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30th Anniversary Gala and SAGE Awards

>> Held October 14, 2008. Honorees
include Prof. Charlotte Bunch,
Martina Navratilova, and Village
Care of NY.

SAGE's Fourth National Conference on LGBT Aging

>> Held October 12-14, 2008 at
New York Marriott at the Brooklyn
Bridge. Sponsored by AARP.

A Trip to Wal-Mart Raises Awareness about LGBT Senior Issues



SAGE's Executive Director Michael Adams met with Wal-Mart representatives.

BY MIKE NADEAU

SAGE has explored diverse venues for educating the public about the needs of the aging LGBT community. One such opportunity arose recently at Wal-Mart's international headquarters in Bentonville, Georgia. SAGE's Executive Director Michael Adams traveled to Bentonville last spring to meet with company spokespeople as well as approximately 150 local Wal-Mart employees.

The purpose of the meeting was to draw attention to the challenges facing seniors in minority communities. To that end, Michael served on a panel with representatives from other minority senior organizations, including the National Asian Pacific Center on Aging, the National Caucus on the Black Aged, the National Hispanic Council on Aging, and the National Indian Council on Aging. The panel also included Jonathan Kaufman, founder and president of DisabilityWorks, Inc.

"LGBT older people as a population were not much on the radar screen of Wal-Mart prior to this convening," said Michael Adams, who explained that SAGE's inclusion in

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In this Edition . . .

This edition of *SAGE Matters* features articles related to SAGE's Fourth National Conference on LGBT Aging, sponsored by AARP and held October 12-14, 2008. The Conference, titled, "It's About Time: LGBT Aging in a Changing World," addresses the following themes:

History: See page 9 for a story about one of SAGE's founders. SAGE's beginnings will be featured throughout the 2008 Conference.

Visibility: See page 1 for a story about SAGE's work to raise awareness of LGBT aging issues at Wal-Mart.

Diversity: See page 3 for a story featuring Karyne Jones, CEO of the National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, who is scheduled to speak at a plenary session on October 14th.

Technology: See pages 1 and 11 for articles about SAGE's growing technological resources for LGBT aging people. Conference attendees will have the chance to visit SAGE's new Cyber Center, and to hear how SAGE is using the internet to serve seniors.

Community: See page 5 for a story about MCC's plan for a faith-based LGBT retirement community. SAGE will hold a preconference institute to bring together MCC and other groups building and running LGBT senior housing.

Growth: See page 2 for a story about SAGE Affiliates, who will hold a preconference Institute on "How to Build a SAGE Program."

FIRST CYBER CENTER FOR LGBT SENIORS OPENS AT SAGE

On July 15, SAGE and City Council Member Gale A. Brewer, Chair of the Committee on Technology in Government, celebrated the opening of the first-ever fully-equipped Cyber Center for LGBT Seniors with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the SAGE offices.

The SAGE Cyber Center offers classes for beginners two times a week, by Older Adults Technology Services (OATS). They teach users how to operate the mouse and keyboard, as well as navigate Windows, the Internet and e-mail. Classes began earlier this year in intergenerational collaboration between SAGE, OATS, and the LGBT Community Center's Youth Enrichment Services (YES) program, in which youth acted as instructional assistants, providing some hands-on support to the seniors as the instructor took them through the class. The first class of seniors graduated in April 2008.

To find out more about the Cyber Center, or to register for classes, contact Doreen Bermudez at (212) 741-2247, ext. 242.



New York City Council Member Gale A. Brewer cutting the ribbon at the opening of SAGE's Cyber Center. (photo credit © Donna F. Aceto, 2008)

SAGE Affiliates from around the Country Gather in Milwaukee

For the first time, SAGE and the majority of SAGENet organizations from around the country met for a weekend designed just for them. SAGENet organizations are affiliated with SAGE and share SAGE's commitment of serving LGBT seniors.

Representatives from SAGE, CenterSAGE (Kingston, New York), SAGE Long-Island, SAGE at the Center on Halsted (Chicago), SAGE Milwaukee, SAGE/Queens (New York) and SAGE South Florida got together to share their thoughts, successes, and challenges.

The conference was hosted in Milwaukee, home to the second oldest SAGE program in the country, and a very welcoming community. SAGE Milwaukee board members pitched in to offer rides to and from the airport, and the Milwaukee LGBT Center hosted a reception for SAGENet. Local philanthropist Joe Pabst, a long-time supporter of Milwaukee-based LGBT causes, sponsored the SAGENet Sunday brunch. SAGE Milwaukee board member Roger Uscila said simply: "We were really happy to have you here. It was an honor."



Representatives from SAGE affiliates pose for a photo in Milwaukee.

The SAGE affiliates in attendance ranged in size, geography, and budget, with the majority of SAGE programs having no more than one full-time staff person. Yet, despite the differences in sizes of programs and services, the groups all concurred on a shared mission: to improve the overall quality of life for LGBT seniors, to foster a greater understanding of aging in all communities, and to promote positive images of LGBT life in later years.

This mission is reflected in the SAGE Memorandum of Agreement, created by SAGE in 2006 to better codify the relationships SAGE has with affiliates, and to control the use of the SAGE "brand."

SAGE's director of advocacy & training, Karen Taylor, led the attendees through a series of sessions addressing commonalities among the groups. Members shared information on how to build programs and services, and conducted breakout sessions to develop job descriptions for volunteers.

"It was very enlightening, and very engaging," said Ron Cantena, SAGE South Florida board member. "I never lost interest in what was being presented." Vanessa Shelmandine, program coordinator for CenterSAGE at the Hudson Valley LGBTQ Center took it one step further. "I have enough information after this weekend to put together at least four presentations for our program," she said.

As the weekend developed, several ideas came forward that the SAGENet affiliates thought should be developed further as joint opportunities and even national initiatives.

One idea centered on working together to promote volunteer involvement, since all of SAGENet programs rely strongly on volunteers for nearly every component of their activities. SAGE Executive Director Michael Adams noted that there are several foundations interested in strengthening civic engagement that would be more inclined

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Where Are the SAGE Programs?

SAGE (Main offices in Chelsea, with locations in Greenwich Village and Harlem)
305 Seventh Avenue, Sixth Floor
New York, NY 10001
(212) 741-2247
www.sageusa.org

CenterSAGE
Hudson Valley LGBTQ Community Center
P.O. Box 3994
Kingston, NY 12402
(845) 331-5300

SAGE at the Center on Halsted, Chicago, IL
3656 N. Halsted
Chicago, IL 60613
(773) 472-6469 x 160

SAGE Long Island
34 Park Avenue
Bay Shore, NY 11706-7309
(631) 665-2300

SAGE Milwaukee
1825 North Farwell Avenue, Ste. 220
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 224-0517

SAGE of California
3138 Fifth Avenue
San Diego, CA 92103-5839
(619) 298-9900

SAGE/Queens, a program of Queens Community House
74-09 37th Avenue, #409
Jackson Heights, NY 11372
(718) 533-6459

SAGE South Florida
8333 W. McNab Road, Ste. 239
Tamarac, FL 33321
(954) 720-0833

SAGE Upstate
P.O. Box 6271
Syracuse, NY 13217
(315) 478-1923

SAGEs Under Development

SAGE of Metro St. Louis
<http://sagemetrostl.org/news.aspx>

SAGE Denver

SAGE of Western New York

sagematters **The Newspaper on LGBT Aging**

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To learn more about SAGE, please call (212) 741-2247 or visit www.sageusa.org



30th Anniversary
2008

SAGE Talks to National Caucus and Center on Black Aged

Karyne Jones, CEO of the National Caucus and Center on Black Aged (NCBA), and Michael Adams, Executive Director of SAGE, talk about “diversity in aging” and how SAGE and NCBA can work together to advance a shared agenda for older people from minority communities. NCBA, founded in 1970, is dedicated to improving the quality of life for elderly African-Americans and low-income minorities.

