

LGBTQ+ WORK GROUP AT FRIENDSHIP PLACE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



PRIDE 2021

CELEBRATING PRIDE 2021

"For all of our progress, there are many States in which LGBTQ+ individuals still lack protections for fundamental rights and dignity in hospitals, schools, public accommodations, and other spaces.

We will not rest until full equality for LGBTQ+ Americans is finally achieved and codified into law." - President Joe Biden in a proclamation marking the start of 2021 Pride Month.

Unlike last year when the DC area was still weary and unsure about large group gatherings and events due to COVID-19 this year a large crowd filled Freedom Plaza to mark Capital Pride 2021 in Washington, DC. This year marks the 52nd anniversary of the Stonewall Inn riots that sparked the modern-day LGBTQ+ equal rights movement. Remarkable achievements have been made in that time and deserve a day of celebration. But we also know there is still a lot of work left to be done to achieve full and equal inclusion for LGBTQ+ individuals. Friendship Place looks forward to participating in that continuing effort.

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FRIENDSHIP PLACE PARTICIPATES IN COLORFUL PRIDE MOBILE

On Saturday June 12th we were out and proud at Capital Pride!



THE POWER OF ALLIES

Dr. Shaqueal Stevens, LMSW (she/her/hers)

Founder, President FOCUS Services, Inc.



Homelessness is a major health crisis that affects us all and is a part of every community. It is estimated that on any given night about 41,000 unaccompanied youth ages 13-25 experience homelessness. Within that population, LGBTQ young adults had a 120 percent higher risk of reporting homelessness compared to youth who identified as heterosexual and cisgender. Something has to change. Someone has to do something. FOCUS Services, Inc is an organization that was birthed out of the need to help these individuals experiencing homelessness.

Geared towards LGBTQ+ youth and young adults, FOCUS Services helps by working to strengthen and build skills, find and maintain housing as well as fostering education/personal development. Finding Opportunities and Consistently Uplifting Self is what FOCUS stands for and it's what we believe. If you want to join in supporting change, like and follow on Facebook & Instagram at @focusservices2019. Check out the website at www.focusyouth.org and donate if you can. We can all make a difference.



"I don't really talk about my sexual orientation. I felt like I was living my life, I wasn't in the closet, but I was just living my life. Everybody who knows me personally, they know I'm gay. And that's the way people should be able to live our lives, really. We shouldn't have to be standing out here demanding something we automatically should have as citizens of this country." Wanda Sykes

- LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) individuals face a particular set of challenges, both in becoming homeless as well as when they are trying to avoid homelessness. LGBT persons face social stigma, discrimination, and often rejection by their families, which adds to the physical and mental strains/challenges that all homelessness persons must struggle with.
- Frequently, homeless LGBT persons have great difficulty finding shelters that accept and respect them. LGBT individuals experiencing homelessness are often at a heightened risk of violence, abuse, and exploitation compared with their
- According to the Williams Institute, 40% of the homeless youth served by agencies identify as LGBT
- 43% of clients served by drop-in centers identified as LGBT
- 30% of street outreach clients identified as LGBT
- 30% of clients utilizing housing programs identified as LGBT



Source: National Coalition for the Homeless

OUT IN DENTISTRY CONTINUES TO GIVE

Our friends at Out In Dentistry continued to demonstrate their support of Friendship Place by donating toothpaste and mouth wash to residents of La Casa and The Brooks in May.

Founded in October 2019 by LGBTQIA+ students and allies at the Howard University College of Dentistry Out In Dentistry was an early partner of the Friendship Place LGBTQ+ Workgroup. Francis Morgan, President of Out In Dentistry, stopped by our Calvert Street office with the oral hygiene product donation and reiterated his groups enthusiastic support of Friendship Place and willingness to become even more involved.



"Every gay and lesbian person who has been lucky enough to survive the turmoil of growing up is a survivor. Survivors always have an obligation to those who will face the same challenges." Bob Paris



D.C. LAUNCHES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS LGBTQ SENIORS

Mayor's LGBTQ Affairs Office partners with Mary's House

The D.C. Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs announced last week that it is reaching out to the community for help finding homeless or "unstably housed" LGBTQ seniors 62 years of age or older for a recently launched city program to provide them with rental assistance for safe and secure housing.

The announcement says the program, known as Housing Older People Efficiently, or HOPE, is being operated jointly by the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs and the D.C. Housing Authority in partnership with the D.C.-based LGBTQ organization Mary's House for Older Adults.

Through a funding allocation of \$348,964 approved by the D.C. Council for fiscal year 2021, the program has been given subsidized rental vouchers for 15 individual LGBTQ seniors or LGBTQ senior households.

Sheila Alexander-Reid, who serves as director of the Mayor's LGBTQ Affairs Office, and LeAndrea Gilliam, who's coordinating the housing program for the office, each called the program a first step in addressing an often-hidden problem of homeless LGBTQ seniors in the city.

"I can just say personally in interacting with all the clients and applicants that I have worked with so far, I know that they are very grateful," said Gilliam. "And we have created an opportunity to improve the quality of life of LGBTQ residents through the D.C. Housing Authority and through this collaboration and partnership that we have."

Gilliam and Alexander-Reid said Mary's House, which is in the process of opening one or more group houses for LGBTQ seniors in the District, has helped the program locate LGBTQ seniors in need of housing assistance.

