

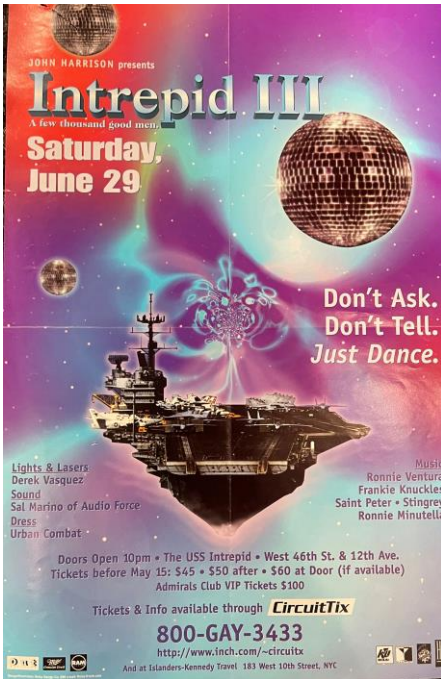


SAGEVets Newsletter

sage | Advocacy &
Services for
LGBT Elders
We refuse to be invisible™

Fall 2021

Dear SAGE Veterans and Friends:



Don Maclver Archives – part of the
GLB Veterans collection

Greetings from SAGEVets! There has been a lot of development with our program that I would love to share. Thanks to some hard work from our partners at SAGE Upstate, we have connected with veterans and veteran service providers in Central and Western New York. I am delighted to announce a *new* partnership that officially began in October with Long Island Cares, Inc. © The Harry Chapin Regional Food Bank. We also have two new SAGE Care Management team members assisting our SAGEVets! Please join me in welcoming River Russ, who is facilitating our weekly Veterans Support Group, and Noreen Bautista, who is assisting with Veteran care management cases – both are doing incredible work. We have updated our brochure to reflect these exciting developments. Please let me know if I can send you a bundle to share with your network. We also have some programs coming up, including our first-ever national virtual program. Keep on reading for more information on these exciting updates!

SAGEVets continues to put experiences shared by LGBTQ+ veterans front and center. This November, two SAGE veterans, Gaston Roberge and Louis Miller, will be inducted into the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame. We applaud Senator José Serrano and Senator Brad Hoylman for recognizing the heroic tales of two courageous veterans. Congratulations to Gaston and Louis for earning this distinction. Edward Field, a long-time SAGE participant, author, poet and WWII veteran, will be featured in the first episodes of [American Veteran](#), a new PBS miniseries. We are also working with the New York State Military Museum to add archives from the early days of the LGBTQ+ veteran movement to their collection. The Intrepid poster, shown above, is just one of the gems found in this collection that has been carefully preserved by Mr. Don Maclver. Stay tuned for future updates!

Lastly, we are saddened by the news that long-time member of SAGE and legendary advocate for LGBT veteran rights, Montague Denny Meyer, passed away on September 4. We are honored to feature his profile in this edition of the SAGEVets newsletter.

Stay strong and battle on,
Ashton Stewart, SAGEVets Program Manager

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAGEVets is coming to your town! Stop by and say, “Hi!” either virtually or in-person when we are at an event near you.

- Nov. 2-3: [The Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Veteran Suicide Conference](#) -hosted by NYS Health Foundation
- Nov. 5: [Central NY Veterans Parade and Expo](#) - Parade at Noon, Expo 9am- 2pm
- Nov. 6: Annual Veteran’s Appreciation Parade and Resource Fair – Parade at noon, Fair noon-4pm at [I.S. 271 John M. Coleman School Brooklyn](#)
- Nov. 11: SAGEVets marching in NYC Veterans’ Day Parade [sign up to join us!](#)
- Nov. 12: [Women in the Military](#) – an event at the NY Historical Society. 1pm- 7:30pm
- Nov. 17: [Transgender Awareness Month](#) – SAGEVets program in collaboration with the VA 12pm-1pm
- Nov. 18: [Restoration of Honor Virtual Conference](#) – SAGEVets/NYS DVS program.
- Nov. 23: [Veterans Winter Stand Down](#) 9am-1pm Freeport Armory, 63 Babylon Turnpike, Freeport, NY

Please take a moment to complete a quick survey about this newsletter. We would love to hear from you:
<http://sageusa.org/sagevets-survey>

SAGEVets News & Updates:

