



sage

# Matters

THE SAGE MAGAZINE

## BUILDING A MOVEMENT

Lifting up everyday leaders who helped shape  
SAGE's past, present, and future



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*"Because of all the outrageous things that are happening, people are starting to say, 'I can't sit back and wait anymore. I need to stand up and be a part of a change.'"*

— LELAND KOBLE

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**SAGEMatters** 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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## SAGE

305 Seventh Avenue, 15th Floor  
New York NY 10001  
212-741-2247  
[sageusa.org](http://sageusa.org)  
[lgbtagingcenter.org](http://lgbtagingcenter.org)

## SAGEMatters

EXECUTIVE EDITORS  
Christina DaCosta  
Lynn Faria

MANAGING EDITOR & ART DIRECTOR  
Alysa Stryker

CONTRIBUTORS  
Nancy Blaine  
Jerry Chasen  
Kira Garcia  
Alysa Stryker  
Anna Wahrman

DESIGN  
Deirdre Reznik, [dpi.nyc](http://dpi.nyc)  
[sageusa.org/sagematters](http://sageusa.org/sagematters)

Please email us if you would prefer to receive **SAGEMatters** electronically:  
[development@sageusa.org](mailto:development@sageusa.org)



# Building a Lasting Movement of LGBT Elders

**A**s we celebrate **40 Fierce Years** since SAGE's founding in 1978, it's natural to look back on where we've been and think about where we're going. SAGE had already been in existence for almost three decades by the time I arrived as executive director 12 years ago. It was a tough time in many respects, and much of my first couple of years at SAGE's helm was spent shoring up our organization so we could continue to be there and be strong for our community's elders. With that not so distant history in mind, it's extraordinarily exciting and inspiring to celebrate what SAGE's work is about today—building a movement with and on behalf of LGBT elders.



Building that movement is the theme of this issue of *SAGEMatters*. When we think about movements—like our country's civil rights movement—we often focus on leaders who make headlines. Over the years, SAGE has had its share—ranging from a young, dynamic Ken Dawson in its early days to its wise elder icon, Edie Windsor, more recently. While people like Ken and Edie are essential to SAGE's story, much of what makes a movement succeed are the people behind the scenes whose names we seldom hear and whose photos we rarely see. In this issue, we lift up those everyday leaders as critically important contributors to SAGE's past, present, and future.

In the early days of SAGE, those behind-the-scenes leaders came from our organization's birthplace—New York City. One of the ways that we're marking their legacy today is by building the Big Apple's first two LGBT-friendly affordable housing developments for older people, fulfilling

a decades-long dream. We're hoping to cut the ribbon on the first building this June—right in time for Stonewall 50 and World Pride!—with the second building opening in the fall.

As we drive toward this historic accomplishment, our communities and our elders are staring down relentless hostility from the Trump administration. Since the 2016 elections, SAGE has been forced to develop strong grassroots advocacy muscles to protect our elders from the bigotry of this moment in our country's history. We've flexed that muscle repeatedly, including through our Care Can't Wait campaign, which powerfully opposes discrimination and advocates for LGBT-inclusive eldercare. When Mary Walsh and Bev Nance were turned away by a St. Louis retirement community that decided the couple's 40-year relationship didn't qualify as a "biblical marriage," SAGE drew the line. We partnered with the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) to defend the couple and remind all care providers of their responsibility to respect our community's elders. And we've stood strong with transgender elders in the face of repeated assaults by the Trump administration.

These are just some of the highlights as SAGE marks **40 Fierce Years** and gears up for our elders to be front and center for Stonewall 50 in 2019. As always, thank you for everything you do to make this work possible. Together, we will build a movement that ensures that every LGBT elder—no matter where they live—enjoys the full respect, support, and opportunities they deserve as they age.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Adams'.

**MICHAEL ADAMS**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



## THE YEAR WAS 1978.

It had been nine years since the Stonewall Riots, and just five years since the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of medically recognized mental disorders. It was not safe to be out in the workplace. It was dangerous just to walk the streets as an openly LGBT person. The nation was deeply divided on racial issues and women's rights, and the AIDS crisis was just around the corner.

# BEHIND THE SCENES OF A MOVEMENT

*In our last issue, you heard from two of SAGE's visionary founders, Doug Kimmel and Chris Almvig. As part of our reflection on SAGE's 40 Fierce Years, we're taking you behind the scenes with five individuals who were integral to establishing SAGE and shaping its central place in LGBT history*

We don't often hear the names of the leaders who worked behind the scenes to make progress happen. It took countless brave and bold individuals to continue to push for LGBT equality and carve out a space for LGBT elders during these perilous years. Our interviewees—some of whom were part of SAGE's early years and others who took part decades later—give insight into what it takes to build a movement for LGBT pioneers.



### HAROLD KOODEN

Harold Kooden remembers the moment SAGE evolved from an idea to a reality. "Chris [Almvig] was in school for social work with my boyfriend at the time, and the three of us were talking. For her masters, she mentioned that she wanted to outline an organization that would deal with LGBT elders. This would be the first organization of its kind," Kooden says. "I strongly supported this idea and said I would help her financially, and put her in contact with Doug Kimmel, who was an out gerontologist at the time. It was from these connections that she would soon form a group, which then took on the name of SAGE."

And so it began. SAGE would become the first and largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of a population that had never been in the spotlight—LGBT elders.

"I didn't have any idea that SAGE would become what it is now," he says. "If you can think of what things were like back then, in the late '60s and early '70s, the concept of what we now know as SAGE was beyond our ability to think about. Even the idea of developing an organization just dealing with gay elders was a shock for many people. It came at the right time for those of us creating professional organizations specifically dealing with LGBT issues."



