

Unprecedented Growth

This year has been one of incredible growth and progress at Openhouse. It may go down as the most seminal in our history. I know that's a big, bold statement. But it has been just that sort of year with even more to look forward to in 2011. We've accomplished so much with your support. Thank you.

As we work to achieve our vision that every LGBT senior is engaged with their community and appropriately served by all providers of housing and care, Openhouse is now offering a vastly new and wider range of programs and activities to bring us ever closer to meeting those critical objectives.

As you may know, the New Leaf Outreach to Elders program (NLOE) ceased operations at the end of September. For over 30 years, this critical program supported hundreds of LGBT seniors in San Francisco with activities like yoga classes, arts groups, writing workshops, and social gatherings; and more intensive social services to meet the medical, health and housing needs of our community.

With the help and support of the City of San Francisco, the staff and board of New Leaf, and many of our sister organizations, these activities and social services have been transitioned to Openhouse. We are honored to take on this essential work to

maintain the health and well being of our seniors. By taking on the entire Outreach to Elders Program, we have added tremendous new dimension and vitality to our existing community programs. We are now serving more LGBT seniors than ever.

Openhouse will begin receiving City funding to grow and expand community services for LGBT seniors in 2011. We will be able to hire new staff, recruit more volunteers, offer more activities, and provide more direct assistance than ever before to LGBT seniors who need in-home care, emergency rental subsidies, affordable housing referrals and much

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SF LGBT Senior Pride 2010

This year, Openhouse had a huge contingent in the San Francisco LGBT Pride Parade! To show our community partnerships, Openhouse organized staff and seniors from the Institute on Aging, On Lok Lifeways, and Northern California Presbyterian Homes to march together with us. Our theme was "Partnering to Serve Our LGBT Seniors."

As Openhouse works to build housing, community and services for LGBT seniors, we also rely on our LGBT-friendly allies to support our community. Openhouse and our community partners filled a cable car with seniors, families,

and allies to show the world that LGBT seniors in San Francisco have resources they can turn to. As we marched along Market Street, cheers from the crowd like, "We love our seniors!" left participants feeling a sense of connection to the entire LGBT community. One senior even remarked, "This was the first time I have ever experienced young people cheering me on, and that felt pretty good."

After the Parade, the festivities continued at the Elder Space, a VIP area for seniors to rest and enjoy the Pride entertainment at the Civic Center. Openhouse has



co-sponsored the Elder Space for the last three years with Lavender Seniors of the East Bay and New Leaf Services for Our Community. A great time was had by all. Our LGBT seniors and our community partners are already talking about next year's parade float! Join us next year in celebrating LGBT senior pride!

Art Group!

Miles O'Bryan is not a teacher, and the group of artists that gather each week to create and "play" as he likes to say, is not a class. When Miles was first approached to take on the Saturday Art Group, he said he would do it under two conditions: (1) that he not be called a teacher, and (2) that the principles of the class be based on kindness and respect. Emerald O'Leary, a regular participant in the group, thinks about the group as a form of therapy. About three weeks after she began attending, one of the sessions had been cancelled. She had turned up, not knowing about the cancellation. She was struck by how upset she was and that "in three weeks it had become extraordinarily important to me." The

Saturday gathering became a place that helped her as she grappled with aging and loneliness. Nearly two years later she says, "I was worried about becoming an old biddy and now I AM an old biddy, but now I am in a group that celebrates my old biddiness!" Miles helps others find their creative voice and style. John Wherry, another regular participant, hadn't done art since high school when he started attending the group. He says that

Miles "teaches as needed". "If you need a little criticism - he provides that; if you need a little instruction - he provides that too," said John. Wherry has been attending the art group for a couple of years and he says what he likes best about the group is "not the art but the people... doing the art is the secondary reason I like the group. I look forward to seeing those people and when someone cannot make it to the group, I miss them."



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more. Transitions are never easy. But we are committed to working with LGBT older adults—in all their diversity—from across the City to design consumer-centered programs that will address unmet needs.