Michael Adams: In June I hit my two-year mark as SAGE’s executive director, at the same time that the agency is celebrating its 30th Anniversary. So I’ve been thinking about the ways in which things evolve over time at organizations like SAGE, and also what doesn’t change.

For SAGE, some of what’s changed is scale — even though we still don’t have the budget required to fully address the needs of LGBT seniors, we’ve grown quite a bit from our early days working out of a supporter’s apartment. Part of what remains the same is SAGE’s role in reminding the LGBT community, which is too “young” to have a long tradition of honoring our elders, of the importance of supporting and respecting our pioneer generations. What do you see as some of the changes versus the constants during your tenure at NCBA?

Karyne Jones: The one thing that never changes is that people don’t think of themselves as “elder.” So just getting people to self-identify or even be realistic about the inevitable is a constant. In every community, the biggest task is getting people to understand that aging is not just old people; aging is all of us who will be blessed with a long life. Though everything must change, that concept of aging remains constant.

What I am observing since becoming a professional in aging in the last five years is a generation of people who are beginning to define how we age. The expectations of our senior years are changing — when we retire, what kind of

communities we will live in, recreational activities, access to health, just about every aspect of living a quality life. As a result, policy and legislative advocacy are even more important in ensuring that the future — our golden years — is inclusive of all kinds of people and cultures.



Michael Adams, Executive Director of SAGE (left), and Karyne Jones, CEO, National Caucus and Center on Black Aged

MA: You and I have been on some conference panels together over the past year, and during those discussions I’ve been struck by the “cross-over issues” — the things that are very important to both LGBT older people and black seniors. One of the issues that comes up over and over again is healthcare. Affordable housing is another theme that seems to be a mainstay. And of course there is the perennial issue of funding for senior service programs. What kinds of overlap do you see in terms of the interests of our respective constituencies? And do you think there are ways that organizations like SAGE and NCBA can work together to advance a shared agenda?

KJ: Discrimination, bigotry, and racism are still quite prevalent in our country and remain the subjects people do not want to openly admit to or confront. Ultimately, our cross-over issues are economic. Poor seniors of any race or sexual orientation remain the most vulnerable to being excluded from public policies and funding decisions in housing, health and employment. Our organizations cannot be exclusive of each other in striving to remedy the ills of an intolerant culture and

in working steadfastly toward fairness and equity for all seniors.

MA: I know that NCBA has been a leader in helping make affordable housing available for black seniors. This is one area where the LGBT community is just starting to scratch the



particularly for older Americans.

All of our aging organizations should form a strong coalition to make this a priority with the new Administration. As people age and retire or become unable to work, many who were barely able to pay rent or keep their homes while working will be unable to do so without some assistance.

With the ongoing tragedy of the housing market, there is no greater time to focus on developing a housing development policy for senior affordable housing. And as in previous years, just like we need an atmosphere that encourages developing communities that are safe and comfortable for people of color, so should attention be given to LGBT seniors.

MA: Discrimination is still a big problem

exist as long as there are human beings who perceive themselves as superior to other people who may be different from themselves. As an African-American female, I have always understood the need to be aware of this fact in any environment, but to never let it deter me from moving forward.

Whether black or LGBT or both, it continues to be our mission to change the attitudes of society and create communities that are politically active and working to ensure that the laws and principles of non-discrimination are followed. That requires keeping people who share our interests informed, developing advocates and experts in every aging field, forming stronger coalitions with mainstream organizations, and

“Poor seniors of any race or sexual orientation remain the most vulnerable to being excluded from public policies and funding decisions in housing, health and employment,” says Karyne Jones.

surface. At SAGE, we frequently hear from LGBT seniors that one of their top concerns is having an appropriate and supportive place to live as they grow older. What are some of the lessons that SAGE and the LGBT community could learn from NCBA based on your experience in the senior housing arena?

KJ: Our housing program began in the late sixties and early seventies when there was a real and genuine focus on providing affordable, safe and supportive communities, especially for people of color. Not since then have we seen that kind of commitment, which is why our developments are all reaching 25 – 30 years of age. In the 80’s, we witnessed a completely different policy towards housing for low-income people. And as a result, there was a tremendous increase in homelessness,

confronting LGBT older people. Far too often SAGE’s constituents face hostility or forced invisibility when they try to take advantage of services at senior centers or need home care or nursing home care. That’s part of the reason SAGE exists — to offer an affirming environment where LGBT seniors are guaranteed respectful treatment and appropriate services.

But we know that we can’t create a complete parallel universe of services for LGBT seniors. There will never be enough resources for that. And if there were it would result in a segregation of our constituents that would be problematic for many reasons. How has NCBA tried to deal with issues of discrimination in the “mainstream” aging world?

KJ: Prejudice and discrimination will always

establishing political alliances with elected officials and policy makers and holding them accountable to our communities.

MA: Unfortunately, for the past seven-plus years the Bush Administration has shown unremitting hostility to legislative and policy efforts designed to improve the lot of LGBT people, making progress on LGBT senior issues just about impossible at the federal level. Discrimination against same-sex couples when it comes to Social Security survivor and spousal benefits and Medicaid “spend-down” protections are just a couple of federal issues that need to be addressed. We’re hopeful about forward movement with the next Administration — it’s hard to imagine it getting much worse on SAGE’s issues! What kinds of opportunities and challenges

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30th Anniversary Gala and SAGE Awards

SAGE to Honor Charlotte Bunch, Village Care of NY, and Martina Navratilova

SAGE is celebrating our 30th Anniversary on October 14, 2008, at the Metropolitan Pavilion in New York City. We will honor acclaimed human rights activist Charlotte Bunch with the first Joyce Warshow Lifetime Achievement Award. Tennis great Martina Navratilova will also receive a SAGE Award, and Village Care of New York and CEO Arthur Webb will be awarded for Village Care's innovative partnership with SAGE to better serve all the seniors of New York City.

This year's event is co-chaired by Henry van Ameringen & Dorothy Sander and will be hosted by Tony-Award winner Denis O'Hare (*Take Me Out*).

The SAGE Awards are presented annually to individuals who have made significant contributions to LGBT culture and history. Corporations and organizations have also been honored for championing public and private policies that have enriched the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

Previous SAGE Award recipients have included: Edward Albee, Governor David Paterson, Dr. Mathilde Krim, Quentin Crisp, Paul Cadmus, John Kander and Fred Ebb, Margarita Lopez, Arthur Laurents, New York Community Trust, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, Dr. Renee Richards, JP Morgan Chase, Phillip Reed and Julie Wilson.