Kooden emphasizes that the creation of SAGE did not begin in a vacuum. It was the result of decades of bottled up tension, hostility, and resistance toward government-endorsed LGBT brutality, he says. “There was a groundswell happening in professional organizations as well as community groups, and they built upon each other,” says Kooden. Kooden was chair of the American Psychological Association’s Task Force on the Status of Lesbian and Gay Psychologists, board member of New York State’s Martin Luther King Jr. Institute for Nonviolence, and co-chair and founder of the National Association of Lesbian and Gay Psychologists, among other esteemed titles.

The LGBT movement struggled in its early years to find its footing in an era where racial justice and women’s issues were also at the forefront of the national dialogue, Kooden says.

“This was a time when intersectionality was beginning to be discussed as a way to bridge the dissension in our community. SAGE, in working with other developing LGBT organizations, was critical in these forward-thinking discussions.”

### AMBER HOLLIBAUGH



Amber Hollibaugh looks back on SAGE’s early years from a unique vantage point, having been both a SAGE Board member in the early 1980s and a full-time SAGE employee in the late 1990s.

“We were trying to figure out how to build a queer movement, because the movement itself wasn’t built yet,” said Hollibaugh about SAGE’s first several years. “Mapping SAGE’s growth from its very beginning to its current moment is really a remarkable trail of the growth of the movement. It gives a template of what the issues were and what had to be done to confront them.”

Hollibaugh, a filmmaker, writer, and political activist, came to SAGE to fill a void that had been missing.

“Ken Dawson [then executive director of SAGE] was a close friend. I was in my forties at the time, and he wanted to try and figure out how to put a younger person on the Board, because he felt as though there wasn’t an intergenerational engagement,” Hollibaugh says. “Women’s rights, race issues, and conversations about class were radical at the time. I brought

conversations about these issues to the SAGE Board. I was part of a small cohort of women, including Edie Windsor, who fought to make women’s issues a priority within the LGBT movement.”

When SAGE began, the biggest roadblock was funding, says Hollibaugh. Because of the overall anti-LGBT political climate, SAGE often failed to find supporters who would fund anything having to do with the LGBT movement. “Sadly, HIV/AIDS allowed us to build a much larger economic infrastructure, because we had no choice,” she says. “We had to do it in order to take care of our own community.”

### STAN NEWMAN



During the early years of SAGE, when fundraising was an uphill battle, the organization stayed afloat because of people like Stan Newman, who became involved with SAGE just a couple of years after its inception. He joined the development committee and

worked to raise funding at a time when it seemed almost impossible. He has since been a major contributor to SAGE’s growth.

“In those years, SAGE was just a social worker and two helpers. It really was a shoestring operation,” says Newman. “It was beyond hard to raise funding—a \$500 contribution was a big deal. The political climate was anti-gay, and being active in anything related to being gay or contributing was a form of coming out. You didn’t talk about it; you didn’t make a point of it. Gay worlds were quiet.”

But that would soon change.

“The real breakthrough of fundraising was the AIDS epidemic. When HIV/AIDS came, people weren’t hiding anymore. They were coming out to participate, and they were writing checks.”

### MICHAEL SELTZER



LGBT activist Michael Seltzer was another driving force behind SAGE’s evolution and growth. In fact, Seltzer helped SAGE receive its first grant.

“In the early years, I counted each grant as an LGBT victory,” said Seltzer. “I knew Ken [Dawson] from activist circles, and also knew



David Rothenberg, the founder of the Fortune Society. Together we formed a support group for LGBT leaders who were in the nonprofit field. Ken was among those who were the first generation of LGBT people working at an LGBT organization. He was a trailblazer. The idea of being an LGBT professional was foreign at the time. Today we take that for granted.”

Seltzer saw SAGE come into its own, with a goal that was unusual for its time: “Ken, from the very beginning, envisioned SAGE as something that could be national. He really stood out as someone with a larger vision.”

Before the AIDS crisis, “We were basically financed from individual contributors. Other civil rights and human rights organizations were getting foundation grants, but in the late ’70s and early ’80s, we weren’t. Funding our community was put solely on our backs,” Seltzer says.

Like many nonprofits, SAGE is still dependent on individual contributors. But as it has grown into the national and intergenerational organization that Ken Dawson envisioned, it has also grown increasingly able to win grants to fulfill its mission.

## ACHEBE POWELL



Achebe (formerly known as Betty) Powell, one of the founders of the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, was connected to SAGE in the 1990s by Amber Hollibaugh. As a consultant, Powell worked to bring racial diversity to SAGE, which meant having a racially diverse workforce as well as reaching and serving racially diverse LGBT elders.

“Similar to many other organizations at the time, SAGE came to a point where it needed to deal head-on with race. I was tasked with trying to help them assess diversity needs. There were growing pains, but we needed to be in there where the wounds were.”

In her work, Powell emphasized the power of intersectionality. “All of our movements—the black civil rights movement, the women’s movement, and the LGBT movement—were so important to link to each other. It’s critical for the long game. It’s about human rights, and we need to work in that context to make this movement much larger than just us,” Powell says.

“It’s the continuing work of our current and future leaders to think in this visionary way, because we have to secure the rights of us all on this planet. We can never stop bending the arc of history toward justice—for all of us.” ●

## REMEMBERING KEN DAWSON



As SAGE’s executive director in the 1980s, Ken Dawson was a true visionary of his time.

Dawson took the helm of SAGE a decade after the Stonewall Riots and the

emergence of the modern LGBT movement. He worked relentlessly to shine a spotlight on the injustices and discrimination faced by LGBT elders.

One of the most powerful parts of Ken’s legacy was his passion for advocacy as a central aspect of SAGE’s work. Ken is credited with shifting SAGE’s focus to activism and self-help, which was groundbreaking for its time, particularly at the height of the AIDS crisis, when the LGBT community faced an existential threat and needed to dramatically challenge the status quo. Ken also recognized that organizational leaders play a critical role and need to be supported. He helped found support groups for LGBT executive directors at the national level and in New York City, and forged a deep and enduring connection between SAGE and the Broadway community, which frequently added star power to SAGE’s events.

