What’s on the Agenda In the Fight For Our Rights?
by Joyce Bolinger

Here’s a brief checklist of issues that need action in 2021. LGBTQI+ Older Adults have unique needs and are a growing segment of the population. This is just a snapshot of key topics for debate and advocacy.

Passage of the Equality Act

The “number one legislative priority” according to Alphonso David, the president and chief executive of the Human Rights Campaign, is the Equality Act.

The Equality Act would make it illegal to discriminate against LGBTQI+ people in housing, employment, jury duty, public education and other areas. It would make existing anti-LGBTQI+ discrimination ordinances nationwide obsolete. https://lgbtactionlink.org/equality-act.

Strengthen Transgender Rights

President Joe Biden signed an executive order lifting the Trump-era ban on transgender military service members. Transgender elders face many challenges in policies on health, housing, employment, long term care and other areas.

The National Center for Transgender Equality details state and federal changes needed. https://transequality.org

More Focus on Addressing AIDS and HIV

Many LGBTQI+ advocates urge the Biden administration to increase the resources dedicated to addressing the HIV/AIDS crisis, especially as the disease has increased among Black gay and bisexual men.

Ravi Grivois-Shah, Chief Executive Officer of the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF) adds: “As those in our community living with HIV age, we need to work to ensure that everyone ages with dignity. This includes addressing issues of housing security, food, isolation, and more.” he stresses.

More LGBTQI+ Officials

Increasing appointments of LGBTQI+ policy makers is a priority. Pete Buttigieg, Secretary of Transportation, is the first gay Cabinet Secretary and Rachel Levine, nominated as Assistant Secretary of the Dept of Health is the first openly transgender federal official in a Senate-confirmed role.

Amend Older Americans Act

The Ruthie and Connie LGBT Elder Americans Act Amendment would collect data, provide funds for resources and insure services to LGBTQI+ older adults.
John Birdsall on James Beard and the Kitchen Closet

After years as a chef and food writer, John Birdsall challenged the homophobia he encountered in the culinary world by “coming out” about major figures who changed the way we all eat.

Birdsall’s essay “America, Your Food Is So Gay,” published in Lucky Peach magazine in 2013, sparked five years of research and writing to publish The Man Who Ate Too Much: The Life of James Beard.

Called “the Dean of American Cooking,” celebrated cookbook author and cooking teacher, James Beard painfully hid his gay personal life, like many in the pre-Stonewall era.

John Birdsall and his husband, Perry Lucina, are new Tucsonans.

“We love getting to know the rhythms of the desert,” he says. “And the food is amazing—especially Sonoran carne asada.”

In the Kitchen Closet:
Food Network’s Ted Allen and author John Birdsall and the secret gay life of culinary giant James Beard. See page 4
Luis did not want to move to Tucson from New York City, but he made a deal with his partner to do so. Sixteen years later, he has come to love it.

Luis was going to be a pilot. While studying for that, he volunteered at an AIDS Service Organization. He found passion and purpose, wanting to work with marginalized communities. He also discovered dormant talents. He was very shy and quiet as a kid, but when he agreed to go into NY bars and talk about HIV, he found his “voice.” That voice grew louder to where now he actually likes public speaking.

His staff gave Luis an award once which he displays proudly in his office. The certificate honors the gift that they felt Luis brings to them. It reads: Tell it like it is. No BS! His best friend, also named Luis, would argue that Luis O. was always “sassy.” So, it seems that trait has carried through his life.

Luis is a proud single parent of a 13-year-old son. His partner, Chris, and Luis adopted him despite concerns about Arizona’s conservative approach to gay parenting. Sadly, Chris passed away and Luis tells how Chris used to drive him nuts by becoming obsessed with certain tv shows or movies, watching them over and over, and voicing each good line while the show was on. Now, it’s one of the things Luis misses most about him.

Luis is Director of Programs for Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF)

Senior Pride is one of the grassroots organizations that I see who is really active and striving toward their mission. It makes me proud and hopeful for the future.” — Luis Ortega

COMMUNITY CARES
Volunteer Orientation

On Zoom: Sat. March 20, 2021 3-5pm

RSVP required by March 8

Senior Pride volunteers currently visit by phone with LGBTQI+ elders 55+ and people with disabilities of any age who are homebound or living in a continuing care community. info@soazseniorpride.org or 520-351-2724 to volunteer or to receive telephone visits.

