

LAVENDER SENIORS *of the East Bay*

Lavender Notes

A Project of the Tides Center

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Civic Engagement: The Heart of Lavender Seniors

The following article was featured in Vol. XXX, No. 3 in the May-June edition of *Aging Today*, a bi-monthly newspaper of the American Society on Aging. We are running this for your enjoyment at the request of many Lavender Senior members. Thank you to everyone who helped make this possible!

In 1994, a small group of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) elders in living in Alameda County, California, took charge of their future. Concerned about growing "gay and grey," they formed Lavender Seniors of the East Bay, an organization that works to improve the lives of LGBT elders in Alameda and Contra Costa counties through volunteer-powered community outreach, education and advocacy.

The unique strength of Lavender Seniors lies in civic engagement. A dedicated cadre of more than 60 volunteers, who take pride in and ownership of their community, provide LGBT elders in the east Bay Area with a wide range of services and activities.

A core value of Lavender Seniors is to empower older LGBT adults to become community leaders by providing them with the tools and opportunities to make a difference in their own backyards.

Lavender Seniors' services are matched with each volunteer's talents and interests. Called "Lavender Leaders," volunteers make friendly social visits, offer telephone support, shopping assistance, welcoming services and social network facilitation. They train healthcare workers, organize outreach events and advocate about the need for legal protections.

Community Comes together

That first meeting of Lavender Seniors, held 14 years ago in San Leandro, Calif., was the beginning of many future community organizing efforts—dedication that would create programs to address issues faced by LGBT elders in the east San Francisco Bay Area.

Bobbie Jarvis, one of Lavender Seniors' original founders who was present at the meeting, was amazed that so many people—including retired social workers, public servants and other professionals—came together to tackle the social injustices faced by LGBT older adults.

Today, the Lavender Seniors membership numbers more than 1,100 people. Monthly, the organization sends out newsletters to more than 800 members and other individuals; more than 80 people receive meals; and 32 elders currently are getting in-home support. Additionally, an average of 170 senior service workers are trained per year and host regular educational events, including an annual Aging in Place Symposium and a Leadership Academy.

Shared Issues

Many LGBT elders came of age at a time when it was extremely risky, if not illegal, to be openly LGBT and "out of the closet." It wasn't until the mid-1970s that the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses, and some states, including California, decriminalized private sexual relations between consenting adults.

Elders in the LGBT community share many of the same concerns as heterosexual elders; such as financial stability, access to affordable healthcare and loss of independence. But, for LGBT older adults, there are added barriers—obstacles that exacerbate health, financial and psychosocial issues related to aging. There is fear of discrimination among senior service providers, isolation due to homophobia in the mainstream community and lack of legal protections that are a benefit of marriage, such as hospital visitation rights, social security, pension and tax benefits.

Although times now are changing for LGBT people, old ways of living persist among LGBT elders. Their history of having to survive by remaining hidden can evolve into a serious threat when an LGBT older adult grows frail and in need of services. This is the rationale for Lavender Seniors programming and community organizing.

Engaged support, Better Lives

Leaders in the LGBT elder community understand that civic engagement enables them and those they serve to live better lives as they age. Nancy Strange, a friendly visitor volunteer who lost her partner says, "Sharing time with another strengthens both. For those of us who miss loved ones, depression can creep into the still hours. Stepping out into another's space helps to fill the empty spot with warm fuzzy

(Continued on page 4)

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay is funded by individuals as well as Alameda County Area Agency on Aging, Alameda County Leather Corps, California Council for the Humanities, The California Endowment, City of Oakland, City of Fremont, Contra Costa County Area Agency on Aging, East Bay Community Foundation, Gay Chemists Support Fund, Horizons Foundation, Royal Grand Ducal Council/Alameda County, San Francisco Foundation, Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights, and Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. We gratefully acknowledge the support of all Friends of Lavender Seniors.

LavenderNotes

is the official newsletter of
Lavender Seniors of the East Bay.

Mission Statement

The mission of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay is to improve the quality of life of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender seniors through direct service, community outreach, advocacy, and education.

