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“The LGBT community has to start changing the culture of what it means to be older.”
— MISS BARBIE Q

SAGE Matters is the magazine of SAGE, the country’s largest and oldest nonprofit agency dedicated to serving LGBT older people. Our mission is to take the lead in addressing issues related to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) aging. In partnership with its constituents and allies, SAGE works to achieve a high quality of life for LGBT older people, supports and advocates for their rights, fosters a greater understanding of aging in all communities, and promotes positive images of LGBT life in later years.

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could not be more excited to share this 40th anniversary issue of SAGEMatters.

When SAGE was founded in 1978, neither the dramatic progress we have made on LGBT equality nor the particularly challenging moment we now face as a nation could have been imagined. Jimmy Carter was president, the modern LGBT rights movement was in its infancy, and the country was recovering from the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War with a new emphasis on ethics and transparency in government.

Today, much work must be done to achieve full equality and acceptance for all LGBT people. Nonetheless, we have achieved many historic milestones as a community, with SAGE’s numerous important advances prominent among those milestones. Yet our country has plunged into one of the darkest eras in decades as a result of the leadership in Washington, D.C.

All of this makes SAGE’s 40th anniversary slogan—40 Fierce Years—particularly poignant. It took fierce advocacy by our pioneers—our elders—to secure so many victories for LGBT equality. Today, we need the wisdom and fierce perseverance of our elders both to protect those gains from current attacks and to keep bending the moral arc of the universe toward justice even in the face of renewed ignorance, bigotry, and bankrupt leadership.

We hope this issue of SAGEMatters is just the antidote for the current moment, offering wisdom from our history, determination from our present, and an inspirational vision for our future.

Wisdom from SAGE’s history jumps off the pages, including the lively conversation between SAGE founders Chris Almvig and Doug Kimmel that I had the privilege to join. Similarly, SAGE’s fierce determination in the current moment emerges from the insights and testimony of today’s LGBT elder justice leaders and advocates throughout the issue.

In this issue we double down on our vision of a bright future for LGBT elders by announcing a 40th anniversary legacy campaign. You’ll read about how the future of SAGE’s work—and the future of our LGBT elder pioneers—is being secured by the Edie Windsor Challenge Fund, and how you can get involved.

Anybody who is aware of Edie’s legacy knows that she always thought big. So as we think about a future of boundless possibilities, it’s only fitting that this issue includes a conversation with Andrea Ayala of ESMULES, an organization focused on older lesbians in El Salvador. SAGE is partnering with ESMULES and other groups in Latin America to forge a vision for LGBT elder rights that extends not only across the United States, but all of the Americas.

This is the inexorable movement with and on behalf of our LGBT elders that 40 Fierce Years has forged.

Please join SAGE in building that movement so that all of our elders can grow old with the opportunities, dignity, and support they have earned.

Sincerely,

Michael Adams
SAGE CEO
SAGE in the Beginning

What better way to celebrate 40 Fierce Years than to hear from SAGE’s fierce founders Doug Kimmel and Chris Almvig? Here are some highlights from an interview with SAGE CEO Michael Adams.

Michael Adams: For those who don’t know about your history, what was your background before starting SAGE?

Doug Kimmel: When I was in graduate school back in the 1960s, homosexuality was a medical condition that was considered a mental illness. I was studying Human Development and I was wondering whether I would be able to become a licensed psychologist. By 1973, the American Psychiatric Association was persuaded to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders and so I attended the first meeting of the Association of Gay Psychologists. At that time, aging was something that wasn’t very popular in the gay community, but I was studying and teaching aging. I decided that it was natural to start doing research on gay men and aging.

Chris Almvig: I’ve had a lifelong interest in older people. I never wanted to babysit; I grandma-sat back in the 1950s. There weren’t any assisted living or retirement communities—elders lived at home and so if they wanted to play cards or do something, they would call me. I spent hours playing gin rummy or canasta. In my adult life, I converted that passion into action. I dedicated my studies and my career to gerontological services administration.

Michael: What were some of the biggest challenges and opportunities in founding SAGE?

Doug: Well, let me take you back to 1977. In those days not many of us could be open about being gay, but because I had tenure, I could be. Chris called and invited me to have coffee and we started talking about this project of hers about providing services for older LGBT people. Then, we organized a meeting at the home of one of the people that she had been talking with who also provided some financial support to get us started. We came up with the name SAGE at the second meeting. We liked the sound of it but recognized that this name had been incorporated already by a publishing company. So, we had to come up with an acronym that fit. It was 22-year-old Lee Sullivan who, sitting cross-legged on the floor, came up with the idea ‘Senior Action in a Gay Environment.’ It lasted for decades. We began developing protocols for friendly visiting and for...
reaching out to these lonely, isolated, older people. We developed trainings for friendly visitors and we got all this in place. But we didn’t have any clients. Nobody came. So we invited the New York Times to write an article about us. A man named Ron Alexander did a fine article but the Times wouldn’t publish it because, in those days, they wouldn’t publish anything that was positive about gay men. And then Chris organized a social—a dance—and that’s what got the word out. People came and danced and began talking about SAGE. Eventually we wound up having a spot on the Phil Donahue Show.

