



## Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

a Program of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

*Celebrating 30 years of outstanding service and positive change  
December 2024, Volume 30 Issue 12*



Happy Holidays to all - what a joyous end to the year it has been for Lavender Seniors! We kicked off our 30th (Pearl) anniversary in November with a beautiful ceremony and reception in San Leandro. Thank you to Mayor Juan González III and Silin Huang from Supervisor Lena Tam's office, who both presented proclamations to Lavender Seniors acknowledging this anniversary.

You can view those proclamations in the soon to be announced unveiling of the Lavender Seniors archive display in the California History Room at the San Leandro Library. We were set to unveil during our November ceremony but due to the current display and scheduling, we have pushed back our opening date. Look for an e-blast to go out in the next couple of weeks to announce when the display will be ready for viewing. Thank you for your patience!

This month we are partnering with SCAN for a super fun and festive Holiday party. We are encouraging holiday themed attire or your favorite ugly sweater! The RSVP link can be shared as well. We often get requests from friends of registered participants, but all guest(s) can and should be registered through the RSVP link provided. When you RSVP you will receive confirmation to save for your records. This confirmation also gives you the option to add the event to your personal calendar, too. For questions or assistance with registration, please contact Maya @ 510-500-5823.

Please note this is not a sit-down lunch. There will be small bites, beverages, and our standard seating but the format of this event will be different than our standard Third Friday Lunch Bunch. We will return to our regularly scheduled program in January 2025!

You can **RSVP** for Lavender Seniors Holiday by clicking [HERE](#) or using the RSVP link provided in the activities section of Lavender Notes. The RSVP link can be shared.

*The deadline to RSVP is Tuesday 12/17.*

Due to the Holiday, December's Social Seniors will be postponed. See you in 2025!

In gratitude and love,  
Jessie R. Spivey (he/him)  
*Director of Elder Services*

Please click [here](#) to donate and support our seniors.



A large crowd, including many Lavender Seniors members, gathered in front of The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center for the Lakeshore LGBTQ Cultural District's flag raising ceremony



The historic flag raising was led by Lavender Seniors member, Karen Anderson pictured here with Joe Hawkins, Nikki Fortunato Bass and Jeffrey Meyers.



San Leandro Mayor Juan González III presented a proclamation to Lavender Seniors in honor of the 30th anniversary. Former LSEB Board members and Lavender Legends, Barbara Jue, Carmen Chiong, Gwen Boozé and Karen Anderson were present to receive.



Lavender Seniors also had the honor of receiving a 30th anniversary proclamation from Alameda County Supervisor Lena Tam's office presented by Silin Huang.

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# STORIES OF OUR LIVES

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## Boricua in the Bay



“La Perla del oriente” and “La Ciudad Gris” are names many locals of Humacao, Puerto Rico refer to or know the land as. To Rita Gatson, Humacao is her childhood home. Although she was born in Manhattan, she was raised in Puerto Rico by her Grandparents until she was about 5. Growing up on her grandfather’s sugar cane farm was a kids dream and always an adventure.

Rita’s earliest and fondest memories include ritual coffee drinking and shifting through coffee beans with her grandmother. In between picking avocados, bananas, and coconuts, she also remembers playing with the chickens, cows and pigs which also lived on the farm.

Rita’s mother, Maria, was 1 of 13 children and the youngest of 5 girls. After giving birth to Rita in Manhattan, Maria decided to have her parents help raise Rita in Puerto Rico in hopes of bringing her to NY once her life stabilized. It would not be until the late 60’s that Rita returned to the states to learn English and start elementary school. Rita describes this time as challenging because she was deemed “behind” due to her language barrier. Around 4th grade, Rita started becoming more comfortable with the language and ultimately overcame that hurdle.

Rita suffered a devastating loss at the age of 10, when her mother was tragically murdered. She recalls this as one of the events that forever changed her life as the suspect was her mother's former partner. It was also during this time that she moved in with her father and stepmother who were also living in Manhattan.

Rita always felt different from as early as she could remember. From making out with girls in middle school to dating "lots of ladies" throughout high school, Rita was starting to become more comfortable with who she was becoming. Rita's relationship with her parents was challenging for reasons beyond her sexuality, but she took advantage of a high school travel abroad program offered to gain independence. She officially came out at age 17.