As we honor SAGE’s early pioneers and individuals who shaped **40 Fierce Years**, we celebrate the brilliant legacy of Ken Dawson. SAGE will mark Stonewall 50 with the launch of a new Ken Dawson Leadership in Advocacy Award in 2019, to be presented each year to a SAGE affiliate leader who has done outstanding policy advocacy work on behalf of LGBT elders.



# LGBT ELDERS NOW HAVE A PLACE TO CALL HOME

**SAGE will soon make history when it opens two LGBT-friendly housing developments, one of which will be the largest in the country**

**T**his year, SAGE is celebrating a historic accomplishment—fulfilling a decades-long dream of building LGBT-welcoming housing for our community's elders. Housing has been a focal point of SAGE's vision since the 1980s. Over the years, SAGE has worked to address LGBT elder housing needs while sparking a national conversation on how to improve policies, create cultural competency practices, and strengthen anti-discrimination protections for older LGBT people. In the past year, these efforts have been featured in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Washington Post*, among many other outlets.

The Ingersoll Senior Residences under construction in Brooklyn's Fort Greene.

Photo by Deirdre Reznik, dpi.nyc







Crotona Senior Residences architect's rendering; breaking ground at Crotona in May; SAGE Center Bronx member Marie Spivey.

In 2019, the year in which we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising, SAGE will open two LGBT-friendly affordable housing developments in New York City—Ingersoll and Crotona Senior Residences. The timing is purposeful and significant, honoring the Stonewall generation by ensuring that they have access to the housing they need and ensuring they have the chance to age with dignity and respect.

**This historic accomplishment is the culmination of years of SAGE's research documenting LGBT elders' housing needs and advocating fiercely for change.**

The Ingersoll Senior Residences in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, will be the largest LGBT elder housing development in the country with 145 apartments. The 17-story building will have three outdoor terraces and feature a state-of-the-art SAGE Center on the ground floor, where residents can find community via extensive programs and services. Crotona Senior Residences in the Bronx will offer 83 affordable apartments and a beautiful roof garden and will also feature a SAGE Center on the ground floor.

The need for this kind of housing is vital, especially given the high levels of housing discrimination that LGBT elders face. In 2014, the Equal Rights Center conducted a national study that found that 48 percent of same-sex couples who apply for senior rental housing are subjected to discrimination. The study's findings are consistent with SAGE's experience on the ground working

with tens of thousands of LGBT elders across the country.

In response, SAGE launched its National LGBT Elder Housing Initiative (NHI) in 2015. The multi-pronged initiative includes advocacy and training to open up the larger senior housing sector to LGBT older people, consumer resources to empower LGBT elders with the information they need to find the best housing options, and support for building LGBT-friendly elder housing in communities across the country. The NHI was seeded with a visionary \$1 million matching grant from the Calamus Foundation, which sparked other investors to support the initiative, including Citi Community Development. The Calamus Foundation, together with Citi Community Development, remain SAGE's lead funders and partners for the NHI.

"Nationwide, there are less than 600 units of affordable housing focused on the needs of the LGBT elderly," said Bob Annibale, Global Director of Citi Community Development and Inclusive Finance. "As the LGBT population rapidly grows toward 7 million by 2030, more housing needs to be intentional and inclusive to their needs. By expanding SAGE's efforts to provide technical assistance and training to communities and housing providers, we aim to help ensure that affordable housing is inclusive and welcoming."

Marie Spivey, 64, a participant at the SAGE Center Bronx, spoke at the groundbreaking for Crotona Senior Residences and described why LGBT-friendly housing is critical for elders. As Marie shared: "Everyone deserves to grow old with dignity and respect, and a bit of happiness. This place will hopefully help me, and other older LGBT people, live their best lives as they get older." ●

# THE ONGOING **THREAT** OF RELIGIOUS-BASED LGBT DISCRIMINATION

**A series of religious-liberty laws backed by the Trump administration are causing a grave threat to LGBT elders across the country**

**T**heir story is heartbreaking. Missouri lesbian couple Mary Walsh and Beverly Nance were preparing for the next chapter of their lives and wanted nothing more than to stay in the community that they've called home their whole lives. What happened next was not what Mary and Bev were expecting.

After they put down a deposit—and put their home on the market—in anticipation of their move to Friendship Village Sunset Hills, a senior housing facility outside of St. Louis, the couple was turned away. The facility refused the couple because it followed the “Biblical definition” of marriage as “between a man and a woman.”

The couple made national headlines, but Mary and Bev are not alone. In more than half the country, LGBT Americans live in fear of being fired from a job, turned away from a business, or denied a place to live—all because of who they are. A majority—60 percent—of states do not explicitly prohibit discrimination against LGBT people. And there is no federal law protecting LGBT Americans from discrimination.

LGBT older people are particularly vulnerable to discrimination because religiously affiliated organizations provide a majority of the services they rely on for their most basic needs. In fact, 85 percent of nonprofit continuing care retirement communities are religiously affiliated, as highlighted

**In more than half the country, LGBT Americans still live in fear of being fired from a job, turned away from a business, or denied a place to live—ALL BECAUSE OF WHO THEY ARE.**

in *Dignity Denied: Religious Exemptions and LGBT Elder Services*, a recent report by SAGE, the Movement Advancement Project (MAP), and Columbia Law School's Public Rights/Private Conscience Project.

Mary and Bev are a real-life example of the consequences of the dangerous expansion of so-called religious exemptions. A coordinated, nationwide effort is being made to pass religious exemption laws and policies, and to file lawsuits that would allow individuals, businesses, and even government contractors to use religion as a license to discriminate against a range of communities, including LGBT people.

