

There are a lot of you and I would not have it any other



way—It's estimated that by 2030 the older adult population will increase to 19% of the overall population. Today there are 2.7 million LGBTQ+ older adults living across the United States. Traditionally there are three areas for successful aging: economic security, social connections, and health & wellbeing. Older LGBTQ+ people face key challenges such as a lifetime of discrimination, a lack of legal or social recognition, a reliance on chosen family, and a lack of competent, inclusive healthcare.

This growing demographic faces unique challenges that includes discrimination based on age, sexual orientation, gender identity, poverty, and physical or mental health conditions. Care facilities have a history of contributing to inequity of the community. Isolation is a concern for this population as they tend to live alone, be single, and have fewer children when compared to their heterosexual counterparts. When you add sex, ethnicity, disability, or race into the mix and the barriers are significantly compounded.

When West of 50 implemented its needs assessment in the spring of 2022, the results noted that mental health was a concern for the community. West of 50's goals have always been to provide opportunities for active engagement and utilize a nonclinical, holistic model for the development of programming. I am excited that in the following pages you will find the results of our Mental Health Survey.

This survey will be conducted every quarter and will assist us in understanding how the community is responding to our programs. This data will also aid us with applying for grants and provide an important narrative on the effectiveness of our supports.—Jason

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LGBTLifePlan

LGBTQ+ individuals tend to rely on caregivers who are not legally recognized such as partners and chosen families to aid with caregiving or daily living. Due to this, our community must be educated on what documents they need to protect themselves from individuals who do not want to respect their wishes.

This could result in surviving LGBTQ+ partners or other loved ones being unable to carry out funeral and burial wishes, being shut out of an inheritance, forfeiture of a family home, or other dire consequences for the serving caregiver or loved one. West of 50 is excited to introduce its newest program LGBTLife Plan. LGBTLife Plan is a monthly program that will bring in speakers who will focus on helping one get ready for the end of the rainbow. The following is the list of new programming & speakers:

March 13th

11:45a—1:00am

Death & Dying In Colorado:

Lunch Provided; RSVP strongly recommended

The Buyers Guide to Pre-Planning Your Final Wishes.

You'll learn about the many options available to you and your loved ones regarding end of life care in Colorado and how you can safeguard your plans for YOUR future. Topics will include: Benefits of Pre Planning, LGBTQIA+ Community Care Colorado, Dispositions Next of Kin Rights/ Responsibilities Burial & Cremation, Traditional

Flame vs Water Cremation: Which is right for you, Organic Natural Reduction & The Rise In Green Funerals Veterans Affairs, and Funding Your Funeral & The Options Available.

April 11th

10:30am—11:45am

Lung Cancer & The Queer Community Presented by National Jewish Health.

Free Financial Coaching for older adults 55+

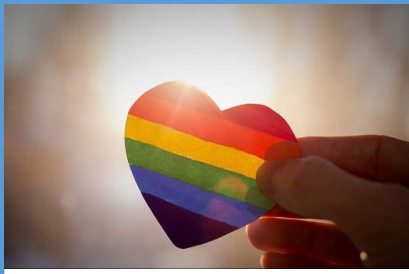
Sunshine Home Share's Financial Wellness & Empowerment Program serves older adults aged 55 and above in the Denver area by offering free one-on-one financial coaching sessions. Our experienced financial social workers are dedicated to assisting you in navigating the complexities of budgeting, managing debt, and improving your credit. Beyond these essential aspects, our program is designed to empower you to articulate and achieve your unique financial goals. By partnering with us, you not only gain access to expert guidance but also a supportive environment that fosters financial resilience. To schedule an appointment contact Becky at becky@sunshinehomeshare.org

Men who have sex with men experience health issues outside of what typical men face-Health risks are shaped by many things such as family history, age, and sexual behavior. Queer men are at greater risk of contracting HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and well as other STIs. There are a few steps one can take to reduce transmitted infections: **use a condom**, have **only one sexual partner**, **limit alcohol**, **don't use drugs**, and **get vaccinated** for things such as HPV, and hepatitis, get tested with your partner, consider getting on **PrEP**.

