

THE MAGAZINE OF SERVICES & ADVOCACY FOR GLBT ELDERS

sageSM

Matters

SPRING 2015



HEROES OF PRIDE

WHITE HOUSE
CONFERENCE ON
AGING

HOW TO BE A
TRANS ALLY

CATCHING UP ON
SUCCESSFUL AGING

sage Matters

SAGEMatters is the triannual magazine of Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders (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 adults, 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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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Spring issue of SAGE Matters is always a time to celebrate the great progress we are making as LGBT people, and to honor our amazing LGBT elder pioneers.

To put it simply, it's the time for Pride! In that great tradition, we're so happy to be sharing with you a few of the many inspiring stories that surround us every day at SAGE. Day in and day out, all throughout the year, SAGE's elder constituents are Heroes of Pride in the very best sense—individuals who have made a difference, in ways large and small, by being out and proud of who they are. I know you will be inspired, as I am, by the Heroes of Pride featured in this issue.

It's gratifying to see that the perspectives of LGBT older people are becoming more and more prominent on so many of the most important issues of our times. That's even true in what we hope will be the final battle for marriage equality, playing out at the Supreme Court as we speak. As we discuss in this issue, SAGE led a group of prominent national aging organizations in filing a "friend of the court" brief with the Supreme Court that explains why marriage equality is so important for LGBT older people, who have a particular need for the legal and financial protections that come with marriage. We were thrilled to hear several Justices invoke the experiences of older adults during oral arguments in the case. It seems apparent that the needs and perspectives of older people will be on the Court's mind when it issues what we all hope will be a final blow for justice and marriage equality.

Winning the freedom to marry is going to help the LGBT community and our allies turn our collective attention to other critically important work that remains to be done. One frontier that still must be conquered is protection from discrimination. The stark reality is that in most States, it's perfectly legal to discriminate against an individual based on her sexual orientation or gender identity.

The voices and perspectives of LGBT older people are going to prove crucial in the battles to win anti-discrimination protections in the States where they don't exist. In this issue, you'll read about how we're using SAGE Story, our storytelling initiative for LGBT elders, to make sure that SAGE's constituents are out in front in educating people about how damaging discrimination is and why it's so important that it be legally banned.

While we're pushing the envelope for progress in the States, SAGE remains steadfast in our work to change federal aging policy so that it takes into account the needs of LGBT older people. We've got a big opportunity this summer, when the first White House Conference on Aging in 10 years is scheduled to take place. SAGE has launched a major campaign to use this year's White House Conference to win important new policy victories for LGBT elders. You can read about our efforts, and how you can get involved, in this issue.

While we focus intently on winning in the courts, in the States, and in Washington, DC, we also need to make sure that we are eradicating discrimination and building full inclusion and cultural fluency in our own backyard. To that end, SAGE has launched a series of powerful workshops on "How To Be a Trans Ally." These workshops, which seek to break down the barriers facing older transgender people, build on a groundbreaking report—*Improving the Lives of Transgender Older Adults*—issued by SAGE and the National Center for Transgender Equality a couple years ago. Read all about these important new workshops here.

We hope that you'll find all the stories in this latest issue of SAGE Matters to be inspiring and informative. Thank you for your support for LGBT elders, our true Heroes of Pride!

Michael Adams, *Executive Director*

IN THIS ISSUE

Heroes of Pride 3

Federal Policy Update 6

SAGE Advice 8

Learning to Become Trans Allies

SAGE Faces 10

Howard Leifman

Successful Aging 11

Q&A with Jerry Chasen

SAGE Story 12

A New Chapter

Aging in America 13

SAGE Winter/Spring Roundup ... 14

Healthy Aging 18

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Cover Photo:

SAGE Participant Cedric Burgess, courtesy the *Washington Blade*



By Kira Garcia

Heroes of Pride

Every summer, LGBT people across the country step out during Pride season to honor who we are, celebrate the progress we've made, and re-energize ourselves for the battles ahead. Yet in the midst of all the revelry and marching, older people are often overlooked. This year, SAGE is celebrating some lesser-known "Heroes of Pride"—LGBT elder pioneers who have paved the way for so much of our progress toward equality and changed our world in countless ways. These remarkable individuals have advocated for themselves and their communities, worked as activists, broken gender and race barriers, and created change simply by living their lives authentically. We honor these heroes, during pride and all year long!

BARBARA ABRAMS, 70 BROOKLYN NY

Barbara Abrams is a portrait of resilience and positivity. A 70-year old lesbian living in New York City, she looks back on years of remarkable experiences, but is quick to add that she's still "going strong!" After a childhood spent on a hog farm in Florida, Barbara says, "At age 18 I asked my mother 'am I grown?' and she said 'yes baby' so I said 'well then take me to the train station!' I had \$600 and five changes of clothes in a yellow trunk." She arrived in New York City inspired by the images of female independence she had seen on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. At the time, she says, women were expected to get married and have babies, but she knew that wasn't for her.

Barbara found work at The Federal Reserve Bank, where she remained for thirty years.

She remembers that the bank "sent me to college—totally paid for. At the time they could afford to do that! So I was born at the right time. There weren't many other [people of color] in the bank at that time; it was the beginning of an era. That was the freedom march era. Because of those political circumstances, I was able to get a job at a place that was known as kind of hard core about appearances. I changed to blend in. I only shopped on 5th Avenue, and I only wore navy blue, grey or brown."

Despite health issues—Barbara now lives with lupus—she continues to be actively involved in her community, both as a volunteer at SAGE GRIOT in Brooklyn, and as a friend. "My neighbor is coming home after surgery soon, and will be going into a nursing home," she says. "I'm going to inspect the home to make sure that the facility has everything she needs, and

make sure she's surrounded by people who really care and love her."

With unflagging energy and positivity, Barbara sets a terrific example for people of any age, saying "I believe in myself strongly—you have to make your own way in the world." We honor her as an energetic trailblazer and a consistent source of care and kindness in her community.

TESSA, 67 CHICAGO IL

At 67, Tessa (who asked that we use her first name only) has overcome daunting hurdles to live her life to the fullest. A bisexual trans woman, Tessa is a dual amputee who re-learned how to walk. As someone who came out later in life, she's sometimes called courageous. But Tessa says "I had no choice. [It was] either be miserable and suicidal for the rest of my life, or content and happy with myself. I chose the latter." Now, she says, "the thing that I'm most proud of is finally accepting myself for who I am and not being ashamed."

