



LAVENDER NOTES

Newsletter of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

Volume VIII, No.9 – September 2003

A Volunteer Services Program — project of The Tides Center
• 1395 Bancroft Ave. • San Leandro, CA 94577 • (510) 667-9655 •

Peggy Moore hired for new project



Lavender Seniors has hired Peggy Moore to lead a new project to reach all segments of Oakland's diverse lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender seniors. In June, the City of Oakland awarded a \$32,073 grant to Lavender Seniors to initiate the project.

"Peggy is a proven community leader, and we are fortunate to have her as a member of the Lavender Seniors team," said Jeff Vessels, MSSW, Director of Lavender Seniors. "We are excited about this opportunity to better connect frequently overlooked LGBT senior populations with needed services."

The project's goal is to increase access to effective and culturally competent senior services for Oakland's LGBT seniors of color. Peggy will work with LGBT seniors in African American, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American communities to document barriers to and gaps in mainstream health and human services. At the end of the one-year grant period, Lavender Seniors will present a report to Oakland officials summarizing the project's findings and recommending specific actions.

Peggy, 39, is a ten-year Oakland resident and an Oklahoma native. She owns and operates Mo Photography and is

'Peggy Moore' Cont'd on page 4

Reflections on sodomy

by Jeff Vessels, Director

"So-do-my: So do my neighbors. So do my best friends. So do my heroes."

The caption on the t-shirt worn by a reveler in The Castro on June 26 proclaimed a redefining of "sodomy" with a boldness that seemed to pale in comparison to the U.S. Supreme Court's historic ruling earlier that day.

The Court had struck down a Texas law that criminalized certain forms of sexual intimacy — only as expressed by people of the same gender — and thereby voided similar laws in 12 other states. In sweeping language, the Court said the Constitution protects the right of LGBT people to form intimate relationships and "retain their dignity as free persons." Further, it said LGBT people have the same right as heterosexuals to "define one's concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." Almost apologetically, it declared that *Bowers v. Hardwick*, the case in which the Court upheld sodomy laws in 1986, "demeans the lives of homosexual persons."

Was June 26, 2003 the day of true American LGBT freedom?

'Reflections' cont'd on page 4

City of Oakland needs your input!

To help identify what is important to Oakland's LGBT seniors, Lavender Seniors is hosting a focus group discussion on Tuesday, September 16, 10:30 a.m. Sponsored by Oakland's Department of Human Services, the discussion about health and human services will take place at an Oakland location to be determined. Breakfast will be provided. If you are a resident of Oakland and would like to participate, please call Suzi Kalmus, our Senior Services Coordinator, at (510) 667-9655, or email her at

suzi@lavenderseniors.org

Our input will help shape the future of services in Oakland. It's essential that our voice is heard!

LAVENDER NOTES

is the newsletter of
Lavender Seniors of the East Bay
 1395 Bancroft Avenue
 San Leandro, CA 94577
 510-667-9655
 fax 510-667-9909

www.lavenderseniors.org
 lavenderseniors@sbcglobal.net

Mission Statement

The mission of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay is to improve the quality of life of older gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered residents of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties through community outreach, advocacy and education.

Advisory Board

Frank Howell & Ina Mae Murri,
 Co-Chairs

Jeanine DeBacker, Secretary

Bobbie Jarvis, Treasurer

Meg Bruynell,

Eugene Marangoni,

and *Natalie Zarchin*

Next Advisory Board Meeting: September 9, 7 P.M. at our office

Interested persons are welcome to attend this meeting; public comments will take place at 7 P.M.

Project Director,
Jeff Vessels

Senior Services Coordinator,
Susan Kalmus

Outreach Specialist,
Peggy Moore

Administrator, *Nancy Fugett*

There are no membership dues. All persons 55 and older, their partners and guests are welcome. The cost of mail makes it necessary to request a donation of \$15 dollars per year to receive the newsletter. Visitors or persons interested in learning more about Lavender Seniors may receive the newsletter for three months without charge. None will be turned away for lack of funds.

Signed articles represent the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay.

Inclusion of a name in this newsletter does not necessarily indicate a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Subscription Renewals

When renewing your subscription, please make the check payable to

The Tides Center/Lavender Seniors

This newsletter was created in Adobe PageMaker 6.5; PDF files are available from our website for viewing in Acrobat Reader.