**Chris:** Dreams seem to start sometimes unconsciously and sometimes through the relationships you have with other people. One of my first relationships was with someone who would’ve wanted to have a sex change if she could have, but at the time they weren’t very available. I started to see the struggles that she had—some of the same struggles we’re having today—about bathrooms. She couldn’t go into the men’s bathroom and she couldn’t go into the women’s bathroom and I witnessed that she could only leave home for short periods of time because she had to come back in order to use the bathroom. She had a dishonorable discharge from the army. There was a witch-hunt and somebody turned her in. She had problems with employment all through her life just because of the way she looked. So sometimes people have this big impact on you to start understanding the kind of discrimination that people experience. This combined with my early experience with LGBT elders—the amount of depression, alcoholism and isolation I saw—my dream was to be part of creating housing for the elderly. Eventually that dream turned into coffee with Doug and blossomed into SAGE.

**Michael:** So many themes are still present today, like outreach, choosing leadership, invisibility, discrimination, trans issues, substance abuse, isolation,
desperation. Looking ahead, our new strategic plan has a big emphasis on increasing our impact on the lives of LGBT elders. As you think back, that notion of big impact—in what ways is that reflective of the spirit of SAGE?

Doug: One of the issues that was always there was gender parity. I think one of the brilliant things we did was to recognize the importance of having male and female co-chairs of the board. We also had a vision that somehow we needed to move slowly and establish a firm foundation—to be an organization that no one could assail—because of the many stereotypes and prejudices about old gay and lesbian people. If you read some of the documents at that time we were described in some of the most pernicious ways, so we had to be above reproach in order to change those attitudes. That was our biggest challenge.

Michael: One part of our strategic plan is what we call “taking care of our own”—a continued commitment to the most vulnerable elders in our communities. To what degree was that the orientation in the early days?

Doug: Indeed I think we were focused on taking care of our own from the very beginning. There was a gay male couple who were among the very first people we visited. It turned out that Bruhs Mero had been a former dancer and singer and his partner was a pianist and so they came and played for the socials. They wound up transforming their lives into a very famous gay couple—on the cover of some magazines, on TV and ultimately a book called The Oldest Gay Couple in America by Gean Harwood. The remarkable thing about the socials was that they were all intergenerational. My husband and I really enjoyed the brunches because we were young people at the time, and we would dine with these couples who had been together 30 or 40 years and we learned how to do it. We learned that it was possible. It was really so important to have those mentors. That was the thing that we got out of SAGE. More than what we gave in many ways—the mentorship.

Chris: In terms of learning the needs of our LGBT elders, I like to use the example of our very first client, Audrey. I was her case manager and I knew there were neighbors who were shopping for her so I wondered why we needed to continue our services if she had someone to shop for her? But then I saw that there was something else that she needed. She needed someone to talk to. You see, when her neighbors came over to help her shop, she turned the portrait of her lifelong partner who had passed away face down on the piano so that they couldn’t see it. When we came to visit she was able to talk with us about her. This was of monumental importance to the heart of the work that we were learning how to do—to cater to the needs of our LGBT elders that we were only just recognizing.

Michael: We are living in a time when more than 50% of people living with HIV are 50 and older. AIDS played a tremendous role in our history.
What impact did AIDS have on the organization and are there any lessons we can derive from that?

Doug: Our first president was Emery Hetrick—you'd recognize his name from the Hetrick-Martin Institute. His partner was Damien Martin and they both died of AIDS. We signed the incorporation documents in their apartment in 1978. One of SAGE's executive directors, Ken Dawson, died in 1992 at the age of 45 from AIDS. AIDS certainly had a major impact across the board.

Chris: Richard Gold was one of the first organizers. Richard was a colorful character and was very interested in SAGE's work. Suddenly, he stopped coming to Board meetings and we couldn't reach him. So I went over to his apartment and his mom answered the door and wouldn't let me come in. The next week we heard he died. This was at the same time that Time Magazine had the cover, “The Gay Plague.” He was the first one and it was all very mysterious to us at the time. Going to his funeral—it just took our breath away, and there was this snowball effect. There was never a time that you weren't grieving. It was constant. It would go on and on and you'd be mourning three people at once. You never get over it. Through it all, we went on. I can't even talk any more about what happened during that time because it was too much. It was just too much.

Michael: As we celebrate SAGE’s 40 years, are there any other words you want to share?

Chris: I'm aware that many cities that seek SAGE affiliation do so with support groups in mind, but it ends there. I would like to see SAGE help affiliates with the natural evolution of support groups to direct services. We always said that “community means taking care of our most vulnerable.” I see SAGE taking that to a larger level with their federal advocacy efforts, but I would love to see the affiliate networks expand even more.

Doug: If there's a silver lining in the AIDS epidemic, it was that a lot of people came out who would not otherwise have come out and we know from research that knowing someone who is gay is the most effective way of reducing the prejudices against gay people.

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Doug: I would say that the changes since the AIDS crisis have been amazing: marriage, LGBT-friendly housing for seniors, SAGE senior centers around New York City, and SAGE affiliates across the country—to name only the most obvious ones! Now SAGE is moving into the forefront of aging advocacy organizations, bringing our 40 years of experience to the political discussions of this new era in the struggle for the rights and dignity of all persons. I'm very excited for the future.

DOUG KIMMEL
NO ONE DESERVES TO BE INVISIBLE

by Theo Hutchinson

On the day I was born 63 years ago, I became a ghost when these words were uttered: “Congratulations, it’s a girl!”

I am a person who is transgender. Although the signs were present throughout my life, the conversation and knowledge about trans folks were not a part of mainstream life in the U.S. back then. I was invisible to myself and to others.

But I’ve come to realize that no one deserves to be invisible. No one deserves to be forgotten. No one deserves to be erased.

