Pride is indeed how we protest every single thing that is messed up out there, while sharing every wonderful thing we are. You can read about the Pride is a Protest project at prideisaprotest.com. Together we can live it with Southern Arizona Senior Pride.

~~ Keith Ashley is Tucson Audubon’s development director and chair of Senior Pride’s public relations/development committee.

We stand in solidarity with those fighting for justice and social change and state unequivocally, #BlackLivesMatter. https://blacklivesmatter.com

This movement for a better country, overhaul of policing, and the right to live with dignity, respect, and safety will impact every US citizen for generations to come. Thank You for your action and commitment.
Claire Ellington knew from an early age that the conventional middle-class world didn’t have everything quite right. Growing up a tomboy “from the get go” in 1950s-60s Charlotte, NC, “I recognized right away the world had a problem, but I didn’t have a problem.”

Claire’s rebellion against conventional life put her on a fiercely independent path of discovery to root out and dismantle oppression in her own life and help others do the same. She now facilitates Senior Pride’s LGBTQI+ Elder Discussion Group, launched in March before the COVID-19 shutdown and now continuing via Zoom every other Saturday afternoon.

Claire discovered feminism at 19 reading Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, while working a summer job in Grand Teton National Park. “I was very lonely. I could not feel connected to the heterosexual world. I had not solidified my identity,” she recalled. “And as soon as I started reading that, I was home.”

She returned to Charlotte “determined to be a feminist,” got involved with the Charlotte Women’s Center, and soon realized she was lesbian. “When I first felt sexual attraction, my response was ‘Yay, I’m not frigid.’ I was just relieved. Oh my god, I’m a normal person. This was the context. I’m normal, I’m gay. In other words, I’m a sexual being, I can have relationships, I know where to go, what to do,” she said.

Claire was active in the Charlotte Women’s Center through her twenties, embraced a radical lesbian separatist lifestyle, helped take over a local women’s rugby team called Charlotte’s Harlots (quickly renaming it the Charlotte Women’s Rugby Club), and helped form the Drastic Dykes collective, whose influence continues today through Sinister Wisdom Journal.

She moved with a partner to Denver in the early ’80s where she discovered Re-evaluation Co-Counseling, which she describes as social-justice-based peer-to-peer counseling to help individuals reclaim humanist ideals by acknowledging oppression of all kinds, from racism and sexism to classicism and homophobia.

She continued to practice co-counseling after moving to Tucson more than 20 years ago. She quickly involved herself in the local lesbian community thanks to Contact Dykes connections. Defying classist middle-class systems, she supported herself with part-time manual labor work sustained by women who wanted to hire women for their home improvement and maintenance jobs. She established a steady clientele for her services, operating under the business name Chore Buster.

“The work was just a necessary evil to support activism,” she said. “The co-counseling is volunteer activity. The lesbian work was all volunteer activity. Those were the things I cared about.”

Among her many local activities, Claire facilitated a women’s coming out group for Wingspan for two years, the Lesbian Discussion Group, affectionately nicknamed the LSD Group.

She did break down and get a bachelor’s degree in counseling from Prescott College due to “middle class guilt,” but got over that guilt and decided not to pursue further education and licensing.

Claire has been involved with Senior Pride for two years. “I needed to be part of a community that was about getting old, being queer and gay and being old. I needed that because getting old was scaring me and does scare me and I wanted to be in situations where we can be supportive of each other,” she explained. “To me aging is a much bigger deal than any of our differences as gay men or women. Aging trumps all of that.”

Claire’s advice for the younger LGBTQI+ generation? “Love what you are doing! Love it! Be it! … Being gay is great. It’s a great thing. Being lesbian has opened my world and opened my view and given me a much deeper view of everything … What a wonderful amazing special thing! Don’t waste a single minute of it.”

~~ Ed Kimble is Senior Pride’s media content coordinator and a steering committee member
In Memoriam

Remembering Larry Kramer (1935-2020)
By Sarah Bahnson

May 27, 2020 - The world lost a hero. Larry Kramer, co-founder of Gay Men’s Health Crisis and AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), died at the age of 84. Most known for his provocative tactics as an activist and public health advocate, he changed the relationship between public health institutions and consumers.