Report from Senior Services Coordinator

by *Suzi Kalmus*, Coordinator

Thanks to two wonderful volunteers for taking on another participant in Hayward. And thanks for the tip on the Canadian lottery scam, whereby you get called to report that you have won the lottery, and all you need to do is wire them \$500. Pfft, there's \$500 out the window.

Unfortunately one of our participants bought the scam. Everyone, keep your ears and eyes open!

Does anyone know of any female "potential" participants in the Oakland/Berkeley area? We have a new volunteer who would love to visit, but looking at my list we don't have anyone for her to visit right now. It seems that this area is particularly "empty." We seem to have more men who need visiting right now. Just a "call out" if anyone knows of someone.

We've all been busy **busy** – with all of the various prides to attend. I heard that the Cull Canyon picnic was a success as was the second annual "Sistahs Steppin' in Pride" (East Bay Dyke March). Oakland's East Bay Pride Festival is September 7, and Hayward Pride is September 13.

We are in the planning stages for our first annual "Lavender Pioneers" event – to honor all of our wonderful founders. This will be held the second Saturday in November. More details to follow as we are in the early planning stages. If any of you are interested in helping plan this new event, do let us know. We know that with more volunteers the event will be a great success!

We will have our next volunteer orientation in September, so if anyone has not had the pleasure of attending, let me know and I'll make room.

The City of Fremont has agreed to coordinate transportation to our potlucks if anyone is interested. This could be a good way to involve more South Bay people in Lavender Seniors. Have fun, enjoy the rest of the summer – Labor Day seems very early this year – and know how much you are appreciated! ▲

Pride Picnic Report

by *Marvin Burrows*

The 2003 picnic was a success, with over 100 LGBT community members who attended; we spent an afternoon in the Cabaña at Cull Canyon Regional Park. Some played volleyball and some went swimming but most just enjoyed the good food and community gossip.

The theme of the picnic has been to come and meet old friends and make new ones. I made some great new friends and trust that you did, too. I made a mistake when I welcomed everyone to the picnic: This was the 10th annual Pride Picnic, not the 9th.

But it has been only the last four years that we have used its present name. The picnic started out small and was hosted by GLOBE as a day of socializing as opposed to politicking, the usual activity of GLOBE (Gays & Lesbians Organized for Betterment & Equality). Lavender Seniors then joined in, EBN, WOFF, PFLAG and soon other organizations in the East Bay wanted to take part. The Lighthouse joined as soon as its doors were opened in Hayward.

This year we had over 20 sponsors and that helped pay for the site reservation, hot dogs, hamburgers, sodas, charcoal – all the picnic basics. To see the list of sponsors, stop by the Lighthouse and check out the Pride Picnic banner on the wall. My thanks go to those who helped make this year's picnic/potluck so much fun. The special **Picnic Workers** who did marvelous things to make it all go so well: *Eugene Marangoni, Frank McNamara, John Ellefsen, Bill Swenor, Mike Lopez and Christina Cappelletti.* ▲

Review of BOOKS

Reviewed
by *Frank Howell*

Learning To Be Old: Gender, Culture and Aging

By Margaret Cruikshank
Rowman & Littlefield – paperback

Margaret Cruikshank is in no mood to trifle. She has little patience with conventional attitudes about old age. Throughout her book she argues quite forcefully that when you pour old wine into new bottles a total revitalization occurs. Being a senior is not a disease requiring a cure, but a simple fact of life. Treatment is not required. Drug companies have brainwashed us into believing that we must submit to old folks homes and consuming drugs by the bottleful. Mrs. Cruikshank says illness doesn't automatically come with the territory. Many oldsters pass through the years without becoming ill and die quietly in their sleep.

Anthropology has shown that in other cultures old age is revered. In Peru men in their eighties still perform hard manual labor. In Japan you always live with your children.

Drugs can often lead to more rapid mental and physical decline. Senior citizens must reinvent themselves after retirement – cultivate new hobbies, carve out new careers. After Carey Grant left the silver screen he promoted commercial products and went on speaking tours.

Some media writers try to frighten younger workers into fearing the wave of senior power that looms on the horizon. We see articles such as "A Demographic Iceberg Threatens To Sink The Great Powers."

Cruikshank preaches **age integration**. Throw off the tyranny of profit mongering of drug companies.