For information about purchasing tickets, tables or sponsorship, please call the SAGE Development department at (212) 741-2247.

Professor Charlotte Bunch

Joyce Warshow Lifetime Achievement Award

Charlotte Bunch is a graduate of Duke University with a B.A. in History and Political Science. A Board of Governor's Distinguished Service Professor in Women's and Gender Studies, Bunch founded the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers in 1989. She remains the executive director and in 1996 was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Professor Bunch was selected by President Bill Clinton in 1999 as a recipient of the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights. She has served on numerous boards and is currently a member of the Advisory Committee for the Human Rights Watch, and on the Boards of the Global Fund for Women and the International Council on Human Rights Policy. She has been a consultant to many United Nations bodies and recently served on the Advisory Committee for the Secretary General's 2006 Report to the General Assembly on Violence against Women.

Village Care of New York

SAGE Award

Village Care of New York is a community-based, not-for-profit service organization serving the city's older adults, persons living with HIV/AIDS and individuals in need of medical and rehabilitation services. Village Care provides leadership to improve the health and quality of life as well as the quality of care and well-being of the diverse New York communities it serves. It performs this work in an environment of hope and acceptance respecting people of all cultures, genders, sexual orientations, races, ages and creeds.

Through support and self-directed care, Village Care enables the people it serves to maintain their independence and control their own care. Village Care's numerous programs build on experience gained from many years of assisting people facing the physical, emotional and spiritual challenges associated with illness, aging, disability and death.

Martina Navratilova

SAGE Award

Martina Navratilova is the best female tennis player of the modern era, and arguably the greatest in the history of the sport. She has amassed an unmatched number of professional records over the course of a career that spanned an amazing four decades. In 2000, she was inducted into the Tennis Hall of Fame, and in September 2006, six weeks shy of her 50th birthday, she won the mixed doubles title at the US Open, her 59th Grand Slam title.

Ms. Navratilova has also proved to be an accomplished humanitarian and public figure with her involvement in numerous charitable organizations around the world. She is also well-known as a champion for the health and wellness of people of all generations. In 2007, she was named the Health and Fitness Ambassador to AARP's 39 million members.

Martina Navratilova: Helping Aging People Lead Active, Healthy Lives



"I think we have a tendency to look for quick fixes and easy solutions to leading healthy, active lifestyles and my goal is to let my generation know that though staying fit takes work, it's just as important now — if not more — than ever before," said Martina Navratilova, who was named AARP's Health and Fitness Ambassador last December.

Ms. Navratilova engages with AARP members through the organization's Fitness Website, www.AARPfitness.com, which provides tools and information to make it easier to live a healthy life at age 50+. Members can access tips, exercise routines, Q&As and video messages specifically geared to addressing health concerns and questions of the 50+ and boomer demographic. Below are Martina's favorite wellness tips.

Martina's Tips

- 1. Make over your kitchen.** If your fridge and pantry are filled with cookies, chips, and other diet disasters, hide them, or better yet, get rid of them. Then hit places like specialty stores, co-ops, gourmet delis, farmers' markets, and community-supported agriculture programs to stock up on organically grown fruits, vegetables, and grains.
- 2. Pile more "raw foods" on your plate.** Raw foods fill you up so you lose weight more easily. They can reduce total cholesterol, as well as LDL cholesterol (the kind that gums up arteries) and help normalize blood pressure. They also improve your digestion.
- 3. Juice up.** I have noticed that I am much more energetic in the morning if I start the day with a fresh juice. One of my favorite juices is carrot-apple juice made from six large carrots and two apples. Juicing is also a refreshing way to introduce raw foods into your body.
- 4. Break out of your exercise rut.** This might include playing sports you enjoy, working in the yard, or doing easy-on-the-joint aqua activities such as swimming or water aerobics.

For more tips and additional fitness tools and educational resources, visit www.AARPfitness.com. ■

Metropolitan Community Church to Build LGBT Retirement Communities

BY BETH KLING

Requests for LGBT senior housing are among the most urgent inquiries made by individuals seeking services from SAGE. Several years ago, SAGE investigated the possibility of creating LGBT Elder Housing, eventually concluding that we were not yet equipped to take on such an ambitious new project.

That didn't stop others from pursuing the dream. Rainbow Vision™, a market-rate retirement community, has been in operation for two years and is building new properties. The low-income Gay & Lesbian Elder Housing at Triangle Square™ has been open since 2007.

SAGE's Fourth National Conference on LGBT Aging brings these groups and others together for a Preconference Intensive entitled, "Structuring Your Community's Conversation on Choosing a Model of Intentional & Inclusive Communities." As expected in the LGBT community, many of these models challenge mainstream assumptions about who we are in exciting, creative ways. And as in the story of MCC's new senior housing initiative, these groups are breaking ground in using mainstream sources to turn their dreams into reality.

"We are trying to do something that, as far as we know, has never been done before," said Rev. Dr. Cindi Love, executive director of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC). Rev. Love was referring to the organization's plan to build a faith-based retirement community for LGBT people using government-issued tax-exempt bonds.

This funding method has been employed by several mainstream churches over

the last 60 years to construct senior housing projects. As Rev. Love explained, these facilities have explicitly excluded gay or lesbian cohabiting couples. MCC intends to provide faith-based independent living and continuing care options for LGBT aging couples and singles, people with HIV, and other vulnerable populations, starting with a facility in Sarasota, Florida.

MCC is a global fellowship of Christian

congregations that fully embraces lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. The church encourages people of all faiths to feel at home in their worship services, a practice which will carry over into its retirement facility. People of all sexual orientations will be welcome as well.

"This is part of a long-term strategic initiative for us," said Rev. Love, who explained that the Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) planned for Sarasota is just the beginning of a commitment MCC has made to serving LGBT older people throughout the country. The project began after MCC was made aware of the intense need for LGBT-affirmative retirement facilities by AARP, which sought its participation in developing an internal training document.

"After reading all the research that they accumulated, it really made us aware that LGBT seniors in some cases almost had to go back in the closet, if not literally, when they needed continuing care or a retirement facility with assisted living," explained Love.

MCC began its initiative by conducting major market research over a

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LGBT Retirement Communities

Several LGBT senior housing communities are currently in existence or under development across the country. *SAGE Matters* reported on Gay & Lesbian Elder Housing's Triangle Square, in our Winter 2008 edition.

- **Triangle Square**, located in Los Angeles, offers 104 independent living rental units, all priced for moderate to lower income residents. The complex includes a full-size swimming pool, a media room, a gym, and other amenities. SAGE is working with **Gay & Lesbian Elder Housing** to create social services for the residents and for the larger GLBT elder community in Los Angeles. For more information, visit www.gleh.org.
- **Openhouse**, planned for construction on the former University of California's Berkeley Extension campus in San Francisco, will offer up to 88 independent living units for gays and lesbians 55 and older. The rental facility will be 100 percent affordable. Visit their website, www.openhouse-sf.org, to get the latest news about the plan.
- **Barbary Lane**, based in Oakland, is a renovated 1927 Art Deco hotel with on-site spa, fitness rooms, and library, along with spacious rooms (see www.barbarylanesenior.com). It is a market rate-facility offering a range of independent living and continuing care options for LGBT seniors.
- **Rainbow Vision** in Santa Fe, New Mexico, offers independent living and assisted living options at a market rate, and includes amenities such as concierge services, first-class dining, spas, and cabaret lounge. Rainbow Vision communities are also being developed in Palm Springs, California, the San Francisco Bay area, and Vancouver (visit www.rainbowvisionprop.com).
- **Stonewall Communities, Inc.** is developing **Stonewall at Audubon Circle** in the Fenway neighborhood of Boston. The facility will offer 53 elegant units, along with amenities designed to "offer a vigorous urban lifestyle in the heart of a supportive community" (see www.stonewallcommunities.com).