Advisory Board

Mike Mora, Chairman
D'Anne Bruetsch, Vice-Chair
Mitch Foudray, Secretary
Bobbie Jarvis, Treasurer

Marvin Burrows, Gabriel Delgado,
Meg Bruynell, Frank Howell, Rob Mills
Pat Skillen, Tomi Smith,
Members-at-large

Next Advisory Board Meeting

Aug 5th, 7PM. Call 510-667-9655 for more information.
All are welcome; public comments take place at 7PM.

Staff

Dan Ashbrook, Director
Tomi Smith, Project Administrator

Newsletter

Tomi Smith, Editor
D'Anne Bruetsch, Layout

Webmaster

Bert Hendriksen

Lavender Seniors welcomes all LGBT persons, their partners, allies, and guests. Cost of production and mail makes necessary a request of \$20 minimum annual donation to receive the newsletter. Visitors & others may receive the newsletter for three months without charge. No one is turned away for lack of funds. For gifts, make checks payable to *Tides Center / Lavender Seniors.*

Signed articles represent the opinion of the authors and not necessarily those of Lavender Seniors. Inclusion of a name in this newsletter does not necessarily indicate a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

ARE YOU CONFINED TO YOUR HOME OR YOUR ROOM?

If you are or you know someone who is, let us know. We have Friendly Visitor volunteers who want to meet you!! Call Melissa, 510-667-9655

What We Do...

Founded in 1994, Lavender Seniors of the East Bay provides the following:

LGBT Seniors of Color: Improves access to health and human services to LGBT seniors in the African-American, Latino, Native American, Asian, and Pacific Islander communities.

Friendly Visitors Program: Matches volunteers with isolated and /or frail LGBT seniors for social support, light household and shopping assistance, and telephone assurance.

Cultural Competency Training: Through LGBT Senior panelists, educates service providers to comply with state laws to change policies and practices to make service more accessible to LGBT seniors.

Monthly Informative Social Gatherings: Help build informal social networks and individual's knowledge of issues affecting seniors at the Monthly Potluck in San Leandro, Lavender Lunch Bunch in Oakland, and South County Lunch and TalkAbout at the Fremont Senior Center.

Community Involvement: Engages in community building and partnering processes with local governments in order to insert LGBT elders' needs into their planning efforts.

Monthly Discussion Groups: Coming Out Again, Fellows of East Bay and Seniors Men's Afternoon co-sponsored and co-hosted by the North Berkeley Senior Center and Pacific Center (see back page for schedules) provide LGBT support group settings to elders in the North County.

Monthly newsletter: *Lavender Notes.*

Website: <http://www.lavenderseniors.org>

To get involved as a participant or volunteer, contact us at 510-667-9655, press 1, or go to: <http://www.lavenderseniors.org>

August Birthdays

Aug. 1 st Pat Mc.	Aug. 9 th Calvin B. Karen A.	Aug 22 nd Ruth M.
Aug. 4 th Natalie Z.	Aug. 10 th Margaret J.	Aug. 23 rd Marcelina D.
Aug. 5 th Ben S. Tamar K.	Aug. 13 th Cal. H.	Aug. 24 th Ron Wong
Aug. 6 th Cam J.	Aug. 15 th Juanita O.	Aug. 26 th Jo Ann D.
Aug. 8 th James D.	Aug. 18 th Charles A.	Aug. 31 st Cheryl W.

MONTHLY POTLUCK

Saturday, Aug. 8th - 12 noon to 2pm

Program: Carol Stuart—Vocal/Piano

A thru K	Dish to bring - a Salad
L thru R	bring a Dessert/Fruit
S thru Z	bring a Main

Donate to Lavender Seniors online! Now you can go to www.lavenderseniors.org and click the **Donate Now** link. This is an easy way to make a difference in your community.



Become a "Friend of Lavender Seniors" Today!

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay need your help! LGBT seniors are among the most overlooked and underserved population. Your donation provides general operating support for programs that help LBGT seniors live better lives by addressing issues of stigmas based on age and sexual orientation, limited biological families and social support, health disparities, insensitive health and human services providers, and economic insecurity exacerbated by ineligibility for spousal or survivor's benefits.

Please take a moment and send your gift today. Your annual giving entitles you to a subscription to our monthly newsletter, Lavender Notes.

