

openhouse

Housing and Services: A Critical Combination

"Putting in place the housing and services necessary to age with dignity and grace is a vital need for today's LGBT seniors and the wave of Baby Boomers to follow. It should be a priority for our community and our many allies, especially in San Francisco." So wrote long-time Openhouse supporters, Ray Rudolph and MJ Isabel, in the Bay Area Reporter (July 7, 2011) in support of the Openhouse senior housing we are building at 55 Laguna Street.

As the senior service agency supporting San Francisco's LGBT community, Openhouse has made extraordinary progress this year on delivering the housing and services that LGBT seniors so critically need. On August 4, the San Francisco Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve a critical

change in the financing plan for the 55 Laguna Street facility, paving the way for us to move forward on this premiere project.

We have also secured an agreement with the University of California that will allow us to build on the site, and we have formed the 55 Laguna Corporation in partnership with Mercy Housing California.

Because we have reached these three critical milestones, the City of San Francisco will release nearly \$600,000 for us to design and engineer our building. We will be unveiling pictures and drawings at our Spring Fling on April 22, 2012. Please mark your calendars and join us for the 55 Laguna debut!

The Openhouse community at 55 Laguna Street will feature 109 rental

apartments for people 55 and older who need subsidized housing. As the housing market and lending environments improve and with experience gained through the 55 Laguna development, Openhouse will continue to pursue strategies, as part of our long-term plans, to build other senior communities to meet the needs of moderate and higher income LGBT seniors.

While we work to build our own housing, Openhouse is helping LGBT seniors find the housing they need today. In the last year, Openhouse has placed over 70% of the seniors who call us for housing assistance in a LGBT-friendly senior community, in subsidized housing or on a waitlist for future openings.

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Caring Connections: Openhouse Friendly Visitor Volunteers



Volunteers are the driving force behind many of our programs at Openhouse, providing much of the critical support that LGBT older adults need. For example, through our Caring Connections Friendly Visitor program, in partnership with Episcopal Senior Communities, we

work with volunteers to provide companionship for older adults who need of a friend to talk to. A Caring Connections volunteer spends 2 – 4 hours with the same senior each month, simply talking, having coffee or playing cards.

By spending these few hours with a senior on a regular basis, our volunteers keep LGBT seniors connected to their community, which is essential for any older adult to stay active, vibrant and healthy.

"Caring Connections means the world to me," said one senior in the program. "The challenges I face are more manageable with someone to talk to. Even when I am weary, my Friendly Visitor brings me joy!"

Recently, one of our older members was diagnosed with stomach cancer. She was anxious and felt isolated at a time when she needed someone to lean on. An Openhouse Caring Connections volunteer visited her before, during, and after her treatments, serving as an open ear and a support during the physically and emotionally difficult time. For both our member and the Caring Connections visitor, this experience was a powerful and healing experience.

In fact, our Caring Connections volunteers and the seniors they visit continually report that they reap a rich harvest of friendship, wisdom, and mutual appreciation through the program.

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Housing and Services

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But housing alone is not enough. Our core belief—reinforced every day by the LGBT seniors we serve—is that housing, support services and a true sense of community must exist and work together in ways that serve the whole person. That is why the 55 Laguna Street development will include a state of the art community center and service space for residents and LGBT seniors from across the City. That is why Openhouse has vastly expanded our social services and community building activities over the last year.

Thanks to your support, we are on track to serve over 300 LGBT seniors in 2012, with a growth goal of 450 for the following year.

Openhouse programs are intentionally designed to meet the needs of LGBT seniors at all levels of income, mobility, and community engagement. We serve active LGBT seniors who seek opportunities to be intellectually stimulated and civically engaged and LGBT seniors with more acute needs who are at risk of social isolation, premature or unnecessary institutionalization, or losing their ability to live independently. Our programming ranges from self-directed social groups

to in-home support to assistance with housing and social service needs.

Your investment in Openhouse has a dramatic impact on the lives of LGBT seniors. In the last year, as a direct result of Openhouse programming and services, 82% of participants feel less isolated, 79% feel more positive and less depressed, 75% experience improvement in health and well-being, and 84% feel better able to live healthy and independent lives.

Thanks to your steadfast support, Openhouse continues to grow as San Francisco's one-stop resource for all LGBT older adults, their caregivers and friends who need housing, services and community support. We are providing a wider range of activities and more impactful social services to more LGBT seniors than ever before. We are improving the health, well-being and quality of life for today's LGBT seniors and ensuring that we all will have the support we need in the years ahead.

We are closer than ever to making our dream of LGBT-welcoming senior housing a reality in San Francisco.

Thank you for your continued support and Happy Holidays!

Seth Kilbourn,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Caring Connections

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Openhouse matches each participant and volunteer based on mutual interests, availability and location, and helps nurture the connection over the course of the friendship. With funding from the Family Caregiver Alliance, we provide an all-day training and ongoing support, including a monthly meeting for volunteers to speak with each other, learn about resources and share their experiences.