SAGE and the \$1 Million Calamus Challenge Grant

HOW YOU CAN PLAY A PART

The LGBT community is now at a unique moment in time. . . . Baby Boomers are retiring in record numbers. . . . In New York City alone, the number of LGBT seniors will increase by more than **60 percent** in the next twenty years.

To address the needs and demands of our exploding LGBT Boomer population, SAGE has envisioned a Strategic Plan which will be seeded through an historic partnership with the **Calamus Foundation Challenge Grant**.

The \$1 Million Calamus Challenge Grant will:

- 1) provide new social service programs to LGBT seniors in NYC;
- 2) give technical assistance to new SAGEs across the country to replicate our programs;
- 3) create a network of LGBT aging advocates for increased government funding and public policy support.

The **Calamus Challenge Grant** will be awarded to SAGE over the next 4 years, and will require matching funds from SAGE donors during this period. Won't you *please* make a donation to SAGE now, and play *your part* in ensuring that SAGE will always be a home and a community for those who need it!

“Ask the Expert”: A New Online Service at sageusa.org

Visit sageusa.org to access a new service provided by SAGE. “Ask the Expert” gives you the opportunity to submit questions on issues that affect LGBT aging people, including legal rights, life planning, socializing within the LGBT aging community, finding LGBT-friendly housing, living longer with HIV, and others. Our participating experts will answer your questions online.

We put the following question to two of our experts:

I am a male senior living with HIV and my current physician has closed his office to devote his time to HIV research. I would like to find a doctor who specifically deals with gay patients, preferably a doctor who is gay. It is very important to me that this doctor not only is knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS in older adults, but also understands LGBT aging issues. What resources exist that can help me find a qualified physician?

Kenneth Stewart, Director of Case Management for Village Care, NY, gave the following response:

It is clear that you value having a relationship with



Kenneth Stewart

your physician — not just an appointment now and then. It is essential for all patients to feel comfortable with their medical providers. Concealing problems and more seriously concealing one's entire identity does not allow for healing and growth physically or psychologically. Physicians will only be able to offer superficial help if patients don't present themselves honestly.

I consulted with Dr. Lawrence Hitzeman, MD, an HIV provider at the Village Care of New York Health Center in Manhattan. He noted that all HIV providers working with HIV-positive older adults need to have awareness of other aging concerns: heart disease, kidney disease, brain function, Diabetes,

Hypertension, bone disease.

The medical professional you choose needs to be a specialist in HIV and knowledgeable regarding treatment strategies for HIV drug resistance and new HIV drugs for patients with resistance. If you are interested in researching via computer, several web sites offer helpful guidance:

GayHealth:
gayhealth.com

Gay Men's Health Crisis:
gmhc.org

GRIOT (Gay Reunion in Our Time) Circle is a grassroots organization for older LGBT citizens. It is associated with Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC):
griotcircle.org

ACRIA offers extensive research and materials on HIV and aging:
acria.org

New York Association of HIV Over Fifty:
nyahof.org

Dr Harold Kooden, Clinical Psychologist, added:

First of all, have you asked your physician for a recommendation? If he is closing



Harold Kooden

his practice to do research on HIV, then he must have access to a network of physicians, patients and researchers who could possibly help you with your question.

Have you talked this over with your friends? This is another way to access an already existing network. You could also call the LGBT Community Center at (212) 620-7310 to see if they have referral lists; if you are outside of New York, you could call them as they have a guide to LGBT centers in the USA. Ask them for the one closest to you.

You could call SAGE at (212) 741-2247 for information (or if you are outside of New York, you could call SAGE to see if there is a local SAGE near you). And I would also suggest calling

the AIDS organizations in your area to see what kinds of lists they have. Some senior centers are very sophisticated about HIV and may have their own referral lists. You could also call your city Department of Aging and ask your question.

No matter how you find this physician, the most important point to remember is that this is a person with whom you are going to have a working relationship. In my experience, it is essential to have a physician with whom you can have a dialogue, regardless of his/her qualifications. I see the physician/patient relationship as a mutual partnership where it is essential that you are an active participant.

Please do not discount what you can bring to this relationship and teach your physician. I say this as you may not find someone who is both HIV and LGBT senior savvy, but the relationship with you may complete his or her education.

To read more questions and answers, and to submit your own questions, visit “Ask the Expert” at <http://ask.sageusa.org>. ■

SAGE Talks to NCBA Continued from page 3

do you see given the reality of a new President in the White House in 2009?

KJ: Too numerous to mention! So many issues have been neglected for the last decade. Our agenda, however, will certainly focus on issues of mutual interest such as affordable housing, employment opportunities, healthcare, and the list goes on. We are cognizant that the next Administration will have major challenges to address as a result of our economic woes. But we feel confident that if we work together for senior issues, most of our concerns will warrant and receive the attention they desperately need.

MA: We're thrilled that you will be a part of our plenary session, “Diversity and Aging: Adding LGBT into the Mix,” at SAGE's 4th National LGBT Aging Conference this fall. I know our conference participants will learn a lot from your presentation. Is there anything in particular you hope to take away from the Conference?

KJ: I hope to establish a relationship with many of the participants to learn how we can collaborate on the many things I have discussed. We at NCBA still have a lot to learn about the LGBT community, as they do of us. We know we have far more commonalities than differences. More so, I hope that the LGBT community works with NCBA to ensure that our memberships practice what we preach and that black LGBT people are an active part of your mission as we hope they will be active in ours. ■

MCC to Build Retirement Communities Continued from page 5

two-year period. The research, which clearly established that LGBT seniors are concerned about finding LGBT-affirmative housing where they can get their health needs met, was required for the church to secure tax-exempt bond funding to build the Sarasota facility.

This funding method makes MCC's proposed facility different from other existing or currently planned LGBT-affirmative retirement facilities (see sidebar, page 5), which are financed by combinations of private money, nonprofit support, and government subsidies.

The tax-exempt bond funding will enable MCC (which is working in collaboration with the private developer Affirmative/Hillspoint, LLC), to provide a far greater array of services and amenities than would be possible if the project were funded solely with money raised by the organization. The proposed project will include independent living options and continuing care options, although the extent of this care is still being determined.

The facility will also offer a number of amenities, including flexible dining options, pools, and workout facilities, and will be situated close to local stores, golf courses, and beaches in Sarasota. The proposed plan also includes a public theatre space where local arts groups can perform, drawing the neighborhood into the facility and further integrating LGBT older people into the community.

