

# Matrix Guild of Vic Inc Newsletter



May 2010

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## SOUL SISTER SWING EXTRAVAGANZA 2010

Welcome to the update for fundraising events for The Matrix Guild of Victoria Inc.

You just cannot miss this fabulous event music from 40's and 60's The Matrix Guild proudly present The Soul Sisters Swing will be performing for our Mid Year fundraiser for The Matrix Guild of Victoria Inc.

"The Soul Sister Swing Extravaganza 2010" will be performed at the beautifully refurbished Fitzroy Town Hall.

We will ensure that there will be lot's of giveaways on the night and a wonderful selection of music with DJ Anny at the decks and you to dance the night away.

We sincerely hope that you can come along and with your support of this wonderful event which allows The Matrix Guild to strive and continue their work and assist our women's community.

Theme: "The Soul Sister Swing Extravaganza 2010" (Music from 40's & 60's)

Date: Saturday August 21 August 2010

Venue: The Fitzroy Town Hall

201 Napier Street

FITZROY - 3068

Time: 7.00pm - 12.30am

Tix: \$40 / \$50

BYO: Nibblies & Drinkies

Bookings / Lou: 0419 539 324/59989133

Bookings / Sharon: [matrixevents@matrixguildvic.org.au](mailto:matrixevents@matrixguildvic.org.au) or 0419 992 966

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me in the first instance. We thank you for your support and are looking forward to catching up with you on the night.

Cheers

Sharon E Stanton

Events Coordinator

Matrix Events

[matrixevents@matrixguildvic.org.au](mailto:matrixevents@matrixguildvic.org.au)

[www.matrixguild.org.au](http://www.matrixguild.org.au)

0419 992 966

The Matrix Guild presents  
a night with

# SOUL SISTER SWING

Saturday 21 August 2010  
Full \$50 / Concession \$40

Fitzroy Town Hall

A women's only event with proceeds to assist our women's community



Harmonies are their passion with selected songs from  
the Andrew Sisters, the Boswell Sisters and the big band era of the forties.

Date: Saturday 21 August 2010  
Time: 7.00pm – 12.30am  
Venue: Fitzroy Town Hall  
201 Napier Street, Fitzroy  
BYO: Nibbles & Drinks

Ticket Prices:  
Full \$50 / Concession \$40

Ticket Sales  
Contact: mobile 0419 992 966  
Email: [matrixevents@matrixguildvic.org.au](mailto:matrixevents@matrixguildvic.org.au)

flyer design by [redhawk.com.au](http://redhawk.com.au)

# Gay and Lesbian Aging



## Gay and Lesbian Aging

Linda M. Woolf, Webster University

Social service workers are becoming increasingly aware that there exists a large population of older gay and lesbian individuals. Estimates range from 1.75 to 3.5 million older gay men and lesbians in the United States. To put these figures in perspective, this is approximately equal to or two times greater than the number of older adults living in a nursing home setting. As this population has been little studied or even acknowledged to exist, few programs are provided to meet the special needs of these individuals.

**Many myths and negative stereotypes exist concerning the aged and the homosexual. Together, the older gay or lesbian suffers from a double stigma in American society. The image of the older gay man or lesbian as depressed, isolated, desperate, and sexless is prevalent. This image, however, does not hold up empirically.**

**Some of the research on gay and lesbian aging has demonstrated the similarities in aging between a homosexual and a heterosexual population. It has stressed that the majority of factors related to aging are the same for a heterosexual population as a homosexual population. For example, when discussing how the older gay man adapts to the aging process, Berger cites two individuals' responses: "Whether you are gay or straight doesn't make a difference. It's your attitude that makes the difference", and "Any person who hasn't adjusted well to other aspects of his life won't adjust well to aging, either. Being gay is just icing on the cake". In addition, older homosexuals go through a life review process as do heterosexuals. Thus, more similarities than differences are likely to exist, in regard to the aging process, between gays/lesbians and heterosexuals.**

