

Matrix Guild of Victoria Inc.

Newsletter - May 2014 Edition

“The Matrix Flyer”

Hello Everyone,

The **Satin and Silk Ball** is now only a few weeks away, so get your dancing shoes ready! It promises to be a wonderful evening, as always.

The Matrix News is always interesting, and this month is no exception. You will see that Matrix is involved with a number of projects designed to increase awareness of the issues faced by older lesbians. You might like to become involved in one of these projects.

The aims and objectives of Matrix are to:

- Ø Promote appropriate care and support for older lesbians
- Ø Provide some accommodation that caters to the needs of ageing lesbians who experience financial disadvantage
- Ø Support ageing lesbians' accommodation choices
- Ø Challenge ageism and oppose discrimination against older lesbians
- Ø Advocate on behalf of older lesbians to governments and other relevant bodies
- Ø Promote social contact and support among older lesbians
- Ø Research lesbians' experience of aged care



Matrix News



Report on same sex parented families

A 2013 research report on Same Sex Partnered Families in Australia reviews and synthesises Australian and international literature on same-sex parented families. To read the report, go to

http://apo.org.au/files/Research/AIFS_SameSexParentedFamiliesInAustralia_Dec_2013.pdf



A VOICE
FOR OLDER
LESBIANS



Short Film Project

Matrix is working in partnership with Gay and Lesbian Victoria (Val's Café) to produce a short film about the lives of older lesbians. This 8 minute documentary will feature 4 lesbians who are over 65 and comfortable to share their stories on film. The doco will be used as an educational tool when we teach lesbian-inclusive practice to Aged Care staff, as well as a being a resource for secondary school students studying topics like Gay and Lesbian History/Herstory. The emotional

background to the lived experience of discrimination, activism and lesbian community is easier to convey with stories than with statistics.

Location/filming basics

Ideally we would like to film participants in their lived context; where they live, socialise or generally feel at ease. Background noise is a consideration, so somewhere quiet is necessary.

We can travel to film participants, and this includes interstate where possible.

Participants can express a preference in terms of who films and interviews them.

The films will aim to explore the following:

- ✓ Past experiences that demonstrate the context that participants grew up in
- ✓ Experiences of historical events, such as activism or 'the scene'
- ✓ Participants' experiences of ageing, both positive and negative
- ✓ Current concerns related to ageing; for example, aged care and visibility
- ✓ Connections between past and present experiences

Timeline basics:

1st April – 30th June Recruitment

1st May – 31st July Filming

29th October Launch

If you would like to tell your story and be part of this film, please contact Anneke on 0427 482 976 or email housing@matrixguildvic.org.au

www.matrixguildvic.org.au

As you get older, you don't stop being a lesbian



Growing older brings its joys and challenges. It can bring feelings of loneliness and isolation. It might bring more interaction with services and family and they may or may not be lesbian- friendly. Even being lesbian- friendly isn't really enough. Some older lesbians miss lesbian company. Matrix is planning a visiting service where lesbian volunteers will meet with isolated older lesbians in their homes or residences for a minimum of two hours per month. The visitors will be supported by a coordinator and receive training. They will be covered by insurance and will receive a small travel allowance for visits. Would you consider volunteering? Do you know someone who would like a visitor? For more information contact Anna Cook on inquiries@matrixguildvic.org.au or on 0448 002 870



Supporting lesbian carers

Matrix Guild are currently engaged with Carers Victoria to provide relevant information to them so that the specific needs of lesbian carers are taken into account and documented.

Background to this project

In partnership with the Matrix Guild Victoria, Carers Victoria aims to support and help strengthen the capacity of lesbian carers, increase awareness of carer issues within the lesbian community and develop greater awareness of lesbian carers' issues among the LGBTIQ and wider population. Their support for carers in the community includes advocacy and policy, a free counselling and Advisory service, the development of information, materials and education opportunities (face-to-face, print and online) and a range of other activities. They also provide carer awareness training for service providers and community groups.

Planning

As part of getting this project up and running, Matrix are looking for lesbians who are currently carers or have been carers in the past, to take part in a focus group. The care you provided can be any of the following: a lesbian partner or friend; parent or other relative; any one you have provided any level of care for. There are no restrictions, since our intention is to provide feedback on key issues and needs of lesbian carers.

Outcomes

Some of the outcomes we hope to achieve are:

- Review of Carers Victoria Information Kit to provide targeted information for lesbian carers
- Development of lesbian-specific carer education workshop to be piloted (via Matrix Guild) with a group of 'post-carers'
- Explore possibility of establishing lesbian-specific carer support groups (CSGs) in metro and rural/regional areas of Victoria according to interest/need
- Agree on plan for rolling out lesbian-specific carer education on ongoing basis via carer support groups and/or one-off workshops

We hope to get the initial focus group meeting with Carer's Victoria as early as possible in May. So if you think you can help us out by becoming part of the initial focus group, please contact Pat. Mitchell via text on: 0409 901 043 or email: treasurer@matrixguildvic.org.au

Matrix Games Afternoons Second Saturday of the Month



The next Games Day will be held on **Saturday 10th May**.