Since qualifying for tax-exempt bond funding requires adherence to strict criteria (none of it written with the needs of LGBT aging people in mind), MCC will move carefully to ensure the continuing economic viability of the Sarasota community. The success of this venture will provide the foundation for MCC to create future communities around the country, where they identify a similar need. Some of the facilities may include affordable or low-income housing.

“If we can demonstrate that we can build sustainable projects that fit the criteria of tax-exempt bond status and that appeal to the marketplace,” explained Rev. Love, “then we will get support for more projects in the future.” ■

SAGE Offers Services for LGBT Older People

SAGE provides dozens of activities, groups, and programs to encourage LGBT seniors to connect with each other and with the community.

Support Groups

SAGE HIV Positive 50+ Support Bereavement Group
 Caregiver Support Group
 Friendship Circle
 Gay Widowers Support Group
 Men's Coming Out
 MS Support Group
 New Beginnings – Harlem Gay & Bisexual Men's HIV Positive 45+ Support Group
 New Connections – Women's 40's & 50's Support Group
 Older Than Springtime – Men's Support Group
 Wednesday Afternoon Women's Support Group

Discussion Groups

Conscious Creative Aging
 Life Issues: Beyond Retirement
 Men's 40+ Rap
 Men's 50+ Rap
 Our Birthdays, Our Stories – Women's Monthly Birthday Discussion Group
 Senior Elders: 75+ Support
 Tuesday Daytime Discussion
 Women: Our Spiritual Journeys

Community Meetings

Focus Groups
 Monthly Drop-In Community Meetings
 SAGE HEAT Monthly Program
 Planning Meetings

Art & Cultural Programs

Art Studio
 Author Book Readings
 Booklovers' Discussion Group
 Creative Writing Workshop

Discounted Theater Tickets
 Drama Class
 Harlem Book Club
 Harlem Cultural Programming at Casa Frela Gallery
 Morning at the Opera – Appreciation & Discussion Group
 Movement & Dance Workshops
 SAGE Film Series
 SAGE Singers
 Senior Art Show

Social & Wellness Programming

Brunch Bunch
 Bus Trips
 Cyber Center Drop-in
 Dating & Relationship Workshops
 Daily Drop-In Center
 Drop-In Monthly Birthday Party
 Drop-In Parties
 Flu Shots
 Gay Pride Activities
 Harlem Fabulous Fridays
 Holiday Parties
 LGBT Senior Health Fair
 SAGE Socials
 SAGE Walks
 SAGERCIZE Class
 Scrabble & Bridge
 Women's Monthly Birthday Party
 Women's Dances
 Women's Parties

Helping Services

Benefits Counseling
 Friendly Visitors
 Legal Clinic
 Lend-a-Hand

Informational Programming

Computer Classes
 Health and Wellness
 Heritage and History
 Money & Finance
 Safety & the Law

Women's Programming

Harlem Women's Mixer
 Harlem Women's Support Group
 Women's Dances
 Women's Discussion Groups
 Women's History Month Events
 Women's Monthly Birthday Party
 Women: Our Spiritual Journeys
 Women's Parties
 Women's Support Groups

Clinical/Counseling Services

Case Management
 Individual Counseling
 HIV Related Counseling
 Group Counseling
 Benefits Counseling
 Legal Counseling
 Walk-In Social Services Clinic
 Help Finding a Safe & Friendly Long-Term Care Facility
 Help Finding Homecare
 Information and Referral

SAGE Communities

Community Street Fairs & Tabling
 Information & Referral
 Informational Presentations
 Harlem Book Club
 Harlem Fabulous Fridays
 Harlem HEAT Meetings
 Harlem's 40+ HIV Positive Support Group

HIV Services
 Social Activities
 Uptown SAGE Neighbors
 Monthly Socialization Programming

Community Partner Collaborations

AIDS Community Research Initiative of America (ACRIA)
 Caring Community Center
 Carter Burden Senior Center
 Congregation Beth Simchat Torah (CBST)
 Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD)
 Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC)
 Greenwich House
 GRIOT Circle
 Harlem United
 Kennedy Senior Center
 Leonard Covello Senior Center
 Older Adults Technology Services (OATS)
 ReServe
 SAGE Long Island
 SAGE/Queens
 Silver Connections, the Loft in Westchester
 Union Settlement Senior Centers
 Village Care of New York

Education & Advocacy

HIV & Aging Advocacy
 National Black HIV Awareness Day
 New York City Senior Advocacy Day
 New York State Equality & Justice Day & Senior Summit
 Older Adults & HIV Training Initiative
 SAGEConnect

SAGE Curriculum:
 "No Need to Fear, No Need to Hide"
 SAGE Matters Newspaper
 SAGE National Conference on LGBT Aging
 Website www.sageusa.org
 World AIDS Day activities

Services for Caregivers

Respite Services
 Caregiver Support Group
 Financial Assistance for Caregiving Needs
 Friendly Visiting
 Assistance with Home Care
 Assistance with Adult Day Services
 Information and Referral

SAGE Positive Programming

Gay Men's HIV+ Social w/Village Care
 HIV Case Management & Counseling
 HIV 50+ Men's Support Groups – SAGE at the Center
 HIV 40+ Men's Support Group – Harlem w/Harlem United
 HIV Prevention & Education – Harlem
 HIV Testing w/Community Partners – Harlem

Volunteer Services

Friendly Visitor Trainings & Support Meetings
 Monthly Speakers' Bureau & Advocate Meetings
 Monthly Volunteer Orientation

SAGE/Queens: A Program of Queens Community House

BY LIZ FERRIS

There are ten SAGE affiliates around the country, each operating independently but with a shared mission: to provide a safe and welcoming space to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older adults, and to increase the visibility of LGBT senior issues in the community. There are different models of SAGE programs, and several of these will be highlighted at SAGE's Fourth National Conference on LGBT Aging.

Only one SAGE affiliate is part of a non-LGBT agency. This is the story of SAGE/Queens, a program of Queens Community House.

For over 30 years, Queens Community House (QCH) has been serving the people of Queens, New York, indisputably the most culturally and linguistically diverse of any area in the United States (138 languages are spoken in Queens, according to an official source). Included in this mix is a sizeable gay and lesbian population, served for the

past 12 years by SAGE/Queens under the umbrella of QCH.

In 1996, Queens LGBT residents approached Arlene Kochman (then SAGE Executive Director), with an idea to build a SAGE affiliate. The residents felt that by replicating the Manhattan-based model, LGBT seniors who found it difficult to commute to

Manhattan would be able to receive similar services and programs in their own borough.

With the support of SAGE, a delegation of Queens LGBT activists approached then-Borough President Claire Schulman about the idea. The Borough President was very enthusiastic, but suggested that the group identify a Queens-based agency to help get the program off the ground. The activists then approached Lew Harris, the Executive Director of Queens Community House, about incorporating such a program into his organization. In other words, a mainstream social services organization was being asked to start a center for LGBT seniors.

The choice to work with Queens Community House made a lot of sense. Opened in 1975 with three staff members, Forest Hills

Community House, as it was then called, had a mission of bringing together the economically, ethnically and racially diverse residents of the community.