Queer men are at an increased risk of **depression**, **bipolar disorder** and **anxiety**. And are more likely to have **body image issues** and **eating disorders**. If this is you, consider accessing The Center's wonderful Mental Health program; where you can access up to

12 free sessions. Queer men are more likely to struggle with **alcohol use disorder**. Additionally, men who **quit smoking** and other tobacco products will greatly lower their risk of health problem.

Partner violence can affect anyone in an intimate relationship. But, **queer men experience intimate partner violence at higher rates than other men do**. Staying in an abusive relationship might leave you depressed, anxious or hopeless. Lastly, make **health care a priority**. Talk with your doctor about your needs and go to your routine health screenings. If you need help please call **1-800-493-8255**. The Colorado Crisis Line is there to help you through it.



Mental Health Data- This Winter we asked West of 50 members to fill out a mental health survey. This survey was created to help us better understand how our programming and groups are serving the community. Through this survey, we gained insight into how West of 50 has supported and how we can better support our community members' mental health and well-being. We are encouraged by the feedback and experiences you have all shared! This survey will be distributed quarterly to ensure that we are doing all we can to continue in this effort! Thank you to all that took the time to fill the survey out!

Here is what we learned: Since joining West of 50 programming...

90% of our community members shared that their mental health and well-being was somewhat good or above! Broken down further: **37%** of community members stated their mental health and well-being was excellent while **53%** state it was somewhat good, and **10%** somewhat poor.

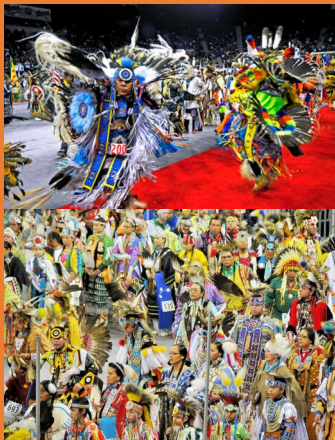
65% stated that they feel more positive about life and **32%** shared they felt about the same as before they joined West of 50 programming. Additionally, **97%** reported an improvement with stress management. While **100%** of respondents stated that they had developed a better sense of self. Regarding social isolation, **97%** reported a reduction in social isolation. Here are a few of the comments that stood out from this round of surveys:

"Better self-esteem, I feel better educated about LGBT people, less loneliness, and better sense of humor."

"It has helped me to realize that I am valuable and can be social."

"Just being out and about with other who are exploring their own selves. This helped my mental health."

Thank you for helping West of 50 create a more welcoming and supporting environment. –Kadie Schultz



WOF a Field TRIP—Denver

March Powwow— It's time for us to hit the streets and see the celebration of indigenous culture. Join the West of 50 team as we enjoy the day at the Denver March Powwow. Since 1984 the heritage of indigenous peoples have been celebrated every year at the Denver March Powwow, one of the largest events of its kind in the country. The

Powwow features more than 1,600 dancers from close to 100 tribes, heralding from 38 states and three Canadian provinces. The three-day event in the Denver Coliseum is packed with singing, dancing, storytelling, food, art, and more. It sure to be wonderful experience for everyone.

Date: Friday, March 15th.

Time: 10:30a - whenever

Price: Free—RSVP required to attend and all attendees must be present at time of entry. Transportation, parking, and meals are not included.

Days Events

10am Powwow, Arts & Crafts Open, story telling (lower foyer Denver Room - top of the hour until 8 p.m.) Native Author Readings - Bottom of the hour until 7:30 p.m.

10:30 a.m. Invocation

11:00 a.m. Grand Entry

12:00 p.m. Fry Bread Concession Stand Opens

1:00 p.m. Intertribal & Contest Dancing—Jr., Teens, Living Treasures (70+); Golden Age (60-69)—throughout the afternoon to supper break

6:30 p.m. Invocation, Royalty Introductions

7:00 p.m. Grand Entry

8:00 p.m. Welcome Frybread Concession Stand Closes Intertribal, Wicaglata Contest, and Contest Dancing—Sr. Adults (40-59) and Adults (18-39)—throughout the evening until conclusion

10:30 p.m. Powwow Concludes for the night



DISABILITY PROGRAM

A social and supportive space for 21+ LGBTQ+ individuals with disabilities.

