



# Lavender Notes

*Lavender Seniors of the East Bay  
a Program of the  
Oakland LGBTQ Community Center*

Volunteer

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PayPal

*Celebrating 28+ years of service and positive change*

*October 2023- Volume 29 Issue 10*

## STORIES OF OUR LIVES

### Gary Green

It can take decades of living for the right inspiration to arrive, and when it does, ride that wave to joy!

Gary recalls his father's gentle suggestion about not future tripping.

"He told me not to worry about having it all planned out. 'In college, you'll have a professor who will really inspire you, and that will lead you to a career.' That did not happen in college – when it finally did, my dad was already gone."



*Gary Green during his hippie days.*

And Gary had retired from his 41-year teaching career.

Gary, age 74, grew up in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the elder son of liberal Jewish parents. His father was an engineer at General Electric, and his mother was more artistic.

"I was more intellectual than athletic," Gary says. "It was a busy childhood. Boy Scouts, lots of homework, activities at synagogue, learning piano and clarinet – I was this bookish kid carrying around my little briefcases. I knew I was different, figured out in second grade that I was attracted to boys."

They lived on the edge of town, the only Jewish family in a Catholic neighborhood. The area's rural feel instilled in him a lifelong love of nature.

Pittsfield was, however, a G.E. company town in the 1950s – that is to say, very conformist and technology-oriented.

“GE had a defense contract,” he recalls. “In junior high, the school awarded me a pin for academic achievement with a Polaris missile image – I was *not* going to wear it.”

Lots of things were different in the '50s.

“Back then, for instance, there was no unleaded gas,” Gary recalls. “The shoe store had an X-ray machine in it for a while, and we were fascinated to see how our feet fit into our shoes. We kids would run around the neighborhood after the DDT truck that was spraying all the trees to kill insects. Now, I feel guilty when I’m driving around burning fossil fuel. I deliver meals and volunteer with Ashby Village to give people rides – that’s my atonement.”

Gary fell into his first career, teaching, by chance. He’d learned to type very fast at a young age, and after he finished a Bachelor’s in Psychology at University of Michigan, he did psychiatric and medical transcription. Moving to Berkeley in 1972, he enrolled at JFK and completed a Masters in Transpersonal Psychology.

“I’m more of a talker than a listener,” he comments wryly, noting that he found possible careers in psychology weren’t as interesting to him as the work he’d begun, teaching at Berkeley Adult School.

“I started out teaching medical terminology through the CETA program. In my 41 years at Berkeley Adult School, I’ve developed and written curriculum and taught many subjects: administrative medical assisting, word processing, computer programming, business English for ESL students – any business-related class. I did career training videos for Prentice Hall. I really enjoyed it.”

His psychology knowledge, though, was always at work, especially when he volunteered. If you ever went to a Pacific Center discussion group in the early 1980s, you may remember Gary from a one-on-one peer counseling session or a rap group.

“Some Monday nights we’d have up to 120 men attend the rap sessions,” Gary recalls of the years when he led discussion groups at Pacific Center. The seven facilitators, each having a different topic or format, would divide the crowd and go into separate meeting rooms. Gary enjoyed providing different types of growth games, a revolving 5- to 10-minute process to encourage two people who don’t know each other to express their emotions and communicate more openly.

He recalls that the most popular topics that men wanted to discuss then were coming out and how to find a partner. Gary’s own coming out was an interesting process.

“Mine happened in a backwards sequence to most men, I think,” Gary says. “First I came out to my family; that went okay. My dad was understanding, but it did take him many years to adjust – he initially hoped it was just a phase. I came out to my friends in my 20s, but didn’t become involved in the gay community until my 30s, really.”

Gary had found hippie culture, with its mind expansion aspects, the human potential and gay freedom movements, to be very positive.

"Most of my college friends would say, 'Well, everybody's really bisexual anyway...'"

His lifelong involvement in community living has its roots in those college years in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"I was lonely the first few years," he says. "Then I found the student co-op, and that fit me best. I lived there my last year and a half, managed the building."