**While many aspects of aging appear to be universal, research on gay and lesbian aging has demonstrated several specific positive and negative effects of aging as a gay man or lesbian. Several of these will be discussed below.**

**Gays and lesbians have had to experience the stigma of homosexuality usually before they experience the stigma of being old. For those individuals who have positively dealt with the homosexual stigma, it appears to make the stigma of growing old less difficult. In other words, many heterosexuals go through life never experiencing active discrimination. When hit with ageism, they must re-evaluate who they are in the face of society's stereotypes. However, gays and lesbians have**

had to overcome the stigma of being homosexual, and this appears to give these individuals the skills necessary to overcome other stigmas. In other words, older gays and lesbians have had to deal with discrimination and negative stereotypes throughout most of their lives. If this has been dealt with successfully, they have been found to have developed greater self-acceptance and self-confidence affording them the skills to deal with the stigma of aging successfully.

Bell and Weinberg found that lesbians and gay men were more likely to have a network of close friends than heterosexuals. They postulate that heterosexuals are more likely to be involved in family interactions as opposed to outside friendships. Krieger describes the lesbian community as a "haven in a hostile world". Similarly, Berger states that "integration into a homosexual community is an important factor in the adaptation of older male homosexuals". As the community of friendships is important to the gay and lesbian, throughout the life-span, they are not dependent on family for their emotional support and needs. This is important for several reasons. First, gays and lesbians are much less likely to experience an "empty nest syndrome" as support already comes from outside the home. Second, the community affords older gays and lesbians the opportunity to meet new people and socialize. As the homosexual community is usually noted for its diversity, older individuals have the opportunity to socialize with a wide range of individuals, young and old. In addition, work relations usually do not make up the majority of personal contacts outside the home for the gay and lesbian. Thus, upon retirement, the network of friends that the gay or lesbian has made remains relatively unchanged. The establishment of friendship networks or communities appears to make the aging process easier for gays and lesbians.

Retirement, for the gay man or lesbian, has an additional positive benefit. While in the work force, the threat of loss of job on the basis of sexual orientation is a constant source of concern for many individuals. Thus, retirement can be seen as an event freeing them from some of these concerns. Individuals find that retirement affords them the opportunity to be more involved socially and politically than before as disclosure as a homosexual is unlikely to eliminate their financial livelihood.

Many of the negative results of being a gay man or lesbian on aging can be related to the negative aspects of being gay or lesbian at any point across the lifespan. For example, individuals who believe the negative stereotypes about gays or lesbians have a more difficult time adjusting to their own homosexual orientation. This is true for older gay men and lesbians, as well.

Four factors seem to be of particular concern for the older gay man or lesbian. First, the health care system has been traditionally unresponsive to recognizing the existence of homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle. Thus, services are aimed at a heterosexual population. Quam presents the example of a woman who is diagnosed with breast cancer and afraid to tell her physician that she is a lesbian. This inability to communicate honestly with a health care professional can only negatively impact treatment. Second, homosexual partnerships are often not recognized to exist even though the individuals may have been involved in life-partner situations for many years. Often, partners are not allowed to visit their loved ones in the hospital, not allowed to participate in health care decisions of their life-partner, are not allowed to live together in retirement facilities, or are even barred or excluded from funeral arrangements. This discounting of primary relationships can have a tremendous, painful effect on the gay men or lesbians involved. Third, older gay men and lesbians are concerned about housing. They wish to live in communities that are either predominately homosexual or at least, a

community that is sensitive to the needs of the older gay man or lesbian. However, these options are limited. Lastly, the individual who "comes out" or explores their same-sex orientation for the first time as an older adult has few resources to meet people or adjust to their reorientation.

To meet the needs of older gays and lesbians several communities across the country have formed support groups. SAGE (Senior Action in a Gay Environment), in New York City, was formed not only to meet the needs of the already involved and active gay man or lesbian, but has initiated an outreach program as well. Their program serves as a model for its community efforts to recognize the gay and lesbian population and provide services to it. Its programs range from opportunities for socialization to a home visitation program for the shut-in gay man or lesbian older adult.