Tessa learned of SAGE through her church, and found that "everyone there was so positive and accepting. It was new for me to be in an environment where you have the freedom to express yourself without fear of being judged, and to realize you are not alone."

Tessa says she celebrates Pride every day, simply by being herself. She says "I am out in the public every day. If someone should ask questions, and they seem to be genuinely interested, I try to answer them truthfully. I feel the more people know about us, the more accepting they will be." Tessa also participates in an annual Transgender Day of Remembrance through her church, which honors the victims of hate crimes. She says "It is



important to make others aware that we are not monsters. We are just people, like everyone else, who want to live their lives in peace and harmony." Finally, she offers a word of advice: "Please remember it is never too late to be one's true self!" We celebrate Tessa's resilience, positivity, and her commitment to trans visibility!

BEV BRANAMAN, 68 RALEIGH NC

Bev Branaman takes pride in the active role that she's played in building her lesbian community, and rightfully so—she's been an energetic advocate and community connector for more than 45 years. As a member of the Raleigh Women's Coffeehouse Collective, she helped create monthly events for lesbian and bisexual women as alternatives to the bar scene. She remembers "potlucks, round robins in which women shared their artistic creations, concerts, a reading of *The Children's Hour*, and health workshops including self-exams." The events also featured well-known members of the community, including artists, comedians and musicians.

Bev's work shouldn't only be described in the past tense, however. She remarks that "many deep friendships developed" through these events, and that an off-



shoot of the Coffeehouse is the Raleigh Women's Potluck, a regular gathering still happening today. She's proud that "the lesbian/bi women's community in Raleigh continues to grow, and old-timers meet new women."

Bev has deep ties to SAGE Raleigh. She says, "As a member of the SAGE committee of the LGBT(Q) Center of Raleigh, I get to connect with the other women and men and gender non-specific members of the committee to plan events." These have included "lunch and learn" events, Valentine's dances, financial and legal clinics, and more. The committee has also "developed connections with municipal leaders, elder service organizations and others." Community leaders like Bev have played a central role in the movement for LGBT equality. We commend her dedication, enthusiasm and long-term commitment to making our world a better place.

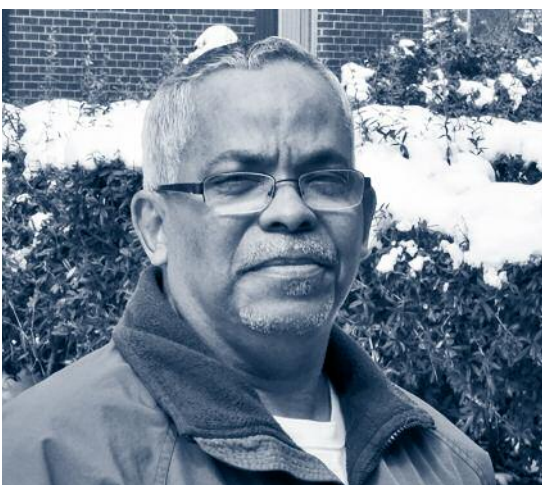


Photo courtesy Washington Blade

CEDRIC BURGESS, 62

WASHINGTON D.C.

As a 62-year-old gay man who has lived with HIV for more than 30 years, Cedric Burgess has spent decades advocating for his own rights and those of others. He has never accepted his diagnosis passively—rather, he is proud to have been “an AIDS advocate from the very beginning, from the late 1980’s all the way to the International AIDS Conference in 2012.”

Born and raised in Washington, D.C., Cedric came out at 19 and remembers the experience fondly. As he told the Washington Blade in a 2014 interview, Cedric remembers “I was accepted by my family. I was taken in...that was a blessing!” He suffered a serious setback in 1982, when a car accident left him with



Clockwise from far left: Barbara Abrams, Bev Branaman, Tessa, Ron Zutz, Cedric Burgess & Chrissie Farthing

back pain and nerve damage, rendering him unable to work for two years.

In 1991, his family encouraged Cedric to get tested for HIV, and he discovered that he was positive. As he recalled in his Blade interview, “I got HIV through a blood transfusion I received when I had my accident. They weren’t screening transfusions for HIV then.” By 2006, the back pain from his injury had returned, becoming so severe that he could no longer work. He has been living with economic hardship ever since.

Despite these struggles, Cedric maintains a positive attitude and a commitment to community activism, including volunteer work with SAGE. He remarks, “It’s great to see an organization caring and sharing information and services for elder LGBT persons.” Cedric has a full schedule for this year’s pride celebrations, saying “I will be proud to serve and volunteer with AARP, SAGE Metro-DC, the DC Office on Aging and Mary’s House during Black and Gay DC Pride.” We salute Cedric for his strength and commitment to making life better for those living with HIV/AIDS!

CHRISSIE FARTHING, 81

ST. LOUIS MO

Chrissie Farthing can recall the exact day she first became aware of her transgender identity. Farthing, who trained as a pilot in the Air Force, continued to fly in her free time until about three years ago. “I was online and by accident found information about transitioning,” she recalls. “I never realized there was anything I could do about my feelings. I was looking up a part for my airplane—a male to female fitting—and all this stuff came up and when I started reading it, I thought, ‘My God, it sounds like they’re talking about me!’” She was 74 at the time, and living alone after losing her wife of 45 years.

Chrissie remembers saying to her doctor, “‘I’m worried that I’ll die before I have the surgery.’ I wanted to live at least one day as a female.” She began to transition as quickly as she could, and she remembers that “I felt awkward, my goodness, did I... but it’s all worked out for the great now. It’s hard to remember that I was ever anything but the female that I am now.”

Some lesbian friends introduced Chrissie to SAGE Metro St. Louis, where she found a community that was “very accepting, very accepting in every way. No matter whether you’re gay male, gay female, transgender, or whatever, you’re welcome.” Now, she says “I’m out in every possible way. I don’t hide anything... I’m happy where I’m at.” We applaud Chrissie for showing us that we can choose to live an authentic, vibrant life at any age.