Rita returned from Geneva, Switzerland, after graduating high school in 1976. Coming back was quite an adjustment for her because she had become accustomed to the European way of living and lifestyle. Her struggles upon returning to the states got so bad, even to the point that Rita sought medical treatment for anxiety. After a brief stint in Philadelphia and struggling with her spiritual identity, Rita decided to move to California. In the summer of 1979, Rita arrived in Oakland, California, to try to start a new life at the suggestion of her friend. She ended up getting a job at Stacy's bookstore in SF. Rita worked there for about 3 years before venturing into the administrative legal field.

In 1981, Rita met a woman Judy while out and about in the town. Judy, unbeknownst to anyone, was pregnant at the time with the child they would end up raising together. Rita really wanted to become a parent, so this was a very fulfilling experience for her. Rita and Judy would remain together for 7 years before separating but continued raising their daughter, Christina, together.

Rita, who had recently celebrated her 40th birthday, began dating again and entered a 10-year relationship with a woman named Carolyn. Christina was finishing high school as well during this time and came out shortly after graduating. A big moment for Rita was helping Christina get a tuxedo for her first "Gay Prom" in Hayward.

Rita and Carolyn ended their romance during this time as well. After couple's counseling and many attempts to keep things together, they mutually decided to part ways but agreed to remain amicable. It was during this time that Rita entered another partnership with a woman named Mary Anne. What started as a promising union, soon became a grim when her partner became ill and eventually transitioned while they were together. Rita became Mary Anne's caretaker in her later years but due to their strong love for one another, Rita has no regrets putting her life on pause to help her and would do it all over again.

Though distraught and grieving, Rita began pursuing a career as a Certified Massage Therapist. Once Rita began working in this field, she learned a new passion and love language. This led to a job at Piedmont Springs, as well as building up her own clientele. Rita was thrilled to be doing a job she loved and settled into a roommate living situation with a friend from the community.

In about 2014, Rita's life took another unfortunate turn when she became unhoused. She was forced to leave the home she shared and room she rented due to a situation with the homeowner. Rita transitioned into a shelter and has remained unhoused ever since then.

Although being unhoused has been one of the most challenging things she has been through, Rita never gave up faith because she felt and saw "little miracles" happening around her constantly. One of those "miracles" was getting connected to The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center. After walking in for services earlier this year, Rita enrolled in Wednesday's Elders Therapy group and has been an active participant since March of 2024. Through her participation in the Elders Therapy group, Rita has been able to work through personal and mental health struggles but also learn that she is loved, supported, and will always have community.

In November of 2024, with the help of our community partners at Front Porch – Home Match, Rita signed a new lease to rent a room and will transition to becoming

permanently housed, as of January 2025. Rita's story is a testament to the human spirit's ability to overcome adversity, find acceptance, and build a life filled with love and community. Through her involvement with the Oakland LGBTQ Center and Lavender Seniors community, she has not only found support, but also the strength to overcome her challenges and continue to thrive.

*If you or someone that you know would like to be featured in Stories of our lives, please email: [info@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:info@lavenderseniors.org)*

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## December Activities

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A festive holiday-themed poster for a party. The background is a red surface surrounded by a wreath of green pine branches, colorful lights, and ornaments. A Santa hat is positioned above the main title. At the bottom, there are logos for Lavender Seniors, Oakland LGBTQ Community Center, and scan, along with a rainbow ball ornament that says 'FREE W/ RSVP'.

**Lavender Seniors Holiday Party**

**FRIDAY DEC 20TH @ 12:30PM**  
**NORTH OAKLAND SENIOR CENTER 5714 MLK WAY**  
**DJ - SMALL BITES - HOLIDAY FUN!**  
**RSVP REQUIRED**  
**QUESTIONS? [INFO@LAVENDERSENIORS.ORG](mailto:INFO@LAVENDERSENIORS.ORG)**

**LAVENDER SENIORS of the East Bay**  
**Oakland LGBTQ COMMUNITY CENTER**  
**scan.**  
**FREE W/ RSVP**

Dec 20

## Lavender Seniors Holiday Party

Please join us for a Holiday party to celebrate the end of the year with Lavender Seniors. We invite you to come decked out in your holiday best or favorite ugly sweater for festive tunes, small bites and ho-ho-

holiday fun!

