



**SOUTHERN
ARIZONA
SENIOR
PRIDE**

SENIOR LGBT Elder Voice FORUM

**CELEBRATE
PRIDE!**

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Celebrating, Supporting, and Uniting LGBTQI+ Older Adults

Senior Pride Invents New Ways to Connect and Serve

By Joyce Bolinger, Lavina Tomer and Keith Ashley

Senior Pride is poised for continued growth and program success. Despite the many challenges presented by the COVID health crisis, we wrapped up fiscal year 2019-20 in a position of financial strength with our core programs humming along, newly adapted to their online platforms. We continue to achieve systematically the goals laid out in our strategic plan and are looking forward to serving our community of LGBTQI+ older adults with steadily increasing capacity.

CAPACITY-BUILDING: With the significant help of community donors and grantors, Senior Pride has taken a major step with the addition of a new associate director. Keith Ashley takes on administrative and development responsibilities necessary for long term growth.

“We are thrilled to have Keith share his talent, resources and skills to build a sustainable organization,” said Lavina Tomer, Volunteer Executive Director. “We are especially grateful to local community donors who contributed the funds to contract with the associate director,” she says. The goal is to build towards a full-time director.

Senior Pride was further able to build capacity for the coming year by being awarded a number of significant grants. We thank the following local and national foundations for support for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. These include the **LGBTQ Alliance Fund of the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona; the Wild Geese Foundation; the Lovell Foundation (three year grant for the End of Life Planning Program); the Jack Challem Legacy Fund, and, a COVID-19 grant from the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona.**

STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS: In March, Senior Pride temporarily discontinued in person events and moved to continue programs and services through video conferencing.

“This is especially important because LGBTQI+ older adults are particularly vulnerable to the effects of social isolation,” says Lavina Tomer. From the communications desk, regular news posts share crucial information, resources, and cultural updates. The Senior Pride website continues to serve as an information hub, including links to our YouTube channel which features community voices.

Monthly speakers continue to address pertinent issues. Groups meeting regularly include the Senior Pride Book Club: the LGBTQ+ Elder Support Group; an AA meeting hosted by the Senior Pride, and the LGBTQ Women’s Grief Group.

After her wife and long term companion died, Donna coped with overwhelming grief. “No matter how well you learn to live with it, grief remains, triggered by the smallest things - a scent, a sound, a flash of color - and bang! You’re back in the moment. And it hurts,” she says. The Senior Pride Womens Grief Group has helped Donna deal with the loss. “The most important, healthiest thing I did was to join this grief group,” she says.

In future years, when the experience we are all now living through has passed, it will be important to re-trace what some members of our community experienced. (Continues on page two)

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Senior Pride Invents New Ways to Connect and Serve (continued)

“Seeing 2020,” a Senior Pride writing workshop, led participants to write some of their responses. An anthology and recordings will be posted on the Senior Pride website and readings by the authors are on Senior Pride YouTube Channel—see links to both at <http://soazseniorpride.org>. “The writer’s workshop offered me an opportunity to make sense of a bewildering time... We need more opportunities for such connectedness,” says one writing workshop member. In future years, when the experience we are all now living through has passed, it will be important to re-trace what some members of our community experienced.

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Through the **Senior Pride Community Cares Program**, volunteers visit homebound LGBTQI+ elders, many of whom struggled for years to “come out of the closet” and have often coped with years of discrimination and economic disadvantage. Alone after the loss of partners and friends, and now homebound due to age or disability, they are

grateful for the companionship of Senior Pride volunteers who make weekly “friendly” visits, now via phone. Says one homebound person who welcomes the visits, “Yes, it helps so much. Visits/phone calls have taken me from being in a down space. I can laugh again.”

Erin Russ, coordinator of the **End of Life Planning Program** and the new **Connect Now project**, is designing a media End of Life Planning Workshop. And, through COVID-19 Funds, the Connect Now project offers online internet and email access and training through devices such as tablets and phones. “I never thought I would have this,” says one recipient, now connected to community, friends, events and the world through her tablet.

“Senior Pride is continuing to track towards our goal of being around for future elders,” says Gary Gardner, Steering Committee Chair. “We’ve added Salesforce Customer Management Software to upgrade our data and records. We’re moving forward in terms of management, fundraising and expanding services to a wider range of older LGBTQI+ people.”