According to Gilliam and Alexander-Reid, the program is currently only available to LGBTQ seniors who are homeless or unstably housed, which the two said refers to someone who is homeless but staying temporarily with a friend or relative in a "couch sleeping" situation.

They said the program is also available to a homeless person who has been placed in one of the city's group transitional housing facilities on a temporary basis and that requires the person to find permanent housing elsewhere.

Under the HOPE program for LGBTQ seniors, Gilliam said participants are required to pay a share of the rent equal to 30 percent of their income, which often comes from Social Security benefits. But if the individual has no income or if their Social Security payment is below a certain amount, the program pays the full rent.

The D.C. Housing Authority, which administers housing voucher and housing assistance programs for people in need in addition to LGBTQ seniors, arranges for landlords to accept people enrolled in the program and sends staff members to visit the apartments to ensure they meet city standards. The DC Housing Authority also ensures that the rent charged by the landlords is within normal market range, Alexander-Reid and Gilliam said.

The two said LGBTQ seniors who are approved for the program are responsible for finding an apartment on their own, but the program will assist them with a list of available apartments and their locations if they cannot immediately find a place.

Gilliam said there are about six remaining rent subsidy vouchers left out of the 15 that are available for the fiscal year, which ends Oct. 1.

"But we have applicants for those six slots," said Gilliam. She said the application process is ongoing and not all of those applicants will be approved, enabling others who learn about the program to come forward and apply for one of the remaining vouchers.

Continued on next page...



Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton at Public Showing of Mary's House

Japer Bowles, who serves as coordinator of a coalition of local LGBTQ organizations that lobbies the D.C. Council and Mayor Muriel Bowser for city funding for a wide range of LGBTQ programs, said the coalition had asked the Council to fund 20 rather than 15 vouchers for the LGBTQ seniors housing assistance program.

Mary's House president and CEO Dr. Imani Woody told the Blade that she was hopeful the 15 approved vouchers for fiscal year 2021 would be considered a starting point, with more funding for additional vouchers for next year.

"We need at least 30 vouchers," Woody said in referring to the number of LGBTQ seniors facing homelessness in D.C.

Chibbaro Jr., Lou. "D.C. Launches Assistance Program for Homeless LGBTQ Seniors." Washington Blade: LGBTQ News, Politics, LGBTQ Rights, Gay News, Washington Blade, 2 May 2021, www.washingtonblade.com/2021/04/21/d-c-launches-assistance-program-for-homeless-lgbtq-seniors/.

MARY'S HOUSE OFFICIAL WEBSITE

Visit their website at maryshousedc.org for more information on how you can support their mission

From the website: This project originated with the President and Chief Executive Officer of Mary's House, Dr. Imani Woody. Her father, an active citizen in the City, had a stroke and had to be placed in a nursing home. Being middle class, he went to a "good" nursing/retirement home. Even though he had Dr. Woody, her wife, and other family to look out and advocate for him, he went in the nursing home continent, and left incontinent.

Dr. Woody wondered what would have happened to him had he been an out gay old man or an old lesbian or an old transgender senior? Shortly, thereafter, she learned that a friend of the community had died – in an upscale retirement community. He died alone and was found five days later. These situations are still happening in our City and across the country. The research tells us, that LGBTQ/SGL seniors often live alone and do not have children that traditionally care for parents. Still others have lost most of their peers through the AIDS/HIV epidemic.



WORKGROUP WEBINAR SERIES

The LGBTQ+ Workgroup presents its new webinar series



Members of the LGBTQ+ Workgroup worked very hard over the last couple of months to produce a five-part webinar series which was presented to attendees online. Our cultural competency webinar series ultimately seeks to better understand how we can create environments that are welcoming and can help minimize the existing disparities experienced by the LGBTQ+ population.

As of the writing of this newsletter the webinar series is still ongoing and features the following topics:

- Session 1: June 2nd LGBTQ+ 101: Welcoming & Inclusion
- Session 2: June 16th History & Culture
- Session 3: June 30th Transgender Experiences
- Session 4: July 14th Systems of Inequity & Disparities
- Session 5: July 28th Advocacy & Resistance

For assistance with registration please e-mail: lgbtq@friendshipplace.org



Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

THE LGBTQ+ WORK GROUP AT FRIENDSHIP PLACE

Co Chairs

Christopher Cannedy
(he, his, him)
Newsletter Editor
Community Engagement Manager

Orelia Lesh, LICSW
(she/her/hers)
Social Worker - The Brooks

Committee Members

Jean-Michel Giraud
(he, his, him)
President/CEO

Sean D. Read
(he/him/his)
Chief Community Solutions Officer

Maxwell Durbin
(he/him/his)
Case Manager - Veteran Services

Kara Green
(she/her/hers)
Housing Specialist - Veterans First

Bruce Grimes
(he/him/his)
Secretary, Board of Directors

Rebekah Koen
(she/they)
Case Manager - Veterans First

Anne Morrison
(she/her/hers)
Board Member

Lynne Tag
(she/her/hers)
Volunteer, Former Board Member

OUR MISSION

The LGBTQ+ Workgroup of Friendship Place is a collective of Staff, Participants, Board, and Volunteers committed to ensuring that all programs, services, and expressions of Friendship Place are considered welcoming, affirming, inclusive, and safer for LGBTQ+ community members and allies.

We seek to continuously expand our awareness, competency, and sensitivity through action and advocacy throughout the broader Friendship Place community and community at-large.