



STORIES of a LIFETIME

HOW THEY AFFECT US
WHAT WE CAN LEARN
WHY WE SHOULD CARE



Housing



Services



Community



housing, services, and community for LGBT seniors
openhouse

OUR STORY

In 1998, openhouse was founded to build critically-needed housing, services and community programs for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) seniors. We strive to ensure that today's LGBT seniors and those that follow in their footsteps can age with grace, dignity and respect in the place they call home.

Since 1998, **openhouse** has:

- increased the visibility of LGBT seniors with government agencies, elected officials and senior service, housing and program providers.
- connected hundreds of LGBT seniors to housing and community-based services that foster healthy aging and independent living.
- built community programs and created opportunities for civic engagement to help LGBT seniors stay connected to their community and each other.
- developed a widely-acclaimed training program to help senior housing providers and service agencies become more LGBT-welcoming and inclusive.
- organized neighborhood groups, housing developers, community organizations and other stakeholders to support building mixed-income housing welcoming to LGBT seniors.
- built an historic partnership with the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and a private developer to build at least 88 units of LGBT-welcoming affordable senior housing with support services.

1. OUR HOUSE

In April of 2008, **openhouse** and the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing came to an agreement to build 88 or more units of affordable senior housing welcoming to and inclusive of LGBT older adults. This historic accomplishment could never have been achieved without **openhouse's** leadership, steady resolve and proven ability to educate, persuade and nurture a network of allies over a long period of time.

openhouse is committed to creating housing welcoming to LGBT seniors at all income levels and we are uniquely positioned to take advantage of opportunities as they arise to build other housing. Developing and building housing takes years to complete and requires the long-term commitment that only **openhouse** can provide.

We recognize that many LGBT seniors can't afford to wait. They need housing today. That is why we work directly with LGBT seniors every day to help them find affordable, accessible and welcoming housing along with the support services they need to live active and independent lives.

Not Missing in Action

Nick's **openhouse** Story

Always knowing he was different, Nick grew up in the Latino area of Los Angeles. In the Army during the Vietnam war, he learned all the tricks to hide his homosexuality, while still exploring who he truly was. When he met Raye it was love at first sight. Nick and Raye were together for thirty wonderful years, until Raye's sudden death left Nick alone and struggling to make ends meet.

Nick moved to San Francisco, trying to start over. Alone in a new city and with no place to live, he contacted **openhouse**. Staff helped him get affordable housing and apply for Veteran's benefits. His new apartment isn't what he had with Raye, but it's all his and he's decorating it the way he wants. Now, Nick is an **openhouse** volunteer, working to help others.

"openhouse is good at pushing me to try new things, which doesn't come naturally to me. But I am getting better and better. And I love it!"



> Read more of Nick's story:
www.openhouse-sf.org/nick

2. OUR SERVICES

Today's LGBT seniors, as well as the upcoming Baby Boomers, often do not access the services they need because they fear discrimination and compromised care. When they do access services they are met by providers with little training on how to make LGBT seniors feel welcome or safe. In 2004, **openhouse** created a plan to change this culture of care to ensure that LGBT people get the services and support they need.

Through a widely-acclaimed training program, **openhouse** has helped over 1,600 service providers from over 170 agencies become more welcoming and inclusive of the LGBT community. In 2010, we will begin marketing *From Isolation to Inclusion*, an interactive curriculum, toolkit and DVD to support the training program. With years of experience working with a wide variety of agencies, **openhouse** is seen as a leading expert in California and nationally in providing these transformative trainings.

In addition to training service providers, **openhouse** helps LGBT seniors navigate the complicated system of affordable housing in San Francisco and refers them to appropriate service agencies that are culturally sensitive to their needs. Calls and requests for assistance will only increase as the community ages.

Giving Back

Felicia's **openhouse** Story

"The greatest contribution openhouse has made to me is giving me the opportunity to talk about my life," says Felicia who represents the "T" in LGBT. "It's made me feel so much better about myself and helped me to remember the many good things that have happened, as well as the bad. It's a little like therapy. I just feel so good about my life after talking about it to others!"