Here's my gift of: \$20 \$35* \$50 \$100 \$250 \$1000 Other \$ _____

Annual Courtesy Giving Levels

Lavender Leader \$10,000 Lavender Supporter \$5,000 Lavender Friend \$1,000

(* Please give this amount or more if possible.)

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- Please contact me about including Lavender Seniors in my will.
- Please contact me about participating in Lavender Seniors' programs and or volunteering.
- Please do NOT list me in Lavender Seniors publications as a "Friend of Lavender Seniors."

Please mail to: Lavender Seniors of the East Bay, 1395 Bancroft Avenue, San Leandro, CA 94577
REMEMBER THAT YOUR DONATIONS TO LAVENDER SENIORS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE

(Continued from page 1)

feeling of helping someone just by being there."

Volunteers Reed Wilgoren, Morris Simpson and Cathy Cade also know the rewards of providing meaningful support for their community. Each started their own social networks within Lavender Seniors in order to reduce risks associated with isolation, and to enable LGBT elders to better age within at home and in community.

Each network group has its own focus: Morris's group is called "We're Still Here," a social group that offers support around issues of aging. Reed's group, called "Coming Out Again," provides a social network for those at risk of going back into the closet as a means of survival. Cathy helps lead a lesbian book club for women who want intellectual stimulation together with social contact. A personal historian and photographer, she helped develop an LGBT senior visibility project, *The Lavender Scrolls*, an exhibit about being older and gay (which still a traveling exhibition after two years).

Other volunteers contribute their time and creative talents as artists, chefs, graphic designers and floral arrangers. Volunteer Gabriel Delgado enjoys creating floral themes and decor for outreach events and meal programs. He also prepares authentic ethnic meals for Lavender Senior meal programs. Gabriel says that he is "content with giving unconditionally" and feels fulfillment in contributing to Lavender Seniors.

According to Dottie Fowler, another founder, Lavender Seniors is unique because it serves both LGBT men and women, and it has volunteers of diverse ages ranging in age from high school and college students (Lavender Juniors), to baby boomers and people in their 70s.

We believe that our volunteer corps constitutes a remarkable system of community organizing—a community that works together for the greater good of all of our members and the LGBT elder community at large. It is a community that tries to ensure that no LGBT senior becomes isolated and that all members have a voice.

Our volunteers truly embody the spirit of engaged service—and are the heart of Lavender Seniors.

THE LAVENDER SENIORS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Lavender Seniors Leadership Academy is an annual discussion forum, led by East Bay city officials and community leaders, on how advisory boards and commissions govern lives. With yearlong assistance from Lavender Seniors, Academy attendees can receive help on submitting city board and commission applications, and learn how they can participate in coalitions, speak to the state legislature and engage in various Bay Area-based LGBT and elder activism efforts.

When they attend the Academy, LGBT elders learn about the importance of active government involvement. The 2009 Leadership Academy, held this past April in Oakland, featured openly gay and lesbian city officials and LGBT allied officials from San Leandro, Oakland, Berkeley and Alameda.

Berkeley city council members Kriss Worthington and Darryl Moore and Oakland city council member Rebecca Kaplan guided a discussion on how LGBT elders can influence and help develop policies that govern their lives through membership on a board or commission. Jim Prola, an LGBT ally and San Leandro city council member, also spoke on the need for

including progressive voices in city planning discussions regarding health and human services and community affairs.

The 2009 Academy also featured Lavender Senior Frank Howell, a true leader and LGBT elder advocate who exemplifies the Lavender Seniors belief that civic engagement is vital to well-being. Frank is a member of the Alameda County Commission on Aging, a Lavender Senior advisory board member and a regular speaker at trainings and outreach events.

The articles and stories Frank writes for the Lavender Seniors newsletter and Alameda County's Senior Update newsletter have helped hundreds of senior service providers and many government officials increase their awareness of the often invisible LGBT population. "Lavender Seniors has forced me to reach beyond myself and into the broader community. This reduces feelings of isolation and fills you with a feeling of political and social power. You no longer feel helpless!" he reports.