Kramer delivered a speech in 2007 titled, “We are not crumbs; We must not accept crumbs,” an adept summation of his contributions to the world. Early in the epidemic, national institutions were unreactive to what was largely seen as a gay disease. Ronald Regan did not speak publicly about the crisis until 1985, five years into the crisis. National and global culture was inimical, if not hostile, toward the LGBTQ+ community. Crumbs. But we are not crumbs, and Kramer forged the path to force public health institutions to acknowledge the crisis and begin research on the disease, effective medicine, and compassionate care for those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Senior Pride. What can I say? It is just GREAT.

To each of you reading this article, please send me the names of potential Recipients. It seems the most fruitful referrals are one-on-one. If you know a homebound or disabled member of our Community who would benefit from visits (when allowed) or phone calls from another member of our Community, I have Volunteers ready and waiting to help. The phone number is (520) 351-2724.

~~ Lee Crosby is co-coordinator of Senior Pride’s Community Cares Program and a steering committee member

Larry Kramer was also a prolific author and playwright, centering LGBTQ+ people in every piece. The power of seeing oneself represented in popular culture, a book, a play, a movie, cannot be understated. Many LGBTQ+ people coming of age when Kramer was coming of age, felt completely alone and may not have even known there were other LGBTQ+ people in the world. Messaging around being LGBTQ+ was not one of celebration, but of shame. Banned from employment with the government, labeled mentally ill, and immoral deviants, the incentive to remain closeted was powerful. Isolation and internalized homophobia/transphobia have serious life-long health effects.

Kramer’s works not only made LGBTQ+ people visible, but asserted value for his generation and every generation thereafter. We are not crumbs, and we will not accept crumbs. We are not crumbs, and we will not accept crumbs. We have value, and we will forever demand the dignity of that recognition. Thank you, Larry Kramer. Rest in power.

~~ Sarah Bahnson is the LGBTQ Community Liaison for PCOA (Pima Council on Aging)

Community Cares Program News
By Lee Crosby, RN, PhD

And now for the Good News: The Community Cares Program is stable and doing fine. Our Volunteers made 73 phone calls to our Recipients for a total of 37 visitation hours in May. Would you believe 13 Volunteers called 17 Recipients and logged those hours? That tells me that despite our own isolation, you, the Volunteers, are still reaching out to our Community brothers and sisters.

CCP Volunteers who have not yet been assigned a Recipient are helping with other Committees within

Senior Pride Steering Committee: Senior Pride officers are Gary Gardner, Chair; Lee Crosby, Vice Chair; Joyce Bolinger, Secretary; Cynthia Beving, Treasurer. They serve on the Steering Committee with Robert Bell, Claire Ellington, Gretchen Field, Ed Kimble, Sue Pennington, Kay Smith, and Pam Witting. Lavina Tomer is our Volunteer Executive Director.

This group meets on the 1st Thursday of each month, 10:30am-12:15pm (currently via Zoom) to conduct Senior Pride business. All are welcome to attend by requesting a Zoom invitation via email to info@soazseniorpride.org
Due to COVID-19, Senior Pride is offering our programs online via Zoom conferencing until we can gather safely in person again. Unless otherwise specified, to get your Zoom invitation, email info@soazseniorpride.org. Please include the date and event (speaker, book club, etc.) you wish to attend.

SENIOR PRIDE SPEAKER SERIES
Second Tuesday each month at 2 pm
July 14 at 2 pm – Landmark US Supreme Court Decision Protects LGBT Workers
Speaker: Amelia Craig Cramer, Deputy Chief, Pima County Attorney. She will discuss this historic decision that existing federal law forbids job discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or transgender status. Cramer is a past president of the Arizona State Bar and former managing partner of Lambda Legal.

Senior Pride is printed in-house by the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF), whom we thank for their many services as Senior Pride’s fiscal sponsor.

HOW YOU CAN HELP US: DONATE TO SENIOR PRIDE

By Check:
Payable to our Fiscal Sponsor: SAAF
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Online: Go to our website
soazseniorpride.org
Click on “Donate Today”

By Telephone:
(520) 547-6119
Specify: Senior Pride

With Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF) serving as Southern Arizona Senior Pride’s fiscal sponsor, all donations to our organization are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.