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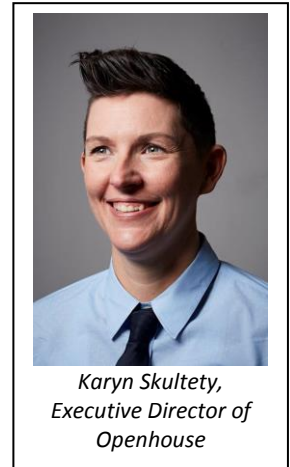
Openhouse and On Lok Join Forces to Help San Francisco’s LGBTQ Seniors Age with Dignity, Independence and Pride

Local Nonprofits Encourage LGBTQ Seniors to Participate in Design Process

SAN FRANCISCO (Sept. 5, 2018) – Openhouse and On Lok, two San Francisco-based nonprofits, today announced a strategic partnership to co-design a program for LGBTQ seniors which would address two critical issues in the LGBTQ senior community: access to much-needed aging services, and the fear that life in a nursing home would drive most back into the closet.

Among those interviewed for a study by the National Senior Citizens Law Center,

- 78 percent felt it would be unsafe for an LGBT senior to be “out” in a care facility;
- More than 80 percent believed that staff and other residents would discriminate against an LGBT elder who was out of the closet;
- 43 percent reported personally witnessing or knowing LGBT individuals who experienced instances of mistreatment.



For transgender seniors, the risks are even higher, with denial of care common, and many reporting thoughts of ending their lives rather than moving into long-term care (Witten, 2014).



“We believe LGBTQ seniors who have recorded lifetimes fighting for the rights of our community should not have to face the double-bind of being forced to choose between being ‘out’ or receiving services. The ideal solution is one that supports LGBTQ seniors to age in the place they call home, surrounded by people they love, in communities where they feel they belong,” said Karyn Skultety, PhD, Executive Director for Openhouse. “Openhouse has long believed we could lead this solution, and we’ve now found a trusted partner with deep expertise in aging services to work with us.”

“When Openhouse invited us to share in this vision, it was an easy decision,” said Grace Li, On Lok’s Chief Executive Officer. “LGBTQ seniors are four to ten times less likely to access senior services. With Openhouse, we now have an opportunity to develop a new program that, by involving LGBTQ seniors early on in the design process, will hopefully help address the issues this community faces accessing vital services.”

The program is expected to begin in summer 2019, and will be one of many Openhouse offerings at the new community center at 75 Laguna Street, which is currently under construction, along with 79 units of LGBTQ-welcoming senior affordable housing. The overall project is also expected to be completed in summer 2019.

“These essential services fill an unmet need for our underserved LGBTQ seniors,” said Mayor London Breed. “I am proud that the City is sponsoring the building of the community center and affordable housing at 75 Laguna Street and I want to thank On Lok and Openhouse for making this innovative approach a reality.”

MEDIA, PLEASE NOTE:

For more information about the partnership, to request an interview with Karyn Skultety or Grace Li, or for hi-res images, please contact Craig MacLellan at craig@landispr.com.

About Openhouse

For more than twenty years, Openhouse has been the only non-profit uniquely committed to serving San Francisco’s lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and queer (LGBTQ) seniors. The mission of Openhouse is to enable LGBTQ seniors the opportunity to overcome the unique challenges they face as they age by providing housing, services and community programs. In 2016, with co-general partner, Mercy Housing California, Openhouse opened 55 Laguna and the Bob Ross LGBT Senior Center. These, combined with 75 and 95 Laguna, currently under construction, will provide 119 units of LGBT-welcoming affordable senior housing and over 10,000 square feet of program and office space. For more information, please visit www.openhouse-sf.org.

About On Lok

On Lok is a family of nonprofit organizations founded in the early 1970s by a group of citizens concerned about the plight of seniors and the lack of long-term care options in the community. With 47 years of history and experience both creating innovative models of care and serving diverse senior communities through integrated health and social services, On Lok has a wide-reaching experience base and is a trusted partner in its communities. On Lok serves seniors in the community through its affiliated organizations, including On Lok Lifeways, 30th Street Senior Center, Care At Home and more. For more information, please visit www.onlok.org.

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