—Dan Ashbrook

VOLUNTEER CORNER

When I volunteered for the friendly visitor program, I thought I'd go and give my time to a shut-in. I did not consider my getting anything out of it other than good feelings. However, I learned to ask a question and really listen. The man I was visiting turned out to be a very brilliant man stuck in a body he could not control due to Parkinson. He, like many scientists, did not warm to small talk. I had to ask real questions and really listen because he could detect insincerity.

My visit took me back to the time when I was an insurance agent when it was necessary to find the need before you could sell the product. My "visitee's" body has failed him, but his mind has not. With each visit I look forward to making him talk more and me listening more. Knowing him has worked to make me "get over myself". I would also like to mention that I am a Lavender Seniors Board member. As a Lavender Senior board member I'm not compensated with money, but through my service to the LGBT senior community I've grown so much as a person.

- Windsor Young

LGBT GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

When: Thursday, July 16th – Sept. 10th
Where: Hospice of the East Bay
Fee: \$50.00 for the full eight weeks *
Facilitator: K. Sue Duncan, MFT

To register please call the Center for Grief and Loss at Hospice of the East Bay (925) 887-5681 Pre-registration is required.

*No one will be turned away.

Potluck Club to the Rescue

A neighborhood can respond to a threat quickly if an informal social network is already in place. Otherwise, "you're behind the eight ball," says Mr. Walljasper who lives in Minneapolis, Minn.

He and his wife bought a home there in a neighborhood that was new to them did not have a strong sense of community. They met with some of their neighbors and decided to start a Friday night potluck club. There was no real agenda. They were tired from a long week at work and wanted to get together, relax and have some fun.

When the City unveiled plans to widen a neighborhood street, they realized that their property values would be affected. Small as their organization was, the potluck club sprang into action. Because of their bond, the members could act quickly in protesting this plan. They not only stopped the street plan, they went on to launch an effort that, 15 years later, got the city to narrow the controversial street.

Walljasper says that, had their informal network not already existed, the powerful streets department would have prevailed before neighbors could get organized.

-Marilyn Lewis of MSN Real Estate

Lavender Leader Opportunities

Cultural Competency Speakers Bureau – Tell your story to health and human service providers to help them better serve the needs of LGBT seniors.

Friendly Visitors – Visit, make phone calls, and provide shopping assistance to reduce isolation and help LGBT seniors Age in Place.

Fundraising – Assist Lavender Seniors with raffle or event ticket sales.

LGBT Aging Coalition Members – Be a part of a network of seniors and community leaders whose mission is to increase access to health and human services. Various levels of participation are available on the coalition. Attend meetings, participate in government forums, and assist projects that improve the lives of LGBT seniors in the East Bay.

Meal Program and Event Assistance – Help set up for monthly potlucks and social events or facilitate monthly lunch bunch programs.

News Crew – Assist with the mailing of Lavender Notes.

Outreach – Host tabling for senior and LGBT community events.

If you are interested in any of the above opportunities, please call Tomi Smith at 510-667-9655 to request a Volunteer Application Package or go to www.lavenderseniors.org, click "volunteers," click "volunteer pack," print the application, fill it out, and mail to Lavender Seniors.

"The trouble with life in the fast lane is that you get to the other end in an awful hurry."

-John Jensen

Careful What You Wish For

John and Jim had been partnered for 25 years. John was celebrating his 60th birthday. During the party, a fairy appeared and said that because they had been such a loving couple all those years, she would grant them one wish each. Jim who was giving the party said, "we've blown all our money on parties, fine dining and decorating this house. I've never had a chance to see the world. I wish I could travel all over the world." The fairy waved her wand and POOF! He had tickets in his hand.

Next John, who was the birthday boy, paused for a moment, and then said with a sly grin, well, I'd like a boyfriend 30 years younger than me."

The fairy waved her wand and POOF! He was 90.

Pride Picnic

GLOBE AND LAVENDER SENIORS

EAST BAY PRIDE PICNIC

When: Saturday, August 15th, 2009

Time: 11:00 AM

Where: Cull Canyon Regional Park

Directions from 580E.

Take exit 36B toward Crow Canyon Rd, and then turn left at Center Street. Turn right at E Castro Valley Blvd., turn left at Crow Canyon Road/Grove Way and continue to follow Crow Canyon Road. Make a slight left toward Cull Canyon Rd then a slight left at Cull Canyon Rd.

COME OUT AND JOIN THE FUN

"It's not the years in your life, but the life in your years that counts!"

- Adlai Stevenson

Julia Craig – 1926-2009

We are sorry to announce the passing of Julia Craig on June 24, 2009.

She worked for 25 years at Planned Parenthood and participated in many programs that assisted women.

She told her doctor that she wanted to be a "political activist."

Cards may be mailed to her daughter Deborah Craig at 2324 Rose St., Berkeley, CA 94704 and her partner, Ruth Michaels at 1320 Addison St., Apt. A104. Berkeley, CA 94702.

A Memorial in her honor will be held at her daughter's home on August 2nd at 2:00PM. The apartment is at the end of Rose between Arch and Scenic before it dead-ends into Bayview place. The street is arrow with limited parking. Car pooling is suggested. Family and friends are

Aug Book Review

The Lonely American: Drifting Apart In the Twenty-First Century

by *Jacqueline Olds, M.D. and Richard Schwartz, M.D.*

Beacon Press, \$25.00

Duke University conducted a rather startling "general social survey" between 1985-2004. Their investigators found that our fellow Americans who had significant relationships with close friends declined from three to two. This may seem rather curious but there is more there than meets the roving eye. According to the 2000 U. S. Census, one out of four households consists of only one person; the fairy tale portrait of a typical household of papa, mama, and child as been shattered. We are no longer a nation of big middle class families.

These observations hold eye brow raising implications for senior citizens in any community, including LGBT folks. Those of us who enjoy social ties and intimate relationships live a longer, healthier life.

Lavender Seniors is considering launching a program where isolated couples or individuals can be surrounded by a collection of concerned friends who can create a protective environment. This can include shopping, trips to the doctor, and tending to household needs.

This situation has been created by a combination of factors such as an increase in the number of seniors who are widows, widowers, or single. Old friends have passed away or moved.

The American ethic of rugged individualism has not been of much help. Children of lonely seniors sometimes don't want to be bothered and pack them off to Nursing Homes.

Olds & Schwartz are both Associate Professors of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. They have also authored the book, "Overcoming Loneliness in Everyday Life."

It will be fascinating to see how this new social trend plays out as the baby boomer generation come to grips with their "golden years." Lavender Seniors will play a major role in this process

-Frank Howell

Volunteers Seeking Seniors:

Volunteers are on standby for placement with seniors looking for social support in the San Ramon and the Castro Valley area.

Seniors Seeking Volunteers:

Senior needing a volunteer for visits in Alameda

Please contact Dan at 510-667-9655 ext 4 to connect with this volunteer or senior.

Closeted Seniors

Closet the Only Option for Many Gay Seniors

The plight of many gay seniors is highlighted by the Chicago Tribune's profile of 85-year-old Victor Engandela, whose rich, challenging life journey has brought him to a seniors care facility in Evanston, Illinois, where he has been forced back into the closet:

Victor always said "when I retire, when it is no longer dangerous, I am going to come out." And that's what he did, retiring in the 1970s and telling everyone he knew, including members of the YMCA men's club where he was president, that he was gay. It felt good to finally be fully open, and he savored those years.

But now Engandela feels as closeted as he's ever been. He often sits alone in the dining room, and has little to do with the various groups and clubs at his long-term care facility. He has a friend who comes by twice a week. On Saturdays they sit in his room and listen to opera on the radio. Engandela has been to the seniors program at the Center on Halsted a couple of times, but it's hard for him to arrange transportation. Once, another man from the nursing home took him, but when the man realized it was a gay organization he stormed off to the Center's lobby, refusing to dine with Engandela and the other seniors. "At this point in my life, I can't believe I have to feel this way," Engandela said. "I have a lot of memories I'd like to share, a lot I'd like to talk about. But I feel like I can't, and I shudder when I think I have to spend the remaining years of my life in this place."

[A COMMON EXPERIENCE]

-Grant Peterson

African American Lesbians 40+

Monthly meetings for social activities, potluck, card & board games, theatre outings and sports events.