RON ZUTZ, 64

DENVER COLORADO

SAGE officially stands for “Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders,” but Ron Zutz has created a playful second meaning.

Continued on page 19

SAGE'S ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING

By Kira Garcia

The White House Conference on Aging is one of our country's most important and influential gatherings of thought leaders on aging. Held once each decade since 1961, these critical events have created new ideas and programs benefiting millions of older Americans. This year's White House Conference will be held in July (a final date had not been confirmed when we went to print), and will focus on four major topics: Retirement Security, Healthy Aging, Long-Term Services & Support, and Elder Justice.

History shows us that the White House Conference has the power to create significant change. As the White House has emphasized, the Conference has "prompt[ed] the establishment of and/or key improvements in many of the programs that represent America's commitment to older Americans including: Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and the Older Americans Act," effectively transforming the way our nation thinks about aging.

For SAGE, the Conference is an unparalleled opportunity to generate awareness of, and support for, the unique experiences, challenges and needs of LGBT older adults. At the time of the last White House Conference in 2005 these issues had barely begun to be included



From left: Catherine Thurston and Serena Worthington of SAGE, David Lipsetz, Chief of Staff, Rural Housing Service, Rural Development Agency, US Department of Agriculture, Seth Kilbourn, Openhouse, Karen Fredriksen-Goldsen, University of Washington, and Maya Rupert, Policy Director, NCLR

in mainstream dialogues on aging. In fact, ten years ago SAGE occupied the only delegate chair reserved for an LGBT perspective, among more than 3000 delegates! But thanks to the work of SAGE and our partners (and a much more LGBT-friendly President in the White House), much has changed in the decade since. Today, SAGE is at the center of planning around the White House

Conference. We're beginning to see robust new dialogue in the media on LGBT aging issues. Government at the federal, state and local level is starting to step up to the plate to make public policies on aging LGBT-inclusive. And an array of exciting new programs and initiatives designed to address the needs of our LGBT elder pioneers are emerging.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS—WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Despite recent progress, much work remains. To that end, SAGE has identified two critically important goals for the White House Conference on Aging:



winning policy advances for LGBT elders, and making sure that LGBT older people and their allies are as visible and vocal as possible in the numerous proceedings associated with the White House Conference. (This Spring and Summer there are a series of regional summits and listening sessions, leading into the final Conference gathering in July.)

SAGE is advancing three key policy changes via the White House Conference: new steps to protect LGBT older people against discrimination, requirements that

federally-funded aging services be LGBT-inclusive, and better data collection so that LGBT elders are not invisible in policy and funding discussions.

SAGE'S STRATEGY—A PATH FORWARD

To advance this ambitious agenda, SAGE will undertake a three-pronged strategy. First, SAGE is activating its extraordinary community of supporters through social media, special programs at SAGE affiliates across the country, and numerous other activities. One tactic that has proven

Today, SAGE is at the center of planning around the White House Conference. We're beginning to see robust new dialogue in the media on LGBT aging issues.

to be especially effective so far is organizing LGBT older people and their allies to testify at White House Conference listening sessions and regional summits. SAGE scored a major coup in February when we secured an early listening session at the White House dedicated exclusively to LGBT aging issues. Since then, LGBT elders have been represented in numerous regional summits nationwide. For example, at an April summit in Seattle, Patricia McIntyre of SAGE's Olympia, Washington affiliate highlighted the critical issues facing LGBT older people by sharing the story of an older lesbian who had been fired because of her sexual orientation.

Second, we're embarking on a major policy advocacy campaign to include SAGE's key recommendations for change among

those policy advances announced at the White House Conference on Aging in July.

Third, we'll soon be launching a media campaign to increase the visibility of LGBT aging issues in connection with the White House Conference. This campaign won't just influence the Conference; it also will make the stories of LGBT elders more widely known, understood, and shared.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

How will we know how much of a difference SAGE has made at the White House Conference on Aging? First and foremost, we'll be looking to whether, for the very first time, we win policy victories for LGBT older adults via the Conference. We'll also be measuring the level of LGBT inclusion at regional summits and listening sessions. Moreover, SAGE's campaign isn't stopping in July. To the contrary, we intend to take full advantage of the momentum we are building around the White House Conference on Aging by continuing to push forward aggressively to improve the quality of life and opportunities for LGBT older people.

JOIN US!

We hope you'll join SAGE's efforts to ensure this year's White House Conference on Aging has game-changing impact for LGBT older people. Please visit the special White House Conference page on SAGE's web site at sageusa.org/whcoa. If you are an LGBT older person, you can take an important survey so that SAGE can share your perspective directly with the White House. No matter who you are and how you want to get involved, you will find lots of valuable information available at your fingertips. Together we will make the 2015 White House Conference on Aging one for the record books!

LEARNING TO BECOME TRANS ALLIES

By Kira Garcia

How can we in the LGBT community best support each other? We spend lots of time advocating for our rights outside of our community, but sometimes forget to ask this question of ourselves. With the debut of “How to Be a Trans Ally” workshops at SAGE last December, we took an important step toward creating stronger allegiances and better understanding among our own community members. These monthly gatherings are led by transgender facilitators who guide discussions, field questions, and build understanding among trans and cisgender (non-trans) participants.

“A lot of cis people don’t expect to identify with trans people, but so many of us in the LGBT community design our own lives despite expectations.”

— KATIE LIEDERMAN

SAGE Program Coordinator Katie Liederman, who founded the program, is dedicated to promoting more participation by trans older people at SAGE. “We’re trying to address some discomfort among trans participants who don’t always feel included,” says Liederman. “Historically, members of LGBT communities often have socialized in distinct groupings,

so many people don’t have that much exposure to people outside their group. This program breaks down those barriers.”

