



## July 2018 Pride Edition

### The President's Corner

~ BY TONYA RUCKENBROD

I hope you are having a great Summer. Happy Pride – a time of love and celebration for our community.

It is my honor to serve as President on the Tacoma Older LGBT (TOLGBT) Board of Directors after serving on the board for the last 3 years. TOLGBT is an organization that is deeply committed to serving older LGBT adults. A commitment that aligns with my professional career as a social worker at MultiCare and my personal life.

As a social worker, I work daily with older adults. Over the years, many of these were LGBT older adults who in their most vulnerable time of their lives allowed me the honor of helping them navigate the complexities of their illness, the hospital and finding support; many who find themselves alone with no friends or family to act as their advocate and support.

As far back as I can remember, I have been passionate about the older adult population and specialized in aging during my graduate work. My career has been focused on working in a variety of settings that impact older adults. I believe that every person, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression deserves caring, compassion, respect,

and dignity from our LGBT community, the community at large and those that serve them in Pierce County.

In my personal life, I first became aware of TOLGBT when I saw their Pride booth at Tacoma Pride several years ago. I knew immediately I wanted to become involved.

Going forward, this year we continue with our popular cultural competency training, which includes the award-winning documentary “GenSilent” to several groups. The groups include Franciscan Hospice staff and ongoing training of new staff at Pierce County Aging and Disability. Popular events such as the Mature Men’s Potluck and WomynRock, a dance and social event are still going strong as are our coffee groups and happy hours.

This year TOLGBT is looking for additional volunteers. Volunteers to help Board Members host and create new programming that includes some fun events that is inclusive of all LGBT older adults. We hope you will consider giving time to help us continue creating warm and welcoming events to the older LGBT adults.

Warmly,

~ Tonya

### Board of Directors

Tonya Ruckenbrod – President/Chair

Patricia McIntyre – Vice President/Co-Chair

Cheryl Cristello – Secretary

Chris Stover – Treasurer

Nellis Kim

Annette Dawson-Miller

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# What is a Caregiver?

*“You call it helping  
Dad. We call it  
Caregiving.”*

~ By Nellis Kim

You may have recently seen the above pasted on Pierce County Transit buses because many family members don't see themselves as caregivers to their loved ones. As family caregivers, we grocery shop, manage medications, provide transportation to doctor appointments. Yet, as many of you already know, caregivers do so much more.

We sit in the emergency room holding the hand of our loved one for hours on end, we listen and smile and make all the right comments as we listen to a story of fishing prowess for the fifteenth time, we are a walking, talking encyclopedia of past and current medications, past and current surgeries, past and current diagnoses. Nurses, doctors, therapists and social workers thank us for the help we provide. We are tireless advocates, but often, inside, we are tired and in need of a helping hand ourselves.

My own caregiving journey started after my dad was involved in a serious car accident in 2014. Since then, additional health issues have significantly increased his dependence on me and on others for his care, even as his ability to understand his own care needs declines. As a social worker in the field of aging, I feel like I have an unfair advantage – and yet

I am impacted in the same way that other caregivers are. Caregiving for Dad has eaten into my work and into my free time, and has led to several moments of outrage with family members who aren't carrying their “fair share.” I have also seen myself stubbornly refuse to accept help, to continue to add caregiving tasks that should be handled by others, and to keep taking on other projects when I am already spread thin.

According to a 2015 report from the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, 56% of unpaid caregivers work 40 hours per week or more, providing care that, in 2013, was valued at \$470 billion. Many caregivers start their journey because of the love they have for a friend, spouse, partner or family member. Caregiving sometimes comes from a sense of responsibility and wanting to give back to a loved one. Over time, however, caregiver duties can increase, forcing a choice between work, family, and social activities and continuing to provide care. The Coalition to Transform Advanced Care with support from the Cigna Foundation recently undertook an analysis of online caregiver support group conversations, which revealed that family caregivers frequently struggle to balance relationships outside of caregiving

along with levels of grief, mental fatigue, fear and anxiety related to their role.

