Celebrating, Supporting, and Uniting LGBTQI+ Older Adults

How Are We Doing? Checking In on Our Community. Pima County Survey of LGBTQI+ Seniors and COVID-19

Recognizing that LGBTQI+ older adults may be vulnerable to COVID-19, Tucson research scientists Beth Meyerson and Sally Dodds looked at how our community is faring and what we need in the midst of a pandemic.

They administered a survey this Spring in Pima County, possibly the first research study ever about older LGBTQI+ adults, 55+, during this national crisis.

They asked four basic questions of the people interviewed:

- What underlying health conditions put older LGBTQI+ adults at risk?
- What COVID-19 risk reduction behaviors are they practicing?
- How are they handling the stress of mostly staying at home?
- How can LGBTQI+ serving organizations better respond to LGBTQI+ older adults during COVID-19?

Sally and Beth reported findings at a Senior Pride speakers program—to view their presentation and see the survey go to our website: www.soazseniorpride.org. Select Senior Pride YouTube to view the presentation. Also included, a handout on “Aging Successfully During COVID-19.”

Beth Meyerson, PhD, is a professor with the University of Arizona (UA) Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW) and Board Member, Lambda Legal.

Sally Dodds, PhD, a retired UA professor of psychiatry and medicine with a career background in HIV/AIDS research, explains: “We believe that work like this will really build a stronger community infrastructure for LGBTQI+ people.” She notes that these survey results are only the prelude to a much larger critical needs assessment currently underway “to help determine the priorities for programs and policies needed by older queer adults.”

Sally Dodds

Photo credit: Joyce Bolinger

Beth Meyerson

Photo credit: Indiana University

Volume 16 • Issue 6
November–December 2020

STAY VIGILANT. SOCIALIZE SAFELY. WEAR MASKS.
PUT YOUR HEALTH CARE AFFAIRS IN ORDER

By Bruce Hyland

Senior Pride’s newly developed online Honoring a Life workshop provides LGBTQI+ seniors with guidance toward appointing advocates and legal representatives for health care, if they are not be able to make those decisions for themselves.

See P 4 for upcoming dates and times for Honoring a Life workshops.

Designed and conducted by Erin Russ and Bruce Hyland on Zoom, seminar topics include the following: why LGBTQI+ older adults need advocates and legal representatives for our healthcare; how to have these difficult conversations; practical considerations for choosing someone to help us; free legal documents and services that are available and, basic legal considerations as put forth by the Arizona Attorney General’s Office.

At the inaugural session in September, participants discussed putting healthcare affairs in order as well as the legal means to complete a power of attorney and living will.

Erin Russ is the Coordinator of our End of Life Planning Program and the former the former Director of Programs of the Southern Arizona Gender Alliance (SAGA).

Contact Erin to register: eol@soazseniorpride.org or 520-319-8923.

SENIOR PRIDE COMMUNITY CARES PROGRAM

By Lee Crosby

Now celebrating its third year, volunteers with the Community Cares Program continue to help to interrupt isolation and loneliness among homebound LGBTQI+ adults and people with disabilities.

Most volunteers make contact with their recipients by phone calls but a few are now able to visit in person while observing all safety precautions.

We now serve 21 recipients. Call 520-351-2724 to volunteer or to receive visits or calls. “Yes, it helps so much. Visits and phone calls have taken me from being in a down space. I can laugh again”—CCP recipient.
Carlos Valenzuela met his first strictly platonic “girlfriend,” Gustavo, at age seven, but it took them another seven years before admitting they found guys in school very attractive. Sixty years later, they are still best friends.

Carlos grew up in Agua Prieta, Sonora Mexico. His career started as an international manager with Levi Strauss in San Francisco in 1971. “A great time to be in San Francisco: flower power, hippies, disco, and gay bars!” he recalls.

While working in Buenos Aires for Levi Strauss, Carlos successfully championed the launch of “fashion jeans.” Yet, he was always the outsider. His homophobic fellow managers in South America excluded him from after-work gatherings where the real decisions were made. Carlos eventually returned to Agua Prieta where he again connected with Gustavo.

