

LGBT Update April 2010

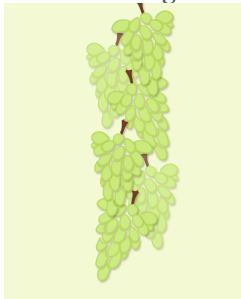
Hi Everyone,

I hope you've enjoyed the beautiful weather recently. The crocuses in my yard have begun to sprout and trees are budding all over. Spring's season of renewal and new beginnings is apparent all around us. WLEN is doing its part with renewed goals and objectives geared toward meeting LGBT seniors wherever they're at. We plan to work very hard and continue addressing the needs of this very private population. So much has happened in the short time we've been around. What began as a group of aging services providers hoping to address the needs of the LGBT aging population has grown into a much larger group of those same agencies plus a larger number of diverse individuals who share the same goal of preparing the way for aging LGBTs. Once again, we need your help. We'd like to ask you to talk about WLEN and what we are all about to anyone and everyone you meet. The best way to spread information about WLEN is through word of mouth. If each one of us tells a friend or family member or the caregiver of an LGBT senior about WLEN and what we are hoping to accomplish we can reach people who may be out of the information loop. If you know of an aging or senior LGBT who needs services, advocacy, visits, or just someone to talk to please contact Kathy McGrath 508-756-1545 (kmcgrath@eswa.org) or Ben Labonte (glabonte@eswa.org) at the same number and we'll contact them.

Social Corner

New Social Networking Opportunity

WLEN is organizing a second monthly event to offer social connections for older LGBT people.



The owners of 86 Winter American Bistro at 65 Water Street in Worcester have offered WLEN the use of their function room once a month on a Sunday evening. We will get together for the first time from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. on May 2, 2010.

86 Winter's menus include both dinner options and smaller portions on its bar menu. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages are available. Individuals may purchase as much or as little as they wish. We are trying to line up entertainment for part of the evening and are just waiting for a final commitment on the artist's part

LGBT people age 50 and over are invited to attend, but we won't be checking IDs if you're younger. Here's your chance to get out of the house and meet some people your own age. Hope to see you May 2nd. Go to <http://www.86winter.com/index.html> for directions or to check out their menus.

HIV/AIDS in the Elder Population

Ben Labonte, the WLEN peer worker at Elder Services of Worcester Area, has researched the care of LGBT elders. Here is the final excerpt from his report, "Principles of Care for LGBT Elders." The full text is available [here](#).

HV/AIDS in the Elder Population

Positive Attitudes

Treatment of HIV/AIDS has made great strides since the dark days of the 1980s and early 1990s when a positive diagnosis was a certain sentence to a proximate, prolonged, and painful death. A cure or vaccine for AIDS still eludes researchers, but understanding the virus and how it replicates and mutates has advanced considerably. Treatment with new, powerful drugs has prolonged the lives of HIV-positive people and turned the syndrome into a manageable chronic disease.

It is important to remember that AIDS is not a gay disease. Worldwide, the majority of AIDS patients are heterosexual. In the United States, gay men continue to be one of the largest classes of infected people, with middle aged women and African American men also especially vulnerable. AIDS organizations are trying to disseminate prevention information to men who have sex with men but who don't identify as gay.[i]

Transgender people who are isolated from family and a supportive community sometimes enter the sex trade to survive. This makes them highly susceptible to infection with HIV. Older adults who are recently widowed or divorced (including LGBT people who lose their partners or spouses) are also at risk of infection if they are unaware of the need for safer sex practices.[ii]

Whereas AIDS patients previously died quickly, many are now living into old age. In addition, 1,780 people over 60 contracted AIDS in 2007, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Since the beginning of the epidemic through 2007, 34,102 people in the over-60 age group have contracted AIDS.[iii] Elder services agencies and long-term care facilities need to gear up for the presence of more HIV-positive people in their caseloads. Of those, many, but not all, will be part of the LGBT community.

Because of the stigma that still accompanies an HIV-positive diagnosis, a person's serostatus should remain confidential unless the person wishes it to be more widely known. Such information should be disseminated by the HIV-positive person and not by staff members or contracted workers, with the possible exception of notifying medical personnel with a need to know.

Caregivers, whether they are family and friends or paid workers, need to be trained in appropriate protocols for care of HIV-positive elders. Most important, it should be emphasized that AIDS is not the highly contagious disease it was once thought to be. There is no need for isolating HIV-positive people or for treating them any differently than someone with any other chronic disease. Instead, positive seniors should be encouraged to pursue healthy, fulfilling lifestyles that will help to prolong their lives. In addition, some of them may need help managing the disease and others may need advocates for housing or admission to long-term care facilities.

Action plans:

Review admission and eligibility standards for elders who are HIV-positive to make sure that they are not excluded from the care or housing they need.

Train staff in proper protocols for treating and caring for elders who are HIV-positive, including formation of positive attitudes for delivering appropriate services.

[i] Behavior does not equal identity. A person may have sexual relations that can be described as homosexual without assuming a gay or even a bisexual identity. See, for instance, Preeti Pathela, et.al. (2006) "Discordance between sexual behavior and self-reported sexual identity: a population-based survey of New York City men." *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 145:6 416-425. Online at <http://www.annals.org/cgi/content/full/145/6/416>. Accessed March 9, 2010.

[ii] For statistics on the prevalence of AIDS in the United States, see <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/basic.htm>. Accessed March 9, 2010.

[iii]<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/basic.htm#aidsage>. Accessed March 9, 2010.

Gen Silent

Gen Silent, the new documentary by Stu Maddux, will have its international debut at 5:00 p.m. Saturday, May 8, 2010, at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, as part of the Boston LGBT Film Festival.



Image from *Gen Silent*

The film follows the lives of a group of GLBT elders in the Boston area as they try to negotiate a medical system that is at best unprepared to meet their needs and at worst openly hostile to them. The Edge of Boston says of the documentary, "... for power, relevance, and sheer heartbreak, Maddux's film in progress, *Gen Silent*, may excel anything he's done before."

The Boston LGBT Film Festival (formerly the Boston Gay & Lesbian Film & Video Festival) celebrates its 25th anniversary this May with

some exciting changes.

The festival is adding two venues. Besides its long-time home at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, there will also be screenings at the Brattle Theatre in Harvard Square, Cambridge, and at Fenway Health's new space.

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Kathy McGrath
Elder Services of Worcester

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