Senior Pride Community Cares Program By Lee Crosby

In June 2020, the Community Cares Program (CCP) participated in a survey being conducted by Pima Council on Aging (PCOA) Neighborhood Care Alliance (NCA). The purpose of the survey was to assess how all recipients within the NCA catchment area were doing and if, relative to our program, the CCP Volunteer visits and calls were helpful.

The responses from our CCP Recipients were so heartwarming and positive that I would like to highlight several of their comments:

“CCP keeps me in touch with humanity. I don’t feel alone anymore”.

“CCP keeps me in touch with humanity. I don’t feel alone anymore.”

“Having a CCP visitor is great. I am less isolated and clicked with the volunteer. I feel connected to the Community”.

“Yes, it helps so much. Visits/phone calls have taken me from being in a down space. I can laugh again”.

“CCP is very valuable to me, I feel cared about now more than ever”.

Thanks to all CCP Volunteers, the Program is making a great difference in the lives of our Recipients.

Other good news, we have enrolled our 20th Recipient! Please keep sending referrals! Just call 520-351-2724 and we will start the ball rolling.

Senior Pride Steering Committee: Senior Pride officers are Gary Gardner, Chair; Tom Buchanan, Vice Chair; Joyce Bolinger, Secretary; Cynthia Beving, Treasurer. They serve on the Steering Committee with Robert Bell, Claire Ellington, Lee Crosby, Gretchen Field, Sue Pennington, Kay Smith, and Pam Witting. **Lavina Tomer is our Volunteer Executive Director and Keith Ashley, associate 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 and observe by requesting a Zoom invitation via email to info@soazseniorpride.org

Community Profile: Josefina Ahumada

By Bruce Hyland

For most of her life, Josefina Ahumada knew she was being called to service. Last year, upon retirement from full-time work at Arizona State University (ASU) Social Work Program, she answered the call to extend beyond social service to offering spiritual guidance when she became a lay pastor for the Presbyterian church on the Tohono O’Odham nation in Sells.

Perhaps only upon looking back on her path through life would it have been obvious that such was her destiny. Her father was a Mexican immigrant and her mother was Native American (her family is from the Southwestern Tigua Pueblo). They did not have an easy time of it, but they maintained their pride and taught Josefina that it is important to know your rights.

Josefina found significant success upon completing her master’s in social work. On graduating from UCLA she moved to Tucson where she worked in behavioral health as a licensed clinical social worker. In 1999 she joined the faculty at Arizona State University School of Social Work-Tucson as the field education coordinator. In 2006 on a voluntary basis she and others at Southside Presbyterian Church formed the Southside Worker Center where day laborers could gather to find employment in a safe site. Subsequently it was this experience that Josefina felt a calling to the ministry.

Nearly 30 years ago Josefina called upon a neighbor to talk about landscaping. Fate stepped in. That neighbor, Helen Battiste, discussed plants with her and eventually discussed marriage. They were together for 22 years before Helen passed. While making the funeral arrangements, Josefina was told that she could not file for the death certificate because Arizona wouldn’t recognize their marriage. (They married in New Mexico.)

Shocked, sad, and angry, she channeled that anger into a social justice campaign becoming one of the plaintiffs in the 2014 landmark case of marriage rights in Arizona and nationally. (https://www.lambdalegal.org/blog/20140313_meet-the-couples-arizona-marriage)

The landmark case brought by Lambda Legal, *Majors v. Jeanes*, struck down Arizona’s discriminatory marriage ban, paving the way for same-sex couples across the state to apply for marriage licenses or to have their legal out-of-state marriages respected. “We won!” Josefina exclaims—Arizona became the 31st freedom to marry state. “You cannot lose hope that things won’t change. They will. It just may take a long time. I had to wait until I was 68 years old. When things are not right, we have to pull it together and work to fix/improve whatever it is.”

“It’s great being a lesbian in my 70s – being in community, being open and safe. I feel very empowered.” Clearly she’s making a difference. In addition to being the lay pastor, she’s the Moderator for her Presbytery. She’s the first lesbian elected to that position.

She’s fully out and no one cares. “That’s a long way from the way it used to be,” she says. She knew discrimination, verbal abuse and mistreatment earlier in her life.

She remains involved. She’s board chair of the YWCA Southern Arizona, and field instructor for ASU for interns in social work. She urges us to become involved and donate to important causes like EMERGE Center Against Domestic Violence and Senior Pride.

She ends our conversation with, “Thank you to Senior Pride for being visible and present. It’s so important. Keep it up!”

