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options for independence

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THE GOOD LIFE

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Rainbow Elders Pride

By *Cris Carl, Rainbow Elders Group Facilitator*



Cris Carl

My favorite definition of the word pride is, “Consciousness of one’s own dignity.” I have been attending Pride marches for the LGBTQIA+ community for over 35 years. This year’s Greenfield Pride march and rally will take place

June 15. So much has changed in our world, especially since the pandemic, but I always find it heartening each year as Pride events happen all around the country. I have been to marches in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco, as well as local events. I can never forget Tipper Gore playing drums with Melissa Etheridge one year. That was a sight to see.

I volunteered as a peacekeeper for several of Northampton’s Pride marches years ago when being visible as LGBTQIA+ was dangerous, even here in the Happy Valley.

I volunteered as a peacekeeper for several of Northampton’s Pride marches years ago when being visible as LGBTQIA+ was dangerous, even here in the Happy Valley. The first year I volunteered, a lesbian bookstore in Northampton had been firebombed and there was a loud contingent of those protesting the march, and by extension, us. But with dignity, the community moved on and moved forward in greater acceptance, not only from the “straight” community but also within our own as we learned more about the scale of gender identity. I think we are all still learning how rich and complex our community can be.

I currently coordinate the Rainbow Elders Program for LifePath. We gather for social connection four times a month. Two meetings are through Zoom and two are in-person, one of which is a luncheon. I have engaged community members and allies for educational presentations at some of our meetings. Most of all, the groups provide a supportive space for those of us who have been on this “march” for many years. A lot of us have found acceptance and good lives, others struggle still with how they are seen, especially as a senior LGBTQIA+ person. We also work to engage with LGBTQIA+ organizations that work with youth, as we all benefit from knowing one another.

As most of us are aware, the country’s politics are rife with hate-filled, ignorant rhetoric, even extending to laws that are being put in place in some states to try to erase even the mention of us. Having a safe place to share how we are all managing has a great deal of value. One member of our group recently gave a presentation about some of the earliest notable protests such as Stonewall in New York City. While I have been alive for many of these significant events, it is sobering to learn more about how the LGBTQIA+ movement has grown and been challenged. Even with all of that, I have always loved the fact that Pride is so often filled with a joyous celebration. Having dignity doesn’t mean we can’t have fun!

Please feel free to sign up for our Rainbow Elders newsletter or call 413-773-5555, ext. 1242, for more information.

Also, if you are interested in joining Rainbow Elders, LifePath staff/volunteers, friends, and families at Pride on June 15, please meet us at 11 a.m. at the Greenfield Middle School parking lot (195 Federal Street). We will have a decorated vehicle and will be marching behind a beautiful new banner. We will march from the middle school to Energy Park on Miles Street.

The march is just under a mile. The parade steps off at noon and there will be a rally with booths and entertainment at Energy Park.

The Stonewall Generation Listserv: News You Can Use

By *Celia Lang, Rainbow Elders Volunteer*



Celia Lang

LifePath’s Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program Director Trevor Boeding speaks passionately about building participation in the Stonewall Generation Listserv, saying, “The Listserv is a free email service that delivers

highlights of local and global LGBTQIA+ news and events into your inbox. By positioning the community front and center, the Stonewall Generation Listserv normalizes the LGBTQIA+ experience and offers a dignified and prideful vision of our community.”

The mission of the Listserv is to provide a central digest of information and opportunity for online conversation for the LGBTQIA+ adult community, service providers, caregivers, and community allies. Subscribers can add posts and/or respond to another member’s posting. For some, the Listserv might be the only opportunity to read about LGBTQIA+ news. For others, a story link can both inform and add spark to personal and professional conversations. “It’s news you can use,” says Trevor.

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Considering community health and mobility issues, economic challenges, and the expanding diversity of personal identities, Trevor adds, “The Stonewall Generation Listserv is growing into a vital and vibrant online connection for those who face the challenges of aging.”

George Pappas serves on the Rainbow Elders steering committee and subscribes to the Listserv. He finds it a great resource. George explains, “The Listserv keeps me current and informed about LGBTQIA+ news from all over the world. Sometimes I see a recommendation for a film or book that catches my eye, and recently I enjoyed reading an email post that linked me to a nationwide survey that had some surprising statistics about the LGBTQIA+ population.”

LifePath’s Executive Director, Gary Yuhas, shares his perspective: “The rural nature of our area doesn’t lend itself to as many organic or chance interactions as may be possible elsewhere, and transportation can be a barrier for folks, whether they identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community or not. The Stonewall Generation Listserv could be a way for folks who may not be willing, ready, or able to connect in person to participate to the degree they feel comfortable.”

Regarding the Listserv, Gary adds, “I think it’s especially helpful as a way to learn more about the challenges and issues that those in this community may be facing, and it provides an opportunity for allyship for those who wish to enter the space in that way. As part of a whole slate of Rainbow Elders programming, the Listserv functions as one more way to connect.”

For more information about joining the Stonewall Generation Listserv, visit <https://lifepathma.org/rainbowelders>.