A major segment of medical research is focused on the young. Doctors don't realize that seniors require different doses of medications. The mature body reacts differently.

The federal government has traditionally seen elder problems as a private matter. But caregivers require increasing amounts of assistance. By the year 2020 thirteen million seniors will live alone. Many will have their drivers licenses taken away. When this happens we descend into isolation. Japan leads the world in life expectancy, the United States is twenty-fourth.

In addition to homophobia we must also battle ageism, a term coined by Robert Butler in 1969. With Margaret Cruikshank leading the charge into battle, we can do much to reshape the idea of aging in America. In Nepal the elders are carried through the village at age sixty as a sign of respect. Perhaps we can all be carried through the shopping malls of America as a sign of esteem. Then we shall have arrived! ▲

San Diego Program Advances Support Services for LGBT Latinos and Latinas Ages 50-Plus

[Excerpted from the Winter 2003 edition of *OutWord*, a publication of the Lesbian and Gay Aging Issues Network of the American Society on Aging]

John Acosta is the kind of smart, gutsy, passionate ground-breaker whose work will improve the lives of LGBT elders. The founder of Azteca, a San Diego program working to link mainstream social services with the elder LGBT Latino community and to provide older LGBT Latinos and Latinas with support, information and referral services, Acosta says with justifiable pride, "As far as I know, no one else is doing this." In the following interview, he discusses the background and the activities of his pioneering program.

How does Azteca work? Is it an independent organization or do you work with already existing organizations?

Currently Azteca is partnering with many organizations. I approached each organization, and many were interested in participating. Once I connect with the organization, I collect any information – flyers, books or other literature – they offer to elders. I promote Azteca through publicity in LGBT publications, participation in health fairs, and distribution of flyers and posters.

I don't have my own site; I work out of the offices of three LGBT organizations in three different cities in the San Diego area: Bienestar, Alma Latina and Coordinated Assistance Services and Advocacy (CASA).

Bienestar is a large group of community centers located throughout California that mostly serve the Latino gay community. **Alma Latina** is a new LGBT Latino community center in Vista, Calif., that was formed by young people but recognizes the need to serve elders. **CASA** provides social services to the gay community, but none directed specifically at elders. Each of the organizations has given me space to make information available, to answer questions and to provide referrals.

How do you decide whether a resource is appropriate for Azteca?

When I approach an agency, I first ask if it is gay-friendly and if it is willing to work with LGBT elders. If the answer is positive, then I see what services the agency has to offer.

Do you think Azteca has had an impact on non-LGBT Latino service providers?

It has educated many social services agencies that they are ignoring a large population and that they are limiting themselves by not including the growing older gay and lesbian population that is in urgent need of their services. Some Latino agencies are not interested in getting involved or learning more about the gay community. But other non-Latino agencies are now willing to assist LGBT elders, such as AARP. I am part of the Latino Advisory Committee for AARP, and AARP is taking small steps to serve the LGBT Latino community.

'San Diego Senior Program' cont'd on page 5

Reflections on sodomy

(from page 1)

As my partner and I stood with hundreds of others in Harvey Milk Plaza on an unusually hot San Francisco evening, I felt buffeted by the heat and the tug of conflicted feelings. The tears that welled behind my sunglasses were of joy and also of profound sadness.

Sure, I felt joy for a legal victory that will affect LGBT rights ranging from employment to child custody to rights for same-sex couples.

But as I scanned the diverse crowd, I found myself flashing back to painful episodes from my own history and studying the faces of those who survived much darker days.

I remembered traveling to Louisville in the mid-1980s with my then-partner. With an LGBT directory in hand, we found a gay bar downtown, hidden down a dark alley and behind a door with no sign. Relieved to finally find the establishment, we plopped ourselves on two stools, ordered drinks, and held hands – something we couldn't do in our small Kentucky hometown, which had no LGBT businesses.

Simultaneously, we both noticed that everyone was looking at us funny. We asked the bartender if there was something we should know.

"The cops are doing an undercover sweep," the bartender said. "They've warned us that anyone they find touching – even holding hands – will be charged with solicitation to commit sodomy."

Silently, our hands fell apart.

We didn't particularly enjoy the evening, though we did decide later to take the risk and hold hands. We were virtually the only patrons who dared touch.