It is in the nature of being human that we seek to make meaning in our lives. This meaning often derives from relationships that mirror back to us a sense of ourselves. When that mirroring is positive and loving, we know we are seen and we flourish. If that mirroring is absent or misguided, then, too often, so are we. Too many mirrors have distorted who trans people are and have fed the fires of hate and bigotry. The Trump administration tried to make the trans community invisible by actions taken immediately after the inauguration.

“NO ONE DESERVES TO BE FORGOTTEN. NO ONE DESERVES TO BE ERASED.”
First, they worked against a previous guidance that transgender students in public schools be allowed to utilize the bathroom that matches their self-identified gender. Trump claimed it as a “states’ rights issue,” effectively removing it from the national conversation. Next, it tried to remove LGBT people from a key survey that funds older adult services. With no small effort from many advocacy groups, and SAGE leading the way, we were able to reinstate LGB people into the survey. But what about the T? The transgender community remained erased—and SAGE stepped up again. Because of this second comment period, led by SAGE, the 2017 survey included trans people. We still need to fight to be included in the 2018 survey. Finally, the Trump administration issued a directive to ban trans people from military service. That directive has recently been reaffirmed and is likely to result in a military depleted of its brave trans soldiers. Three for three. We are erased.

So why does this matter?

It was only four years ago when I realized who I was. I recall sitting in my therapist’s office and saying, “I have something to tell you.” I said these words in a tentative whisper: “I’m a boy.” Then a little louder: “I’m a boy...” and finally with a joyful grounded sense of myself, I declared aloud, “I’m a boy! I am trans!” And, for the first time, my life made sense to me. I naively thought I had “arrived” with this declaration, but it turned out to be only the beginning of my journey. It took another two years working through therapy, introspection, struggle and education to inch forward. Finally, in January 2016, I made my public and professional announcement that I would be affirming my gender—physically, socially and legally. The positive strides made by the transgender community at that time—in the media and in the social and political discourse—were my mirror. It seems ironic that in only one year, I would begin to be erased again.

So where will trans elders be? Who will see us with our unique and pressing needs? With attacks on Medicare and Medicaid, will we be able to access our specific trans-related medications? Are the physicians and nurses and other health care professionals working with older folks knowledgeable and compassionate about the unique health care needs of trans elders? Can we access safe and clean LGB and T-friendly housing? And if housing in health care facilities is divided along the gender binary, where will trans elders find ourselves? These are the questions I ask myself—and I am relieved that there is an organization asking these questions too. SAGE is here for the long game, and I’m proud to be a part of it.

No, Trump administration... You will not make me invisible again. You will not make me forgotten again. You will not erase me now—or ever. I am here; we are here and will raise our voices until all of us, brothers, sisters, siblings, comrades in the LGB and T community are all counted and included.

DR. THEODORE J. HUTCHINSON teaches at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, and was the winner of the 2017 SAGE/Airbnb Pride Contest. After his SAGE Pride experience, Theo became an outspoken advocate for SAGE and trans elder rights.
SAGE as Home.

As SAGE celebrates 40 Fierce Years, we asked our community of elders from across the country to reflect on what SAGE means to them.

Glen Rubin
“Warm, friendly home environment where I am welcome anytime. A second home.”

Paulette Thomas
“SAGE allows you to not have isolation and depression, especially coming into your senior years. To be around like-minded people who understand your age, understand your identity—as a woman of color, as a lesbian—it’s great.”

Roger Hoffman
“When I first started going to SAGE my partner had recently died and I was feeling alone. I was in a wheelchair and felt confined to my home. SAGE introduced me to new friends and fellowship.”

Danielle Hayduk
“SAGE Cleveland has allowed me to face aging without fear.”

Joy Robertson
“It’s my family.”

Marie Spivey
“SAGE allows my SGL (same-gender loving) lesbian family to have a safe place to be real. We have a home!”

Gwen Offley
“SAGE has been my #1 place to go since my 60’s.”

Radhames Senior
“It offers a support system and a good place to go to get out of the house.”
Kam Low
“Where a single guy can get a balanced meal and meaningful conversation with a diverse crowd.”

Lujira Cooper
“Without SAGE I would have floundered and been washed away. Thank you SAGE for being here.”

Rocky
“It means having a place to go.”

Dorothy Durlach
“SAGE means survival!!!”

Terri Deboze
“SAGE remembers that lesbians are queer people, too!”

Michael Carbonaro
VOLUNTEER
“It means so much to me to volunteer for a wonderful group of people I can call my friends and my adopted grandparents.”

John Chism
“Gives me an outlet to express myself in a safe environment while learning from other people.”

Elspeth Macdonald
“A chance to be myself.”

Joyce Banks
“SAGE has been a safe haven for me. We are at our third year in the Bronx and we are going strong.”

Michael Feuerstein
“SAGE has been a great life saver to me—the support of so many people; so many great friends.”

Dorothy Durlach
“SAGE means survival!!!”

Highlights:
- **1992**: SAGE national network of affiliates launches
- **1993**: Older Lesbians Project launches
- **1995**: SAGE opens its headquarters at 305 Seventh Avenue, NYC
In honor of SAGE’s 40th anniversary, we paired LGBT trailblazers and influencers of varied generations to reflect on our collective past and discuss our future. These eight pages reflect life experiences that span several decades and geographical divides. All illustrate burning passions for a better tomorrow. Watch for more from these conversations in the months to come on the SAGEUSA website.
hear my experiences mirrored, even back to the 80’s. As a young Asian-American I am really inspired and indebted to the work done by black and brown people to pave the way for other people of color, especially as I continue to confront anti-blackness in my own community. There’s still a lack of nuanced representation of people of color, and for me a lot of work to be done educating and uplifting my own people and building together across cultures.