In Memoriam • Gloria “Mickey” DeVore
August 10, 1932 - January 17, 2021

She was preceded in death by her life partner, Marge Sloan. Mickey was Tucson’s premier Occupational Hand Therapist. Remembered for all her major contributions to Tucson’s LGBTQ+ community. Contribute in her honor to the LGBTQ+ Alliance Fund at AllianceFund.org.
Senior Pride is getting creative with Zoom during COVID. Get your Zoom invitation via email: info@soazseniorpride.org

All information about these and other programs can be found on our website: www.SoAzSeniorPride.org

SENIOR PRIDE SPEAKERS
Second Tuesday Monthly

CHICANAS IN RESISTANCE
Tuesday, March 9 2-3 pm
Retired history professor, Lupe Castillo discusses Chicanas who have led the fight for justice, nationally and in the southwest.
For Zoom Link: info@soazseniorpride.org.

A ROMP INTO THE PAST
Tuesday, April 13, 2-3 pm
A panel of long-time Tucson LGBTQI+ residents take a look at what life was like for us back in the 70s, 80s and 90s.
Natalie Perry, Colette Barajas, and Randy Spalding will tell stories from “way back when.” Fun stories, turning points, struggles, on-the-sly secrets, places, people, and so much more. (Well, at least as much as we can fit into an hour.) For Zoom Link: info@soazseniorpride.org.

SENIOR PRIDE WOMEN’S LBTQ GRIEF GROUP
Thursdays, 1:30 pm on Zoom Weekly support group (free) for Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer women 18 years of age+ who are looking for an accepting space in which to share their loss. A facilitated, peer support group.
For Zoom Link: info@soazseniorpride.org.

SENIOR PRIDE HOSTED AA MEETING (on Zoom)
Every Monday, 7-8 pm
An open 12x12 Step meeting for LGBTQI+ older adults. Contact aaright@gmail.com

LGBTQI+ ELDER SUPPORT
March 6 and 20/ April 3 and 17
Alternate Saturdays, 1-2:30 pm
The LGBTQI+ Elder Support Group is an open and welcoming forum.
Contact facilitator Claire Ellington for Zoom link: info@soazseniorpride.org.

HONORING A LIFE
These informative, down to earth workshops on Zoom give LGBTQI+ older adults necessary documents and guidelines for making sure their health care wishes are known.
Erin Russ and Bruce Hyland lead. In addition, they offer optional Meet and Complete sessions for those wanting extra help.
Next 4 months Workshop dates
Sat. Apr 3 • 1 pm — Fri. May 14 • 10 am
Tues. Jun 22 • 3 pm — Mon. Aug 2 • 9:30 am
Contact Erin: elo@soazseniorpride.org or (520) 312-8923.

SENIOR PRIDE BOOK CLUB
Third Wednesday: 2-3:30 pm.
March 17 • The Quick and the Dead. by Joy Williams
Three misfits “share an American desert summer of darkly illuminating signs and portents.” Goodreads.

April 21 • Death of Vivek Oji. by Akwaeke Emezi
A coming of age in Nigeria of a young person with gender fluid/LGBT identity and a cross-multi-national subculture.
For Zoom link: info@soazseniorpride.org

CATCHING FIRE: Poetry Reading
Saturday, March 6 • 3 pm
on Zoom
New Poems Sparked by Joan Larkin's Poetry Workshop
For Zoom link: info@soazseniorpride.org

In the Kitchen Closet: Food Network’s Ted Allen and author John Birdsall and the secret gay life of culinary giant James Beard.

Wednesday, May 5 • 10-11:15 am (MST)
Join us on Zoom on James Beard’s birthday—for a lively discussion of food, culinary trends, and the interwined LGBTQI+ history.
For registration, Zoom link and information, check the Senior Pride website: https://soazseniorpride.org - EVENTS

Senior Pride Presents

COMING EVENTS

Senior Pride connects our community -- Your donations keep us strong!
Senior Pride’s cultural events, support groups, Community Cares Program, workshops, website with local resources, Facebook page, YouTube channel and weekly news updates provide a hub for our community.
This work is made possible by supporters like you. Please donate today.

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.