Much has happened in the years since then. But I still remember that Louisville bar and how I felt before the Kentucky sodomy law finally fell in 1992. I was a criminal. I was supposed to feel undeserving of tenderness, of love, of touch, of dignity.

As I scanned the crowd in Harvey Milk Plaza, my gaze fell on the seniors. I tried to read their expressions and the life stories reflected in their eyes. How many were prosecuted under sodomy and similar laws? How many careers and reputations were ruined? How many fell into self-destructive behaviors due to damaged self-esteem? How deep are the scars from being labeled criminals and untouchables?

Legal equality does not suddenly transform our society – or even ourselves. Just ask any African American, any woman, any immigrant, and any of the many others who are still fighting for the equality that the law says they have.

Still, it is a time of celebration and, I hope, a time of healing.

How have sodomy laws affected your life? How do you think life will be different for those who will never have to experience them? I would like to hear from you. Write or email me at the address on page two of this newsletter.
—Jeff ▲

Peggy Moore Outreach Specialist

(from page 1)

founder and coordinator of **Sistahs Steppin' in Pride**, an organization that sponsors a multi-racial, multi-ethnic festival and march around Lake Merritt. Her other employment and volunteer experiences include the Nia Collective, East Bay Pride, Zuna Institute, Health Access, and the NO on Knight campaign.

To talk to Peggy about the new project, contact her at the office at (510) 667-9655 or email her at

peggy@lavenderseniors.org

We greatly appreciate support from the City of Oakland, which makes the project possible. ▲

¡Happy Birthday!

James Ortiz

September 3

Robert McKenna Jr.

September 5

Larry Buttwinick

September 6

Linda Spencer

September 9

Pat Branch

September 10

Donna Montgomery

September 11

Pat Kemper

September 14

Kathy Carnahan

September 16

Chester Curtis

September 19

Frank Hoveland

September 20

Jerry Fishman

September 25

Diane Esposito

September 30

¡Feliz Cumpleaños!

**Saturday • 12 Noon • Potluck Meeting
• Program at 1 P.M. • September 13 •**

Your name begins with the letters

A through E — Bring Dessert/Fruit

F through R — Bring Main Dish

S through Z — Bring Salad

**San Leandro BART station shuttle is available. Call
667-9655 day before to arrange pickup.**

Dancer Ahead – Senior Citizens Falling!

On September 13 at the San Leandro Community Church, 1 p.m. **Tina Scott**, an outreach worker for the Alameda County Health Department will lead a discussion on ways of preventing serious injury in the elderly. The problems are especially prevalent in seniors in their eighties. The potluck will begin at noon. For further information call 510-667-9655.

—Frank Howell, Program Chairman

San Diego Senior Program

(from page 3)

What about the Latino LGBT community? What kind of responses have you gotten from them?

Most of the time, the response I get from the older members of the community is that they are glad someone is thinking about them, because the gay community is usually focused on the young and the pretty.

What are the special needs of older Latino gay men and Latina lesbians? Are they different from non-Latino gay and lesbian elders?

The needs of a Latino gay person are very different from mainstream LGBT people. We face distinct social expectations involving religion, family, machismo. Latinos from many different cultures of origin must deal with language and cultural barriers. Unfortunately, many Latino gay men and Latina lesbians are ashamed of who they are, and many Latino cultures see homosexuality as evil. Many Latino families would disown a gay or lesbian family member rather than let him or her live close to them.

Have you had to make adjustments to your original concept?

I started by wanting to change the whole world; I had big plans. However, I need to slow down and focus on identifying and gathering together people who need help. I have lined up agencies that want to participate. Now I have to find people who will use the services the agencies are providing.

Where do you see Azteca going?

My goal is to inform mainstream social-services agencies of the neglected LGBT Latino elder population and to inform the LGBT community that there are many services out there they are not aware of. I would like to have sufficient documentation about the large gay Latino population that exists. And finally I'd like to open a gay senior center where people could go and feel comfortable and meet people like themselves – a place where they can socialize, relax, get information, and take part in activities away from the bars.

For more information on Azteca, contact John Acosta at aztecaproject@hotmail.com or write to Azteca, PO Box 7678, Chula Vista, CA 91912-7678.▲

Our Mailing List Lavender Seniors does not lend, sell or give away its mailing list to any outside organization.