“What if I became a hairdresser?” Carlos asked Gustavo, who instantly replied, “Go for it, you will do great.” He found his passion. “The beauty industry really saved my life; I was free to be fully myself.”

He attended the prestigious Vidal Sassoon Academy in London and later was the first hairdresser to work in China in 1979. For the occasion, Carlos wore pink sneakers and sported shoulder length hair. The Chinese mobbed his appearances.

The desert called him and, in Scottsdale, he founded the Carlos Valenzuela Academy, a successful beauty school that he later sold. Today, in Tucson, he still consults for major beauty brands and writes for a popular professional hairdressing magazine.

He says “Our past successes and failures are important, but what’s important is to do something well now.” To that end, he is finishing up “Tiny Step Rituals,” a program focused on small daily steps that bring big changes to lives. He also just launched an e-book called “The Thrifty Cosmetologist” focused on money smarts for salon people. His next goal is to complete, “Letters to Young Carlos,” a bi-cultural memoir of advice to his younger self. You can read his musings at www.carlos-valenzuela.com

“The beauty industry really saved my life; I was free to be fully myself.” —Carlos Valenzuela
With Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF) serving as Southern Arizona Senior Pride’s fiscal sponsor, all donations to our organization are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

By Check:
Payable to our Fiscal Sponsor: SAAF
375 South Euclid Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85719
Write SENIOR PRIDE in the Memo Line

Online:
Go to our website
soazseniorpride.org
click on “Donate Today”

By Telephone: (520) 547-6119
Specify: Senior Pride

Senior Pride Connects Our Community -- Your Donations Keep Us Strong!
Senior Pride’s cultural events, support groups, Community Cares Program, workshops, website with local resources, Facebook page, YouTube channel and weekly news updates provide a hub for our community.

This work is made possible by supporters like you. Please donate today.

COMING EVENTS

Senior Pride Winter Gathering
On Zoom
Saturday, December 19, 2020 from 2-4 pm
Childhood Holiday Memories
Join us to connect and share memories. While we will miss being with each other in person this year, we can still enjoy being together virtually. Several of us will share photos and tell humorous and touching stories about holidays gone by.

We’ll have plenty of opportunity to interact and reminisce.

We want to spend time with you this winter!
Please RSVP to receive a Zoom invitation: info@soazseniorpride.org

SENIOR PRIDE BOOK CLUB
Third Wednesday each month:
2-3:30 pm.
For Zoom invitation: email
info@soazseniorpride.org

NOVEMBER 18
The Nickel Boys
By Colson Whitehead
Two boys unjustly sentenced to a hellish reform school in Jim Crow-era Florida.

DECEMBER 16
Harvey Milk: His Lives and Death
by Lillian Faderman
The story of the gay rights pioneer by the brilliant historian.

HONORING A LIFE WORKSHOPS
SEE PAGE 2 FOR MORE INFORMATION
Nov. 17 (Tues) at 10 am
Jan. 6, 2021 (Wed) at 1:30 pm
Feb.18, 2021 (Thurs) at 1 pm
April 2, 2021 (Fri.) at 1 pm
May 1, 2021 (Sat.) at 10 am
No fee. Preregistration 10 days in advance of workshop date is required.

COMING IN FEB. 2021!
CATCHING FIRE: Poetry Writing Workshop
Taught by Joan Larkin on Zoom, Check the Senior Pride website for all the information!

The LGBTQI+ Elder Support Group is an open and welcoming forum.
Contact group facilitator, Claire Ellington, at info@SoAzSeniorPride.org

AA MEETING HOSTED BY SENIOR PRIDE
Every Monday, 7-8 pm
An open 12x12 Step meeting for LGBTQI+ older adults. Contact the meeting coordinator at aarigbt@gmail.com

Senior Pride is getting creative with Zoom during COVID. Get your Zoom invitation via email: info@soazseniorpride.org

All information about these and other programs is found on our website: www.SoAzSeniorPride.org