

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*

**October 2004**

### **BEING WITH OUR GAY ELDERS**

**by Mary**

A recent article in the Democrat and Chronicle came to my attention: "Coalition to Fight Elder Abuse", June 1, 2004. My reaction to that article led me back to the November 9, 1997 insert, "Protecting Our Elders." Who is not familiar with the form such abuse can take: physical, emotional, financial, and, of course, neglect, isolation, loneliness. I began to wonder: are there specific needs our elderly GLBTI sisters and brothers might have?

The obvious ways of reaching out are phone assurances, cards, driving, and myriads of other practical helps. But then, thoughts began to tumble into my head: What about preparing conversation pieces as relates to gay status today. What things are happening in our gay culture in society today, what is happening in our own lives? The sharing of our life experiences is always fascinating and, it goes without saying, confidential, and can help keep an elder connected and involved with the world.

Perhaps one of our most basic needs as we age is to remain connected to our true selves, to our "GLBTI-ness." Since our mutual gayness alone creates a bond, we have the ability to give credence, affirmation, and encouragement to our brothers and sisters. If you have ever felt like you were living in a land of make-believe and eventually found a safe landing place, you will understand the gift you could be to our gay elders.

And if we don't know someone already, how do we locate "family" members? Not from any list that I know of. I think the answer is already among us, and perhaps has been for some time. We stay alert for those who are out but may be in an unfriendly situation, or the closeted and lonely. And when the opportunity arises to speak out, to "educate" health care providers, we will have the courage and right words to do so.

The Rochester organization that is specifically set up to address the needs of the older GLBTI community is the Rainbow Seniors of Western New York. If you would like to respond to this article, you may do so at [RSWNY@rainbowseniorsrswny.org](mailto:RSWNY@rainbowseniorsrswny.org). Our web site is <http://www.rainbowseniorswny.org>. Our new location is at 150 South Clinton Ave. (First Universalist Church of Rochester, corner Court St., next to Xerox Tower). The open Board meeting is at 2:15 p.m., and the potluck social is at 4:00 p.m., both on the 3rd Sunday of the month.

We mean it when we say: all are welcome.

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