The New York City Council Committee on Veterans had a hearing in September to propose a change to the NYC Charter definition of the term veteran and to discuss the DUALS initiative. DUALS is a \$1.5 million NYC Department of Veterans' Service program to help fund legal programs that offer pro bono services for discharge upgrades to LGBTQ+ veterans. SAGEVets testimony included details about our involvement with Mayor DeBlasio's office in putting the initiative together. We are delighted that it is now up and running! We also spoke on behalf of LGBTQ+ veterans who struggle to qualify due to Don't Ask Don't Tell and other discriminating policies. We shared a case of a veteran discharged with less than 30 days of active service due to military sexual trauma (MST). SAGEVets worked with the NYSDVS to prove veteran status under Title 38, Section 101, of the United States Code. We also helped him get approved for a Section 8 housing voucher with his newly acquired veteran status. The Committee members found the testimony helpful and have scheduled a follow-up meeting to further discuss the implications of punitive discharges and cases similar to the one described above.

SAGEVets is dedicated to raising awareness of the Restoration of Honor Act (ROH) and gaps in federal policy. Through our work, we recently discovered the existence of a policy that provides no safety net for LGBTQ+ veterans who were discharged from service prematurely. Since September 7, 1980, the minimum active duty service requirement for eligibility for VA healthcare is 24 months of continuous active duty (unless ordered for another period of time). Even with an honorable discharge, or an approved discharge upgrade, those cut short of the full two years of service are ineligible for VA health care and benefits. We are continuing to raise awareness about this policy gap to bring about reform. Since 1980, close to 40K veterans have been discharged from active duty service short of the two-year requirement. We are grateful to the New York State Division of Veterans' Services and the New York City Department of Veterans' Services for their leadership in bringing this issue to the attention of legislators. We are seeing progress in making a legislative change and hope to see this policy gap corrected soon.

SAGEVets continues to advocate for [Senate Bill S6022A](#), the pension buyback bill that was not included in the ROH. Recently, we met with the Governor's office to recommend this bill as a veteran priority. We also pressed for a public awareness campaign to promote the ROH.

Since our last newsletter, we have made referrals for the ROH, including a discharge upgrade with the Department of Defense and a claim for the Blue Water Navy (BWN) Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019. We have also provided much-needed support in housing, mental health, care management, caregiving, and medical referrals.

sageVets

Western and Central New York

On August 31st SAGEVets hosted a virtual launch party to kick off the partnership with SAGE Upstate, featuring a panel that included Lyn Johnson, Outreach Specialist and Minority Veteran Coordinator at the Manhattan VA, Wanda Martinez Johncox, former LGBTVCC at the Canandaigua VA, and Ronald Piasieczny, President of [Niagara Pride](#).

On October 12th, SAGE Upstate Consultant Wanda Martinez-Johncox hosted a special veterans support group. The event featured Grace L., a veteran of the U.S. Air Force who was discharged in 1985 for being gay, and Roderick Castle, Director of Behavior Health at the Veteran Outreach Center in Rochester, NY, who provided resource information. This emotional program began with Grace recounting the day she met Wanda at a holiday party that began with an "innocent conversation over the cookie plates" and led to her receiving a discharge upgrade! SAGE Upstate hosts veteran support groups meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month.

The October 26th program features guest speaker Marines Staff Sergeant Eric Alva. Alva served in the Marines for 13 years. For much of his career, Alva was out to his fellow Marines. He was in charge of 11 Marines in a supply unit when he stepped on a land mine and lost his right leg. Alva will be discussing his new book, *Radical Courage*.

To learn more about the SAGEVets program in Central and Western New York, please visit: <https://www.sageupstate.org/>

SAGEVets Spotlight

By Arnold Lewis & Ashton Stewart

Montague Denny Meyer, a dedicated advocate for LGBTQ+ veterans and military members, passed away on September 4 due to heart complications. Denny helped shape the beginning of the LGBTQ+ veteran movement to fight for equality, and his efforts will be remembered for generations.

After volunteering to serve in 1968 during the Vietnam Era, Denny served his country in the US Navy as a Petty Officer Second Class and as Sergeant First Class in the US Army Reserves. After his 10+ years of service, and following the death of his partner of 20 years, Denny founded the New York Chapter of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender veterans' service organization, the [American Veterans for Equal Rights](#). He also served as the Public Affairs Officer, Veteran Affairs Officer, and Congressional Liaison for the [Transgender American Veterans Association](#), an organization that advocates for the equality of transgender veterans and active duty service members to receive fair and equal treatment in areas such as healthcare, benefits, and open transgender military service.