In response to the ongoing threat of religious-based LGBT discrimination, SAGE fought back, launching its Care Can't Wait campaign in May. The campaign, which has reached thousands of supporters across the country, is mobilizing LGBT elders, allies, providers, and all who believe in caring for our community members to stand with LGBT elders in the face of religious-based discrimination. To date, more than 25,000 people have signed the Care Can't Wait pledge. When news of Mary and Bev's story broke, SAGE joined forces with the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and via an expansion of its Care Can't Wait campaign asked supporters to pledge to stand with Mary



Mary Walsh and Bev Nance

Photo from National Center for Lesbian Rights



**With Care Can't Wait as a rallying cry, SAGE will continue to fight against any proposed legislation that allows a license to discriminate against LGBT people, ESPECIALLY LGBT ELDERS.**

and Bev—and all LGBT older adults—in the face of discrimination. The campaign on behalf of Mary and Bev netted nearly 3,000 petitioners and a growing awareness of the couple's plight, including a major feature in the *New York Times* in August.

SAGE's Missouri affiliate, SAGE of PROMO Fund, which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary, worked on the ground to rally petitioners, educate the community, and spur change on behalf of Mary and Bev. "During our anniversary celebration event, we brought together over 150 LGBT community members, allies, and aging professionals in support of LGBT elders aging with dignity and respect," says Dan Stewart, the program coordinator of SAGE of PROMO Fund. "LGBT Missourians know that care can't wait. The discrimination Mary and Bev went through unfortunately mirrors countless stories from others across the state."

In fact, Stewart says that a month before Mary and Bev's lawsuit against Friendship Village became public, another local lesbian couple contacted him, sharing a similar story of discrimination. "The couple had decided to downsize and looked into Friendship Village as a potential future home, but upon inquiring about housing, the staff informed them that they would not be able to move in as a



Kamila Harris

same-sex couple," says Stewart. "In response, they reached out to SAGE of PROMO Fund to use our LGBT-affirming information and referral network to learn of supportive housing options."

Hopefully Friendship Village will soon be in the minority. Hundreds of aging providers across the country are working with programs like SAGECare, which provides LGBT cultural competency training to housing service providers.

"It is absolutely crucial for the LGBT community to not only *feel* welcome within long-term care but to *be* welcomed," says Ryan McHugh, executive director at Sunrise Senior Living in Missouri. "Typically, this population has already dealt with discrimination throughout their lives, overcoming many unnecessary obstacles to simply living a normal life. These individuals shouldn't have to continue to fight for happiness when it is their right as a human being."

In his line of work, McHugh says he has seen LGBT discrimination in long-term care settings "too often and at too many levels. It exposes the true cowardice of hiding behind the shroud of religion when it is really just the hypocritical ideology of these company leaders," says McHugh. "Despite making major progress in recent years, the LGBT population will continue to struggle for their basic human rights. Thankfully, I am part of a very inclusive organization that celebrates individuality rather than alienates due to our differences."

With Care Can't Wait as a rallying cry, SAGE will continue to fight against any proposed legislation that allows a license to discriminate against LGBT people, especially LGBT elders. ●



Hannah Stewart

For its 10th anniversary, SAGE of PROMO Fund rallied 150-plus community members and allies in support of LGBT elders.

# My Religion Stops Where Your Civil Rights Begin

by Bishop Gene Robinson

The separation between church (or any religious group) and state is being eroded—and LGBT citizens may pay a high price for that diminishment of our constitutionally protected rights

**C**ontrary to what we are often told, religious freedom is not under attack in America, nor is it being undermined by government. I am free to believe whatever my religion teaches, to proclaim the tenets of my faith to any who will listen, and to practice my religion (pray, bless, marry and bury, and attempt to convert others to my way of understanding God/religion). The government even allows me to deduct my contributions to my church as a charitable exemption.

What is at issue is this: where does my religion end and your rights begin? Does my freedom to exercise my religion extend to denying you your rights under the Constitution? Religion must never be allowed to take precedence over the laws and rights as expressed in our Constitution.

Earlier this year, a Colorado court found that a baker who refused to provide a wedding cake for a gay couple's wedding was in violation of Colorado's anti-discrimination law. The case moved to the Supreme Court, where they ruled—on very narrow grounds—that the baker wasn't handled with proper respect and overturned the original ruling. This sends a terrible message to conservative, anti-gay religious people that they have every right to discriminate—and use religion as a license to discriminate.

As I approach a time when I will need long-term medical attention and end-of-life care, I am alarmed that certain long-term care facilities may be allowed to deny me

admission and services based on their religious condemnation of LGBT people. Recent research by SAGE, the Movement Advancement Project (MAP), and Columbia Law School's Public Rights/Private Conscience Project shows that as many as 85 percent of continuing care facilities are affiliated with a religious institution. Fourteen percent of hospitals in this country are also connected with a religious entity.

In long-term care, same-sex partners or spouses may be denied the opportunity to share their housing, and a same-sex spouse may not be included in decision making in the ways a heterosexual spouse would. Happiness and security for LGBT elders may be tenuous and determined more by geography than by the law. More than half of states still have no protections for LGBT people! That's why I supported

SAGE when it launched Care Can't Wait, a campaign that specifically targeted religious-based discrimination in long-term care facilities by asking care providers, people of faith, and all who believe in caring for our community members to take a pledge to stand with LGBT elders in the face of discrimination.

Religious leaders of all kinds should take offense at this weaponization of religion to harm an already-vulnerable population. Our constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion gives you the right to believe and worship as you will. But as a gay elder, my citizenship should protect me from your religion. ●



**THE RT. REV.  
V. GENE  
ROBINSON**

was elected Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003, becoming the first openly gay and partnered priest to be elected bishop in historic Christianity. After leaving that position in 2013, he served as Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress, and in 2017 became Vice President of Religion and Senior Pastor at the Chautauqua Institution in western New York State.