**Vega:** Mala and I founded an organization in Seattle called Trikone Northwest for the queer South Asian community. We had a 20th anniversary celebration and the room was full of people—some as young as 16 who were saying, “oh wow, I didn’t know you were here. I’m not out to my parents yet. I’m afraid to lose my family’s support.” And this is 2018! So there’s still so much more work we need to do.

**Pat:** Definitely agree. I don’t see much that is queer, Asian and intergenerational, so that’s fascinating and I’d love to know more! That’s why we need more conversations across queer generations. What is queer today is influenced hugely by the trans tipping point and trans voices. A lot more young people are identifying gender non-conforming than necessarily lesbian, gay or even bisexual. I wouldn’t identify with any of those identities. I just use queer—for the ambiguity and fluidity. And knowing queer elders is crucial to this understanding as well. The elders I met at SAGE really influenced me for the work I’d like to do.

**Robert Patrick** is a writer and singer.

**Miss Barbie Q** is an actor, producer, director, dancer, singer, drag queen, poet, writer, club legend, radio event host, and performance artist.

**WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES THE LGBT COMMUNITY FACES AS WE AGE?**

**Robert:** The first challenge is that everybody is living longer and there are going to be a lot more old people and a lot more old LGBT people. They’re not all going to get married so there are going to be a lot of older, single LGBT people who are alienated from their family. So some kind of new social structure is going to have to develop particularly aimed at the old and alone. I never thought I’d be 80, and I’ve been incredibly lucky health-wise—I’m active and still creating—but I don’t know any other gay people my age. I think they’re all in homes.

**Miss Barbie Q:** The LGBT community has to start changing the culture of what it means to be older. The LGBT culture needs to really take a look at how we value our elders. We’re one of the few communities that really has a hard time honoring our elders.
Japanese, Mexicans, Indians, and so many other cultures hold their elders in high esteem. We discard our elders. We treat them as bitter old queens, jaded lesbians, angry. I think the biggest job for SAGE is to change that dialogue. SAGE is part of changing the culture by bridging the gap—not just between older LGBT and youth. I’m the in-between—between 25 and 60. There are many of us who don’t want to get old because we’re afraid of how we’re going to be treated because we see how elders are treated. We are living in fear. That’s why there’s such a high percentage of my generation who are HIV+ because they are living like there is no tomorrow. I have many friends in their 40s being diagnosed because of condom fatigue, and they don’t want to get old because they see no redeeming value in that, which is a shame.

We knew there would be a backlash after marriage equality, but when they lost, they really went after our transgender community.

— Jim Obergefell

President John F. Kennedy. He’s the reason I live in Washington, D.C.

Jim: I was going to say my late husband John, so I love that we both started with our partners of multiple decades. When I feel tired, I just think about John and the fact that I fought for him and for our marriage, and that just keeps me going forward. And I was also going to say Frank Kameny because he was instrumental in so many things. He was one of those people willing to put his entire life on the line for what he believed in—for himself and for his community. And I also have to say—Edie Windsor. I think about her almost every day and I wouldn’t be in the place that I am in the fight for equality if it weren’t for Edie. I love and miss her dearly. Also, I’d like to point out the inspiration of our younger generation in general, and, in particular someone like Adam Rippon who is so unapologetically himself. Here he is, in the limelight. He inspires kids everywhere, and he inspires me because I see the difference created in our world because of people like Frank, Harvey Milk and Edie. So, it’s really the kids today because they aren’t afraid to wave their flag of individuality, and they don’t apologize for it.

What about the backlash of the past year? Did you see it coming?

Jim: We knew there would be a backlash after marriage equality, but when they lost, they really went after our transgender community. Am I surprised at the backlash? Am I surprised at the vitriol we are experiencing? I am, unfortunately. But I try to be hopeful and think that hatred won’t win. We just need to remember that and we have to keep on fighting for every other community that is at risk.

Paul: There were three people who deeply inspired me. First, my partner, Steven Brent Miller, who I was with for over 42 years when he died in July of 2004. Of course, the late Frank Kameny who I met on Sunday evening, February 25, 1962. And
make. And I’ve been astonished—especially in the past 10 years—how much progress there’s been. We can’t forget that.

**JEWEL THAIS-WILLIAMS** is a lifetime LGBT activist and Founder of The Village Health Foundation, Inc.

**JOEY WASSERMAN** is Director of Major Gifts at SAGE.

**WHO INSPIRED YOU?**

**Jewel:** The most inspirational person for me over the past 40 years without a doubt is Dr. Donald Kilhefner. He was one of the founders of the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center here in Los Angeles, which was the first one of its kind in the world. I came to him as a client and we ended up becoming great friends. I always called him my brother and I tell him that he’s much blacker than I am in his thinking. He is also one of the founders of The Radical Fairies that helped kicked off the gay and lesbian revolution back in 1969. We are probably two of the oldest LGBT activists in this area still out there doing the work.

**Joey:** I think it would have to be my parents. My parents started a gay and lesbian bar back in the 70’s. Around the same time, Jewel, as you started The Jewel Room in 1973, which was the precursor to The Catch. Growing up in that affirming environment made me always appreciate the pioneers who came before us. We’ve encountered so much. In the 50’s with the Lavender Scare. In the 60’s at the Stonewall riots and into the Gay Liberation Movement of the 70’s. I think bars in the gay community created a safe space. They weren’t necessarily frontline at the marches or rallies, but they were behind the scenes and they were the ones making sure that there was comfort, acceptance and love. And people like my parents were truly part of a pioneering movement that established a community among the LGBT family.