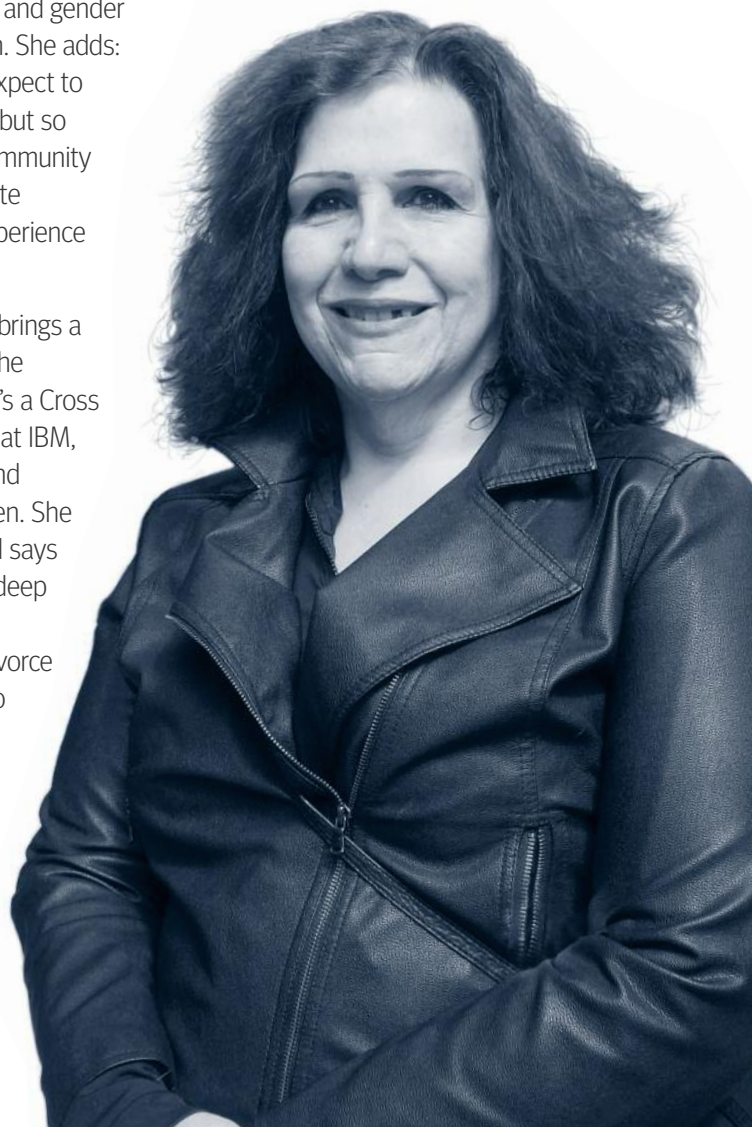
Liederman gets especially animated when talking about the great variety of speaking styles, sexual identities, and backgrounds of speakers in the “Trans Ally” workshops. “Some come in with Power Point presentations, others just sit down and say ‘here’s how it was growing up’, but all of them emphasize the difference between sexual and gender identities,” says Liederman. She adds: “A lot of cis people don’t expect to identify with trans people, but so many of us in the LGBT community design our own lives despite expectations. That’s an experience many of us share.”

Facilitator Monica Pedone brings a warm, easygoing style to the workshops. At age 62, she’s a Cross Sector Technology Leader at IBM, a martial arts enthusiast and mother of two adult children. She transitioned at age 30, and says that before that “I was so deep in the closet I was finding Christmas presents! My divorce allowed me the freedom to find myself, and I began finding my people in the community.”

One of the topics discussed in the “Trans Ally” workshops is the

idea that questions about gender-affirming procedures (sometimes referred to as “sex change” operations) are usually inappropriate to ask strangers about, especially since surgical and medical decisions are kept private by many trans people. At the same time, “Trans Ally” workshops are not intended to shame participants or discourage them from asking questions.

Continued on page 19



Monica Pedone

ANNOUNCING THE 2015 HEALTHY LGBT AGING PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS!

By Hilary Meyer

To kick off the new year, SAGE's National Resource Center on LGBT Aging and the National Council on Aging's National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) paired up to launch the 2015 Healthy LGBT Aging Photo Contest. Responding to a lack of positive images of LGBT older people in the media and popular culture, we set out to show just how vibrant our communities are. In total, we received over 60 entries, including amazing photos from India, the U.K. and the U.S. Participants were asked to send fun, diverse and positive shots that exemplify what it's like to be aging as an LGBT person. Some of the action shots were particularly impressive!

Our SAGE/NISC team narrowed down all of the entries and our celebrity judges—James Firman, President and CEO of the National Council on Aging, and Genevieve Gorder, celebrity designer and HGTV star—picked their top choices. There were so many good pictures, we even had some winner ties and a few terrific Honorable Mentions! View all of the winners and learn more at lgbtagingcenter.org/winners.



1. Grand Prize Winner—Deborah Craig
2. First Prize Winner (tie)—Reece Pickering
3. First Prize Winner (tie)—Gillian Edward
4. Runner up (tie)—Rachelle Lee Schneider
5. Runner up (tie)—Marsha Bancroft

A CONVERSATION WITH HOWARD LEIFMAN

By Jerry Chasen

SAGE is fortunate to have inspired many individuals to find ways to support the organization's work, whether by giving of their time, making financial contributions, volunteering their skills, planning a legacy gift, or taking on SAGE leadership positions. But we really hit the jackpot with Dr. Howard Leifman, who hasn't done just one of these things, but all of them.

"I was on SAGE's Board from 2001-08, and was Board president for the last two years," Leifman recalls. "SAGE was a very different organization then. I remember having to write personal checks just to keep the electricity on. We worried about being able to pay for the phones, the lights, the overhead. But we did one thing especially well, I'm proud to say—we hired Michael Adams (SAGE's current Executive Director). I'm incredibly proud of that choice because I see the way he's transformed the organization."

A licensed psychotherapist, much of Leifman's work focuses on executive and career coaching, specializing in recruitment, organizational development and training. He received his Ph.D. from New York University, and he continues that relationship by serving as an Adjunct Professor both there and at LIM College. He's a Senior Consultant with a number of different firms, including Preferred Transition Resources, MRW Consulting Group International, and the BPI Group.

"I did a planned gift because I wanted the love I have for SAGE and its mission to continue after I was gone."

— DR. HOWARD LEIFMAN

"I began my relationship with SAGE when I was getting my master's degree," said Leifman. "I volunteered first for the 'Lend a Hand' program, and that led to the friendly visitor program. I had a professor who was on the SAGE Board, and she told me to finish my Ph.D. before I thought about any board service. I went on SAGE's advisory board in the 1990's, and then in 2001 joined the organization's Board of Directors.