Your support is crucial to enable the *Lavender Seniors* to continue its role as a vital resource to our community. Please take a moment and send your donation today.

Here's my gift of: \$10 ____ \$25 ____ \$50 ____ \$75 ____ \$100 ____ other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Home Telephone _____

E-mail address _____

Please make checks payable to
The **Tides Center/Lavender Seniors**
and mail to:
Lavender Seniors
1395 Bancroft Avenue
San Leandro, CA 94577

Thank you for your generosity!

☐ Please contact me about including Lavender Seniors in my will. ☐ Please contact me to volunteer.

An African-American Lesbian Elder's Story: 'I Tried to Break the Closet Down, Walls and All...'

By the Rev. *Shaba Barnes*

[From *OutWord*, a publication of the American Society on Aging, Spring 2003]

"My name is Shaba. I am a 67-year-old lesbian." This is often the way I introduce myself when I am participating in a group discussion on aging.

The responses I most often receive are "You don't look 67!" and "Why do you have to tell your age?"

I reply, "I am 67 years old, and this is the way I look, so this is the way a 67-year-old looks. And I want you to know my age. Why wouldn't I? It took me 67 years to be here now."

Ageism is entrenched in our society so deeply that often its victims are the first to criticize our attempts as old lesbians to improve our lives and inform others of ageist attitudes. Although making racial or fat jokes is not culturally accepted, the green light is on when the joke is on old people.

Ageism, though commonly seen as harmful and oppressive, is visibly accepted by everyone except those who speak and act against it. How closely connected to ageism are sexism and racism? Do lesbians of color have another burden to bear as we age? How many of us have the ability to fight on the political and economic playing field when we are 60, 70 and older? How many of us can afford not to?

The injustices many old people endure can be eliminated without passing costly government bills. What we need are amendments to societal attitudes. I am referring to attitudes that make old women invisible because we do not match the image of the young woman on the billboard, attitudes that ridicule the old woman crossing the street with a cane, attitudes that make people older than 29 lie about their age.

I become outraged by the behavior of some clerical staff at doctor's offices and some people I encounter at social functions, but I am particularly outraged at the attitudes of some salespeople. When my granddaughter was a young adult, I remember taking her shopping at a department store. The sales clerks would ask her if they might help her, not considering or caring that I might be shopping – that I had money to spend. Sometimes I would stand there waiting to see what would happen next. The salesperson would walk away. I had to teach that person a lesson.

Coming from a family of Orthodox Black Jews, I was raised in a home where girl children were cute and adored but boys were preferred. I remember asking my uncle, the rabbi, why God did not like me. He told me to pray. Sometimes he would pray with me. I was one praying child. I wanted to be loved, but I didn't think God was listening. One day I realized he had answered me: I found love in the arms of a woman. The lesbian life was the path that I would follow. God is love. This could not be wrong. I tried to break the closet down, walls and all.

I doubt if I would be as comfortable and committed fighting for human rights, women's rights and lesbian rights had it not been for the women who lighted my way. I am referring to women, lesbian and straight, black and white, such as Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks, Barbara Jordan, Barbara McDonald and Shevy Healey.

I sincerely hope that all of the readers of this newsletter will be much older someday. Although often misdirected, unity is one of the strongest powers in the universe. Working together, old lesbians of all diversities will guide all lesbians as we age into a creative force for good – for everyone.

As a teacher of spiritual values, I firmly believe that we are all spiritual beings manifested in many different shades, hues, sizes, shapes and families. I believe that we are all experiencing different perspectives on the issue of aging at various times in our lives. There is no better time than now to address ageist attitudes and aging within the LGBT community, especially now that many of the baby boomers are approaching retirement age.

Soon those ages 65 and older will represent an even greater part of society than teenagers. We are living longer, higher-quality lives with all the amenities that the 21st century has to offer. When we come to this realization – and I believe we will – all of the ism's will be no more.

The Rev. Shaba Barnes is 67 years old; she lives with her partner of 35 years in a supportive women's community in Arizona. She is a member of Old Lesbians Organizing for Change and is a metaphysical minister who enjoys her faith by teaching spiritual values and being a guest speaker for organizations and churches of all denominations.

Repeatable Quotes

'You could move.'