Openhouse was founded on the ideal that every LGBT senior should live in safe and stable housing that is affordable to them. We will never stop working until we've met that promise. We've made incredible progress this year on our first affordable senior housing development at 55 Laguna St. While the details remain under discussion, the developers of the master project have brought a renewed momentum and vigor to the table that we haven't seen since the economic crisis slowed us down. And we've brought in advisors with unparalleled expertise in affordable senior housing to help us secure the public funding we'll need to make our dream of building an LGBT-welcoming senior housing facility a reality. Meetings with the San Francisco Mayor's

Office of Housing and the University of California (which owns the site) have been very productive and we expect to have a more detailed announcement very soon about the timeline for development.

As we grow, our work is being recognized more and more at the national level. This year, Openhouse was selected to be one of ten community partners working with Services & Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Elders (SAGE) to develop a National Resource Center on LGBT Aging. Made possible by an historic grant from the U.S. Administration on Aging, the Resource Center will assist communities across the country in their efforts to provide services and support for LGBT older adults. We are thrilled that the expertise we have developed here in San Francisco in housing, services and community programs for LGBT seniors will now be reflected on a national scale.

Please help sustain the momentum we have built in this extraordinary year by making a generous gift to Openhouse before December 31st.

Rapid growth is challenging for any organization. And we need your help to sustain it over time. We are lucky to live in a City where public funds are made available to support LGBT seniors. But especially in these tough economic times it is not enough to address the full range of challenges that our seniors face every day.

LGBT seniors need your help as we transition critical services. They need your help to ensure we can continue supporting them for many years to come. As the community's sole remaining organization exclusively serving LGBT seniors, our consumer-centered approach is driven by your continuing feedback and guidance. It is sustained by your generosity. Your support today—no matter how large or small—will help us turn the momentum of this remarkable year into something that will endure.

However you may be celebrating this holiday season, I hope it is filled with love, joy and peace. And thank you again for your support.

Happy Holidays!

Seth Kilbourn, Executive Director

Randy's Story

Randy worked with families for almost 30 years in Los Angeles before retiring from his career as a social worker to move to San Francisco. Having grown up in Iowa, Randy felt the draw of the big city and moved to L.A. for college, then stayed to eventually go on to graduate school to receive his Master's in Social Work. He loved working with families and brought his love for working with people to the city he would call his home—San Francisco.

Randy started as a volunteer for an Openhouse project that helped identify LGBT-welcoming affordable senior housing in the city. Randy says that he started becoming engaged in more Openhouse activities because we "just kept pulling [him] into different things."

Randy began attending Openhouse's monthly neighborhood discussion groups held at different senior centers in the city. He became a regular at our LGBT Forum at the 30th Street Senior Center, where he also began using the exercise equipment in the mornings before the group. Getting used to a new place, where many of the seniors speak Spanish, was difficult at first. Then, the Forum participants started discussing how to increase visibility for LGBT seniors at the center so others would feel more welcome. Randy stepped up to volunteer. Now, as you walk through the elevator doors into the center, you will be greeted at the reception desk by Randy and other LGBT-friendly volunteers welcoming you with a smile.

Randy attends weekly volunteer meetings at the 30th Street Center and has made friends with other center participants, many of whom have been volunteers there for 30 years.



"Sometimes the ladies ask me to salsa dance with them, and I get embarrassed. I just don't dance," said Randy. He continued, "One day, another volunteer says to me, matter-of-factly, 'I have gay friends, you know,' as if she were letting me know that we could be friends, too." Randy looks forward to volunteering at the 30th Street Center's reception desk every Wednesday. "I'm grateful to Openhouse for introducing me to this wonderful place," he says. "It's really started growing on me and I like what it's doing for me in my life." Randy has started sharing information about the Center's offerings to his friends. One friend has started the Always Active fitness program and uses the treadmill in the Happy Heart Room every day.

Most recently, Randy made a big move from a building he's lived in since first moving to San Francisco. Openhouse told him about an affordable senior apartment complex with a waitlist that was open. Openhouse knew of other LGBT residents who also enjoyed living there and Randy went over to take a look. At first, the unit he saw was too noisy and dark. "Keep me on the waitlist," he said, and a couple of months later, an apartment on the 11th floor opened up with spectacular views of the city. "Once again, I've got Openhouse to thank for helping me find my new home. This view is pretty spectacular and I think Luna and I will be very happy here," he says as he watches, Luna, his cat, perched atop the T.V. as if to take in the view herself.

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