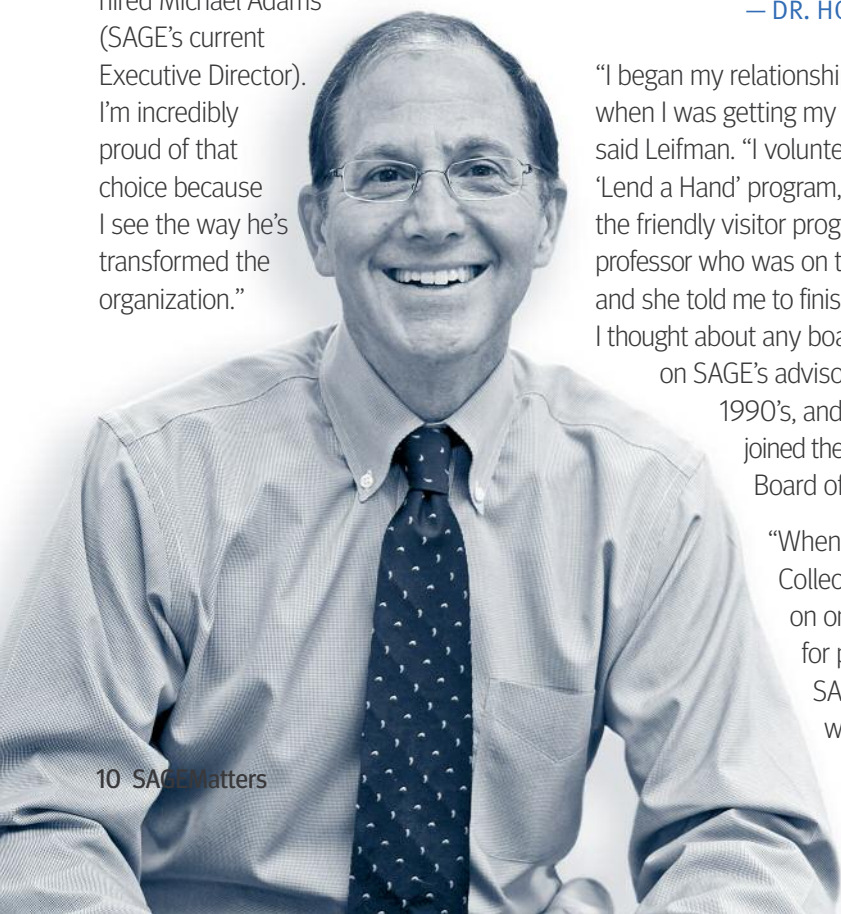
"When the Gay Coaches Collective offered one on one speed-coaching for participants in SAGEWorks [SAGE's work readiness

program for LGBT older people], I was one of the volunteers. Then last year, when SAGE got a grant from Walmart to create SAGEWorks Bootcamp, I was asked to help lead it. It wasn't easy given my private practice, but I've been able to make it work. At this point, I'm pleased to say that I've facilitated workshops for over 500 SAGE participants."

He's not the only one that's pleased. Michele D'Amato, SAGEWorks Program Manager, says that the "boot camp hit the lottery when it engaged Howard as its facilitator. He not only brings decades of experience in preparing people for job searches—he also brings warmth, caring, humor and empathy to the sessions. Howard provides invaluable advice, connections and inspiration to the participants long after the boot camp ends."

Leifman has also included SAGE in his planning. As he says, "I did a planned gift because I wanted the love I have for SAGE and its mission to continue after I was gone. And sadly like a lot of people I know I am actually worth more dead than alive!" We beg to differ!

When asked about his continued engagement with SAGE, Howard's response is simple. "I love it. It lets me give back...it's amazing to have been involved with the organization since the 80's and see it go from there to here. When I was on the Board, we talked about having a SAGE Center, but didn't have the resources to do it. Now look at it! It's really great to still be involved."



CATCHING UP ON SUCCESSFUL AGING

By Kenneth Cox



SAGE's Successful Aging program is not even a year old, but it's off to a great start. A quick check-in with Jerry Chasen, Director of Legacy Planning at SAGE, left no doubt that there is a very exciting road ahead.

Jerry, remind us of what Successful Aging is about. Many LGBT older people will never participate in SAGE programs, or avail themselves of SAGE services, even as they get to what we affectionately call "SAGE age." But that's okay. SAGE has lots to offer every LGBT person as they get older.

There are some fundamental ways that aging will change for everyone in the coming decades. The LGBT community of course will experience the same issue that all older Americans face. But there are also ways that this generation of LGBT older people will face challenges beyond those experienced by older people generally. We're more likely to be isolated, less likely to have an intergenerational network of support, and we don't have confidence that programs and institutions that address aging generally will welcome or serve us.

Successful Aging provides a context for us to discuss these issues proactively and positively. A good deal of the aging experience is determined by choices we make. Through the program's five themes—Reflection, Momentum, Wellness, Preparation, and Legacy—we focus on those choices. Successful Aging raises both awareness of the issues and the options, and provides support going forward.

What has SAGE hoped to accomplish with Successful Aging in its first few months? There are various components of the Successful Aging program—live presentations, emails, website "lessons," social media sharing. We spent time through last fall tweaking the various aspects, including doing a "test run" for key SAGE supporters. We've now got a good tool box of materials to engage our audience.

We recognize that talking about aging is in some respects makes people think about one about mortality, so starting that discussion is itself often a challenge. Nonetheless, quoting Ben Franklin "failing to plan is planning to fail," and it's as true of aging as anything else.

What's on the horizon for Successful Aging? We'll continue to build on what we've been doing. People are very receptive and interested in our program—interested enough to have asked for more. As an example, we did a presentation last November for SAGE's Washington, D.C. supporters; one of the people attending was the president of the D.C. Gay Men's Chorus, and he arranged for us to do a presentation in February for chorus members. On another occasion, a financial planner who attended a presentation arranged for us to present before a group of her clients. This is a great way to support SAGE and the Successful Aging initiative.

What our participants have to say is critical. At the end of the day, aging is an individual experience. We invite feedback and input from attendees, and so we're able to learn from one another. If people let us know what they're interested in, we support them by sending information to them on that subject.