**WHY IS SAGE’S WORK CRITICAL MOVING FORWARD?**

**Jewel:** There’s an African proverb that says, “If the elders are lost, then the adults are lost. If the adults are lost, then the children are lost.” The sense of community, of organizing the intergenerational events like the dinners that SAGE promoted last year, are critical. Individuals by themselves are isolated. Television shows and discussions on the internet are helpful but as in any movement we need numbers and we need dedicated people to make real sustained changes come about. So interacting with other elder organizations, that may or may not be LGBT, would be advisable too.

**Joey:** I think SAGE keeps the spotlight on what’s important. Its mission is critical to an ever-growing population of the LGBT community. As we see the Baby Boomers age into retirement, we also see, for one of the first times in our history, our LGBT community retire. It’s important that we don’t lose sight of this trend. And it’s important that we don’t lose sight of the resources and the support needed to take care of our own. SAGE’s work is important because it takes a more comprehensive approach to what that means. And as Jewel mentioned before, it also includes intergenerational engagement. I don’t think segmenting...
our community based on age or different minority groups is going to be beneficial as we grow. We weren’t founded upon those principles. We were founded on the principles of cohesion and camaraderie and as we grow older SAGE’s focus will continue to take a more comprehensive and collective approach to aging.

Phillip: That’s a great point. There’s a lot of talk about taking care of LGBT homeless youth as central to the mission for the media brands that I work with, but then I think about what happens when people are displaced from their families or loved ones and they have nowhere to turn and nowhere to go... And then the older folks—our elders—who’s taking care of them? Who is offering them help, resources, connections, and interaction? As a community, we are only as good as our most vulnerable, and I think we often leave our elders out of that conversation. Age is an important intersection when we talk about diversity and representation. It’s so important to keep SAGE in mind because those interests are the most important. And the stories and the lessons we can learn from our elders are among our most valuable. So taking care of them is just as vital as securing the next generation. Our missions have to be two-fold in that respect.

Phillip Picardi is the Digital Editorial Director of *teenVOGUE* and *Allure*.

**WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES THE LGBT COMMUNITY FACES AS WE AGE?**

**Tom:** For me SAGE is like a big mama, with these gigantic arms extended to hold us all. We’re all on the conveyor belt of age and I think when we’re young, we don’t get that. As I age up in the gay community, I always feel like I’m in the world where ageism is rampant. In the entertainment world there is ageism, and in the LGBTQ community there is ageism, and I think when you have a SAGE, it bridges the gap to have us all unite. That’s why I’m such a fan of SAGE because these are the conversations that need to be had. Sometimes I think that I’m looking at someone younger and having negative thoughts, and I think “Come on Tom, why is that? Are you jealous? Is it because you’re losing that?” That’s why these conversations need to happen.

**Phillip:** Right! Therefore, you guys had to pave your own road and be your own example. You were able to lay a template for a generation of kids who needed you to do that. Because if it wasn’t for you, there would be hundreds of thousands of kids who would have to do that work themselves. Every queer generation that comes out, we’re paving a road to make it easier for them to exist. I think we can all take some satisfaction in knowing the world we live in may not be perfect, but it’s getting a little better as the years go on. There is going to be immense power in being queer for kids moving forward.
JERRE KELBAS is a long-time supporter of SAGE and is currently a recipient of SAGE services. Jerre just turned 100.

TERESA THEOPHANO is Assistant Director of Care Management Services at SAGE and is Jerre’s Care Manager.

WHO INSPIRED YOU?

Teresa: This might sound cheesy, but it was about 20 years ago when I first learned about SAGE. I didn’t know I would end up working for SAGE, but how exciting it was to see the SAGE bus at the first Pride March I ever attended in NYC. It was such a huge deal for me. I’m inspired by a lot of the LGBT grassroots organizations of the past, and to be part of one now is incredibly exciting.

Jerre: There were a lot of people I looked up to because I was a very shy and scared person. I looked up to people and copied their behavior and I moved forward that way. Chris Alnvig asked me to come to her house so that I could be part of SAGE. I was about 60 at the time. I put up fliers on telephone poles to try to recruit people—which we did.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES THE LGBT COMMUNITY FACES AS WE AGE?

Jerre: There are still people who will deny the LGBT community. And so we still have to fight back. I think we’re doing very well though. I have outlived all of my friends and, of course, that is hard for me. I have younger friends but they have their own life. I don’t push. When I see them, I see them. I had my 100th birthday party a few weeks ago. Many people came. Stacy, who was my first Friendly Visitor, came in from England. So it was really a great party. Nobody thinks I’m 100!

Teresa: I work a lot with caregivers, and their concerns are ‘who’s going to care for me when I age?’ People have concerns around how they are going to avoid isolation and where they can have safe, affordable housing.
Jonathan: It’s interesting that you mention working with older LGBT people, because I started on the younger side of the spectrum. I was executive director of an organization that I founded three years ago called “Gay Vista Social Club” (GVSC). The whole mission behind the org was taking young gay men outside of the nightlife scene—away from drugs and alcohol—putting them in safe spaces and scenarios where they could build intentional and lasting friendships. Having that safe space, and hearing the stories from people—it has just turned into something magical in Miami. I hear from people who tell me that it’s so refreshing to be in a space where they are not judged. It empowers people to really interact with one another in a way that we never would have if GVSC wasn’t around. This makes me push daily to make sure that I am doing all I can to give all the resources that I benefit from, to all of the other young folks in our community—who are our emerging leaders.