In March 2019, SAGEVets was proud to welcome Denny as our keynote speaker at the Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day co-hosted by the New York State Division of Veterans' Services. Denny received a Certificate of Recognition from the State of New York from the Governor's office.

Denny's funeral was held at the [Congressional Cemetery in Washington, DC](#), where he was interred in a 35-acre stretch of land referred to as "Gay Corner." He worked tirelessly, leading the way for many significant policy changes that include the end of Don't Ask Don't Tell. He will be missed, but his legacy lives on.



Denny Meyer, founder of NY Chapter of AVER and Aries Dela Cruz, Governor Cuomo Regional Representative for Manhattan

Restoration of Honor Act Virtual Conference

On November 18 from 6:00pm-7:30 pm, SAGEVets and the New York State Division of Veterans' Services are co-hosting our first-ever nationwide virtual conference highlighting Restoration of Honor (ROH) legislation. Five states now have ROH, legislation that expands the state definition of honorable discharge to include veterans who were discharged due to sexual orientation or gender identity. We have seen three of the five states pass this legislation just this year. Join us to hear a robust conversation about how this legislation found support in Rhode Island, New York, Colorado, Connecticut, and Colorado, what legislation is still needed, and how other states can get involved. We are honored to welcome a panel of esteemed guests including: Benjamin Pomerance, Esq., Deputy Director for Program Development; Kristen L. Rouse, Deputy Director for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs; Kasim Yarn, Director of the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services; Thomas J. Saadi, Esq., Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs; Colorado State Representative David Ortiz; and Illinois State Representative Joyce Mason. This conference is a continuing legal education (CLE) event and is open to the public. You can register with this link: [Restoration of Honor Virtual Conference Registration](#)

SAGE Programming

Learn more about our resources for LGBT elders and SAGE's work at <http://sageusa.org>. For programs that are specific to New York, visit <http://sagenyc.org>.

Caregiving

Many people don't think they are caregivers, but if you are assisting your partner, spouse, friend, or neighbor with shopping, escort services, laundry, household chores, cleaning, or just regular check-ins, you fit the description. If you are a caregiver, or if someone is helping you, SAGE can help through its Caregiving support program. We provide counseling, support groups, case management, and can help pay for respite homecare, group socialization, or specialized items. For more information [click here](#) or call 212-741-2247 and ask for the Care Manager on duty. SAGE's Caregiving Program is funded through the New York City Department for the Aging.

Veteran Support Group (VSG) – Now offered on Zoom! Fridays from 2:00pm – 3:00pm

Please contact River Russ to sign up for the Zoom link or call-in information at rruss@sageusa.org, and join us for engaged, casual conversation.

Finally, please take the time to fill out a quick survey on the SAGEVets newsletter. Your opinion matters>> <http://sageusa.org/sagevets-survey>

New York State SAGEVets Partners

[Long Island Cares, Inc | The Harry Chapin Food Bank](#)
Veterans Project
10 Davids Dr,
Hauppauge, NY 11788
mhaynes@licares.org

[SAGE Upstate](#)
431 E. Fayette Street, Suite #050
Syracuse, NY 13202
315-478-1923
lsloan@sageusa.org

New York City SAGE Centers

[Edie Windsor SAGE Center – Manhattan](#)
305 Seventh Avenue, 15th Floor
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646-576-8669
info@sageusa.org

[SAGE Center Bronx at Crotona Pride House](#)
1784 Prospect Avenue
Bronx, NY 10457
jcollazo@sageusa.org

[SAGE Center – Harlem](#)
220 West 143rd Street
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646-660-8954
sageharlem@sageusa.org

[SAGE Center Brooklyn at Stonewall House](#)
271 Myrtle Ave
Brooklyn, NY 11201
212-741-2247
sagebrooklyn@sageusa.org

[SAGE-GRIOT Senior Center – Brooklyn](#)
GRIOT Circle, Inc.
25 Flatbush Avenue, 5th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11217
718-246-2775
reunion@griotcircle.org

[SAGE-Pride Center of Staten Island](#)
Pride Center of Staten Island
25 Victory Boulevard, 3rd Floor
Staten Island, NY 10301
718-808-1365
lsloan@sageusa.org

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