

The Rainbow Seniors Logo



***Promoting and addressing life issues affecting the
general welfare of older gay, lesbian, bisexual,
transgender, and intersex (GLBTI) individuals***

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The Empty Closet

May 2004

Rainbow Seniors and the GAGV Youth Groups-the Intergenerational Panel event

By Sherlea Dony, Vice President, Rainbow Seniors of Western New York

Young and older GLBTs got together on Sunday, March 21 for an Intergenerational Panel. The event was a great beginning of interaction between two ends of the GLBT spectrum. Rainbow Seniors of Western New York and the GAGV Youth Groups co-sponsored this panel at Rainbow Seniors¹ monthly meeting and potluck.

About 60 people attended the event, many from Rainbow Seniors and the Youth Groups, along with a few people from the community. In an hour and a half, seven GLBT individuals ranging in age from 16 to 75 shared their experiences with the audience and each other. Tears and laughter, sadness and understanding all occurred in that time frame. Several of the older panelists talked about trying to live a ³straight² life when only alcohol made them feel better. The youngest panel member spoke of forming a Gay/Straight Alliance in his high school, which he has attended for less than a year. A brave young man, indeed.

As the discussion neared the end, an audience member summed up that regardless of the generation in which a panelist came out, coming out was and is a difficult process, especially in the beginning. Afterwards members of the youth groups stayed to share a meal with the Rainbow Seniors. People from both groups commented that we should have a similar event at least once a year with the recognition that we can all learn from each other and make a connection. We're hoping to get an invitation to the Youth Groups¹ new digs! When the panel was over, each panelist received a red rose and certificate of community service.

The next day one of the panelists sent an email, ³It is wonderful that you created a space that encouraged the seniors and the youth to join together. And sharing stories is a powerful and necessary bonding experience from which the LGBT community can benefit. I hope that RSWNY can think of another way to join our groups in the near future.... I think that the certificates of community service were a classy way to reflect the ¹reality of our sharing; it is a statement of our worth and especially important as a validation of our life journeys.²

And on a different note, Rainbow Seniors is pleased to announce our new Web site: www.rainborseniorswny.org. We're grateful to Patrick Byrnes, Karmicom Design Team, for building this awesome site for us. Come visit!

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