Sandy: Probably earliest inspirations—once I came out in my 40’s—were Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. They had been out, activist lesbians for many years. They were the first older lesbian couple to be married in California when it became legal. They were activists. They were proudly out. They fought for everybody else to be out. They tackled the issues as they came at them, and I definitely admired them.

SAGE Matters | 40 FIERCE YEARS
Jennifer C. Gregg is the Executive Director of ONE Archives Foundation.

Ruth Berman & Connie Kurtz are lifelong LGBT activists who fought for, and won, domestic partner benefits in New York City in the early 80’s.

WHO INSPIRED YOU?

Jennifer: I’m lucky because I have access to the amazing collection of ONE Archives. There are so many people and organizations that inspire me. The work of ACT UP, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Lambda Legal, SAGE, the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund and, of course, the work of the archives. I am also inspired by ordinary people brave enough to take on these huge issues of equality—like you, Ruth and Connie. For example, there’s a woman here in southern California named Carolyn Weathers. She was part of the Gay Liberation Front. In the early 70’s the American Psychiatric Association was holding a convention here in Los Angeles at The Biltmore Hotel. They had classified homosexuality as a mental illness and were scheduled to show a movie that advocated curing gays and lesbians with electroshock therapy. Carolyn organized a group of people to invade. It was called the Biltmore Invasion. They stormed the stage, they canceled the screening, and she continued to work very hard to have that classification removed. I’m so inspired by so many brave people who took the risk to fight for our justice.

Ruth: I had three children. I had the best of all possible worlds, and then I fell in love with my best friend. There was no turning back, but it was a little bit of a nightmare coming out. So who inspired me in this particular time of my life as a lesbian? It was my spouse, Connie. She said, “You are not respecting our relationship if you’re going to remain in the closet.” And she’s always been my inspiration because she did not have the fear I had. She did not have the ugliness of thinking that I was an abomination. Also, justice was very important to me, so injustice stirs me up with anger and energy to make the change. I came out because Connie was right, being closeted did not respect our relationship. And I also came out in my field. When I found out that people had their spouses on their health plan, but that Connie couldn’t be on my health plan, I was ready to fight. I was more than willing to work with Lambda Legal to sue the Board of Education and get that changed. At that time we were going for domestic partnership. And Connie says to these big shot lawyers—this was in the early 1980’s—“how come we’re not going for marriage?” I don’t call her an ordinary person—my wife, my lover, my best friend, my beneficiary. She’s brilliant, and she was right. She’s my role model and continues to be.

WHY IS SAGE’S WORK CRITICAL MOVING FORWARD?

Connie: We as a people need to be recognized and, no matter what era we are in, we need to know that somebody has our back in the truest sense of the phrase. SAGE has always been there for us.

Jennifer: I always say, “Nothing about us without us,” and SAGE truly embraces that adage. It’s an organization that provides its members a seat at the table. A voice. We must advocate for our elders and we must advocate for people at all stages of life in our community.●
SAGE CEO Michael Adams talks with ESMULES Executive Director Andrea Ayala

**ANDREA AYALA** is Executive Director of ESMULES, Espacio de Mujeres Lesbianas por la Diversidad (Space for Lesbian Women for Diversity), an organization working for LGBT equality in El Salvador.

**MICHAEL ADAMS** is Chief Executive Officer of SAGE and has led the organization for 12 years.

Michael Adams: *ESMULES recently released an important report on LGBT elders in El Salvador. What challenges do LGBT elders face there?*

Andrea Ayala: We found that LGBT elders are invisible. It’s as though they don’t exist in El Salvador. The other thing that we discovered is that LGBT elders don’t want to be in the spotlight in my country. They are so used to being in the closet as a result of the tremendous discrimination and hostility that they face that they don’t feel they can be part of the movement. So that’s very hard for us because we totally understand why. El Salvador is a country that is full of homophobia. But we need our LGBT elders to be empowered so that they can use their own voices.

Michael: *In the U.S., religious conservatism is on the rise and having a significant and negative impact on our government’s policies toward LGBT people and issues. What impact does religious conservatism have in your country? Does it shape the willingness of LGBT elders to come out and be part of a movement for progress?*

Andrea: I think this conservative movement is advancing globally and El Salvador isn’t an exception. Just last week a group of trans women presented a proposal for a gender identity law in El Salvador’s National Assembly. All of the religious conservatives are putting a tremendous amount of money and publicity in opposing that proposed gender identity law. The LGBT movement in El Salvador doesn’t have the resources that other movements do so we struggle to fight back. But it’s hard, including because of financial issues. The religious right and evangelicals can have a 30-second spot on TV 24 hours a day if they want. We are not able to do that.

Michael: *Given that this work is hard—with many tragic circumstances and ferocious opposition—what keeps you going day to day as an activist?*

Andrea: If I’m honest I’d have to say my wife. She always keeps me inspired. I admire her very much. Also, I am here because of other very brave women, trans people, lesbian women and gay men who decided to have a voice before me. So it’s my time to pay them back. And remembering that many people are in worse conditions than me. The needs in my community are a big part of keeping me inspired to do this work.

Michael: *ESMULES, SAGE, CIPAC (Costa Rica), and Mano Diversa (Bolivia) are working collaboratively to advocate for LGBT elders in the Americas. Why is collaboration across organizations and countries valuable and important?*

CIPAC: Centro de Investigación y Promoción para América Central de Derechos Humanos (Center for the Investigation and Promotion of Human Rights for Central America)
Andrea: We may be in different parts of the world but we always find ways in which our communities are fighting the same fight. Invisibility happens everywhere—in the U.S., in El Salvador, in Costa Rica and in Bolivia. So I think it is very important because these problems are worldwide and we have to face them as a global community.