*The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of SAGE or its employees.*

*As a gay elder,  
my citizenship  
should protect  
me from your  
religion.*



# AN UNPRECEDENTED ATTACK

## THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION HAS RELENTLESSLY TARGETED THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY SINCE ITS INAUGURATION IN 2017— *AND SAGE IS FIGHTING BACK*



**ROBIN  
BAULDWIN**

is 20 years old  
and from California



**LELAND  
KOBLE**

is 61 years old  
and from Florida

It has been a deeply challenging two years for transgender people, whose rights and livelihoods have been continually threatened under the Trump administration. Early on, the administration sought to erase transgender elders from a key federal aging survey. More recently, they indicated their intent to roll back the Obama administration's Affordable Care Act guidance protecting transgender people from discrimination. And now, per a bombshell report from the *New York Times*, the administration aims to advance a starkly narrow definition of gender as official public policy with the goal of effectively writing transgender people out of existence when it comes to the federal government.

SAGE has fought back against these ongoing attacks, successfully leading a nationwide campaign that forced the Trump administration to restore transgender elders to the National Survey on Older Americans Act. We are working closely with the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) against the Affordable Care Act rollback and gearing up to vigorously oppose the extreme redefining of gender for federal purposes.

These relentless assaults are particularly dangerous for transgender older people, who already face profound challenges and experience striking obstacles to accessing culturally competent health care, services, and housing. The economic and personal impact of this prejudice can accumulate over a lifetime to severely impact financial security.

Several years ago, SAGE joined forces with the National Center for Transgender Equality to release a first-of-its-kind report that outlines these challenges and recommends a comprehensive agenda to improve the quality of life for transgender older people. The report underlines not only the obstacles, but also the resiliencies of transgender elders, who have demonstrated a profound ability to forge ahead even in the face of such stark challenges.

Much of that resiliency comes from the wisdom developed and shared across generations of transgender people. To get a firsthand take on the current moment, SAGE spoke with 20-year-old Robin Baldwin of California and 61-year-old Leland Koble of Florida to get a firsthand perspective.

**Q** ***SAGE:** Robin and Leland, how long have you known about your gender identity, and when did you begin your transition? What were the major challenges you faced in doing so?*

**Robin:** I first knew when I was around 8. I would be in my mom's room trying on her dresses, her skirts, and her shoes. As I got older I found out what it meant to be transgender, and I felt that I just fit into that category. I didn't come out as transgender until my junior year of high school, when I felt comfortable in my own skin.

I grew up in a very Christian home. My brothers and my mother were very confused, because all of their lives I had been gay. It took them a year to start calling me Robin and using the right pronouns. Even at school, teachers would call me by the wrong name. I would tell them to say Robin, but they would still say Robert. My classmates would be snickering and laughing. That was, and still is, a very challenging aspect of it.

**Leland:** I never felt feminine, but we didn't question it back then. You were just gay. You didn't get to say, "I think I'm a boy," because you just didn't do that then. I lived my life as a lesbian, but there was always a stopping point, because I never felt like a lesbian. I realized something was wrong in kindergarten. I was playing dodgeball, and the teachers said, "All the little boys line up over here, and all the little girls line up over there." I was 5 years old, jumping up and down all excited, and ran over to the little boys. I'll never forget—it was the first time I had any recognition that I was different, because the teacher grabbed me by the shirt and said, "Cathy, you belong over here." It was my first realization of gender identity. They called my dad in and said, "Your daughter's going to have to conform to the dress code." When this was happening, of course, I didn't realize the gravity of what my parents did for me. My dad just looked at the principal and said, "Yeah, that's not going to happen." I was very fortunate to always be able to live my life authentically with no pressures from my friends, family, or school. I transitioned when I was 54 years old.

**Q** *We've made real progress on transgender issues, with society starting to become more accepting of people who are transgender. But with that acceptance has also come a strong backlash—by states, and now by the federal government. What is your reaction to this?*

**Robin:** One of the main things that concerned me most was when the Trump administration rescinded an Obama administration policy that allowed students to use bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity. I remember the first day I went into the girls' locker room, all the girls were like, "Oh, my God, Robin. You're finally here." They were hugging me, and they were so excited. To have a presidency that doesn't see the need for such an order is just mind-blowing to me.

**Leland:** As scary as this administration is, I think that it's a positive thing in some ways. There is always a terrible resistance before a huge change. I think that's where the transgender community is right now. Because of all the outrageous things that are happening, people are starting to say, "I can't sit back and wait anymore. I need to stand up and be a part of a change." We're banding together more and realizing that the only way we're going to get this to stop is to join together. We can't sit silently. People are looking at what it means to be a man much

**"BECAUSE OF ALL THE OUTRAGEOUS THINGS THAT ARE HAPPENING, PEOPLE ARE STARTING TO SAY, 'I CAN'T SIT BACK AND WAIT ANYMORE. I NEED TO STAND UP AND BE A PART OF A CHANGE.'"**

differently. I know, because when I put a suit and tie on and go out, I'm treated completely different than when I dress in a way that makes it questionable whether I'm male or female. I think that change is going to come, and I pray it will in my lifetime.

**Q** *There are more than 3 million LGBT older people in the U.S., and this number will double in the next two decades with the Baby Boomer generation. When it comes to transgender rights and social acceptance, are you hopeful for future generations?*

**Robin:** Yes. I feel like a lot of transgender people are seeing what's going on and they're putting on their running shoes. They're running toward the idea of



not wanting the next generation to end up how we are, you know? I feel like a lot of that is owed to the older generation of transgender people who fought for rights that I, as a young transgender person, now have. They've been through things that I've never been through. I feel hopeful about young and old transgender people coming together and building on the past to help with the present.

**“I’VE ENCOUNTERED OLDER TRANSGENDER WOMEN AND MEN WHO HAVE TAUGHT ME SO MANY THINGS ABOUT LIFE—ABOUT BEING STRONG, ABOUT NOT LETTING WHAT’S HAPPENING IN THIS ADMINISTRATION AFFECT WHAT’S HAPPENING IN MY LIFE AND IN MY HEART AS A HUMAN BEING.”**

**Leland:** I think that there are a lot more people stepping forward. I know that in South Florida, we're seeing more being done for the transgender community. As far as people retiring, I am now seeing LGBT-focused retirement homes. I have great hope for the transgender community, and for the future. I believe there will come a point where there won't be criticism. There will be freedom. It's just like any other change. It's always an uphill battle until it's not. It's going to be a struggle, but we're a strong community. We'll persevere.

**Q** *At SAGE, we've seen the power of intergenerational conversations and the impact that they can have on both younger and older transgender people. Do you feel there is a need for more connection, particularly between the younger and older members of transgender communities?*

**Robin:** A lot of younger LGBT people can learn from older LGBT people because they've gone through so much. They can teach us lessons about how to get through the trials that we're going through. There is a need for that connectivity between young and old, because I can learn things from Leland that I won't learn from my 19-year-old classmate. I want that, because I can take those lessons with me throughout life. Then, when I reach that trial, or when I reach that bridge, I can remember those moments of growth that I learned from someone older. As a young transgender woman, I've encountered older transgender women and men who have taught me so many things about life—about being strong, about not letting what's happening in this administration affect what's happening in my life and in my heart as a human being.



## **NYC MAYOR SIGNS PIVOTAL GENDER MARKER BILL**

In a significant step forward for transgender, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary New Yorkers, New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio signed groundbreaking legislation to add a third gender option on birth certificates. The new law—signed at the Edie Windsor SAGE Center in Manhattan on October 9, 2018—also eliminates a prior invasive policy requiring a letter from a physician or an affidavit by a licensed health care provider to change gender markers on birth certificates. The new gender category will be included on all birth certificates beginning on January 1, 2019. New York City joined the states of Oregon, California, Washington, and New Jersey, all of which have passed similar legislation allowing for a third gender marker on identification documents.

**Leland:** We have to appreciate where we come from. Elder transgender people have been putting in work for a really long time, and we didn't have the privileges that the younger generation has. We couldn't just go have surgery or take hormones or anything. We just stayed closeted. But we can't change the past, and we can't be bitter about the way it was. We just have to keep on thinking, from here on out, "What can we do to help this next generation?" I think that's what we have to focus on.

**Q** *Despite your differences, you have had some shared experiences from being transgender. What have you learned from each other during this conversation?*

**Robin:** I love hearing the stories of people who have been trailblazers for me. It's beautiful, because without your story I wouldn't be here. I've learned from you, Leland, a new sense of what it means to be inspired, because your story did really touch me.

**Leland:** I think that I've learned we still have a lot of work to do to educate the world about how important it is for our children and our youth to be able to live authentically. Listening to you makes me realize that we have a lot more work to accomplish. •

*For a full transcript of this conversation, visit [sageusa.org](http://sageusa.org).*

## A Day of Advocacy Decades in the Making

The concerns of LGBT elders will soon be front and center as SAGE affiliates and members from coast to coast converge in Washington D.C.

**F**ifty years ago this coming June, LGBT elder pioneers started the fight for LGBT equality at the Stonewall Inn in New York City. As the nation nears the 50th anniversary of this watershed moment for the LGBT movement, SAGE and LGBT elders from across the country will gather in D.C. for SAGE's first-ever National Day of Advocacy on March 13, 2019.

The Day of Advocacy will be held in conjunction with the annual SAGENet meeting, where SAGE affiliates gather to share ideas, participate in training sessions, and sharpen their advocacy skills. SAGENet affiliate leaders, SAGE constituents, and allies will speak directly with their senators and representatives about their needs as LGBT older people—just as newly elected officials are taking office. This is a chance for those constituents to say, for example, "I live in Alaska. I am an LGBT older person in your district, and here's what's important to me."



There's a lot to discuss, including the importance of protecting Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. The group will also prioritize talking to legislators about the Older Americans Act (OAA), which provides about \$2 billion in national funding to states for essential supports like caregiver respite, transportation, and home meal delivery.

The relationships that are forged during this Day of Advocacy will work to help SAGE and its allies come together to pass the Equality Act, a national policy that aims to protect LGBT people from discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations, and more.

As we commemorate the 50th anniversary of Stonewall and the founding of the modern-day LGBT rights movement, our elders will continue their advocacy, sending a loud and clear message to Congress that we will continue to fight relentlessly until all LGBT elders have equal protection under the law. •



# The untold experiences of LGBT elders

## AROUND the WORLD



*LGBT elders and their advocates, led by SAGE, had a major presence at this summer's International Federation on Ageing (IFA) Global Conference in Toronto*

**S**assa Almendro Zeballos knew from an early age she was different. “When I was a kid, I felt like I was a girl. I was always aware of that since I was a child.”

Zeballos, 68, who lives in Bolivia, knew that at that time that coming out was simply not an option. Still, Zeballos persevered and now finally feels comfortable in her own skin. “I am convinced that we cannot be invisible, discriminated against, or excluded.”

Zeballos attended this year's 14th International Federation on Ageing Global Conference (IFA), which included an entire track of programs on LGBT aging. The seed for this idea was first planted when SAGE CEO Michael Adams traveled to Australia to present a workshop on LGBT aging at the 2016 IFA conference. When Adams discovered there was a desire to learn and do more for LGBT elders across the globe, he helped make the 2018 conference have a robust LGBT aging track. The conference illuminated the often-untold experiences of LGBT elders from around the world—people like Zeballos, who now advocates on behalf of LGBT elders in her native Bolivia.

SAGE proudly sponsored Zeballos' attendance at the conference, which drew advocates from



SAGE CEO Michael Adams at the IFA Global Conference.

