

Seniors Needs

Why We Should Take Action

Many of us saw the film [Gen Silent](#) at the 2012 [Rainbow Reels Queer Film Festival](#), and it highlighted some serious concerns to do with our aging population:

- increasing isolation, loneliness and depression for those without partners or without many friends;
- the lack of personal advocates in legal and health matters;
- the lack of understanding or sensitivity on the part of staff in hospitals and care facilities;
- and the fear of being out in potentially non-supportive environments.

All older people can benefit from some assistance as they deal with life challenges, such as handling complex legal and health matters, or moving from home to a retirement home or nursing home. It is important to remember that a significant number of **heterosexual people** have **children or other younger relatives** to assist in these matters. A significant number of **non-heterosexual people** do not. That is why community is so very important to the aging LGBTQ population.

Moving Forward

On 2013, October 22 (Tuesday), **SPECTRUM** hosted an organizational meeting for a **Working Group on LGBTQ Seniors Needs** in the area. The goal of the Working Group was to create a set of detailed concrete recommendations for (1) programs and services that will best meet the needs of local LGBTQ seniors, and (2) how to begin implementing the proposed programs and services.

At its second meeting, 2013, November 21 (Thursday), the group renamed itself: **Aging With Pride - Serving LGBTQ communities in Waterloo/Wellington**, also known as **Aging With Pride** for short. Its institutional page is at:

<http://ourspectrum.com/Seniors/AgingWithPride.html>

As a preliminary to the first meeting, SPECTRUM compiled below some information about similar initiatives in a few other metropolitan areas in North America.

Other Communities Providing Seniors Services

City	Sponsoring Agency	Website	Comments
<i>Toronto</i>	The 519 Church Street Community Centre	http://www.the519.org/ See "Programs & Services" then "Older LGBT Services"	The page referred to lists a weekly afternoon drop-in and two monthly book clubs, one for 50+ women and one for 50+ men.
<i>Vancouver</i>	Qmunity	http://www.qmunity.ca/ See header "Older Adults"	The page referred to lists a rich variety of support/discussion groups, social activities, recreational activities, and educational workshops. "QMUNITY Generations offers training for new professionals as well as in-service opportunities for professionals already on the job."

<i>Boston</i>	LGBT Aging Project	http://www.lgbtagingproject.org/	Their work was featured in the film <i>Gen Silent</i> . They have an extraordinary array of services, including bereavement and caregiver support groups, community meals, and healthy aging programs. A section of their site is entitled National Resource Center in LGBT Aging ; it contains much useful information.
<i>Chicago</i>	Center on Halsted	http://www.centeronhalsted.org/ Go to the “Programs” tab, then to ”Seniors“.	They have a meal program, social and recreational programs, visiting programs, help finding affordable housing, etc.
<i>Denver</i>	GLBT Community Center of Colorado	http://www.coloradoglb.org/ Go to the “Programs” tab, then to ”SAGE of the Rockies“.	They offer a good variety of programs and services to support seniors.
<i>Los Angeles</i>	L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center	www.laglc.org/ Go to the tab “Your Well-Being”, then “Seniors Services”.	They provide a variety of health & wellness activities, social and recreational

			activities, support groups, etc.
<i>New York</i>	SAGE (Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders) Center	http://www.sageusa.org/	This is an organization started in New York City; go to the tab for “New York City Programs” to find information on the New York SAGE Center. It “provides a comprehensive array of unique services and programs related to arts and culture, fitness, food and nutrition, health and wellness, and lifelong education for LGBT elders.”
<i>San Diego</i>	San Diego LGBT Community Center	http://www.thecentersd.org/ Go to the “Programs” tab, then to “Senior Services“.	They provide a very full array of programs and services for seniors.
<i>San Francisco</i>	Openhouse	http://openhouse-sf.org/	A major initiative is housing, but under the tab for “Events” is a listing of various social and recreational activities, support and discussion

			groups, and health and wellness activities as well.
<i>San Jose</i>	Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center	http://www.defrankcenter.org/ Go to the “Programs/Groups” tab, then to ”Vintage Program“.	They provide a very rich set of programs and services.

NOTE: We have also gone to the following additional Canadian websites, but did not find much pertaining to services for seniors:

- **Calgary** - [Calgary Outlink: Centre for Gender & Sexual Diversity](#)
- **Edmonton** - [Pride Centre of Edmonton](#) [The tab entitled “Seniors” refers the reader to the Calendar, but we had trouble finding any seniors program events there. There may be some, but they do not jump out at you.]
- **Montréal** - [Centre communautaire des gais et lesbiennes de Montréal \(CCGLM\)](#)
- **Winnipeg** - [Rainbow Resource Centre \(Winnipeg\)](#)

The Range of Services in Other Communities

<u>Toronto</u> See “Programs & Services” then “Older LGBT Services”	<u>Vancouver</u> See header “Older Adults”	<u>Boston</u>	<u>Chicago</u> Go to the “Programs” tab, then to “Seniors“.	<u>Denver</u> Go to the “Programs” tab, then to ”SAGE of the Rockies“.	<u>Los Angeles</u> Go to the tab “Your Well-Being”, then “Seniors Services”.	<u>New York City</u> Go to the tab for “New York City Programs” to find information on the New York SAGE Center.	<u>San Diego</u> Go to the “Programs” tab, then to ”Senior Services“.	<u>San Francisco</u>
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Specific Activities at Different Community Centers:

Typical Activities: drop-ins, book clubs, camera clubs, card games (euchre, cribbage, bridge, canasta), board games, bingo, Scrabble, music (concerts, museums), parties, dinners, tea dances, senior proms, karaoke, bowling, wii bowling, knitting, poetry sharing.

Classes: language classes, enrichment activities (computer, writing, art, Mahjong, dancing, acting, photography, self defense).

Exercise: Yoga, Tai Chi, Zumba, exercise, stretching and conditioning, food and nutrition, meditation, wellness lectures.

Friendly Visitor Programs: Two types - programs involving several seniors and younger people, and also programs in which young people visit seniors.

Professional Training: Some community centers offer training for professionals (health, social services) by arranging for professionals (including doctors, nurses, social workers) to provide services **at the community center** (wellness classes, group facilitation, assistance in interacting with staff at hospitals, the center gives the professionals some experience in working with the LGBTQ community. Some community centers do out-reach by working with hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, social services agencies, and counselling agencies to deliver sensitivity training to grant staff and residents.

Outreach Assistance for Individuals: These consultations are performed either by trained volunteers at the community center, or by professionals at the community center (see “Training for Professionals” above).

Broad Problem Areas and Possible Solutions	
Broad Problem Areas	Possible Programs/Services
Fear of Being Out in potentially non-supportive environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outreach to hospitals, retirement homes and nursing homes to ensure that appropriate policies are in place • sensitivity sessions with staff in hospitals, retirement homes and nursing homes • outreach to community centres to ensure that appropriate policies in place

<p>Other Emotional Challenges like loneliness, low self-esteem, or grief</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• friendly visitor programs• intergenerational programs• social and recreational opportunities• grief/bereavement support groups• educational and wellness programs
<p>Other Living Challenges like dealing with bureaucracy, institutions, or housing matters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• help in handling government, legal or medical documentation• help in interacting with people in agencies and institutions• help in getting organized for a major move• help in finding housing