He found it wonderful to live in community, and moved into a rooming house near the university, called Channing House, when he came to Berkeley.

"I was managing it, and the owner didn't want to fix anything," Gary recalls. "So I encouraged the tenants to fix the place up, which we did. We really bonded through that experience. Fifty years later, I'm still in touch with some of those people – it was a very important community for me."

He is involved with several living communities in the East Bay – Atchison Village, where he's been part of a weekly meditation group for the past 20 years; Rossmoor in Contra Costa County; and Ashby Village – a volunteer-based reciprocal community where members help each other so they have access to resources to help them age in place in their own homes.

These are natural extensions of his volunteerism over the decades – including with Project Open Hand, the AIDS Health Program and Project Inform. During the pandemic, he answered phones at the Alameda County Food Bank to help people locate where they could get a bag of groceries that day, and provided shut-in services through Meals on Wheels, where he continues to volunteer twice a week.



*Gary and his goddaughter, Alex, around 1990*

Life in congregant living isn't in the cards for him now. He's very happy in the same Berkeley property he moved to with 3 other people some 30-odd years ago. The lot includes 2 houses and a cottage. The parents of his goddaughter, Alex, took one house, he the other, and a lesbian who became godmother to the couple's younger child chose the cottage. Gary delighted in babysitting once a week, giving the parents a night to themselves.

Over the years, as his goddaughter matured, their weekly time together segued into having dinner and catching up on the latest. Alex now lives in the Midwest. Sharing this home with good friends has been his favorite co-op, and there's really no need to change.

After retiring, Gary had plenty of volunteer activities, but he also became curious about live theater. In 2013, he signed up for a class in play-directing at [Stagebridge](#), Oakland's award-winning Performing Arts Institute for adults

aged 50+. [See the [website](#); classes start October 2nd!] This was the electrifying experience his father had described.

"That was when I finally knew what I wanted to do with my life!" Gary laughs. Marge Betley, executive director of Stagebridge then, was teaching, and Gary was so inspired that he took her class three times.

"Marge is a wonderful person, a wonderful teacher and a wonderful theater director," Gary says.

So began his second career, writing and directing plays. He's produced a number of plays with senior women actors, with the Rossmoor dramatic association, in particular, during the pandemic. He directed projects at Fringe Festival of Marin for several years. Most recently he did two short plays at the North and South Berkeley Senior centers.

"Probably the most advanced play I've directed was one with younger actors by Nick Payne, called 'Constellations'," Gary reports. "There are 50 scenes. The dialogue in each scene is the same, but each scene takes place in a different parallel universe. And how does the 'universe' change the meaning and what happens? I directed this in 2020, during the pandemic. It was very amenable to video."

He's very happy doing this on a local scale and deeply enjoys his work with all ages of actors. He feels it gives him a great deal of freedom to develop and help his actors stretch and do their best.

"I get a lot of joy out of it!" he says enthusiastically, "And the actors say I'm nice."

Over the years, Gary donated frequently to gay causes; our country's current political situation, though, has refocused his efforts.

"NPR has helped me realize what my mission is now," Gary says. "I've never been a big politico, but preserving our democracy is the most important priority right now. I have to do everything I can to help strengthen democracy in the U.S. – I've written so many letters each election. Fighting fascism is the most vital thing we can do to safeguard our rights."

Of course, he still has time to travel, something he dearly loves. If legal marriage had been available to our community back in 1987, Gary likely would have married the wonderful man he met while travelling in Japan – they were in love, but United States immigration rules barred Yasunari from receiving a visa.

Gary loves cool climates in Scandinavia, Europe, Asia. One of his favorite trips was to Norway:

"They had a ferry that went to every little town along the coast that had a few small cabins," Gary recalls. "It was simple – no pool, no casino – but they did have naturalists on board! We'd get off in every town for four hours; it wasn't long to explore, but it was fascinating."

He's been on Road Scholar trips, especially theater-related ones to London

and Edinburgh for the Fringe Festivals, where he really enjoyed meeting and learning from other directors and theater critics. He greatly enjoys traveling with friends.