Welcome to new Senior Pride roles:

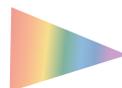
Keith Ashley, Associate Director
(see profile on <http://soazseniorpride.org>)
and **Tom Buchanan, Vice Chair**
Senior Pride Steering Committee



Photo credit: YWCA Southern Arizona

Josefina Ahumada

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Southern Arizona SENIOR PRIDE

**Celebrating, Supporting, and
Uniting LGBTQI+ Older Adults**

375 S. Euclid Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85719

(520) 312-8923

**info@soazseniorpride.org
www.SoAzSeniorPride.org**

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Para información en español,
por favor llama al 520-312-
8923 y deja tu nombre y tu
número de teléfono. Uno de
nuestros miembros de habla
hispana te regresará. ¡Gracias!

About Senior Forum

Lavina Tomer, Content Manager

Joyce Bolinger, Newsletter Editor

Rick Jorgenson, Ed Kimble
Previous Editors

Lee Crosby, Keith Ashley, Bruce
Hyland, Content Contributors

Connie Rose, Graphic Designer •
High Desert Rose.

<https://highdesertrose.carbonmade.com>

Steve Godwin, Website Manager •
White Space Designs.

www.whitespacedesigns.net

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call (520) 312-8923 to be put
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or email us at
info@soazseniorpride.org



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Coming Events

SENIOR PRIDE BOOK CLUB

Third Wednesday each month, 2-3:30 pm.

Join a lively discussion about an
intelligently curated book selection by
LGBTQI+ writers or of special interest
and importance to the elder queer
community.

SEPTEMBER 16

*The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After
Warming* by David Wallace-Wells.

OCTOBER 21

*At the Center of All Beauty: Solitude and
the Creative Life* by Fenton Johnson. The
author will join the discussion.

LGBTQI+ ELDER SUPPORT GROUP

Every other Saturday, 1-2:30 pm

Sept 5, 19; October 3, 17, 31

The LGBTQI+ Elder Support Group is
an open and welcoming forum to discuss
experiences of aging in the LGBTQI+
community. Contact group facilitator Claire
Ellington at info@soazseniorpride.org for
your Zoom invitation.

AA MEETING HOSTED BY SENIOR PRIDE

Every Monday, 7-8 pm.

An open 12x12 Step meeting of
Alcoholics Anonymous for LGBTQI+ older
adults. Contact the meeting coordinator
at aasrlgbt@gmail.com to be put on this
meeting's Zoom invitation list.

THANK YOU WILD BLUE PIXEL AND SUSAN TAUNTON

Senior Pride owes a debt of gratitude to
Susan for six years of dedicated and expert
management and development of our
website. Now that she has moved on, we
thank her and wish her well in her new
endeavors.

<https://wildbluepixel.com>

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.

More info about books and speakers
found on www.SoAzSeniorPride.org

SENIOR PRIDE SPEAKER SERIES

Second Tuesday each month at 2 pm

Check <https://www.soazseniorpride.org>
for YouTube recordings of previous speakers.

SEPTEMBER 8 "Coping with Uncertainty"

Speaker: Robert D. Claassen, MC LPC,
retired mental health therapist.

OCTOBER 13 "LGBTQI+ Aging Successfully:

5 take-aways from the AZ COVID survey"

Speakers: Drs. Sally Dodds and Beth
Meyerson will discuss key findings from the
first (ever?) survey of older LGBTQI+ adults
during COVID.



Pima Council on Aging

In-house Specialists in LGBTQ Elder Care:

- LGBTQ Community Liaison: Sarah Bahnson
- Client Services Specialist: Jennifer Caragan
- Intake Specialist: John Chihak
- Caregiver Specialist: Zury Reyes
- End of Life Specialist: Adreanna Molina

Help Line: 520.790.7262

help@pcoa.org

(M-F 8:30am-5pm)

To learn more about additional LGBTQ
Elder Care specialists on PCOA's staff,
email: SBahnson@pcoa.org

How we fulfill our mission to recognize and respond to the unique concerns of LGBTQI+ elders 55+ and their younger allies:

- Delivering social and support programming sponsored by Senior Pride in three areas: Social & Learning, Health & Wellbeing, and Arts & Culture.
- Vetting and sharing LGBTQI+ welcoming information and services offered by other organizations in the community.
- Increasing awareness of LGBTQI+ and aging issues.

HOW YOU CAN HELP US : DONATE TO SENIOR PRIDE

By Check:

Payable to our Fiscal Sponsor: SAAF
375 South Euclid Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85719

Write SENIOR PRIDE in the Memo Line

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.