"We build all of our services from expressed community need. Our policy has been never to walk away from an identified need," says Lew (who will retire in 2010 after nearly thirty years).

The first programs were a children's program and a summer day camp, and eventually they started programs for senior citizens. Today Queens Community House (renamed to reflect its wider reach) has over 400 full- and part-time staff and 20 sites around the borough, serving over 20,000 people annually. An original budget of \$200,000 has grown to over \$13 million. The senior



Lew Harris, Executive Director, Queens Community House

services department includes SAGE/Queens and four other senior centers, a social adult day care program, case management services, meals on wheels, transportation assistance, and the Forest Hills Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) program.

QCH also runs Generation Q, a program serving LGBTQ youth, based in Astoria. The agency regularly runs cultural competency trainings, and

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VILLAGE CARE OF NEW YORK

is a community-based, not-for-profit organization serving older adults, persons living with HIV/AIDS and individuals in need of medical and rehabilitation services. We are guided by the people we serve in alliance with staff, administration and the board of directors.

SeniorChoices

- » Skilled Nursing Care » Day Health Centers
- » Senior Information Centers » Home Care
- » Care Advocate Services » Assisted Living
- » Rehabilitation Services » Primary Care Health Center

Network of AIDS Services

- » Skilled Nursing Care » Day Treatment Centers
- » Treatment Adherence » Home Care
- » Community Case Management
- » Primary Care Health Center



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CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

Natt Nevins and the Beginnings of SAGE

BY GARRISON PHILLIPS

One focus of the pre-conference institute of SAGE's Fourth National Conference presents the best practices in building a SAGE program. To this end, SAGE Matters looks back to SAGE's early days from one of the wonderful, inspired, and dedicated founders of the organization. Her name is Natt Nevins, and Garrison Phillips had the pleasure of interviewing her for this article.

Natt Nevins has a fascinating background, including serving as an entertainer for the troops during the Korean War (see sidebar for more information). In the days before SAGE came into being in the 1970s, she was working as director of the Burrwood Home for the Blind (Aged) in Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island. In this capacity, Natt was already serving LGBT seniors, finding a place at Burrwood for a blind, gay, senior man who had been abandoned by his family.

Natt's loving help of this man did not go unnoticed by others in the gay caregiving community. As a

result, a mutual friend connected Nat with Chris Almvig so that the two could discuss the need for an intergenerational group to help lesbian and gay seniors. Chris was attending Graduate School at the New School and was a major volunteer with the Gay Switchboard at the time.

Chris and Natt spoke for hours on the telephone on a number of occasions and when Chris set up a first meeting, Natt asked her longtime friend, Jerre Kalbas, to go with her. Also in attendance were Dr. Emery Hetrick, Jim Dorf, and Babette Beckerd.

The group continued to meet, often in the Upper West Side apartment of Chris and her partner Carol until the organization moved to St. Luke's Church in their first year. By then, SAGE also had a name and a board president, Dr. Emery Hetrick. But the organization had no money, no mailing list, and very few resources.

Working to change this situation, Natt asked for funding assistance from a couple of gay-friendly

organizations, but they declined. Then she turned to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force for help, asking if SAGE could "piggy-back" on a Task Force mailing. All SAGE had to provide was self-addressed, stamped envelopes for the returning correspondence. This mailing marked the beginning of a continuing association of mutual help and admiration between the Task Force and SAGE.

Fortunately, the mailing was a success. The funds it garnered, plus a grant of \$34,000 from the Greater New York Fund, allowed a search committee to begin looking for an executive director. In 1980, Jim Flanagan was hired, and he served for a year. He was followed in this position by the legendary Ken Dawson, and SAGE was on its way to becoming the incredible, resourceful, successful, senior services organization of the LGBT Community that it is today. And this would not have happened without Natt and all the others who worked those first few years to create what is now SAGE.



Left: Natt Nevins, in the early 1980s, with Ken Dawson, SAGE's second executive director.



Right: Natt today, with her beloved pets.

Natt Nevins was a member of the vocal group, "Tops in Blue," which entertained troops across the United States, in Europe, and in Korea during that conflict. The U.S. Air Force awarded her two "Rogers," silver statuettes modeled on the Oscar, for excellence in performance. She displays these awards in her Greenwich Village apartment.

Natt had volunteered for the Air Force after finishing two years at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia. She said she was bored and needed to escape from her family. (She later earned a bachelor's degree from Empire State College in New York City.)

Three-and-a-half years after signing up for the Air Force, Natt married a gay man to get out of service. She says, with some delight, that she and her husband spent their wedding night taking turns at the wheel as they raced back to Texas to join their respective lovers. ■

SAGE Makes a Trip to Wal-Mart

Continued from page 1

this conference provided an opportunity not only to re-emphasize the challenges shared by all minority seniors, but also to bring to light the unique needs of the LGBT senior community.

The panelists led a question/answer forum attended by Wal-Mart associates from their national headquarters. They also had the opportunity to meet with company spokespeople, including Bruce Gillespie, from Wal-Mart's LGBT Employee Resource Group (ERG).

In many ways, Wal-Mart is a receptive audience for this type of discussion, as the company prides itself on its commitment to the senior community. Wal-Mart's "Mature Community Fact Sheet" spells out their achievements, including the hiring of more than 355,000 "associates" who are 50 years of age and

older. Among its other contributions to the mature community, Wal-Mart lists "affordable healthcare and access to more than 2,000 generic prescriptions for \$4 on Wal-Mart health plans." The company has also recognized the importance of addressing the diversity within the senior community, listing among its partners the four ethnicity-based organizations attending the conference.

But the company has been less inclusive of LGBT people, particularly in its employment policies. Unlike major competitors such as Target, Best Buy, Costco, Federated Department Stores (Macy's), Walgreen's and Sears Holding Corporation (Sears/K-Mart), Wal-Mart continues to deny its "affordable healthcare" to domestic partners. Additionally, Wal-Mart's

employment non-discrimination policy does not extend to the transgender community. Wal-Mart has also paid less attention to LGBT senior communities than it has to other senior minority populations.

Michael Adams' participation in the conference will hopefully raise awareness about LGBT senior issues at Walmart.

Michael Adams' presence at the conference will hopefully raise awareness of LGBT senior issues so that the company can begin to redress this imbalance. He spoke of "the relative social isolation of many LGBT seniors," explaining that seniors in LGBT communities "often lack a social support network because of

a lack of family relationships." Given these needs, existing Wal-Mart programs, such as personal shoppers, may be especially beneficial to seniors lacking access to traditional support systems.

The Wal-Mart conference is not the first time that SAGE has joined forces with other minority organizations to raise awareness of the issues facing seniors in minority communities. In June of 2007, SAGE was invited to participate in a Washington, DC-based conference sponsored by AARP on Diversity and

Aging in the 21st Century. The conference was organized by Gloria Cavanaugh, who is currently a consultant with AARP's Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and who previously led the American Society on Aging as its president for 30 years. SAGE also participated in that conference, which included many of the organizations that later attended the Wal-Mart meeting.