*Gary, mugging for the camera from inside a fallen redwood.*

If you haven't met up with Gary yet in all his many activities, just take a hike, and you may find his engaging, kind smile on the trail. He goes out on Bay Area hiking trails at least weekly. Who knows, he may introduce you to a new one!

Thank you, Gary, for sharing your energetic, life-loving warmth with us!

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## CONNECTIONS



Have you moved out of the area, do you want to get in contact with other Lavender Seniors near you or someone you have lost contact with? [Email us](#) and we will try to help out. No information will be shared without your specific permission.

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### LAVENDER SENIORS FRIENDLY VISITOR PROGRAM HAS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE.

Volunteers with the Lavender Seniors Friendly Visitor program are background checked, interviewed and trained, after which they are matched with a senior to visit regularly, usually for a couple hours each week. Visitors can share stories, chat about mutual interests and current events, and if both are willing and able, volunteers can take their seniors out for a walk in the park, a bite to eat, a cup of coffee, shopping or maybe a movie or a trip to the museum.

We ask volunteers to make a commitment of at least six months.

If you are in need of a Friendly Visitor, we can help with that too!

Please contact us at [jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org](mailto:jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org) and we will be in touch with you soon. Thank You!

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Friday October 20th, 2023 @ 12:30pm The North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 Martin Luther King Jr Way, Oakland, CA 94609.

RSVP Required - lunch provided for registered guest.

Register for lunch here by Tuesday, Oct 17:

<https://forms.gle/6mb5KbSACHokZchz6>



For more info please call 510-781-2926 or email: [jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org](mailto:jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org)

# *Third Friday* **Lunch Bunch**

**RSVP  
REQUIRED**

Every **Third Friday @ 12:30pm**  
North Oakland Senior Center  
5714 MLK Way



For more info please call **510-781-2926** or email: [jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org](mailto:jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org)

## **SOCIAL SENIORS - Last Friday of every month**

A monthly social gathering for LGBTQ+ Seniors & Elders

Friday October 27th, 2023 @ 12:00pm The Watermark, 1440 40th St,  
Emeryville, CA 94608

RSVP Required - lunch provided for registered guest.

Register for lunch here: <https://forms.gle/r43Hvw4jLQsougTDA>

For more info, please call 510-781-2926 or email: [jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org](mailto:jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org)





# SOCIAL SENIORS

**A MONTHLY SOCIAL GATHERING FOR LGBTQ SENIORS**  
**THE WATERMARK, 1440 40TH STREET, EMERYVILLE, CA 94608**  
**FOR MORE INFO PLEASE CALL 510-781-2926 OR EMAIL [JESSIE@OAKLANDLGBTQCENTER.ORG](mailto:jessie@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org)**  
**RSVP REQUIRED**

## Oakland Pride Parade



Ruth Michaels' Granddaughter/Great-Granddaughter - Gabriel-Robert-Bobbe - Lavender Notes Editor Beckie

For those who were unable to attend or view the live-streaming of the Oakland Pride Parade on September 10th - where Lavender Seniors, Rep. Barbara Lee and others were selected as Grand Marshals - there is a one-hour YouTube video of ABC7 live coverage of the parade, hosted by Zach Fuentes and Anser Hassan.

There is only about a five-second shot of the Lavender Seniors cable-car-like trolley filled with LGBTQ+ seniors and their allies.

There are also interviews with Barbara Lee and the Pride Board, as well as supportive staff from such groups as Kaiser, Pixar and AC Transit.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YppfAoFb3BM>



Photos Contributed by Barbara Jue - Huge Oakland Unified School District Contingent Behind, Seeing Photos

In addition, there are numerous photos highlighting individuals and over 100 contingents in the parade available on the OaklandSide website (you might even see somebody you know!?):

<https://oaklandside.org/2023/09/11/photos-oakland-pride-festival-parade-2023/>



Musical Theater History Repeating Itself?