Michael: Mano Diversa submitted several requests to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for an official hearing on LGBT elders, all were denied. However, when our organizations and countries came together to submit a request, the Commission said yes. That’s a really powerful statement about the strength that comes with locking arms and working together. How can this type of advocacy help LGBT elders in the Americas?

Andrea: Having an Inter-American human rights system that tells the states the ways they are failing in human rights when it comes to LGBT elders is very important. It’s not the same as Michael and Andrea telling them they are doing this wrong, but it’s the Inter-American Commission! So it is very important to have this official voice from an official body on human rights issues in the Americas. Looking beyond that, I also aspire to use the UN system, which is a broader stage where we can have a louder voice.

Michael: Yes, absolutely. Regarding the UN, it’s exciting that their new independent expert on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) is from Costa Rica. I think there’s every indication he’ll be interested in LGBT elder issues.

Andrea: Of course he will be! I was in Geneva last week to deliver a report on lesbian/bisexual violence in El Salvador for the Human Rights Committee, and I had the opportunity to meet with the office of Victor Madrigal, the UN independent expert on SOGI issues. They were amazed when I talked about the network our organizations have built, and they said, “Are you talking about LGBT elder issues as human rights issues? Could you please send us information? Can we schedule a follow up meeting with the UN Independent Expert to discuss LGBT elder issues with you?” So they are really interested in our work. From what I know, our four organizations—ESMULES, SAGE, CIPAC and Mano Diversa—are the only organizations talking about the very important issues facing LGBT elders across the Americas.

Michael: This summer at the International Federation on Aging in Toronto, you and I and other LGBT aging advocates will present various programs and have the ability to talk to policymakers, service providers, academics and advocates from across the globe. What is our big opportunity at a world conference like this?

Andrea: I think that there are two big opportunities. The first one is to highlight the intersections of these very important issues—aging and LGBT people. And the other thing is, because this is an aging conference and not an LGBT conference, it gives us the opportunity to change minds so that people who work on a daily basis with elder people and elder issues in countries across the globe can bring a new perspective on LGBT issues. They have to start thinking, “how do I take into account LGBT people in this new policy that I’m writing or this new medical protocol that I’m introducing?”

Michael: I completely agree. It is a really extraordinary opportunity to advance an agenda of inclusion and respect for LGBT elders.
EDIE WINDSOR Challenge Fund

SAGE LEGACY MATCH CAMPAIGN

Your gift to SAGE tomorrow yields a contribution to SAGE today!

Sound too good to be true? It’s not. Starting July 1, 2018, when you make a gift to SAGE in your future legacy plans and tell us what that gift is currently worth, SAGE will receive a current cash contribution.

The Edie Windsor Challenge Fund is the power behind SAGE’s Legacy Match Campaign. Edie loved SAGE, contributing generously and serving for many years on its Board of Directors. Edie’s beloved surviving partner, Judith Kasen-Windsor, is continuing Edie’s commitment and leadership by establishing this fund, which is also funded through a generous contribution from an anonymous donor.

Participating in this campaign is simple! All you have to do is complete a Bequest Intention Form. This written document lets SAGE know that a legacy gift to SAGE is part of your estate planning. It describes the kind of gift (for example, bequest in a will or trust, a beneficiary of a life insurance policy or retirement plan, a gift of real estate or proceeds from its sale, or another form of legacy donation), and the estimated current value of that gift.

In December 2017, the SAGE Manhattan Center was renamed the Edie Windsor SAGE Center.

THE SAGE LEGACY MATCH CAMPAIGN: HOW IT WORKS

 Include SAGE in your legacy plan for tomorrow...

EDIE WINDSOR Challenge Fund

...and SAGE gets a matching gift today!

For a limited time, the EDIE WINDSOR CHALLENGE FUND will multiply the impact of your future gift to SAGE.

NEW LEGACY GIFTS

For every $10 of the current stated value of your new bequest, SAGE receives $1.

|$100,000 => $10,000

EXISTING LEGACY GIFTS

For every $20 of the current stated value of your existing bequest, SAGE receives $1.

|$100,000 => $5,000

20 | SAGEMatters | 40 FIERCE YEARS
Frequently, a donor’s legacy gift to SAGE will be contingent on provisions the donor has made for a spouse, partner, sibling, or a member of your chosen family, and the form lets SAGE know that. The form is not a contract—it can be changed if you choose to do so.

Starting July 1, 2018, the Bequest Intention Form will be available at sageusa.org/legacy-match. It can be completed online or downloaded and mailed to us. Of course, if you have any questions, or need support in completing the form, contact Jerry Chasen, SAGE’s Director of Legacy Planning.

If you’re thinking you don’t have the kind of money to leave a gift to SAGE, then think again. If you own your own home, have a retirement account, or may not want to leave your entire estate to your family, your legacy can live on in SAGE’s work. Your gift will be worth even more during this campaign. Help fund both SAGE’s present, and future, today.


But when Frank learned about SAGE’s Legacy Match Campaign, he was intrigued. Until that point, he had not included SAGE in his estate planning.

“I don’t know what is going to happen when I die. How can I make plans about giving now? Since I’m not sure of what I will be worth, I was uncomfortable making future plans,” he says.

“Then I realized: I give when I’m living, so why should I worry about how much money I’ll leave behind? And why should I feel guilty about not giving enough when I’m gone?”

