

Rainbow Seniors of Western New York
by Meredith Reiniger

YOU HAVE MAIL. A postcard: Had a wonderful time! Wish you were there. An invitation: come dance!

There was a mixture of ages and a variety of paths. Yet all of us had traveled from "when we knew" to the gathering of the 3rd annual RSWNY Inter-generational Panel. That gathering was an important event...a time when people both young and old congregate to share stories. Some of us were listening, learning about other people in our community. Others were at the microphone willingly telling about their lives to a group of virtual strangers. Together we discovered common grounds and learned about unique experiences. If you missed this one, plan on joining us next year. We need to know what the closets of yesterday looked like, and we need to recognize the doors on today's closets.

Before I go on, let me tell you that serendipity brought two speakers to the stage who had not anticipated seeing each other. First there was J, a 19-year old male, who celebrated that, several years ago, his high school guidance counselor had given information to him about GAGV when he revealed his truth to her. For him, the GAGV Youth Group became a place of good companionship. Second, on the same stage, sat K, the 74-year-old social worker who had been that counselor. She called J to the podium and said "I wish I could have told you then...J, I'm gay." The power of that reunion still reverberates in my memory.

The presentations were awesome. I think that we all left slightly different from when we arrived. Different because we had been allowed into the hearts of eight people new to our lives. Because we heard about real events from each person, we move closer together...the emotional barrier between audience and panel blurred and, rather magically, we all moved into a level of friendship.

You too might have developed a comfort level with some new people. If you had joined us. Do not dismay. Good news, you have another opportunity, in May, to join our growing group for a fine time.

Come to our second annual spring dance. No dancing required. You certainly may dance. You certainly might be inspired to dance. But you can also watch others, watch the joy of music and friends move around the dance floor. Of course, conversation comes with any gathering. And laughter. Basically, it is a wonderful time to be surrounded by your community, to meet new people, to say hey to long time friends. And remember the group that went to the Inter-generational Panel? Well, they have established connections, so even more youth and "middlers" and elders will be at this dance.

The location, right on the shore of Lake Ontario, offers a lovely sunset view. There's sand to play in. There's a board walk to follow over to the gazebo or the pier. The building is now called the Roger Robach Community Center, but some of us might

remember when it was the bath house for our summer swims. Maybe we will hear the echoes of metal lockers clanging shut and the snap of elastic bands as locker keys were slid up arms ready to swirl through the cooling waters.

I know that we will hear great music played by Chuck Argento (just ask him for your favorite). I know we will share more stories and I know that we will have a good time. I'm pretty sure that we will hear "We Are Fam-i-ly" and a whole bunch of us will cram onto the dance floor and wiggle our whatevers. Now I want to know...will you be there too? Mark this on your calendar or your blueberry or your post-it note: Friday 26th of May.