As part of the **openhouse** trainings for providers of senior services, she regularly joins other LGBT seniors in panel discussions in which **openhouse** volunteers speak candidly about their lives, their current needs and their concerns about discrimination.

"While you can't change lives and attitudes overnight, we make an impact," says Felicia. "We're not only training the staff, we often speak to the seniors themselves so they'll be more sensitive to the people around them and not make assumptions."



> Read more of Felicia's story:
www.openhouse-sf.org/felicia

3.

OUR COMMUNITY

Hundreds of studies have shown that building community and reducing isolation are key pillars of healthy aging. For the many LGBT seniors without children and other family support, building community is that much more important. To address this, in 2007, **openhouse** began partnerships with senior centers in San Francisco to create LGBT programming and outreach. This Neighborhood Outreach Project has brought hundreds of previously un-served LGBT seniors into the centers for a variety of social activities. Through their participation in these programs, LGBT seniors are now connected to a web of other support services available at the centers, such as meals, wellness programs, case management and home visitation.

Each year **openhouse** offers events, discussion groups, educational forums and social activities attended by hundreds of LGBT seniors. We are helping LGBT seniors become stronger leaders and building a more civically engaged community. As a result of this extensive community organizing, **openhouse** has become the community hub that connects LGBT seniors to their neighborhoods, their community and each other.

Creating a Family

Matile's **openhouse** Story

Few community programs existed for older lesbians and gay adults when Matile moved to California in 1979. So she started one to speak around the city about older gays and lesbians and their needs. She co-led that group for five years.

Soon Matile and several others began meeting to plan housing for LGBT seniors. But when the AIDS epidemic began claiming more and more lives, they stopped the effort to focus on the epidemic.

In 1998 when **openhouse** co-founders, Marcy Adelman and Jeanette Gurevitch, revived the effort to create housing for LGBT seniors, Matile was recruited back, and has been on the Board ever since.

"We're doing so much now to make sure LGBT seniors can meet and interact. At the end of life, people want a place they can feel comfortable, where there is camaraderie. **openhouse** is making that possible for LGBT seniors all across the city."



> Read more of Matile's story:
www.openhouse-sf.org/matile

YOUR STORY

We're all in this together.

We cannot stand by while anyone is forced back into the closet because they fear discrimination. We know that staying connected to each other is essential to staying healthy, living longer and staying out of hospitals and nursing homes. We understand that building affordable and mixed income housing is critical for our community's future.

Support the thousands of LGBT seniors who need your help. All contributions to **openhouse** are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. You can donate online or send us a check by mail.

If you or someone you know needs help finding housing or services, please call our office. You can also call us to discuss Planned Giving, Gifts of Stock and Employer Matching gifts. We can help you sort out all the details.

Please give generously and ensure that LGBT seniors are able to age with dignity and respect. After all, *there is no place like home.*

openhouse
870 market street, suite 458
san francisco, ca 94102
415.296.8995
www.openhouse-sf.org

*"I will need senior housing that is affordable. I have a great apartment, but it will soon be impossible for me to stay here. Our community needs the kind of affordable housing that **openhouse** is building."*

*"I couldn't be an openly gay Vice President of a Fortune 500 firm if it weren't for the sacrifices made in previous generations by the "Stonewall generation." I honor and celebrate our LGBT seniors, and that is why I support **openhouse**."*

*"During the **openhouse** training, I realized that the stereotypes and assumptions I had about LGBT seniors are not true. The panel showed me the reality of LGBT issues for seniors in the community."*

*"**openhouse** helped me navigate all the red tape and bureaucracy to secure an affordable studio apartment in a new building. Thanks to **openhouse**, I now live in a clean and nice apartment with sweet, very welcoming neighbors."*

*"The **openhouse** training showed me that I, myself, can be an instrument to help LGBT seniors move from isolation to inclusion."*

*"**openhouse** training was the best, most emotionally intense training I ever had. I hadn't ever really thought about LGBT concerns for the seniors I serve, but now I'm a force to be reckoned with! I know I can make a difference."*

"For many of us, the LGBT community is our only family. We've all got to look out for each other, and our seniors really need us."



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