The idea of making a gift during the legacy match campaign appealed to Frank. “I like the matching aspect. When I thought about collectively giving—that my future gift will be amplified for SAGE with a current contribution—I realized it actually matters. And I like the upfront nature of this campaign,” he says. “If I tell SAGE what something is worth, it unlocks the money now for SAGE to use, and secures my own legacy as a longtime supporter of SAGE.”

Legacy is about the difference you have made in this life and cementing that legacy for years to come. This July, join Frank in participating in SAGE’s legacy match campaign.

Find out more at sageusa.org/legacy-match or email Jerry Chasen, SAGE’s Director of Legacy Planning, at jchasen@sageusa.org.
[ SAGE EVENTS ]

SAGE & FRIENDS PHILADELPHIA
March 1, 2018

Reggie Shuford, Stephen Glassman, Michael Adams, Perry Monastero

SAGE & FRIENDS MIAMI
February 10, 2018

Amber Hikes, Eyan Thornburg, Samar Aryani-Sabet

SHE March 22, 2018

Betty Weems, Lisa Cannistraci

Linda Gottlieb, Natasha Haase

Ellen Ensig-Bronksy, Emily Forman

SAGE AWARDS October 16, 2017

Michael Adams, Judith Kasen-Windsor, Jim Obergefell

Michael Adams, Cleve Jones, Nii-Quartelai Quartey

TOYS PARTY December 10, 2017

Whoopi Goldberg

Robby Browne, Whoopi, Tom Leonardis, Michael Adams

Larry Hyer, Michael Gongora
thanks all of its champions including donors, volunteers, board members, and staff.

LGBT elders and those who love them have paved our way forward since 1978.

Here's to 40 Fierce Years and to the future.

2015
With support from the NYC Council, SAGE inaugurates new SAGE Centers in the Bronx, Brooklyn (with GRIOT Circle) and Staten Island (with Pride Center of Staten Island).

SAGE receives $1 million from the Calamus Foundation to support its National LGBT Elder Housing Initiative.
**2016**

SAGE launches SAGECare, a training and credential program for care providers committed to offering LGBT-inclusive services.

SAGE announces New York City’s first LGBT-welcoming elder housing—Ingersoll Senior Residences—with more than 225 apartments, wrap-around services and a SAGE Center.

SAGE joins Diverse Elder Coalition to lead first-ever grassroots advocacy campaign for more LGBT-inclusive federal elder services.

Citi awards SAGE $250,000 to expand the National LGBT Elder Housing Initiative.

**2017**

SAGE launches aggressive national advocacy campaign—We Refuse To Be Invisible—and forces Trump Administration to abandon plans to erase LGB elders from evaluation of federal elders; SAGE follows up with a trans campaign.

SAGE announces 3,500 people gather nationally for the first SAGE Table, launched to build ties across LGBT generations.

**2018**

SAGE Center Midtown is renamed The Edie Windsor SAGE Center.

SAGE and partners successfully advocate for first-ever public hearing of Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on LGBT elders.

Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation awards SAGE $1.7 million for Ingersoll Senior Residences, country’s largest affordable LGBT elder housing.

SAGE partners with International Federation on Aging (IFA) to present first-ever LGBT program track at global conference.

SAGE joins Diverse Elder Coalition to lead first-ever grassroots advocacy campaign for more LGBT-inclusive federal elder services.

Citi awards SAGE $250,000 to expand the National LGBT Elder Housing Initiative.
A license to discriminate could put the lives of millions of LGBT elders at stake.

SAGE’s latest national advocacy campaign “Care Can’t Wait” targets the Trump Administration’s efforts to allow religious-based discrimination not only in our bakeries and restaurants, but as importantly, in our ambulances, hospitals, and nursing homes—affecting the lives of all older LGBT people. “Care Can’t Wait” for our LGBT elders when they seek care. Join us and sign the pledge at sageusa.org/carecantwait.

“WE ARE UNAPOLOGETIC ABOUT OUR WORK WITH & FOR LGBTQ PEOPLE.”
- Bishop Tonyia M. Rawls

THEY Fought for US. NOW WE FIGHT FOR THEM.
BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Did you know that there are SAGE affiliates across the United States? See if there is a SAGENet near you and visit sageusa.org/sagenet for more information.

WEST
- SAGE Alaska
- SAGE Albuquerque
- SAGE of the Desert
- SAGE of the Rockies
- SAGE Olympia
- SAGE Metro Portland
- SAGE Utah

SOUTH
- SAGE Atlanta
- SAGE of the Bluegrass
- SAGE Raleigh
- SAGE Tampa Bay
- SAGE of South Florida
- SAGE Wilmington of the Cape Fear Coast

MIDWEST
- SAGE Center on Halsted
- SAGE Cleveland
- SAGE Metro Detroit
- SAGE Milwaukee
- SAGE of PROMO Fund
- SAGE Tulsa
- SAGE West Suburban Senior Services

NORTHEAST
- SAGE Hudson Valley
- SAGE Jersey City
- SAGE Long Island
- SAGE Maine
- SAGE Philadelphia at William Way
- SAGE Rhode Island
- SAGE Rochester
- SAGE Western Pennsylvania
- SAGE Upstate

THE SAGE NATIONAL LGBT ELDER HOTLINE

operated by the GLBT National Help Center

If you’ve got something to talk about, WE’RE HERE TO LISTEN.

Concerns over health and housing? Anxiety over today’s political climate? Worries about infringements upon your civil rights in your community or workplace? Woes over a relationship? Feeling lonely?

GIVE US A CALL!

1-888-234-SAGE

HOURS
Mon-Fri: 4pm-Midnight ET
Sat: Noon-5pm ET
Se habla español.
Free and confidential.