At SAGE's Fourth National Conference, members of the panel will reconvene in the plenary session titled "Diversity and Aging: Adding LGBT into the Mix." And SAGE will continue to advocate for the unique needs of aging LGBTs, especially in underserved populations, among healthcare organizations, multinational corporations, and other institutions that affect our lives. ■

SAGE Milestones: LGBT Seniors Turn 90, and 100

BY TRUMBULL ROGERS AND
BETH KLING

Long-time SAGE members are reaching milestones in their lives, just as the organization celebrates its 30th anniversary.

Jack Neher

John ("Jack") Neher, who turned 90 in February, says a friend who knew long-time SAGE volunteer Adrian Mayer, encouraged him to join SAGE back in its early years. Yet it wasn't until about 15 years ago that he joined his first SAGE activity — a class in Italian. When the class ended three years later, he became a charter member of the opera group, which led to his being asked to lead a group on musical theater. He agreed, but insisted that it focus on musicals of the 1930s and 1940s.

Besides these SAGE activities, Jack is a founder of the Upper West Side SAGE Neighbors, where he serves on the planning committee. In this capacity, he has started and run several programs for the group, including a highly successful evening of words and music by Jerry Herman; a political meeting where the featured guest was City Council Member Gale Brewer; and a program of highlights from movie musicals.

Not long ago, Jack bought a computer and took a class to learn how to use it. His first project was to write a memoir of his early career, which he is publishing with a vanity press.

Jack's first job was as a page at NBC, where he met some of the celebrities who performed on the radio. One, the opera singer Eleanor Steber, asked him to hold her dog, while Julia Sanderson, best known for singing the Jerome Kern song "They'll Never Believe Me" in the hit musical *The Girl from Utah*, asked him to find her a more comfortable chair. When she was seated, she looked up at him and said, "Stay out of show business. It'll kill you."

After leaving NBC, Jack spent most of his working life at the Mental Health Materials Center (MHMC), editing and writing pieces

on mental health, as well as promotional reviews of such related movies as 1948's *The Snake Pit*.

Art Roloff

Art Roloff has enjoyed afternoon games of Scrabble in the SAGE drop-in room for about 20 years, which is how long he's been a SAGE member. At 90 years old, he's grateful, and a little surprised, to have outlived some of his younger relatives.

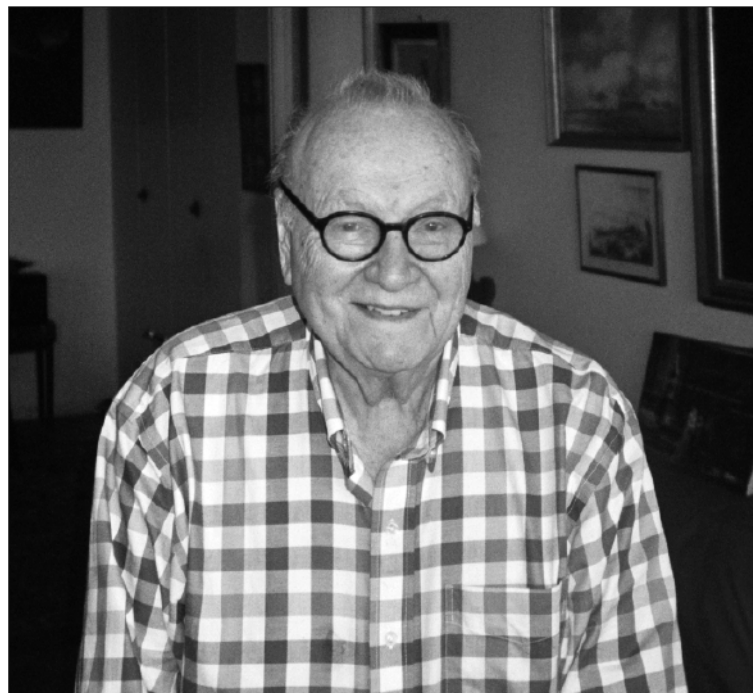
Art was born in Winona, Minnesota, where he lived for the first 35 years of his life, except for the war years

in San Francisco, where he found work and a dream apartment on Nob Hill with a view of Mount Tamalpais and the Golden Gate Bridge. When his company moved its headquarters to New York City, he came too.

Since the War, Art's extensive travels have taken him to all of the states in the Union, except Vermont, and through most of Canada.

Gerry Faier

On August 7, 2008, Gerry Faier became 100 years old. An avid reader, a gifted storyteller, and a writer,



Jack Neher says being a member of SAGE has brought him many new friends and helps keep him active.

(1941–1945). He was drafted into the Army Air Corps in 1941 and was stationed at March Field near Riverside, California. After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, he was transferred to the Naval Air Station on North Island near San Diego; ultimately his squadron was sent to an airfield near Cambridge, England.

Art spent much of his off time in London, where he says there was great theater "for almost nothing." In fact, he was in London on VE Day, and says, "It was great — the lights came on and I remember standing in the crowd outside the palace cheering and calling for the king — George — to come out."

After his discharge, Art returned to his old job in Winona. Although he never saw combat, the war had broadened his experience of the world, and so at age 35, he gave up his job and moved to San Fran-

Gerry was in her 70s when she became involved with SAGE. Chris Almvig, one of SAGE's founders, had encouraged her to join SAGE's writing group in the late 1970s. Gerry took this advice and participated long enough to contribute to three books published by the group. Her involvement in SAGE didn't end there, though.

"I became a public speaker in no time," she says, recounting her experiences lecturing to college students all over the state about lesbian and gay seniors. She attended conferences in Washington, DC, and on the West Coast, helping to represent SAGE. She also served three terms on SAGE's Board of Directors.

Gerry was born in 1908 to East European Jewish immigrants, grew up in Borough Park, Brooklyn, and was married by the time she was 19. In her early 20s, she left her husband and raised



Art Roloff says he is never bored. He spends much of his day at the Center, where he loves to play Scrabble in the SAGE drop-in room or in the garden.



Photos by Trumbull Rogers and Beth Kling

Gerry Faier was honored by Congregation Beth Simchat Torah and SAGE on the day after her 100th birthday last August.

their two children alone.

Gerry had her first lesbian experience in the 1930s in Woodstock, but she didn't enter the Greenwich Village gay scene until the 1940s. During her first visit to a gay bar, she felt extremely self-conscious as the other patrons stared at her professional attire. After walking in, then ordering and drinking a boilemaker, she called her friend.

"I said, 'Grace, I walked in, but I can't walk out.'" Grace arrived a half hour later to escort her home. Eventually, Gerry became friends with a lesbian artist who helped her feel more comfortable in the community. At age 53, she met Ethel, who would become

her long-time partner. The two lived together in Queens and were a couple for more than 35 years.

In recent years, Gerry's activities have slowed down. But she still recalls, wryly, the various ways she was involved with SAGE from early on.

"I'll never forget one time I went to SAGE's office, when it was located in the church on Hudson Street," Gerry begins, recounting a time in SAGE's very early history. "The executive director said, 'Gerry, we're so glad you're here.' I said, 'Really?' I was feeling pretty important. He said, 'Yes, we need to borrow five dollars for stamps.'" ■

SAGE to Offer Online Housing Resource

Soon SAGE will be a pioneer in the effort to make information about LGBT-friendly housing available to all. In October, we will be launching a new interactive tool on sageusa.org: the first ever LGBT Online Housing Resource!