If you are interested in becoming a Caring Connections volunteer or know someone who might want a friendly visitor, contact Elyn Bloomfield at Openhouse. Be a part of bringing our community together and supporting one another as we grow older. The investment is small, but the reward is priceless.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OPENHOUSE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

\$25,000+

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Out and About with Openhouse

stunning Botanical Garden. Science fans went to Oakland's Chabot Science Center. Culture and entertainment enthusiasts enjoyed Broadway's *Billy Elliot*, San Francisco's famous *Beach Blanket Babylon*, and the San Francisco Jewish Museum's *Gertrude Stein Exhibit*.

"In-town" excursions included picnics, film screenings, and an awe-inspiring stroll down San Francisco's mural-lined Balmy Alley. Lovers of street art marveled at the vibrant beauty of the Mission District's 24th Street corridor.

Many Openhouse outings are free to participants; others are offered at discounted or group rates. Those who attended Billy Elliott were particularly thrilled at seeing a live performance in orchestra seats! "The music, the dancing, the clever sets, the dialog, and the sweet but powerful storyline were wonderful," said Betsy Banner-

man. "It was about equal rights on many levels, and that made it a perfect outing for Openhouse people."

Longtime community member George Paphitas spoke of his delight in the majestic beauty of Muir Woods' stunningly high redwoods, as he enjoyed the warmth of community and meandered among trails he had not remembered seeing before. John Wherry met new friends while crossing quaint bridges in the woods, appreciating the opportunity to listen to flowing water and to escape the sirens of the City.

Openhouse has more excursions planned in the months ahead. Contact Activities Manager Fairly Parson for more information. Please join us and go Out and About!

Throughout this summer and fall, Openhouse community members enjoyed great company, good food and exciting entertainment with Openhouse's Out and About program. Members have literally been out and about, meeting new friends and enjoying the company of old pals.

Nature buffs took a trip to Muir Woods and Golden Gate Park's

Ed and Richard: There's No Place Like Home

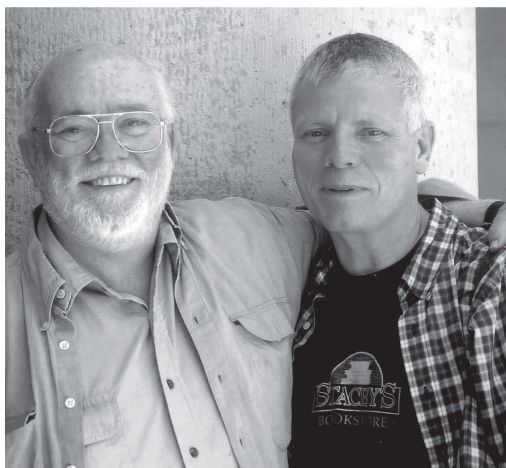
Ed and Richard met at San Francisco's Spaghetti Factory on Memorial Day Weekend 1971. Richard says that he thought Ed talked too much. Ed claims that he was determined not to meet anyone. But meet (and talk) they did. "We haven't been apart since," said Ed. Thanks to Openhouse, they have a new place to call home at the Coronet, an affordable living facility for independent seniors on Geary Street.

From their teasing repartee to the way they finish each others' sentences, it is easy to tell they have been together a long time. They are a jovial, spirited and very active couple. Ed, 67, is a prolific poet. Richard, 74, is busy painting and working at the San Francisco Botanical Garden's library. They love San Francisco and wouldn't want to be anywhere else. They deeply enjoy the City's many cultural events, its climate of openness and its diversity of expression. They also have nieces nearby and family in Santa Cruz.

Earlier this year, as they witnessed the slow dissolution of their former home, a public housing co-op in the Western Addition, they became gravely concerned about finding suitable affordable housing. Not wanting to leave their beloved San Francisco and their network of support, they knew this would be a daunting task.

"I'm in great shape except for going up the steps," said Ed, noting the difficulty of navigating their former apartment's three flights of stairs. They feared the City would displace the residents in order to repair the quickly deteriorating building or demolish it altogether. To avoid competing with 400 displaced families for affordable housing, Ed and Richard called Openhouse.

The assistance provided by Openhouse was indispensable. "Having the information was key," said Richard. Openhouse Social Services Manager Ellyn Bloomfield researched housing waitlists, provided the applications, and answered their questions.



"When Openhouse told us to apply for every waitlist, we did. We were placed on waitlists from Bay View to Ellis Street," continued Richard. Openhouse staff not only provided critical information, but also the encouragement to persevere in a process that can be scary and overwhelming.

Five months after moving in, Ed and Richard love their new digs. "We have a variety of different people living here," said Ed. "We're all very close in age and people are friendly.... They're more joyous than where we used to live." The Institute on Aging (IOA) is next door, and many of the residents participate in IOA programming. The easy access to health and other services provided by IOA allows residents to continue living independently.

Ed and Richard greatly enjoy the lushness of a park just steps outside their building and Ed reports feeling healthier, no longer in need of a cane because their new housing has an elevator. And they've gotten used to the micro-climate of the Richmond District. "When we first moved in on May 23, we put on our winter jackets and scarves to go for a walk in the fog," said Richard. "It was like an Antonioni film, gray and foggy. It was really magical."

Their move-in date has particular meaning for Ed and Richard. Indeed they moved into their new home exactly 40 years after they first met on Memorial Day weekend 1971.

housing, services, and community for LGBT seniors
openhouse

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SAVE THE DATE!

Spring Fling

Sunday, April 22, 2012

11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Four Seasons Hotel, San Francisco