



# SAGEVets Newsletter

sage | Advocacy &  
Services for  
LGBTQ+ Elders  
We refuse to be invisible®

Winter 2022

## Dear SAGE Veterans and Friends:



NYS Senator Brad Hoylman with the SAGEVets Veterans Day Contingent

Many older LGBTQ+ veterans experienced trauma during their service and have not utilized the potentially life-changing government benefits, programs, and services that they rightfully deserve. SAGEVets is honored to be working with veterans, the VA, and our legislators to

change that, one case at a time. This year we have made great strides with dozens of referrals for healthcare, service benefits and compensation, legal support, and discharge upgrades. We have also seen progress in legislation such as the Restoration of Honor Act (ROH), now in effect in six states! On November 18, SAGEVets hosted our [first national virtual program](#) that brought together five of the six states with ROH legislation (NY, RI, CO, CT, and IL) to discuss how this powerful legislation is changing lives. New Jersey is the sixth state with ROH laws. And for those of you who missed it, on November 17, the Navy launched the [USNS Harvey Milk](#), named after the gay rights activist. Harvey Milk was forced out of the Navy with an other than honorable discharge in 1955 because he was gay. He continues to inspire us in our work!

We look forward to our Spring virtual programming series celebrating Black History Month, Women's History Month, and National Vietnam Veterans Day (NVVD). Please see the Upcoming Events section for details. Also, we are excited to announce our NVVD event hosted by our partners at Long Island Cares! Please see the SAGEVets partners section below for details. We thank the NYS Division of Veterans Services for sponsoring this program with us. While most of our programming over the past several months was virtual, we were happy to have at least one in-person social event. Thanks to our friends at the [Theater Development Fund](#), SAGE veterans were treated to a free off-Broadway performance of the award-winning *Lackawanna Blues*.

Please reach out if we can be of service or if we can send you a few of our SAGEVets brochures!

All good things,  
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. **Pre-registration** is required for virtual events.

- Feb 22 – [SAGEVets Upstate Welcomes Honor Flight](#) 6pm -7pm
- Feb 23 - [Two Remarkable Stories: A Celebration of Black History Month](#) – 6pm -7:30pm
- Feb 24 – [Senator Hinchey's Veterans Resource Fair](#) 3pm–5pm  
American Legion Post 187  
Athens, NY
- Feb 28 - [Life Planning for LGBTQ+ Veterans featuring Pete Kempner from Volunteers of Legal Service](#) 6pm-7:30pm
- March 22 – [SAGEVets Celebrates Women's History Month with two American Heroines](#) – 6pm-7pm
- March 1 – [Veteran Appreciation Tuesday](#) Freeport, NY -10am-1pm
- March 8 - [Veteran Appreciation Tuesday](#) Bethpage, NY -10am-1pm
- March 26 – [Western New York LGBTQ+ Health & Wellness Fair](#) Sanborn, NY -10am-3pm
- March 29 - [National Vietnam War Veterans Day](#) – Hauppauge, NY 12pm-2pm

**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:

Over the past three months, we have had several successful outcomes to veteran cases. We had our second meritorious Restoration of Honor Act (ROH) application for a 70-year-old veteran of the U.S. Navy. His newly acquired honorable discharge status makes him eligible for the Blind Annuity Program, a benefit offered by New York State to legally blind wartime veterans with an honorable discharge. A highly decorated officer saw his disability rating with the VA increase from 50% to 80%, providing him with better health care and additional monthly income. We also secured an Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) phone for a veteran residing in an assisted living facility who is suffering from isolation issues. He can now join us for SAGEVets virtual programming, including our weekly veterans support group and informational seminars (meeting info on page 4).

We are thrilled that our partnership with the VA has grown stronger over the past three years as we work together to make good use of the VA's commitment "to a culture where everyone is treated with civility, compassion, and respect." The culture has changed, and the VA is determined to ensure LGBTQ+ veterans are offered restitution for harm caused by discriminating policies of the past, that they receive appropriate healthcare. To help with this mission and to promote some of the lesser-known services available at the VA, SAGEVets spoke with several doctors and medical specialists from the VA New York Harbor Healthcare System for a virtual program celebrating **Transgender Awareness Month**. Additionally, did you know that the VA has a **Whole Health Program** to help every veteran live well? The VA also offers LGBTQ+ support groups and LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinators to ensure that staff and patients are treated fairly. SAGEVets also offers a weekly virtual veteran support group.

SAGEVets continues to put experiences shared by LGBTQ+ veterans front and center. This past December, we ended a 30-year quest to find a home for a comprehensive collection of historic artifacts and files. These archives, preserved by **NYS Senate Veterans Hall of Famer Don MacIver**, tell the story about LGBTQ+ veterans who served predating Don't Ask Don't Tell and actively opposed the legislation in the 1980s-1990s. MacIver donated them to SAGEVets and the NYSDVS in early 2020, and they have now been accepted by the New York Military Museum (NYSMM) and the New York Historical Society to be cataloged, indexed, and made available to the public. We are grateful for the Historical Society and the NYSMM for taking this bold step to preserve the history of LGBTQ+ veterans that is seldom made available within our country's military museums. Lastly, we appreciate the Manhattan VA for accepting a small library of LGBTQ+ military/veteran literature that was part of this collection. The books will be made available for use in the Veteran Clubhouse.