*What is a caregiver to do?*

Know that you are not alone, and know that there are resources in the community available to help you. You should also know that Tacoma Older LGBT is pleased to have a close partnership with Pierce County Aging and Disability Resources. We provide training to their social workers on Older LGBT cultural competency.

If you are an unpaid caregiver of an older adult or an adult with a disability in Pierce County, and you are interested in learning more about resources, programs and services, contact our partner, Pierce County Aging & Disability Resource Center at (253) 798-4600 or visit them online at <http://www.pierceadrc.org>. They can provide information about online and in-person support groups, the Family Caregiver Support Program, and other resources designed to support you as a caregiver.

~ Nellis



# Editor's News

- Pat McIntyre

You may have notice... we have finally chosen a name for our newsletter "Chapters."

Why "Chapters?" Like a fascinating novel, as older LGBT adults age, we often remember how our lives have been filled with chapters. Unique chapters that our straight counterparts have not faced.

For some it may be the life chapters before we came "out" and our chapters after we came out. While others it may be reflecting on their lives before and after the AIDS crisis and the many losses of friends and loved ones.

Your chapters may include before and after transition to your correct gender identity or perhaps when you were finally able to walk down the aisle to marry your longtime partner. These significant chapters in life have taught us strength and resilience.

Our lives are abundant with chapters that change how we live or view life; chapter's common to everyone experiencing the aging process but for us, the additional unique chapters that only we, in the LGBT community, have experienced.

Pride month has become a time that many of us older LGBT reflect on our "chapters," the Pride events we have attended and an opportunity to recognize how far we have come.

For me, I reflect on my many decades of life chapters, those filled with sadness, losses and tears, but also those I celebrate with great joy and gratitude. All which have provided great life lessons. I think of friends, many who I consider "family" those who have graciously shared their life chapters with me, some that I celebrate their courage, strength and resilience to overcome adversity and hate. Others who had me laughing so hard tears ran down my face.

This July, I do hope you take some time to remember, to share your life's chapters and listen to others share theirs as we celebrate 2018 Pride Month in Tacoma.

## *Changes to our TOLGBT Board*

Tonya Ruckenbrod, our newly elected President/Chair of Tacoma Older LGBT and one of our youngest, but longest serving board members will share her background and why she is committed to the mission of Tacoma Older LGBT in this issue.

We welcome our three newest board members. Cheryl Cristello, Nellis Kim and Annette Dawson-Miller, While Cheryl is enjoying retirement, Nellis and Annette work for our partner, Pierce County Aging and Disability. In the coming month we will spotlight our new board members. In this issue, Nellis will take on "Who is a Caretaker"

This year, we said "goodbye" to former Board Members Susie Guidetti and Tish Johnson as they start new chapters in their lives. We send them off with hugs and well wishes on their new adventures.

~ Happy Pride ~

Pat





## One Last Word....

And it is a sad word. Recently with the suicide deaths of Kate Spade and Anthony Bourdain, we are talking more about elder suicide. The fastest growing cases of suicide are in the older

community. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in 2013, the highest suicide rate (19.1%) was among people 45 to 64 years old. The second highest rate (18.6%) occurred in those 85 years and older. In fact, the rate of suicide in the oldest group of white males (ages 85+) is over four times higher than the nation's overall rate of suicide. Older people who attempt suicide are often more isolated, more likely to have a plan, and more determined than younger adults.

Please if you know of an older LGBT individual who is alone, consider visiting them, invite them for a meal or bring them to one of the TOLGBT events.

If you are contemplating suicide or worried about a friend, please, please call the National Suicide Line for help. We care. - Pat

### National Suicide Line

1-800-273-8255

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/talk-to-someone-now/>

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BE sure to check out our events at [www.tacomaolderlgbt.org](http://www.tacomaolderlgbt.org). and add yourself to our mailing list.