Several problems exist with the limited research that has been conducted not only on older gays and lesbians but gays and lesbians as a whole. First, Morin points out that there is no true representation of a hidden population. Thus, much of the current research has been conducted on white, formally educated, middle class gay men and lesbians. Second, a heterosexual bias pervades the literature. For example, the motives of the researchers studying homosexual relationships generally reflect a desire to present lesbian and gay men relationships as comparable and as common as any other heterosexual relationship. In other words, the heterosexual standard is something the homosexual is supposed to emulate. Also, there seems to be a negative response to the study of older lesbians within the lesbian community. Some women feel that by isolating them out as a group for study, researchers are focusing on differences and are in fact contributing to ageism. Lastly, much of the research on gay and lesbian aging has been conducted on populations 40 years of age or older. Very few studies include or examine solely the individual over 60. Finally, no studies have been conducted on the frail elderly as this remains an extremely hidden population. Many very old gay men or lesbians may never have defined themselves as homosexual. For example, two women may have been coupled and simply defined their relationship as roommates. Individual self-identification as a gay man or lesbian was inhibited by the strong moral and social injunctions against homosexuality.

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## References and Suggested Readings

- Adelman, M. (1986). Long time passing: Lives of older lesbians. Boston: Alyson Press.
- Almvig, C. (1982). The invisible minority: Aging and Lesbianism. New York: Utica College of Syracuse University.
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- Copper, B. (1980). On being an older lesbian. Generations: Journal of the Western Gerontological Society, 39-40.
- Copper, B. (1987). Ageism in the lesbian community. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press.
- Cruikshank, M. (1990). Lavender and gray: A brief survey of lesbian and gay aging studies. Journal of Homosexuality, 20, 77-87.
- Deevey, S. (1990). Older lesbian women: An invisible minority. Journal of Gerontological Nursing, 16, 35-39.
- Dunker, B. (1987). Aging lesbians: Observations and speculations. In Lesbian Psychologies: Explorations and Challenges, ed. Boston Lesbian Psychologies Collective, 72-82. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Healey, S. (1994). Diversity with a difference: On being old and lesbian. Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Service, 1, 109-117.
- Kehoe, M. (1986). Lesbians over sixty-five: A triply invisible minority. Journal of Homosexuality, 12, 139-152.
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- Kehoe, M. (1988). Lesbians over sixty speak for themselves. Journal of Homosexuality, 16, 1-111.
- Quam, J. (1993). Gay and lesbian aging. Siecus Report available at <http://www.cyfc.umn.edu/Diversity/Gay/gayaging.html>

- Quam, J. & Whitford, G. (1992). Adaptation and age-related expectations of older gay and lesbian adults. Gerontologist, 32, 367-374.
- Raphael, S. & Robinson, M. (1981). Lesbian and gay men in later life. Generations: Journal of the Western Gerontological Society.

## **BUILDING BEGINS ON THE MATRIX APARTMENTS**

*Matrix is keenly watching the progress of the building that will house our first 3 apartments. Work is going well and it is expected that they will be completed at the end of March 2011. They will then be rented out to older lesbians who are experiencing financial disadvantage. Rent will be set at no more than 25% of the woman's income.*

*Anneke has been invited to address the Australian Lesbian Medical Association (ALMA) to tell the story of the Matrix housing project and how Heather Chapple's bequest made this possible. Matrix hopes that as this inspiring story spreads, more lesbians will be motivated to donate or bequest to our housing fund. Remember, all donations are tax deductible.*

*For more detail about the project go to [www.matrixguildvic.org.au/housing-brunswick.html](http://www.matrixguildvic.org.au/housing-brunswick.html) and to register your interest in becoming a tenant, email Anneke at [housing@matrixguildvic.org.au](mailto:housing@matrixguildvic.org.au)"*



Jeanette Large, CEO of the Victorian Women's Housing Association (left) with Anneke Deutsch, convenor of Matrix's Housing subcommittee at the 201 Albert St building site

# MATRIX AND RESEARCH

Matrix has been successful in gaining funding from the Reichstein Foundation for research on seniors GLBTI people.