Register

Free

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COMMUNITY  
CALENDAR

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#### Lavender Seniors Holiday Party

Friday December 20th 12:30pm - 2:30pm

In-person at The North Oakland Senior Center

*A special holiday party in partnership with SCAN featuring a DJ, small bites and holiday fun! FREE but RSVP is required to attend. For more info, please call 510-882-2286 or email: info@lavenderseniors.org.*

#### Social Seniors

*No Social Seniors in December due to Holiday*

In-person at The Watermark Emeryville

*A monthly social group for LGBTQ+ seniors. A themed luncheon that usually includes music and/or performances. Lunch is provided for registered guests. FREE but RSVP is required to attend. For more info, please call 510-882-2286 or email: info@lavenderseniors.org.*

#### The Heart to Art Program

*Cohort 2 in session*

Bi-weekly on Tuesdays 5:00pm - 6:30pm

In-person at The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

*A new art program for LGBTQ+ seniors facilitated by a local Artist. No drop-ins, pre-registration is required. For more info or to be added to mailing list for next cohort, please call 510-882-2286 or email: info@lavenderseniors.org.*

#### LGBTQIA+ Elders Therapy Group

Wednesdays 1:00pm - 2:00pm

In-person at The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

*This group provides a therapeutic space in which LGBTQIA+ (includes questioning) older adults, age 55+, feel welcome to express their thoughts and feelings in an environment that is non-judgmental, inclusive and supportive. The group process works to reduce isolation, stigma and discrimination related to LGBTQIA+ identities, mental health issues and all the issues that affect each group members life. This group meets weekly for multi-week sessions. No Drop-ins. Pre-Registration is required to participate. For more info, please call 510-882-2286 or email: info@lavenderseniors.org.*

#### Older & Out

Mondays in-person at The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

*SPONSORED BY: Pacific Center for Human Growth. For more info, please call*

510-768-8612 or email: [olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org](mailto:olderandoutgroups@pacificcenter.org). No drop-ins. [Intake is required for attendance.](#)

### Black Women Connect

Every 3rd Sunday @ 11:00am

In-person at The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

*This groups designed for Black Lesbian and Queer Women to connect, network, build community, have engaging conversations and authentically express themselves in a safe, inter-generational space. For inquiries or to RSVP, please email Dawn Edwards at [ms.edwards73@gmail.com](mailto:ms.edwards73@gmail.com).*

### Trans Masc Affinity Support Group

Every second Wednesday 7:00pm - 8:30pm

In-person at The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

*A monthly Affinity group for community members who identify as Trans Masculine only. For more info, please call 510-882-2286.*

### POSTPONED - Senior Gay Men's Affinity Group


*In-person at The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center*

*A monthly Affinity group for Gay Men ages 55+. Group start date and facilitator TBA. For more info or to be added to the mailing list, please call 510-882-2286 or email: [info@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:info@lavenderseniors.org).*

### POSTPONED - Senior Lesbian Women's Affinity Group

*In-person at The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center*

*A monthly Affinity group for Lesbian Women ages 55+. Group start date and facilitator TBA. For more info or to be added to the mailing list, please call 510-882-2286 or email: [info@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:info@lavenderseniors.org).*



# Alameda County District 3 Winter Shelter Resources

**Need shelter or housing this winter?  
Help is just a call away!**

**Call 211 (Eden Information and Referral) for assistance.**  
**Shelters have limited capacity. Please call ahead before arriving.**

**OAKLAND**

East Oakland Community Project  
7515 International Blvd.  
Oakland, CA 94621  
(510) 532-3211

St. Mary's Center  
925 Brockhurst St.  
Oakland, CA 94608  
(510) 923-9600, Ext. 297

St. Vincent de Paul  
675 23rd St.  
Oakland, CA 94612  
(510) 638-7600

**ALAMEDA**

The Village of Love  
431 Stardust Pl.  
Alameda, CA 94501  
(510) 995-8936  
info@thevillageoflove.com

City of Alameda Warming Shelter  
Rotations among three churches.  
(628) 233-2545

Rotations among three churches:

Christ Episcopal Church  
1700 Santa Clara Ave.  
Alameda, CA 94501

Trinity Lutheran Church  
1323 Central Ave.  
Alameda, CA 94501


Twin Towers United Methodist  
1411 Oak St.  
Alameda, CA 94501

**SAN LEANDRO**

Building Futures  
1840 Fairway Dr.  
San Leandro, CA 94577  
(510) 613-5268  
(510) 686-2332

**UNINCORPORATED  
AREA**

First Presbyterian Church of  
Hayward  
2490 Grove Way  
Castro Valley, CA 94546  
(510) 581-6203



## Resource Hub

[Sign up for Direct Services](#)



The Center's **Elder Services** promotes a positive and healthy quality of life for elder LGBTQ+ individuals 55+ by ensuring they continue to be supported, respected, and connected as they advance in age. We collaborate with existing agencies working with LGBTQ seniors to connect people to needed resources and work to identify gaps in services so that we can find ways to fill those gaps.

The Center's Elder Services Program participants also have access to other Center services to include:

- Benefits Enrollment
- Care Management & Service Coordination Assistance
- Emergency Rental Assistance\*
- Food Pantry
- HIV/STI testing and treatment
- Linkage to Primary Care
- Mental Health Subsidies\*
- PEP/PrEP enrollment
- Transportation Assistance\*

\*rental/transportation assistance and other subsidies are limited and provided to qualified enrolled program participants as they become available.

*To inquire about case management/direct services, please click the button above. For more info, please email: [maya@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org](mailto:maya@oaklandlgbtqcenter.org) or call 510-500-5823.*



**The Center's Food Pantry Is Open**  
**Monday thru Friday, 1pm-4pm**  
Please call 510-882-2286 for more information.

**Let's Get Excited About...**



**SEXUAL HEALTH**

The **Glenn Burke Clinic** offers our community high-quality, full-service, STI & HIV prevention and treatment services, to help you to stay sexually healthy all year long.



**GLENN BURKE**  
WELLNESS CLINIC



Schedule an appointment by using the QR Code or call 510-781-2639

The Glenn Burke Wellness Clinic is a project of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center



A recovery meeting for LGBTQIA+ Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Mondays 7pm - 8:15pm  
Starting May 15th at the  
Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

This is a discussion meeting with  
different topics read each week.

For information contact  
The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center  
Call 1(510) 882-2286 or visit their website at



**Narcotics Anonymous**

Every Tuesday @ 7pm



### City of Oakland Senior Centers

Four senior centers are located throughout the City of Oakland and managed by the City's Human Services Department - Aging & Adult Services Division. Senior centers provide social, recreational, nutritional and educational activities to older adults in our community.

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/senior-centers>

#### Downtown Oakland (DOSC)

200 Grand Ave | Oakland, CA 94610  
(510) 238-3284 | [DOSC@oaklandca.gov](mailto:DOSC@oaklandca.gov)

#### East Oakland (EOSC)

9255 Edes Street | Oakland, CA 94603  
(510) 615-5731 | [EOSC@oaklandca.gov](mailto:EOSC@oaklandca.gov)

#### North Oakland (NOSC)

5714 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way | Oakland, CA 94609  
(510) 597-5085 | [NOSC@oaklandca.gov](mailto:NOSC@oaklandca.gov)

#### West Oakland (WOSC)

1724 Adeline St | Oakland, CA 94607  
(510) 238-7016 | [WOSC@oaklandca.gov](mailto:WOSC@oaklandca.gov)

### Pacific Center for Human Growth

Founded in 1973, Pacific Center for Human Growth is the oldest LGBTQIA+ center in the Bay Area, the third oldest in the nation, and operates the only sliding scale mental health clinic for LGBTQIA+ and QTBIPOC people and their families in Alameda County.

<https://www.pacificcenter.org/>  
2130 Center St Suite 200 | Berkeley, CA 94704  
(510) 548-8283 | [info@pacificcenter.org](mailto:info@pacificcenter.org)

### Rainbow Community Center

The Rainbow Community Center of Contra Costa County started in 1995 and continues to envision a society that embraces acceptance, safety and equality for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

<https://www.rainbowcc.org/>  
2380 Salvio Street, Suite 301 | Concord, CA 94520

## Community Phone Calls

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

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).

## Friendly Voices Phone Buddies for Seniors

Our mission is to create a vital human connection for isolated seniors through weekly phone conversations with trained, compassionate volunteers.

Sign up [here](#) or call (650) 395-8017  
<https://friendlyvoices.org/>

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



Mailing Address:  
490 Lake Park Ave. #10530,  
Oakland, CA 94610-8019

*Donations:*  
Please make all checks payable to "The Oakland LGBTQ Center" and include "Lavender Seniors" in the memo section

**510-882-2286**  
[info@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:info@lavenderseniors.org)  
<http://www.lavenderseniors.org>  
<http://www.oaklandlgbtqcenter.org>

Contact

Donate

Lavender Seniors | The Oakland LGBTQ Community Center 3207 Lakeshore Avenue |  
Oakland, CA 94610-8019 US

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