For more Information
email tsmith3565@comcast.net

Working toward a real economic recovery

As the country struggles to pull itself out of this economic crisis, Task Force Executive Director Rea Carey calls for a real economic recovery that is LGBT-inclusive and ensures that all people are given an equitable chance to thrive and contribute their full selves, talents and skills to their families, communities and country.

"Beyond the myth of large incomes and large living are the real stories of our lives. LGBT people, already vulnerable and unprotected by most anti-discrimination employment laws and marriage laws, take multiple hits as large and small employers cut jobs, community-based nonprofits are forced to eliminate services and programs, and small mom-and-mom and pop-and-pop businesses shut doors. ... This is just the beginning of a long haul back to a healthy, robust economy and society. Over the weeks and months ahead, the Task Force will continue advocating for an economic recovery that is fair, humane and inclusive."

— Task Force Executive Director Rea Carey



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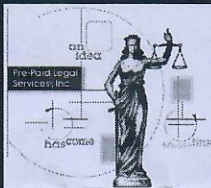
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August 2009

Schedule of Events

Aug. 3rd - 1:00 PM to 3:00PM—Coming Out Again Group (1st Mon.) 1901 Hearst Ave. Berkeley, Dining Area, Co-Sponsored by Lavender Seniors and North Berkeley Senior Center.

Aug. 5th - 7:00 PM to 8:30PM – Lavender Seniors Board Meeting (Wed. before Potluck) 1395 Bancroft Ave, San Leandro

Aug. 7th – 2:00PM to 4:00PM – Lavender Women’s Book Group (1st Fri.) North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 MKJ Jr. Way, (58th St.) Oakland – **Reading: “Risk” by Elana Dykewomon**

Aug. 8th – 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM –Lavender Potluck (2nd Sat.)1395 Bancroft Ave, San Leandro; **Program: Carol Stuart - Vocal/Piano**

Aug 11th - (2nd Tues.) PFLAG Meeting, 7:30PM, Holy Redeemer Lutheran 35660 Cedar Blvd., Newark

Aug. 13th and 27th - 1:30PM to 3:30PM - Seniors Men’s Group. (2nd and 4th Thurs.), 2712 Telegraph Ave. Berkeley at the Pacific Center Co-Sponsor: Pacific Center 510-548-8283

Aug. 15th - Fellows of the East Bay (3rd Sat.) 1823 9th Street (at Hearst), Berkeley. **Social Hour 5:30, Dinner 6:30.**

Aug. 21st - 12:30 to 2:30 PM - Lavender Lunch Bunch, (4th Fri.) North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 MLK Jr. Way. (58th St.) Oakland. **Sponsored by City of Oakland Aging and Adult Services. Program: Frederick C. Hertz—Same-Sex Law**

Aug. 28th – 12:00PM to 2:00PM – South County Lunch Bunch and Talk About, (4th Fri.)40086 Paseo Padre Pkwy, Fremont. **Program: Katharina W. Dress—Aging In Harmony**
FREE LUNCH for LGBT Residents. Sponsor: City of Fremont, Human Services Dept. For more info. Contact Ina Mae Murri 510-490-5425.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3 Coming Out	4	5 Board Mtg	6	7 Book Group	8 Potluck
9	10	11 PFLAG	12	13 Sr Mens	14	15 Fellows
16	17	18	19	20	21 Lunch Bunch	22
23	24	25	26	27 Sr Mens	28 South County	29
30	31					

ADVERTISING RATES* FOR LAVENDER NOTES

Ad Size	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
Classified Ad	\$2 per line (per month) on a 3-column page			
Business Card	\$30	\$75	\$140	\$250
Quarter Page	\$50	\$125	\$225	\$400
Half Page	\$90	\$220	\$400	\$750
Full Page	\$200	\$450	\$800	\$1400

* Individuals and non-profit organizations who have made an annual contribution of \$25 or more are entitled to discounts of 40% on classified ads and 20% on ads of other sizes. Lavender Seniors reserves the right to accept or reject any ad submitted.

* A one-page insert to Lavender Notes for one month may be purchased for the fee of: Non-Profits, \$250; For-Profits, \$500; ½ half page inserts are the same amount. Must be received by 10th of preceding month.