With this exciting feature, senior housing communities will be able to complete a self-report card to see how well they have incorporated LGBT issues in all aspects of their functions, and this information will be available to people who are searching for LGBT-friendly housing.

Questions on non-discrimination marketing, sales and leasing policies; employee and volunteer policies; and resident and community programs will result in a ranking for every center that completes the survey. And visitors and residents of those senior housing centers will also have a chance to rate their experience and add comments, which will give users more information as they research future housing options.

Earlier this year, similar websites have been launched for the senior community at large, including seniordecision.com, a user-based site for reviewing senior care and senior housing centers, and snapforseniors.com, which includes a senior housing locator by city or zip code, listing independent living, assisted living and nursing care facilities around the country. ■

SAGE Affiliates Meet in Milwaukee

Continued from page 2

to fund a SAGENet-wide initiative than a single local group.

Another point of discussion was the desire to enable members of any given SAGE affiliate to have membership benefits in all other SAGE affiliates. All of the SAGE programs present were very interested in making this happen for their members. SAGE South Florida Board President Carl M. Galli noted that, "SAGE South Florida includes a number of snowbirds," and promoting opportunities to be engaged year-around in SAGE programs, no matter where a member lived, would be very beneficial. A national SAGE members' event was also suggested, so SAGE members from around the country could meet each other.

The SAGENet attendees concluded their weekend together with a special presentation on Transgender Aging, conducted by Loree Cooke-Daniels and Michael Munson, co-founders of the Transgender Aging Network. The two provided important information on health risks for the transgender community and discussed the few — but crucial — programs and services that exist specifically for transgender seniors (including health and social services programs for transgender veterans). In addition, Loree skillfully facilitated a discussion about "including the 'T' in LGBT aging programs."

SAGENet attendees expressed the desire to continue the communication started in this meeting and to hold weekends like this one on a regular basis. "This is the first conference I've ever attended where it felt like everyone in the room was on the same page," said Bill Serpe, executive director of SAGE Milwaukee. "We have the same challenges, the same concerns, and the work we did together is immediately relevant to the work I do every day." Serena Worthington, director of the SAGE program at the Center on Halsted, agreed wholeheartedly. "It was great to meet people who actually have my job," she enthused. "It was very productive."

The SAGENet affiliates are planning their next meeting for SAGE's Fourth National Conference on LGBT Aging, where their work will be highlighted. They will also gather for a Preconference Institute on How to Build A SAGE Program. ■

HIV MIXER WITH VILLAGE CARE



Photo courtesy of God's Love We Deliver

Last spring, in collaboration with Village Care, GMHC and God's Love We Deliver, SAGE initiated a series of Social Mixers for long-term survivors with HIV. The mixers were held in April and June at the Village Care AIDS Day Treatment Program on West 20th Street and featured food, music, dancing, raffle prizes and the chance to get out and have some fun. There are plans to have more of these events on an ongoing basis starting in the fall. Look for announcements in the SAGE Calendar. If you are interested in being part of the planning committee, or want more information about this program, contact John Genke in SAGE's Social Services department at (212) 741-2247. ■

SAGE/Queens: A Program of QCH

Continued from page 7

LGBT issues are incorporated into all areas of its services. There are several SAGE/Queens members who get meals on wheels and case work support from Queens Community House, and its staff works hard to ensure that LGBT seniors feel safe and comfortable when accessing any part of the agency.

Although Lew, the QCH Board and the Queens Borough President were all fully supportive of creating SAGE/Queens (Borough President Schulman provided the start-up funds for the program), there was some community opposition when QCH started to look for an appropriate site for the program. No one wanted a gay group in their building. But that didn't stop QCH from remaining committed to creating a SAGE affiliate.

"Our settlement house mission of total commitment to the community did not allow for homophobia," says Lew. Only churches were amenable to the idea and the basement at St. Andrew's Church in Astoria became the first SAGE/Queens site.

"They had a kitchen and there were terrific dinners and parties," recalls Lew. "People came from all over Long Island, not just from Queens, which shows you the overwhelming need that existed for socialization in this population."

Today SAGE/Queens has over a thousand members, and 35-40 members attend weekly meetings at the SAGE/Queens clubhouse, now located in Jackson Heights. Its location is culturally appropriate — Jackson Heights is the home of the Queens LGBT Pride March & Festival — and accessible, being just a block away from a major transportation hub for 5 subway lines and a dozen buses.

True to the mission of bringing together the diverse residents of Queens, the QCH Jackson Heights site is also home to the largest free English as a Second Language program in New York City (over 700 adult students attend QCH-run classes from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.), an after-school leadership program for girls, and an employment and community empowerment program.

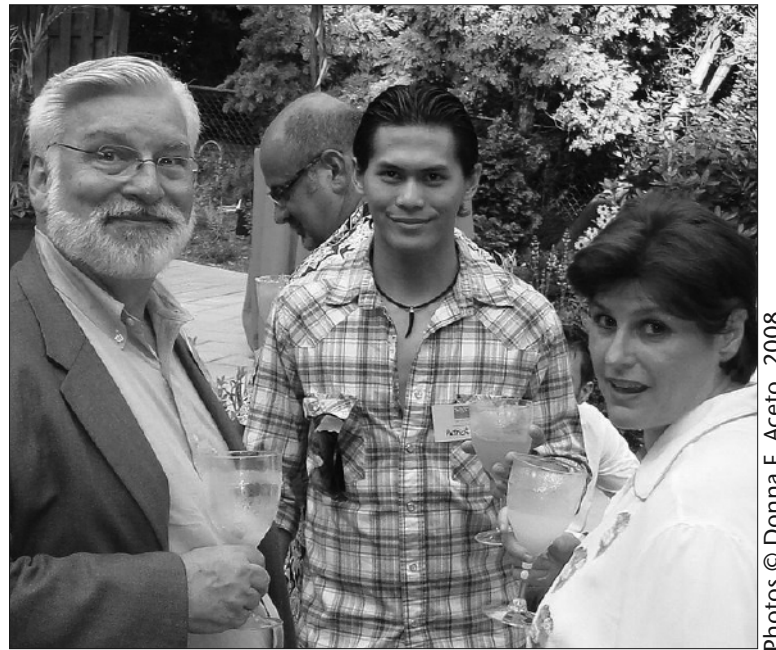
"Coming to work every day in this site provides a great snapshot of Queens," says John Nagel, the Director of SAGE/Queens. "Youth and seniors, immigrants and long-time residents, gay and straight, we're all part of the same community."

John oversees the SAGE/Queens programs, which include women's and men's discussion groups, computer classes and workshops, an exercise program, creative writing and acting classes, a Spanish-speaking support group, escorted day trips, and more. SAGE/Queens also holds a monthly social at the Kew Gardens Community Center, the site of another QCH program. It is a place where LGBT seniors feel safe and genuinely cared for, and they come from all over the city, from every borough as well as Long Island.

For a site map of all QCH centers and details on its programming and staff, please visit queenscommunityhouse.org or call (718) 592-5757, or SAGE/Queens directly at (718) 533-6459. ■

SAGE Celebrates

Seniors and their friends gather for summer activities at SAGE.



Photos © Donna F. Aceto, 2008



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