## LGBTQ+ "Cats" at Ground Zero?

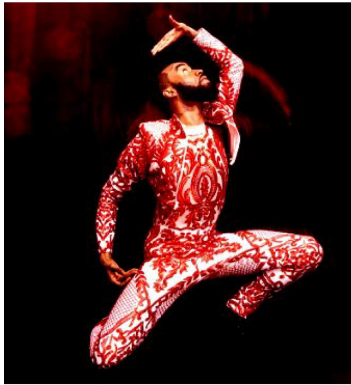
Five years ago this month, a dozen Lavender Seniors journeyed up to Ashland, OR, for "OSF-Out" weekend at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. The highlight of our visit, of course, was seeing the first-ever production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Oklahoma" where the couples and hook-ups are all same-sex or (in the case of Aunt Eller, portrayed by a trans-woman). Only one name had to be changed: Ado Annie became Ado Andy in this production.

Picture some of these Lavender Seniors with tears in their eyes, watching this performance that somehow validated our relationships in a brand new way. The following year (2019, pre-pandemic) some of those who had seen the new (and improved?) production sat in Artistic Director, Bill Rauch's, office to see the performance again via DVD, still not available for purchase anywhere, perhaps because of agreements with the Rodgers & Hammerstein estate (see NYTimes story below).

That same Bill Rauch (an openly gay man with husband and two children) was pulled away in 2019 to be the first Artistic Director of the Perelman Performing



Arts Center, just opened two weeks ago as the final link in the monument to 9/11 at Ground Zero in Lower Manhattan. The first season of performances seems quite electric, of course, but one of the most exciting for Lavender Seniors will be an all-gay version of "Cats", which Rauch has worked his magic on, having become successful in securing the rights for producing still another same-sex version of a long-running Broadway show.

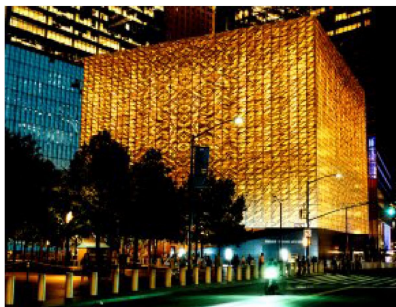


Cats - Perelman Promo Photo

Many of the people from that 2018 venture from the East Bay to Ashland have indicated they would be seriously interested in seeing first-hand this second permutation of a successful Broadway musical into an LGBTQ-focused musical in a now-hallowed place in America, Ground Zero. The production, ostensibly opening on 20th June 2024, will take place in a drag bar, among other sets, according to Rauch. Since there will only be a two-month run (June and July), decisions will need to be made shortly.

Like any proposed group outing of this nature, there might be the odd difference of opinion on such things as date (e.g., "we want to be there for opening night" or "it's too hot in NY in late June"), accommodations ("we have friends we can stay with" or "why don't we rent a five-bedroom AirBNB, splitting the cost among ten people at \$100/night", etc.)

*Editor's Note: New York City has currently banned any private accommodations - like AirBNB or VRBO - unless they are for more than 30 days, an apparent concession to the hotel/motel lobbying efforts there. The AirBNB route might have to be switched to Jersey City. Also, the "Cats" production will only be a two-month run - June and July - rather than a whole season - so the decision would have to be made shortly if reservations were to be made during that period. Tickets go on sale next month.*



Perelman Performing Arts Center at Night

Bill Rauch has indicated that "Cats" tickets will go on sale in November, though he says we might work out some semi-affordable senior rate and block of tickets for some performance during this historic run. His staff might also be able to help us find affordable accommodations (senior hostel vs youth hostel?) in a part of the world with astronomical hotel prices.

**A fabulous reimagining of Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic dance musical based on T.S. Eliot's Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats.**

Maybe this will happen; maybe it won't. But we're hoping to get feedback from the East Bay LGBTQ community on how many folks might actually want to front the \$\$\$ (and/or the Frequent Flyer miles) to make this trans-continental voyage to see LGBTQ+ musical history being made. Maybe all of this will happen; maybe none of it will. But we're hoping to get feedback from the East Bay LGBTQ community on how many folks might actually want to front the \$\$\$ (or the Frequent Flyer miles) to make this trans-continental voyage just to see LGBTQ+ musical history being made.

Anyone seriously thinking they might want to join this east coast excursion at some point in June or July 2024 - if it were to materialize - please contact [JohnDavid@LavenderSeniors.org](mailto:JohnDavid@LavenderSeniors.org).

Meanwhile, here's a brief stroll down the five-year-old memory lane to remind readers of Bill Rauch's first success at staging a same-sex version of a Broadway classic. This from the 18th of August 2018 [New York Times](#). Lavender Seniors arrived in Ashland two months later!

## In This 'Oklahoma!' She Loves Her and He Loves Him



Left: Alfred Drake and Joan Roberts as Curly and Laurey in the 1943 Broadway production of "Oklahoma!" Right: Royer Bockus as Laurey and Tatiana Wechsler as Curly in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival production. Credit: The Rodgers & Hammerstein Organization. Jenny Graham/Oregon Shakespeare Festival

By [Laura Collins-Hughes](#)  
Aug. 15, 2018

ASHLAND, ORE. — The idea came to [Bill Rauch](#) in the early 90s: What if he directed a production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Oklahoma!" where the lovers were same-sex couples?

A gay man in a committed relationship at a time when marriage equality seemed like an impossible dream, he was sure that it would be revelatory. He was equally certain that he would never get the rights to stage the musical that way. For more than 20 years, he did not dare to ask.

But on an August afternoon two summers ago at [Oregon Shakespeare Festival](#), where he is the artistic director, Mr. Rauch watched a version of his vision unfold. Onstage, in costume behind music stands, actors gave a public reading of the show — an "Oklahoma!" where Curly and Laurey, the central couple, were women, and the secondary romance was between two men, Will Parker and Ado Andy (changed from the original Ado Annie).

In the audience, seated close to Mr. Rauch, was [Ted Chapin](#), the vigilant longtime overseer of the Rodgers and Hammerstein catalog, who'd listened to Mr. Rauch's nervous pitch and given a cautious go-ahead.

The rest is history — stay tuned on what this production of "Cats" might add to that history, as well!



*Calling All Hoarders!*

## *Archiving Lavender Seniors History*

Beginning this month, we are adding a feature called "Twenty Years Ago" that will take one look at the history of this organization, which will celebrate its

30th anniversary in November of next year. We have included here a link to the October 2003 newsletter, so people can see the politics, the humor and the pioneering events that were happening already two decades ago. Each month from now on, we will attach the "20 Years Ago" issue of *Lavender Notes*.

Some stalwart Lavender Seniors volunteers have begun the process of scanning, naming, filing and archiving available newsletters from the past. Those completed to date appear already on the website:

<https://lavenderseniors.org/newsletter/>, where you can click on any year, then each month, to access those available to date. (All interested volunteers encouraged to help in this somewhat tedious task!)

Unfortunately, there are a number of *Lavender Notes* issues that are missing; for example, five months' issues in 2001 (i.e., March, April, May, August & October) seem to be missing, though we have complete copies of all of 2002 and 2003. Thus, the overline on this story: "Calling all Hoarders!" We're hoping that some of the folks involved from the beginning – or early on – may have copies of those missing issues from 1994-2014 that could be scanned for permanent archiving. Anybody finding past issues of these irreplaceable historical documents is urged to notify either [JohnDavid@LavenderSeniors.org](mailto:JohnDavid@LavenderSeniors.org) or by phoning (510) 631-7930. We will be happy to pick up any copies a hoarder might have, scan and archive them, then return them to the person (hoarder or otherwise) who provided them.

Here is the link to the "20 Years Ago" issue from October 2003 for a stroll down memory lane:

<https://lavenderseniors.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Vol.-9-10-October-2003.pdf>

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## Well Connected Enriching lives and supporting well-being.

(FORMERLY SENIOR CENTER WITHOUT WALLS)

### Community Phone Calls

This award-winning program offers activities, education, support groups, and friendly conversation over the phone or online.

#### Just a few of the things offered:

(The times are no longer listed in the generic catalog, once you have signed up you will get a link to a catalog with times in your time zone)

#### LGBTQ Chat Wednesdays, 10/11, 10/25, 11/8, 11/22, 12/13, 12/27

This group is intended for participants who identify as LGBTQ, and is an opportunity to connect with others socially in a supportive environment, where participants can share individual and collective experiences. We will create an inclusive place to share our stories with each other and build a sense of



community. Facilitated by Kay George

### **Mystery Melody Saturdays, 9/30 – 11/4**

The mystery melody themes, with guidelines to help you get started are: 9/30 Adjectives ('Big Bad John'); 10/7 In the Sea, fish, ships ('Beyond the Sea'); 10/14 At night, sleep, dreams ('Daydream Believer'); 10/21 Question words, who, why, when, do; 10/28 Songs of the 60s; 11/4 Anticipating the holidays, Christmas, Thanksgiving. Facilitated by Jan Knowles

View the Current catalog of community phone calls [here](#). Check the website for more information. To participate in these or other Well Connected telephone activities, or to learn more about their programs, call 877-797-7299 or email [coviaconnections@covia.org](mailto:coviaconnections@covia.org).



**Out Standing Seniors - Hayward - Sponsored by Pacific Center**  
Oct 3 & 17 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. (1st & 3rd Tuesdays)  
Hayward Senior Center  
also on Zoom on the 1st Tuesday.  
email [outstandingseniors@pacificcenter.org](mailto:outstandingseniors@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

**Rainbow Seniors**  
Oct 10 & 24 12:30 p.m. (2nd & 4th Tuesdays)  
San Leandro Senior Community Center  
email [rainbowseniors@pacificcenter.org](mailto:rainbowseniors@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

**Older & Out Therapy Group - Online - Sponsored by Pacific Center Meets via Zoom Tuesdays 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.**  
Please email [olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org](mailto:olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org) for more information. No drop-ins. Intake is required for attendance.

*Free therapy group for LGBTQIA+ community members age 55+*

**Life after 40 - Gay & Bisexual Men's Group**  
Meets in person at Oakland LGBTQ Community Center every 1st Tuesday at 7:00pm & virtually every 3rd Tuesday at 7pm.

*A support group for men over 40*

**Older & Out Therapy Group - Oakland - Sponsored by Pacific Center In-person at Oakland LGBTQ Community Center**  
Wednesdays 1:15pm - 2:45pm  
Please email [olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org](mailto:olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org) for more information. Intake is required for attendance.

*Free therapy group for LGBTQIA+ community members age 55+*

Living OUT in Livermore - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Oct 4 4:00 - 5:00 p.m. (1st Wednesday)

Meets via Zoom email [livingoutlivermore@pacificcenter.org](mailto:livingoutlivermore@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to safely share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

Tri-Valley Rainbows - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Oct 20 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. (3rd Thursday)

Meets via Zoom email [trivalleyrainbows@pacificcenter.org](mailto:trivalleyrainbows@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

Oakland Third Friday Lunch Bunch

Sponsored by City of Oakland Aging/Adult Services, Lavender Seniors of the East Bay & Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

Oct 20 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. (Third Friday)

North Oakland Senior Center

*This month's program: ('TBA' - see info above)*

Social Seniors

Sponsored by Oakland LGBTQ Community Center and Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

Oct 27 12:30 p.m. (Last Friday)

The Watermark

1440 40th St, Emeryville

*See flyer above for registration info.*

Older & Out Therapy Group - Berkeley - Sponsored by Pacific Center In-person at N. Berkeley Senior Center

Fridays 1:15 - 2:45 p.m.

Please email [olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org](mailto:olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org) for more information.

Intake is required for attendance.

*Free therapy group for LGBTQIA+ community members age 55+*

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## Lavender Seniors of the East Bay a Program of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center Advisory Council

Dr. John David Dupree  
Beckie Underwood

Jessie Spivey  
Barbara Jue

## Lavender Seniors of the East Bay a Program of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

Message: 510-736-LGBT (510-736-5428)  
or [info@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:info@lavenderseniors.org)

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Board:  
Beckie Underwood  
John David Dupree

Website: <http://lavenderseniors.org>

Contact Us



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