Over the next few months, we'll be adding a resource list to the Successful Aging website, one that will include materials that we've found useful. We've also had a number of people ask about how to identify organizations that match their goals and passions, and we've discovered a few tools that are very useful in that regard so we will post that too.

Your position at SAGE is "Director of Legacy Planning." How does Successful Aging connect with that? I'm a 63 year old man. I look at where we as a community have journeyed and I'm immensely proud. To have come from Stonewall, through the horror of the AIDS epidemic, to marriage equality has been quite a trip—and leaves quite a legacy. But none of us are done. I look ahead at what I call the "next chapter" for me personally, for my community, and for SAGE's work. The way we navigate these years will be the capstone on that legacy, and I'm doing what I can to help SAGE make that happen.

A NEW CHAPTER FOR SAGE STORY

By Serena Worthington

SAGE Story is expanding! Our national digital storytelling program is now up and running in North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

So far we've collected more than 50 stories in these two states that powerfully portray the lives and experiences of LGBT elders. The stories are online at sageusa.org/sagestory.

In this latest iteration, SAGE Story is working to create a greater understanding among policymakers, service providers and the general public about the need

"I learned that I can live my life free and not behind doors. [I'm] very grateful that I can be here with people that are free to be themselves. I get to tell my story and not be afraid or looking over my shoulder, and no one is judging me."

– Mary Minor, Freedom Center for Social Justice

for laws that protect LGBT people, particularly LGBT older people, from discrimination in housing, employment, healthcare, and public accommodations. To this end, we've educated close to 200 service professionals in North Carolina and Pennsylvania about the importance of equitable treatment of LGBT older adults and the need for anti-discrimination protections and culturally competent services.

In SAGE's experience, the stories and perspectives of LGBT elders vividly demonstrate the importance of equality for LGBT people of all ages. These powerful narratives also convey how discrimination has affected the health and well-being of LGBT people over a lifetime. Through a four-part series of SAGE Story classes, participating LGBT older people learned storytelling fundamentals and were provided opportunities to craft and refine their stories. Our storytelling strategies are particularly focused on persuading straight people who are conflicted about the need to extend nondiscrimination protections to LGBT people. SAGE's efforts in this special initiative are funded by the Gill Foundation and Evelyn and

"I learned that I am strongly identified with all LGBT folks, not just trans folks as it relates to struggles. We all share a common journey and goal, i.e. to be recognized and treated with respect."

– Dawn Flynn, Freedom Center for Social Justice

Walter Haas Jr. Fund and guided by research from the Movement Advancement Project and the Equality Federation Institute.

These exciting advances by SAGE Story would never have been possible were it

"I firmly believe that sharing...our stories is one of the most powerful opportunities we have as individuals to be of help to others, to cut through the isolation & self judgement we can too often have."

– Vince T. Newton, SAGE Raleigh

not for the participation of an extraordinary collection of SAGE affiliates. We're grateful for the leadership provided by SAGE Raleigh at the LGBT Community Center of Raleigh, SAGE Wilmington of the Cape Fear Coast, SAGE Western Pennsylvania at the Persad Center, and SAGE Philadelphia at the William Way LGBT Community Center. The amazing Freedom Center for Social Justice in Charlotte, North Carolina has also played a key role in this exciting initiative.

At the conclusion of the series of SAGE Story classes, we asked our storytellers, **"WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF DURING THIS PROCESS?"** Some of their answers are featured in this article.

Bringing an LGBT Perspective to Aging in America

By Serena Worthington

One of the biggest opportunities SAGE has to educate service providers about the needs of LGBT older people is Aging in America, a massive annual convening that brings together thousands of professionals from across the U.S. for hundreds of workshops, forums and site visits spread out over a full week. Sponsored by the American Society on Aging, this year's convening took place in March in Chicago. Over the course of five days, SAGE staff joined the nearly 3,000 attendees for a remarkable 12 conference programs related to LGBT aging, including nine workshops, a collaborating program, a symposium, and a national forum. All the while, we shared SAGE's messages about LGBT aging online through blog posts and tweets. Here are excerpts from some of the "on the ground" reports by SAGE Staff at this year's Aging in America event.

CATHERINE THURSTON

Senior Director of Services and Training, talking about "Innovative Senior Centers: A Model for the Future"

More than 50 audience members attended a lively session on the history of how the SAGE Center and another innovative senior center, in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City, came to exist. The audience was especially interested in learning about

From left: Mark Brennan, ACRIA, Serena Worthington, SAGE and Richard Gollance, Clinical Social Worker

SAGE's successful advocacy to convince the NYC Department for the Aging that it is important to recognize not only neighborhood communities, but also communities like the LGBT community that are built around shared identities and life experiences.

SERENA WORTHINGTON

Director of National Field Initiatives, talking about "Helping Elders Tell Their Stories: Best Practices from SAGE Story and StoryCorps"

We wanted people to understand just how dynamic elder storytelling projects can be. So we asked everyone to share stories one-on-one using question prompts. We weren't sure what was going to happen. I was totally amazed to see a room full of strangers immediately and enthusiastically jump into sharing personal stories. The room just buzzed with

people talking and laughing—demonstrating once again the power of storytelling. One participant summed it up perfectly—"This is so fabulous, tell me more."

AARON TAX

Director of Federal Government Relations, on "Working Towards Equitable LGBT Aging Policy"

In particular, I focused on the importance of working in coalitions. For SAGE, this means working with other LGBT organizations, diverse elder organizations, and other aging organizations. We rely on our allies to advance LGBT-friendly federal aging policies. We're especially looking forward to working with coalition partners in the next few years as we continue our work on the Older Americans Act reauthorization and other priorities.

ALEX KENT

Program Replication Coordinator, talking about the National Forum on Social and Health disparities

SAGE's own Michael Adams joined many others in presenting fantastic research and innovative programs that are actively working to address social and health

Continued on page 19





SAGE AND FRIENDS. January 31st marked the Second Annual SAGE & Friends Event in Miami, Florida. Hosted by Colgate Darden & Ed Heidel, the event smashed all of our Miami records by attracting more than 200 friends and new supporters committed to SAGE's work on behalf of LGBT older people. Enjoying the breathtakingly beautiful setting, guests mixed with SAGE Staff, Board Members and Executive Director Michael Adams and were inspired by the path-breaking new initiatives SAGE is spearheading in 2015.



1. SAGE Executive Director Michael Adams addresses the SAGE & Friends crowd 2. Event Host Colgate Darden, Rod Gillis and Larry Hyer 3. Frederica Leser and Judith Daniels

Photos: Dimitri Cvetkoff-Latorre

SAGE LAUNCHES NATIONAL LGBT ELDER HOUSING INITIATIVE.

On February 3, SAGE announced our critically important National LGBT Elder Housing Initiative with a media launch and thought leaders panel discussion at our national headquarters. Speakers included marriage equality pioneer Edie Windsor and Jennifer Ho, Senior Advisor for Housing and Services at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. SAGE's anchor partners on the Initiative—Enterprise Community Partners, HELP USA, and the Equal Rights Center—were all represented on the discussion panel (by Cheryl Gladstone, David Cleghorn, and Melissa Rothstein respectively). The National LGBT Elder Housing Initiative will drive five strategies designed to change the housing landscape for LGBT people across the country—learn more at sageusa.org/lgbthousing.



Photo: Kira Garcia

Edie Windsor and Kathleen Sullivan, Los Angeles LGBT Center Director of Senior Services



A packed room listens to SAGE Executive Director, Michael Adams, outlining the new initiative

SAGE AT CREATING CHANGE. Creating Change is the nation's pre-eminent activism, leadership and skills-building conference for the LGBT social justice movement. This year SAGE made a big splash by hosting The Elder Institute (a day long pre-conference session featuring storytelling and activist training),

leading a record number of workshops, and participating in the AARP sponsored Elders 50+ and Allies Dance. We were also thrilled to award Senator Michael Bennet of Colorado with the SAGE Advocacy Award for Excellence in Leadership on Aging Issues during the opening plenary on February 6th. The SAGE Award, bestowed on Sen. Bennet for his lead sponsorship of the federal LGBT Elder Americans Act, was accepted by the Senator's State Director, Rosemary Rodriguez.



Photo: Serena Worthington

Michael Adams & Sen. Bennet's State Dir. Rosemary Rodriguez



Serena Worthington, Ruth Debra, Mandy Carter, Shari Wilkins and Dan Mullins at the closing panel of the Creating Change Elder Institute.

WHITE HOUSE LGBT ELDER HOUSING SUMMIT On February 10, SAGE and the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) joined forces with the Obama Administration to host the first-ever White House National LGBT Elder Housing Summit. This Summit provided a unique opportunity to bring together LGBT aging advocates, the housing sector and key public officials and agencies to address the challenges communities across the country face in providing affordable, welcoming housing to LGBT older people.



Photo: Maria Bryk, HUD

Michael Adams, SAGE Executive Director and Jennifer Ho, Senior Advisor on Housing and Services

NEW YORK CITY INVESTOR'S CIRCLE. On February 11, SAGE brought together members of its NYC Investors Circle for a fabulous reception at the beautiful home of Scott Bromley and Tony Impavido. Local SAGE Board members joined longtime and new supporters for a lovely cocktail party, complete with a "state of the union" on our local programming growth from SAGE Executive Director Michael Adams.



Neil Williamson, Pat Wile, Artemis Anninos and Jack McClay, NYC



Photos: Jason Russo

Carol Garcia and Barbara Rosen, NYC



1. Danny Gibson, Michael Nava and Bill Weinberger, LA.
2. Jan C. Perry, LA 3. Party goes celebrate Bill Weinberger and SAGE, LA

60 FOR 60 In conjunction with its first-ever Board meeting in Los Angeles, on March 7 SAGE hosted 60 for 60, a fun-filled 60th birthday celebration for Board co-chair Bill Weinberger that also honored SAGE's national advocacy and training efforts on behalf of our LGBT elder pioneers. More than 125 guests mixed, mingled and celebrated with fellow supporters, friends and SAGE Board members. The night was made even more special when SAGE's senior leadership announced an exciting new partnership with the Williams Institute at UCLA Law School.

SPRING! On April 19, over 400 people gathered at the spacious Chelsea Piers Light House for SPRING!—SAGE's inaugural warmer weather fundraiser in New York City. This pulsing new party was co-hosted by Robby Browne and Chris Kann and sponsored by Open Finance, Deutsche Bank and Ketel One. Guests had a great time moving to the tunes from the fabulous DJ Lina. Spring! promises to be a great new tradition for SAGE supporters in the Big Apple!



1. Dennis Chung and SAGE Executive Director Michael Adams
2. Rick Lipscomb, Dennis Chung, Genesis Garcia, Aubrey Saunders and Ricky Wai 3. DJ Lina spinning beats at the SPRING! party.

Photos: Edith Elle Photography

Photos: Jason Russo

SAGE CENTER EXPANSION COMPLETE! In 2014, SAGE was awarded \$1.2 million in new funding by the New York City Council to engineer the largest expansion of LGBT elder services in



Photo: Kira Garcia

Councilmember Dromm, Deputy Commissioner Resnick, Bronx LGBT Community Liaison Lewis Goldstein, Councilmember Torres, New York City Council Speaker Mark-Viverito, Councilmember Annabel Palma and SAGE Executive Director, Michael Adams



Photo: Kira Garcia

Catherine Thurston, Senior Director, Programs, SAGE, Catherine Acey, Executive Director, GRIOT Circle and Michael Adams, Executive Director, SAGE



Photo: Kira Garcia

The crowd listens to GRIOT Circle members

history. Winter 2015 marked the completion of the expansion with the opening of lively new SAGE Center sites in Harlem, Staten Island, the Bronx and Brooklyn. We're proud to be partnering with GRIOT Circle in Brooklyn and the Staten Island LGBT Community Center. These photos show the beginning of a new era in SAGE's programming across New York City!



Ralph Vogel, Executive Dir., Pride Center of Staten Island, Dr. Donna Corrado, NYC DFTA Commissioner, Michael Adams, Executive Director, SAGE, Paul Sanders, Senior Services and Special Events Manager, Pride Center of Staten Island and Vickie Fossella, Counseling Services Manager, Pride Center of Staten Island

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING: CLEVELAND LISTENING SESSION

On April 27, SAGE's Serena Worthington, Director of National Field Initiatives, along with our SAGENet affiliate, SAGE of Western Pennsylvania, attended the fourth regional White House Conference on Aging (WHCOA) listening session in Cleveland, OH. The WHCOA only happens every ten years and it sets national aging policy for the next decade.

SAGE's ultimate goal is to see the issues of LGBT older adults addressed in Federal aging policy and has devoted a webpage to inform and collect the voices of our community. Visit sageusa.org/whcoa to learn more.

Nora Super, Executive Director, White House Conference on Aging and Serena Worthington, Director of National Field Initiatives, SAGE





LEADING THE WAY IN LGBT HEALTHY AGING

By Elise Colomer

LGBT older people face the same challenges in aging as their heterosexual peers, but also experience unique issues that can stand in the way of their health and well-being. For example, LGBT elders are five times less likely to access needed health and social services, due to fear of discrimination. As we often discuss at SAGE, our communities also have thinner support networks and are at higher risk of social isolation. In an exciting partnership, Pfizer and SAGE have joined forces to raise awareness nationally about these issues, and to promote healthy aging for older people in the LGBT community.

Our partnership began in 2012 when Pfizer launched “Get Old,” an initiative designed to take on an important issue affecting society today—our country’s rapidly growing aging population—and

provide useful, actionable information that can help people take control of their health. SAGE worked with Pfizer on Get Old in 2012, as well as on its re-launch as “FoGo” (Fear of Getting Old) in 2014, ensuring that the unique issues facing LGBT older people are part of this vital conversation. Our collaboration then grew to include a series of white papers and panel discussions on topics such as HIV and aging, age-friendly communities and navigating the Affordable Care Act.

Most recently, SAGE and Pfizer launched our Health Education Initiative, which educates LGBT older people about four important topics: adult vaccinations, cardiovascular disease and hypertension, diabetes, and Alzheimer’s and related dementias. A short “Fact Sheet” was developed for SAGE constituents on each

topic with concise takeaways. By distributing these fact sheets digitally, through sageusa.org as well as our National Resource on LGBT Aging, we’re working to reach as many LGBT older people and allies as possible.

Pfizer’s focus on these issues has been notable. Chris Gray, a Senior Director at the company, remarked “Pfizer is dedicated to helping raise awareness among the LGBT older adult community about health and wellness. We are proud to support SAGE’s health education programs and to highlight how conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes and dementia impact LGBT people across the life-course.”

To find our health education fact sheets, visit sageusa.org/publications

HEROS OF PRIDE


Continued from page 5

"I jokingly refer to SAGE as standing for 'Sexy, Agile Gay Elders.' Everybody liked that and no one complained about false advertising!"

At age 64, Ron is still a relative newcomer to Denver. When he first arrived, he didn't have many ties to the community, but SAGE of the Rockies "really jump-started everything." Since then SAGE has become a second home, and has helped him create deeper ties to the community at large. "As I met more people at SAGE and came more frequently...I felt like I had found a sort of family—a group of people that were comfortable with each other," he remarks.

Ron began volunteering in SAGE of the Rockies' Friendly Visitor program, which pairs volunteers with isolated older adults in need of help and companionship, a role that is deeply meaningful for him. Of his visits, he says, "I just sit with him on the sofa because he can't really walk, or we'll go outside and just hold hands and talk. Even just a few sentences. For me it's about connecting somebody, but not so much through words. Sometimes, when everything is in the right place—he wakes up, all his circuits are going, sometimes he does talk about something that interests him and he puts together sentences, asks me questions. And that's just delightful. Every time I'm there, he says 'Thank you for coming,' so I believe that even on his bad days, he appreciates the contact."

We honor the central role that Ron plays in caring for his community, as well as his terrific sense of humor, generous spirit and commitment to improving the lives of those around him.

 We'll be featuring more Heroes of Pride on our blog this summer at sageusa.org/blog!

LEARNING TO BECOME TRANS ALLIES

Continued from page 8

In fact, Pedone says she's enjoyed the lively conversations she's experienced as a facilitator.

"There were a lot of people there who were curious and inquisitive and have interesting points of view," she remarks. "It was fun to interact and hear their perspective. I didn't want to just be a talking head up there—it's nice to have a dialogue."

So how does one become a trans ally, exactly? Pedone has some wisdom to share. "I think that part of it certainly is learning the 'ten things you don't say to a transgender person', but I'm not worried about people saying something as long as it's coming from a place of learning rather than resentment or anger. You have to be a good person and say what's in your heart. And if you make a mistake and call someone the wrong pronoun it's ok, don't make a big deal of it but next time try to do it right. Treat transgender people the same as everyone else, and also understand that there might be some gender cues that are slightly different."

Pedone finds the approach of SAGE's "Trans Ally" workshops to be especially impactful because "it allows trans people themselves to lead the conversation, and to meet and interact with people. Participants learn that trans people are just like them—they have mothers and pets and homes, they have trouble paying their bills. These workshops open the community up to new conversations, and new friendships. We shouldn't box ourselves up into little groups."

Dozens of participants have now attended our monthly "How to Be a Trans Ally"

workshops, increasing awareness of trans experiences at SAGE and growing the number of trans allies in our community.

 Interested in hosting a "How to Be a Trans Ally" workshop at your organization? Contact Katie Liederman at kliederman@sageusa.org to discuss program replication.

BRINGING AN LGBT PERSPECTIVE TO AGING IN AMERICA

Continued from page 13

disparities among older Americans. Closing speaker Jeanette Takamura called on us to envision the consequences of a future in which social and health disparities have NOT been adequately addressed, when "minorities" become the majority in the U.S. (expected to occur within the next three decades). Substandard health care would become the norm. This call to action clearly resonated in the room, which was packed with hundreds of aging advocates.

TIM JOHNSTON

Manager of Training and Education, on micro-aggressions

We learned that being aware of micro aggressions (subtle, unintentional exchanges that send denigrating messages to members of marginalized groups) and preventing them requires humility and being open to feedback. When someone takes the time, energy, and risk to point out a harmful comment, we should strive to really hear what they're saying, rather than becoming defensive.



Services & Advocacy
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& Transgender Elders

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