# sageVets

Partners - Long Island, Central  
& Western New York

We are deeply grateful to be working with partners at SAGE Upstate and Long Island Cares. SAGEVets programming has taken place both virtually and in-person in Syracuse, Rochester, Niagara Falls, and throughout Long Island. Many thanks to Kim, Rita, Dan, Wanda, Alex and Michael for all you do to help us reach veterans and service providers in your area.

On Feb. 22 at 6pm SAGEVets welcomes **Honor Flight Syracuse** to talk about their program flying New York patriots to D.C. to visit and reflect together at designated memorials. Please also mark your calendars for March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6pm as we celebrate Women's History Month featuring two SAGE Veterans who will share how they overcame their discharge experience for being LGBTQ+. And March 29 is National Vietnam Veterans Day. SAGEVets, LIC, and the NYSDVS will honor LGBTQ+ veterans who served during the Vietnam Era and in Country with signed proclamations signed by Governor Hochul. **Please register here** to join us in Hauppauge, NY for this meaningful tribute.

If you missed the SAGEVets presentation by Eric Alva, the first soldier injured during the Iraq War, it's not too late! Please **visit this link** to hear Alva share his experiences serving in the U.S. Marines as a gay man, predating Don't Ask Don't Tell.

To learn more about the SAGEVets program in Central and Western New York, and Long Island please email: **astewart@sageusa.org**

## SAGEVets Spotlight

Petty Officer Second Class La Wanda Mobley entered the U.S. Navy in 1985 with a career of dedicated patriotism that lasted for over a decade. Mobley served during Operation Desert Storm, a conflict that began in 1991, but she also struggled with a conflict that persisted throughout the military at that time, discrimination.

The harassment did not start until Mobley had served for a few years and was moving up in the ranks due to her stellar service and top-rated performance evaluations. "Everybody spoke highly of me," Mobley recalls, still, there were a few who questioned her sexuality and started meddling in her personal life. After suffering from years of discrimination and harassment, Mobley turned to alcohol and drugs to ease the pain caused by the trauma, developing an addiction that was later attributed to her other than honorable discharge.

Following her service, Mobley's substance use worsened until she made the difficult commitment to get sober. After seven years of sobriety, Mobley began to connect her substance abuse to the abuse she endured aboard her ship. SAGEVets met La Wanda in 2018 and has always believed in her. As soon as she was ready to make the decision to appeal to the Navy Boards for a discharge upgrade, we referred her case to the Veterans Advocacy Project. It has been a long-fought battle, but we believe we are nearing the end. In the meantime, La Wanda volunteers for the City of Middletown, NY Drug Court helping veterans enter a 12-step program. She is also an advocate for improving mental health and issues affecting LGBTQ+ veterans.

Please join SAGEVets in saluting La Wanda for her courage and her fortitude.



Petty Officer Second Class La Wanda Mobley

## Veterans Day 2021

As part of our Veterans Day activities, SAGEVets marched in Veterans Day parades in Syracuse and New York City where we began our day at a breakfast event hosted by Mayor Bill DeBlasio. Our contingent of marchers was greeted by Senator Brad Hoylman, sponsor of the ROH, who showed up for a photo-op before we were launched into the parade. Ashton drove the rental vehicle for veterans who required transportation due to age and mobility issues. It was a heart-warming day to see the joy of our contingent shared with the grateful spectators who lined the streets of Manhattan. Thousands of onlookers were present to see SAGEVets march with pride in a display of unity to support all veterans. Over 250 SAGEVets key rings were distributed along the way. Bill Gross, SAGE's Assistant Director of Special Programs, attended the Wreath-Laying Ceremony sponsored by NYC Council Committee on Veterans, Chair Dinowitz, and State Senator Jamaal Bailey. SAGEVets nominated two veterans who were inducted into the New York State Veterans Hall of Fame on Veterans Day. Senator Brad Hoylman (SD27) and José Serrano (SD29) accepted our nominations and hosted special award ceremonies to honor **Louis Miller** and **Gaston Roberge**. Lastly, on November 23, Ashton helped hand out free turkeys and all the trimmings at the Nassau County Veterans Stand Down. Over 200 veterans received free meals in addition to SAGEVets promo materials, and veterans in need received handmade pillows designed by **HarlemYes!** with the SAGEVets logo. Earlier in the month, Ashton shared resources at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Veterans Day Parade and Expo in Brooklyn.



Long Island Cares, Inc. The Harry Chapin Food Bank Veterans Program

## SAGE Programming

Learn more about our resources for LGBTQ+ 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 home care, 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](mailto: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](mailto:mhaynes@licares.org)

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

## New York City SAGE Centers

[Edie Windsor SAGE Center – Manhattan](#)  
305 Seventh Avenue, 15th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
646-576-8669  
[info@sageusa.org](mailto:info@sageusa.org)

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

[SAGE Center – Harlem](#)  
220 West 143rd Street  
New York, NY 10030  
646-660-8954  
[sageharlem@sageusa.org](mailto:sageharlem@sageusa.org)

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

[SAGE-GRIOT Senior Center – Brooklyn](#)  
GRIOT Circle, Inc.  
Brooklyn, NY  
718-246-2775  
[reunion@griotcircle.org](mailto: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](mailto:lsloan@sageusa.org)

*SAGEVets programs are made possible by public funds facilitated by the New York City Council's Committee on Veterans and the New York State Legislature.*

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