

housing, services, and community for LGBT seniors

# openhouse

OCTOBER 2009

## EVENTS

As part of our Neighborhood Outreach Program, over 75 LGBT seniors attended a reception and tour of the On Lok 30th St. Senior Center in September. **openhouse** sponsors lively discussion groups and other community programs at neighborhood senior centers across the City to increase the visibility and participation of LGBT seniors.



In July, **openhouse** co-sponsored a reception for *Finding Home*, a photography and oral history exhibit at the San Francisco Public Library. The inspiring exhibit told the stories of today's LGBT elders who came to San Francisco in search of home and community. Through beautiful photographs and written commentary, the exhibit documented the experience of LGBT seniors living in the City that they made a safe haven for so many LGBT individuals.



Fifteen pioneering LGBT seniors participated in Senior University, co-sponsored by **openhouse** and Senior Action Network in June. The four week course included workshops on leadership

development, public speaking, community organizing, and civic engagement. Participants formed the **openhouse** Leadership Council to recruit volunteers, reach out to LGBT seniors and organize educational forums and other events.

In April, over 200 supporters celebrated LGBT seniors and the work of **openhouse** at the 5th Annual Spring Fling held in the spectacular penthouse of the St. Francis hotel. **openhouse** honored former State Senator Carole Migden and founding board members Arthur Hurwith, Warren van Eck, Matile Rothschild and Jan Faulkner (in memoriam). Harvey Milk's campaign manager, Anne Kronenberg, received the **openhouse** Trailblazer award.



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## SPOTLIGHT: Nicolas Frausto

**openhouse** is privileged to serve hundreds of people each year—each with a different story. To read Nicolas's full story and others, visit [www.openhouse-sf.org/blog](http://www.openhouse-sf.org/blog).



"It was love at first sight," said Nicolas Frausto of his first meeting with Raye. "He took me that night and kept me for 30 years."

After a few years in West Hollywood, they decided to get out of the whole gay scene in L.A. They moved to be near Raye's family in Calimesa, which is east of L.A. in the Redlands area where they bought a nice double-wide trailer home in a good park. Nicolas began working with troubled young people in youth homes, which he loved. He ended up working with youth offenders for 20 years.

When Raye's health began to decline a few years before his death in 2006, Nicolas had a tough time adjusting from being a "partner" to being a "primary caregiver." Both were retired and enjoyed one another's company a great deal. So the shift was hard. What was more difficult was Raye's death.

"I grieved a great deal and we didn't have a lot of close friends, so I was lonely," Nicolas said. "I would watch movies on the Logo channel and see two men holding hands and burst into tears." And he didn't have a lot to live on—Raye's death had meant the end of his Social Security and other retirement income.

But Nicolas learned over time that life goes on. So, he decided to sell the double-wide trailer home he and Raye had owned. With a little money, Nicolas was able to achieve his life-long dream: moving to San Francisco.

When he first arrived, he rented a room from someone, which didn't work out well, and he needed to find his own housing. He only had a few weeks and needed help.

That's when Nicolas found **openhouse**. Working with **openhouse** staff, they learned he was a Vietnam War-era veteran and got him connected to Veteran's Affairs and the Swords to Plowshares program, which together found him housing and Veteran's Section 8 subsidies. His new studio apartment isn't what he had when Raye was alive, but it's all his and he's decorating just the way he wants.

"It's cool and quiet, and it's my castle!" said Nicolas. These days he enjoys volunteering for **openhouse** and taking long walks to the Castro. He enjoys reading at home and going to events sponsored by **openhouse**. "Michelle is good at pushing me to try new things and to go to meetings. After 30 years in my relationship, living in a trailer park and 20 years at the same job, trying new things doesn't come naturally, but I'm getting better and better at it. And I love it!"

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*By Seth Kilbourn,  
Executive Director*

Since I took the helm of **openhouse** a little over a year ago, I have been inspired everyday by the spirit and hard work of our staff, board and volunteers who, day in and day out, work to improve the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) older adults. Our brand new website includes an incredible video produced by students from San Francisco State University. Watch the video at [www.openhouse-sf.org](http://www.openhouse-sf.org)—you'll laugh, you'll cry, and you'll learn how openhouse is supporting LGBT seniors every

day. In the last year, we've seen a dramatic increase in the number of calls we get from seniors and their caregivers looking for LGBT supportive housing and services. Nicolas's story inside is one example of how **openhouse** is ensuring that LGBT seniors get the help they need now, while we work to build LGBT-welcoming housing of our own.

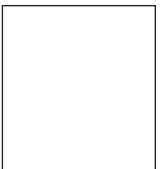
In the last year, we've expanded our widely acclaimed training program and developed a comprehensive manual to help staff at senior service agencies and housing facilities across the country become welcoming and supportive of the LGBT

seniors they currently serve and the many more who need their services. We've conducted more resource events in the last year than ever before and created an LGBT Senior Leadership Council to organize more social events, help LGBT seniors become stronger leaders and build community programs to support independent living. Please consider supporting LGBT seniors and the work of **openhouse** by returning the donation card inside or visiting our website at [www.openhouse-sf.org](http://www.openhouse-sf.org). While the economic times change, the needs remain the same. Now, more than ever, we need your support.

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