Bring your favourite games such as scrabble, cards, mah-jong, or chess. Women are always welcome to just come for a "cuppa and company". A gold coin donation helps fund the tea, coffee and biscuit supplies. If you don't have transport, let us know and we might be able to put you in touch with someone coming from your area.

When: 1.30 – 3:30pm

Venue: Jika Jika Community Centre. Cnr Plant and Union Sts. Northcote. (Mel. Map 30, F11)

How to get there: Tram - No. 86 Stop No. 27. Bus – No. 506. Train - Westgarth Train Station.

Contacts: Ardy Tibby: 9387 6610 or Margo van der Voort: 0407 672 757

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Gatherings and Social Events



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**The Satin and
Silk Ball 2014**

**Tickets on
sale now.**

The Matrix Guild Of Victoria Inc. proudly presents *"The Satin & Silk Ball 2014"*. Featuring the awesome talent of **WENDY STAPLETON** performing as Doris Day with a splash of Dusty. DJ Trish will be playing your favourites and if you have any special requests please email Sharon @ matrixevents@matrixguildvic.org.au and we will ensure that your request is played on throughout the evening.

If you are looking for a wonderful night out, great ambience, wonderful company, friendly environment and fabulous entertainment this annual event is a must for your calendar. We look forward to seeing you and your friends joining The Matrix Guild to assist to raise funds for Older Lesbians throughout Victoria.

When: Saturday, 17th May 2014
Time: 7.00 pm – 12.30 am
Where: St. Kilda Town Hall, 99A Carlisle Street, St. Kilda

- ✓ BYO Food and Drinks
- ✓ Tea, Coffee and light snacks available
- ✓ Lucky seat prizes

Contacts: Anna Cook 0448 002 870 or inquiries@matrixguildvic.org.au
Sharon Stanton 0419 99 966 or matrixevents@matrixguildvic.org.au

On a Personal Note



My Ovarian Cancer Journey By Sara Elkas

After an enjoyable overseas trip last August I experienced a persistent cough and shortness of breath and was treated with antibiotics and asthma medication. I went back to my doctor because nothing was helping and he sent me for a CT scan that showed that I had a collapsed right lung and pleural effusion. We went immediately to the Alfred hospital and they did a procedure to drain the fluid (2 litres!) from around the collapsed right lung.

While in hospital I had another CT scan that showed the lungs were clear: however there was a large (15cmx14cmx14cm) solid cystic mass in the pelvic area that we were told was very likely ovarian cancer.

We went to see an oncologist gynaecologist surgeon in early Oct. and I had a radical debulking operation 2 weeks later at a private hospital. All visible cancer was removed and fortunately it was confined to the pelvis. The lab report said that I had a high-grade serous ovarian cancer stage 2b.

I was advised to have chemotherapy and referred to a medical oncologist who recommended 6 cycles (3 weeks on and one week off) of chemo with Carboplatin & Taxol. My CA 125 (ovarian cancer marker) levels went down to normal after only 3 weeks of treatment and according to my oncologist I am officially in remission!! I didn't experience too many side effects and the main problem was low white blood cell count that led to a cancellation of a couple of sessions. What I did was to eat more dark green vegetables like kale, drink green tea and take garlic, vitamin C and zinc supplements and the white blood cell count did go up. As expected I lost my hair and have been wearing colourful bandanas, including a rainbow one!

My last chemo session was on the 24 April!!! The female oncologist we saw that morning (my regular guy was away) said my blood test results were "fabulous". What a relief it is to have chemo out of the way. I will be seeing the surgeon in 3 months & the oncologist in 6 months and having blood tests before the visits so they will be keeping an eye on my progress. I was told to expect that it would be up to 12 months before I am back to 100% in my energy levels.

After the session we celebrated by going to see "The Grand Budapest Hotel" movie and also had dinner at a Chinese vegetarian restaurant. We are going to see "Wicked" on 4th May and are also booked to visit Broome for a few days in mid-July. I can just see us riding a camel on Cable Beach at sunset! I will be going back to work in June but only 2 days a week.



I consider myself very lucky to have had the support of my partner of 20 years, Shoshi, and our 9 grandchildren, other relatives, friends and work colleagues, as well as medical staff and volunteers (foot massage!) at the private hospital where I received the chemotherapy. I have joined an ovarian cancer support group held at the Queen Vic that I have found very beneficial.

Ovarian cancer affects approximately 1:100 women and older age is one of the main risk factors. Unlike breast cancer there is no reliable diagnostic test so that in the majority of cases it is only diagnosed at an advanced stage. The symptoms are vague and in most cases such as mine it is discovered only by accident. For more information on symptoms, diagnosis and treatment please see this link:
<http://www.ovariancancer.net.au/awareness/>

May Newsletter

The deadline for the next Newsletter is 28th May. Please send news items and short articles to Rosemary at r.wealthy@bigpond.com

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