The first research project has resulted in a report titled

*My People: A project exploring the experiences of GLBTI seniors in aged care.*

The second research project has resulted in a report titled

*Permission to Speak: Determining strategies towards the development of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex friendly aged care services in Victoria*

Both reports are available on our web site: [www.matrixguildvic.org.au](http://www.matrixguildvic.org.au)

## Partnerships with other groups involved with the Project.

Those on the committee were representatives from: Matrix Guild; Vintage Men Inc., a social and support group for mature gay and bisexual men and their friends; A General Practitioner, The Carlton Clinic and Senior Lecturer, The Department of General Practice, University of Melbourne, Member Australian Lesbian Medical Association Committee and Member Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay and Lesbian Health; Admissions Officer Brotherhood of St Laurence; Victorian Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby; Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria; The ALSO Foundation; Women's Health East; Women's Health in the South East; Women's Health West; A Consultant Geriatrician and Australian Lesbian Medical Association; School of Health Sciences (OT Program) University of South Australia, and Expert Advisor to the Steering Committee.

## Older Lesbians Social Networking

A number of new Matrix's members have written to us that they would be interested in meeting other older lesbians. The Matrix Committee would be very interested to hear from any older lesbians out there that are able and willing to start such a group/network.

## Matrix Guild's Managing Committee

Meets 6.30 pm the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month in Betty Day Centre, St Kilda

You are most welcome to attend and contribute. Ring to check if meeting is still on 3<sup>rd</sup> Tues. before you come and also



to get venue details – 0419 992 966

Come and meet more lesbians.

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**SHEBAR - Women Only Events**

**2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday Every Month**

**Fun and friendly atmosphere with regular live acts, female DJs and special events.**

"The Glass House Hotel" 51 Gipps Street COLLINGWOOD  
[www.shebar.org](http://www.shebar.org) - Call Sharon & Andrea 0419 992 966

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For photos and information about our events, for back copies of newsletters,  
and full updates of the Matrix Research Project refer to

**THE MATRIX WEB PAGE**

**[www.matrixguildvic.org.au](http://www.matrixguildvic.org.au)**

**Thanks to Pat Mitchell for designing, producing and keeping the page up to date**

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## **Matrix Guild Victoria Inc**

### **A voice for older lesbians**

Matrix Guild was founded by and for the benefit of lesbians over forty years of age. We are committed to the support of appropriate care and alternative lifestyle options for older lesbians in Victoria.

Matrix Guild was founded by a group of lesbians and it was incorporated in September 1992. The visions and aims of these women were to raise money to assist older/ disabled lesbians.

#### **Matrix Guild Statement of Purposes**

The Guild is established for the public charitable purposes of the relief of poverty, helplessness and suffering of women, and in particular lesbians, by without limitation providing home based services and accommodation to aged, disadvantaged and disabled women.

As an incidental and ancillary purpose, the Guild may provide training and education to home care providers on issues relevant to caring for lesbians to increase the sensitivities of the carers and the standard of home care to lesbians.

#### **Do you want to support Matrix? Here's what you can do.**

- Attend Matrix Guild fundraisers.
- Include Matrix Guild Victoria Inc as a beneficiary in your will.
- Become a financial member.

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## **If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to Matrix Guild of Vic Inc**

You will receive a receipt from Matrix, with our ABN number on it that states the receipt is for a tax deductible gift for Matrix Guild Benevolent Services.

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## **Application/Renewal Matrix Guild Membership**

Yearly fee period from Annual General Meeting  
(September)

Full membership: \$20 waged / \$15 concession

Organisation membership: \$30 (or donation)

Send to: The Secretary, PO Box 99 Fairfield, Vic 3078

Name:

Address:

Phone:

E-mail:

This is a renewal / new membership.

I agree / do not agree to my name and details as listed above being made available to Matrix Guild members.

Signature:

Date: