



# Lavender Notes

April 2013

## OUR MISSION

**Improving the lives of LGBT older adults with community building, education, and advocacy.**

## SERVICES:

*Friendly Visits*

**Monthly Lunches**

**Educational Events**

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

San Leandro Potluck  
Saturday 4/13

Photovoice  
Monday 4/15

Oakland Lunch Bunch  
Friday 4/19

Fremont Lunch Bunch  
Friday 4/26

**See Calendar on page 3 for more details.**

Volume 17, Issue 4

**LAVENDER SENIORS**  
*of the East Bay*

## April Potluck at Unity Church

Important reminder that the April potluck will be held at Unity Church which is only 1 block from the previous location. The address is 1420 Santa Maria St. at the cross street of Joaquin Ave. The time is still the same, Noon to 2PM.

## Outstanding Friendly Visitor

Friendly Visiting volunteer, Katy Brady, reports that Pat O'neil ([www.berkeleybestplumber.com](http://www.berkeleybestplumber.com)), an East Bay Licensed Plumber, did a wonderful thing for the senior she visits. Pat provided free labor and parts to repair her senior's leaky kitchen sink and shower. The senior with whom she has been visiting hasn't been able to use her bathtub for a very long time and now she can with thanks to Pat (if anyone needs a plumber, give her a call at (510) 526-7721)! Katy also has two friends who had volunteered their carpentry and handyperson skills with Rebuilding Together Oakland for eight years until they "retired" last year. Evidently, this year they were showing signs of withdrawal from helping people fix their homes, so Katy told Regen and Christine about her senior. Since January, they have been doing repairs in the house and out in the yard and other numerous tasks to help improve the senior's quality of life. Katy and Lavender Seniors wish to extend a big thanks to Pat, Regena and Christine for helping a senior in need. And thanks, Katy for your resourcefulness and for going above and beyond what we expect of our volunteers. If you or someone you know needs a friendly visitor contact Program Coordinator Mitch Foudray at 510-667-9655.

## Long-Term Care Insurance Myths

**Myth: Medicare will cover my long-term care expenses.** Medicare does pay for nursing facility care, but only for a maximum of 100 days and if the 3-day qualifying hospital stay requirement has been met. In addition, Medicare will only pay as long as you are showing progress towards recovery. Once your condition becomes stable, even if you are not fully well or back to a completely healthy state of being, Medicare rules indicate that benefits will stop. Also, Medicare does not pay for individuals to attend an adult day care or for the room & board expenses at a residential care facility. Long-term care is substantial assistance from another individual to perform 2 or more activities of daily living such as bathing, eating, dressing, toileting, transferring and continence due to a loss of functional capacity expected to last at least 90 days or longer or substantial supervision due to a severe cognitive impairment such as Alzheimer's disease. — By David Scharff CA Insurance Professional License # 0689910

## Social Security Benefits Denied To Same-Sex Couples, Costing Thousands:

Report By Catherine New, Huffington Post, March 5, 2013 - For Marvin Burrows, the grief of losing his partner in 2005 was quickly followed by a different emotion: devastation as his financial life crumbled around him. He lost his home, his pets and even his furniture when he was forced to downsize. All for the simple reason that he is gay. Burrows and his partner Bill Swenor were married in 2004 in San Francisco. They were together for more than 50 years. But unlike most other married couples in the United States, Burrows has not been eligible to collect any of his spouse's social security benefits because of a federal law that does — *continued p.2*

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Lavender Seniors is a project of Bay Area Community Services (BACS)



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## Lavender Notes

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### BOOK REVIEW

"Oddly Normal: One Family's Struggle To Help Their Teenage Son Come To Terms With His Sexuality: A Memoir By John Schwartz Gotham Books-\$26.00

Bullying rivals gay marriage is the number one hot topic these days. Schwartz shares a compelling tale of his son Joseph who attempted suicide after enduring much harassment by classmates. Some observers will say he begged for trouble, he wore pink shoes and dressed formally. His brother Sam was strictly butch. But John and his wife totally accept their son's orientation. Studies tell us that effeminate boys have a fifty per cent chance of being gay as adults. He was taken to the usual psychotherapists. Battling homophobia was only part of Joe's problem. He enjoyed causing arguments in class and suffered from mental depression. Many high schools now take the lead in offering gay-straight alliances but middle schools do almost nothing. The turning point for Joe came when he joined a summer theater group. Home at last! The high school he attended offered yoga or dance classes in place of the standard P. E. schedule. (I still have a vivid memory of being forced to run the mile in gym class!) Schwartz gives the reader an unforgettable saga of a middle class family who thrive with their gay son.-Frank Howell

**Continued** - not recognize gay marriage. For the 77-year-old retired shoe salesman, that amounts to around \$1,100 per month that he cannot collect, he said, and is income that would have been crucial to keeping his home eight years ago. For gays and lesbians who have lost their spouse, the inability to collect Social Security survivor benefits highlights just one of the many ways in which gay married couples are treated differently than their heterosexual counterparts under federal law, same-sex marriage advocates say. In opposite-sex couples who have been married for a certain length of time, survivors are entitled to collect an amount equal to the deceased's benefits. On average, the surviving spouse in a same-sex union is denied an average of \$1,184 in monthly survivor benefits, according to a new report released last week from Human Rights Campaign and the National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare. With his own Social Security and some income from his deceased husband's company pension, Burrows now lives on a monthly income of less than \$1,900 per month. To reduce costs, he lives with a roommate in Hayward, Calif., a suburb of San Francisco. Yet living on fixed income in the age of booming medical costs is not easy. Hospital bills, Burrows said, are the

hardest to pay. When he goes for heart surgery, he is still unsure where the money will come from to pay for his operation. "I will have to ask [the hospital] for financial assistance," he said in a recent conversation with The Huffington Post. Without Social Security benefits, it is estimated that half of all Americans over the age of 65 would be living below the poverty line, according to the new report. "The denial of Social Security benefits to same-sex partners and their children places this already vulnerable population at even higher risk for poverty," the report states. Gay marriage advocates are urging Congress to amend the Social Security Act so that same-sex couples are able to collect the same spousal benefits that their straight counterparts can collect. The push comes as the Supreme Court will consider gay marriage in two cases this month, including a challenge to the Defense of Marriage Act, the federal law that is behind many of these financial roadblocks for married gay and lesbian couples. The court is expected to rule in the cases by June. But even as same-sex marriage advocates tend to focus the financial challenges of the law, a new ruling recognizing same-sex marriage at the federal level could have a financial downside for top-earning same-sex married couples: Higher taxes. In same-sex couples where both individuals are making salaries of \$400,000 a year or more, a Supreme Court decision changing the legality of gay marriage could mean thousands of dollars in higher taxes, Bloomberg reported.

### CARA CORNER

The Alliance sent two letters to the Hill in March in support of Social Security bills that would improve seniors' lives. Sen. Tom Harkin's (D-IA) Strengthening Social Security Act of 2013, S. 567, is similar to Harkin's Rebuild America Act, but NOT identical. It extends the Social Security Trust Fund through 2049; lifts the cap on earnings subject to the Social Security tax over a 5-year period beginning in 2014 (the previous legislation removed it over 10 years); and immediately applies the CPI-E. The changes would increase average benefits by about \$65 per month, or \$800 per year. As before, those now contributing beyond the 2013 cap would get an increase in benefits - though that formula has changed. Rep. Peter DeFazio's (D-OR) Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers Act, H.R. 1030, calls for adoption of the CPI-E, a more accurate measure of inflation for seniors. "These are two great pieces of Social Security legislation that benefit seniors, and they come in an environment where we are so used to hearing the calls of 'cut, cut, cut!'" said Ruben Burks, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

**Lavender Seniors of the East Bay is funded by individuals as well as the Alameda County Area Agency on Aging, Alameda County Leather Corps, Kaiser Permanente, City of Oakland, City of Fremont, Gay Chemists Support Fund, Horizons Foundation, Royal Grand Ducal Council of Alameda County, San Francisco Foundation, Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights (BAPHR) and the True North Foundation. We gratefully acknowledge the support of all Friends of Lavender Seniors.**



Lavender Notes

April 2013



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4 ♀♀	5	6
7	8	9	10 BOARD MEETING	11 ♂♂	12	13 Potluck
14	15 Photovoice Meeting 6:30P	16	17	18 ♀♀	19 Oakland Lunch Bunch	20
21	22	23	24	25 ♂♂	26 Fremont-Lunch	27
28	29	30				

**April 4 & 18, 1:30PM to 3:30PM, Support Discussion Group for Aging Queer Women, (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thurs.)** The Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Ave. (at Derby) Berkeley

**April 10, 7PM-8PM, Lavender Seniors Advisory Board Meeting** at BACS, 1814 Franklin St. #400 Oakland. A portion of this meeting is open to public.

**April 11 & 25, 1:30PM Senior Men's Group, (2nd and 4th Thurs.),** 2712 Telegraph Ave. Berkeley at the Pacific Center Co-Sponsor: Pacific Center 510-548-8283

**April 13, Noon-2PM, Lavender Seniors Potluck, (2<sup>nd</sup> Sat.)** Unity Church 1420 Santa Maria St, San Leandro **Program: Liquid Girlfriend, musical entertainment.**

**April 15, 6:00PM, Photovoice Meeting,** The Neighborhood Center at All Saint Episcopal, 911 Dowling Blvd. San Leandro

**April 19, 12:00-2:00PM, Oakland Lunch Bunch Sponsored by City of Oakland Aging & Adult Services,** N. Oakland Sr. Center, 5714 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, **Program: Stagebridge Senior Theater**

**April 26, Noon-2PM South County Lunch at Fremont Senior Center,** 40086 Paseo Padre Parkway, Fremont **Program: To be announced on website at [www.lavenderseniors.org](http://www.lavenderseniors.org).**

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

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I would like to make a monthly pledge of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Please send me a monthly donation form and envelope.

**Please mail to: Lavender Seniors of the East Bay, 1814 Franklin St. 4th Floor, Oakland, CA 94612**



**Monica Z. Nowakowski-Carlson, L.C.S.W.**

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