Australia, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Panama, Puerto Rico, Kenya, and more. The LGBT track at the conference included three special “town hall” sessions, numerous workshops, and the first-ever LGBT-inclusive Addressing Inequalities Summit.

“We live in an increasingly interconnected world,” says Adams, “and SAGE is the world's largest organization focused exclusively on LGBT older people. So it's no surprise that in recent years people and organizations from across the globe have been reaching out to SAGE for help with their efforts to address the needs of LGBT elders in their





# PASSING ON LESSONS TO THE NEXT LGBT GENERATION

In 2018, SAGE ramped up its efforts to bring together LGBT people and allies of all ages. We launched our National LGBT Mentoring Initiative in several cities across the U.S., inviting younger and older LGBT people to meet, share stories and experiences, and connect with one another through intergenerational skill-sharing. We also celebrated another successful SAGE Table, bringing together LGBT folks of all ages from across the country, and even the world, to sit down in person, have a meal, and have a meaningful conversation.



“Growing up, I didn’t have positive LGBTQ role models. I want to be a better role model for our youth. It’s a rewarding, personal satisfaction to be able to contribute to the community.”

—SAGE MENTORING PARTICIPANT



“There was a woman in her eighties who had been disowned by her family. Most of her friends had passed away, and she doesn’t really get to socialize anymore. She’s having surgery next week and said there’s no one to check on her even if she makes it through. After our SAGE Table, that’s changing. My wife and I are going to visit her in the hospital, and multiple people at the table offered to help her with her grocery shopping and to run errands. AND we’re taking her to Sacramento Pride in June. She hasn’t been in 20 years.”

—SAGE TABLE PARTICIPANT

“I thought the mentoring event went so well because it was a no-pressure environment to interact, and EVERYONE had something to offer. We belong to each other, and I think the mentoring event showed that beautifully.”

—SAGE MENTORING PARTICIPANT





# OVERHEARD

IN SAGE'S DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

**Joey Wasserman:** So how's that Match thing you have going?

**Jerry Chasen:** I assume you're talking about SAGE's Legacy Match Campaign fueled by the Edie Windsor Challenge Fund? It's been kind of amazing—we've learned about some very generous gifts that many supporters have planned for SAGE in the future. They've also shared how motivated they were to make these estate gifts now, with the knowledge that SAGE will receive a current matching gift just by informing us of the gift they've planned for the future.

**Joey:** Remind me again—how does it work?

**Jerry:** It's pretty simple. Typically, with a match, a donor says, "I'll match all contributions, or a percentage of contributions, that come in during a certain period of time." With me so far?

**Joey:** Go on...

**Jerry:** A legacy match is similar, except that it's not a *current* contribution that's being matched; instead, it's the current value of a *legacy* gift that is part of a donor's estate plan. We know that values may change—inflation, depletion of assets from use, market volatility, you name it. The value is not likely to be precise, nor necessarily reflective of what the gift will actually be in years to come. A good faith estimate of the current value is what we need.

**Joey:** I'm a little confused.

**Jerry:** Here's an example. Let's say you own your apartment and today it's worth \$500,000. You could make a plan to donate your apartment to SAGE as part of your legacy giving and during our match campaign, we would receive a current cash contribution based on a percentage of the \$500,000 value.



Joey Wasserman and Jerry Chasen of SAGE discuss the Edie Windsor Challenge Fund.

**Joey:** How do I sign up?

**Jerry:** It's really easy. All you have to do is complete a Bequest Intention Form. The form is available online at [www.sageusa.org/legacy-match](http://www.sageusa.org/legacy-match). It can be downloaded, printed, and filled out or completed online. And of course, if anyone has trouble accessing the form, I would be happy to send it to them.

**Joey:** So how much gets matched? What happens with that \$500,000 apartment?

**Jerry:** Well that depends on whether the donor had previously told us that they included SAGE in their planning. If the donor did not previously let us know their intention, then the match is 10:1, meaning that for every \$10 of value in the Bequest Intention Form, SAGE will receive a current contribution of \$1. If the donor had already told SAGE about their planned gift and is a member of the Taylor Society, then the match is 20:1,



meaning that for every \$20 of value described in the form, SAGE will receive a current contribution of \$1.

So in this case, if the donor already let us know that they included SAGE in their planning, we would receive a current contribution of \$25,000. If the gift is new, we would receive \$50,000—*right now*.

**Joey:** Where does this current contribution come from?

**Jerry:** That's where it gets super-sweet. Before she died, Edie Windsor had agreed to co-chair this campaign. We named the fund after Edie because it is such a marvelous expression of her love for SAGE. Edie contributed generously to our organization, served on our board of



## EDIE WINDSOR • Challenge Fund • SAGE LEGACY MATCH CAMPAIGN

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.

**"We named the fund after Edie because it is such a marvelous expression of her love for SAGE."**

directors twice, and passionately believed in SAGE's mission.

**Joey:** Are some gifts better than others?

**Jerry:** Well, we're obviously grateful for just about every kind of gift. But there are some that may make more sense for the *donor* in certain circumstances. Say a donor wants to include a \$25,000 gift to SAGE in their planning. They can take it from a bank account or from a retirement account, such as a 401(k) or an IRA.

It's quite smart to make a planned gift from a retirement account. Retirement plans are distributed pursuant to instructions contained in beneficiary designation forms, which means no lawyer visit—like you would need for a will or trust—is necessary. SAGE will receive the full amount given, without the tax obligation a person (i.e., a non-charity) who receives the funds would have.

**Joey:** Interesting. Anything else I should know?

**Jerry:** I sometimes hear people say that legacy gifts are only for wealthy people and that they don't have enough to make such a gift possible. But *anyone* can make this type of gift. For example, many people may not have much in investments but own their own home or apartment. When they've passed on, that home or apartment will likely be sold, and there will be cash with which to make a legacy gift to SAGE. Heck, I've even thought about a campaign called "Give us a room!"