—Abigail Van Buren, "Dear Abby," in response to a reader who complained that a gay couple was moving in across the street and wanted to know what he could do to improve the quality of the neighborhood.

Community Listings

Senior Men's Afternoon

1:30 – 3:30 P.M.

2nd and 4th Thursdays

September 11 and 25

2712 Telegraph Avenue,
Berkeley

Co-sponsored by *Pacific Center*
and *Lavender Seniors*

Senior Support Group at Lighthouse Community Center – Hayward

Meets the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays of
each month, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

September 9 & 23

Frank Howell & Fred Bamuelos
are the leaders

For information call Frank at
510-489-0932

East Bay Women's Support Group

Meets 2nd and 4th Fridays each
month

Sept. 12 and 26: 1:15 – 3 P.M.

Meets at *Pacific Center*,
2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley

Fellows of East Bay

Second Sunday, 5:30 – 8:30 P.M.

Social Club for mature men and their
admirers. Monthly Potluck dinner and
social held the second Sunday of every
month at Oak Center Towers, 1515
Market Street, Oakland.

Bring food and drink to share and a
\$4 donation.

September 13

What a difference 30 years can make!!

1972: Long hair

2002: Longing for hair

1972: Disco

2002: Costco

1972: KEG

2002: EKG

1972: Acid rock

2002: Acid reflux

1972: Growing pot

2002: Growing pot belly

1972: Killer weed

2002: Weed killer

1972: Being called into the principal's office

2002: Calling the principal's office

1972: The perfect high

2002: The perfect high yield mutual fund

1972: Moving to California because it's cool

2002: Moving to California because it's warm

1972: Trying to look like Marlon Brando or Liz Taylor

2002: Trying NOT to look like Marlon Brando or Liz Taylor •

1972: Parents begging you to get your hair cut

2002: Children begging you to get their heads shaved

1972: Passing the drivers' test

2002: Passing the vision test

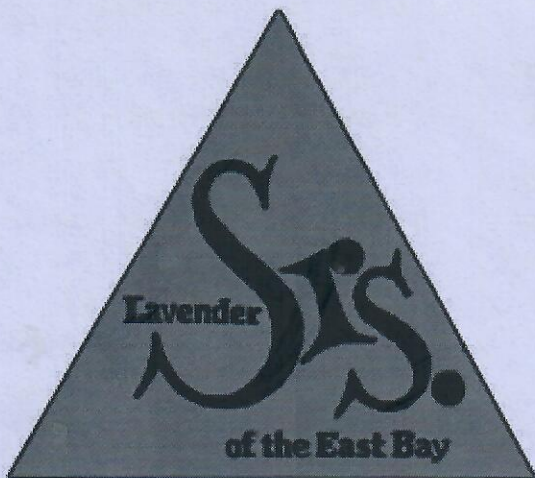
Gay & Lesbian Adoption

Have you thought about the joy and
challenges of gay and lesbian adoption?
How much does it cost? What are the
legal implications?

Our panel of experts will enlighten
you. Dave Alexander, an attorney who
specializes in family law and Kaija Lan-
gley from Family Builders By Adoption
will give their perspective. They will be
joined by gay and lesbian parents who
have actually gone through the process.

The event will take place at the
Lighthouse Community Center, 1217
A Street, Hayward (across from the
Bank of America, next to the A Street
Cafe). The date is September 20, 2:00 –
5:00 p.m. For further information call
510-881-8167.

*"If homosexuality is a disease, let's all call in queer to work:
'Hello. Can't work today, still queer.'"*— Robin Tyler



**Do you know an LGBT elder
(age 55+) in Oakland's
African-American, Latino,
Native American, Asian, or
Pacific Islander
communities?**

You are invited to a

Town Hall Meeting

**to kick-off a new Lavender Seniors project
that is funded by the City of Oakland.**

October 2, 6:30 p.m.

Oakland City Hall

- ★ **Talk with the coordinator of the new project, Peggy Moore, and others who are concerned about our community.**
- ★ **Share your ideas for improving health and human services for LGBT seniors in Oakland's African-American, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American communities. *(You don't need to be a senior to attend.)***
- ★ **Light refreshments will be served.**

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

(510) 667-9655 ▲ email: lavenderseniors@sbcglobal.net ▲ www.lavenderseniors.org

Improving the quality of life of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender seniors in the East Bay since 1994.