**Joey:** What has surprised you the most so far?

**Jerry:** I've been so deeply touched by the robust response that this campaign has received thus far. We've heard from new and existing donors from all over the country. Learning about these gifts allows SAGE to express its appreciation to these donors right now. We're grateful. ●



sage

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# SAGE Raises Over \$1 Million at Annual Gala



Marie Spivey

For 40 years, since the emergence of the LGBT movement and the Stonewall uprising, SAGE has been fighting to build a better future for LGBT elder pioneers—and all LGBT people. On Monday, October 15, 2018, at its annual gala, SAGE celebrated its historic 40th anniversary and raised over \$1 million to support its mission to improve the lives of LGBT older people.



Kevin Williams, John Lake



Stephanie's Child

The event was co-chaired by Larry Chanen, Lisa Davis, Char Defrancesco, and Dawn Fischer. Honorees included actor and activist George Takei, the Honorable Corey Johnson, Speaker of the New York City Council, Kate Kendell of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and Wells Fargo's John Lake.

Andrew Werner,  
Michael Adams, Jeffrey Erdman

Corey Johnson



Liz Schwartz, Kate Kendell



George Takei



Photos by Kamila Harris, Justin McCallum

Michael Adams, Char Defrancesco,  
Marc Jacobs, Stephanie's Child



**SAGE & FRIENDS NEW JERSEY**

September 22, 2018



**HAMPTONS TEA DANCE**

July 14, 2018



**NYC PRIDE** June 24, 2018



**SAGE & FRIENDS HARLEM**

June 21, 2018



**FIRE ISLAND PINES CELEBRATION** June 2, 2018





# SAGE Alaska Has Made Its Mark on the LGBT Movement

*SAGE's affiliate in Alaska is fighting to help the LGBT community win at the ballot box*

Over the past year, Alaska has emerged as a leader in the national fight against concerted, continuous attacks on the LGBT community, particularly those who are transgender.

In April, Anchorage became the first city in the nation to defeat an anti-transgender proposition that would have made it illegal for transgender people to use the locker room and bathroom that match their gender identity. SAGE Alaska was a part of the driving force behind the defeat of the proposition, and worked collectively with like-minded groups in the Fair Anchorage coalition. The coalition included the ACLU, Alaskans Together for Equality, Christians for Equality, Freedom for All Americans, HRC, Identity (which includes SAGE Alaska), the Pride Foundation, and Planned Parenthood.

SAGE Alaska is a program within Identity, a statewide organization that provides support to LGBT older people.

The need for a SAGE chapter in Alaska, which formed in 2016, was critical: In that state, the number of people 60 to 65 has increased 107 percent in the last 10 years. Alaska has the highest health care costs in the U.S., the highest long-term care costs, and a scarcity of affordable housing.

SAGE Alaska co-founder Julie Schmidt says that the organization is focusing on how to overcome the challenges of a sparse landscape that exacerbates LGBT isolation.

"We only have three city hubs and a little over 280,000 people in Anchorage, with only 800,000 people in the whole state. Many LGBT people live in the villages, which is a whole other culture. They don't want to be identified and out."

A statewide survey on the needs of LGBT elders in Alaska revealed three major needs of the LGBT aging community: access to LGBT resources and information; knowledge about activities and events; a variety of places to connect; and assurance about personal safety after being outed when they participate in LGBT events and services.

"Besides Identity, there really aren't that many LGBT aging resources in Alaska," says Schmidt. "People are becoming more and more receptive to the LGBT community, but many people still don't realize that LGBT elders have special needs and circumstances."

Schmidt says the chapter has already begun to dig in to these issues and identify strategies to help the LGBT aging community in the long-term. ●







## SAGE

305 Seventh Avenue  
15<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York NY 10001  
212-741-2247  
[info@sageusa.org](mailto:info@sageusa.org)  
[sageusa.org](http://sageusa.org)  
[lgbtagingcenter.org](http://lgbtagingcenter.org)

## CONNECT WITH SAGE

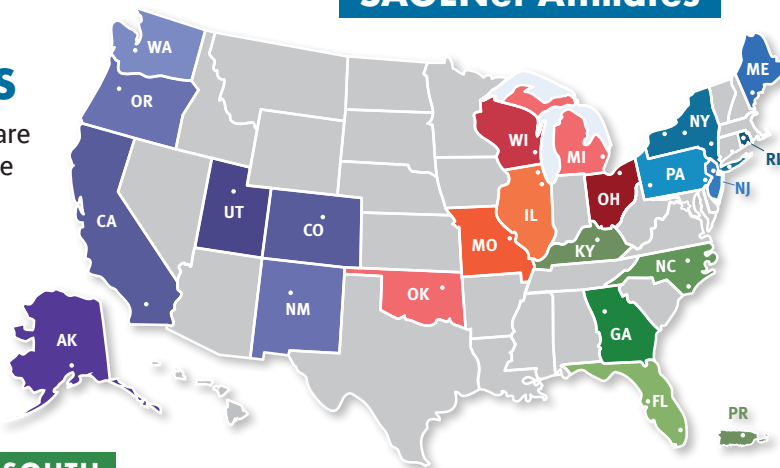
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## SAGENet Affiliates

## 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](http://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 Puerto Rico
- 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



Interested in becoming an affiliate?  
Start the process at [sageusa.org/sagenet](http://sageusa.org/sagenet).

## EDIE WAS WITH US EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.



## SHE STILL IS!

For a limited time, just letting SAGE know that we're included in your planning—and the current value of your gift—entitles us to a matching grant from the **Edie Windsor Challenge Fund!**  
For more: [sageusa.org/legacy-match](http://sageusa.org/legacy-match)



## 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

**A 10% MATCH!**



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



\$100,000 => \$10,000



### EXISTING LEGACY GIFTS

**A 5% MATCH!**



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



\$100,000 => \$5,000