Coordinator of Disability Services—Bryant Mehay, MA, CTRS

Email: bmehay@lgbtqcolorado.org **Phone #:** 303.951.5228



This hybrid peer support group is for individuals who have a disability and identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. This is a drop in space that provides conversation, social support, and resource sharing. This group is free to attend. Registration is required if you intend to participate virtually. For questions, please contact Bryant at bmehay@lgbtqcolorado.org.

When: Every Friday from 1:30 - 3:00 PM

Where: Virtually or In-Person at the Center on Colfax. Visit <https://thecenteroncolfax.salsalabs.org/disability/index.html> to register for the zoom link.

Upcoming Group Cancellations:
March 29th— Center’s Got Talent

Sexuality and Disability is going on a break.

There will be a stop to the Sexuality and Disability program for the next while. Work is being done to improve the services and programs offered by The Center. Please contact me with any feedback or concepts regarding what you want to see from this program.

Oh honey The Center's Schul of Drag was a SERVE— “*Ineffably Grateful*” – a participant!

West of 50 takes pride in creating impactful evidence-based programs that embrace creative ageing. The program implements 12 weekly groups and several other programs throughout the month. Our goal is to encourage personal growth, provide educational experiences, and spark creativity. Recently we hosted our first Schule of Drag.

To ensure that participants received the best possible experience, we fostered a relationship with The Wizard's Chest, they ensured we had the make-up needed and provided a staff person to aid with color matching. We expanded our partnership with Hamburger Mary's, who provided their space and helped bring in and manage the crowd. Several local drag queens volunteered their time and assisted participants with learning new skills, providing makeup tips, and aiding with the facilitation of the four-day program. Thanks to StarChild, Ty Woo, and Betty Swallows Alnite. The workshop was constructed by Bryant who has his Master's in Drama Therapy. This intergenerational experience encouraged participants to develop a better sense of self, foster new friendships, step out of their comfort zones, learn to work with people, and construct a new support network. Ultimately this type of work allowed for the participants to develop confidence, increase self-awareness, and develop new skills. Our Graduate intern Kadie developed a survey to help us understand the impact of the program.

44.44% of the participants reported significant improvement in their overall mental health, the same was reported by individuals who experienced improvement. 55.5% reported significant improvement in their overall well-being, while 33.3% reported an improvement. 100% of attendees reported feeling more positive about their lives. 88.89% of attendees reported the program assisted with developing a better sense of self. Lastly, 77.78% of attendees reported attending the program helped reduce social isolation while 22.22% reported it was somewhat true. One participant noted “*It has given me a new form of self-expression and a goal to strive towards, as well as something to look forward to.*”

Congratulations to all the Drag Children! Thank you for taking the time to spend your weekends with us! Thank you to all the community partners and a Thank you to Bryant! You did great work.



Schule of Drag—A Reflection

At the beginning of February I had the privilege of hosting The Center's inaugural Schule of Drag show at Hamburger Mary's. This performance was the culmination of a two weekend workshop and weeks of program development & collaboration. The workshop was based in theories and practices of Drama Therapy. I knew I could go into this trying to teach fan-clacking, heel strutting, and hair twirling; that wouldn't be true to who I am as an artist. Instead I focused on teaching the fundamentals of storytelling, intentional theatrical movement, the importance of costuming, and play. YES PLAY! One group member noted that, as adults, they had so few opportunities to play and that this group gave them the opportunity to engage in the freedom of play.

I went into this workshop having conducted research on the therapeutic power of drag, so I knew that I would have to create a space that goes beyond just safe; the participants needed to feel brave, needed to feel like they had the support of those around them to experiment and grow. I knew I was successful in this goal when I heard the group share their experiences and they directly connected to the theories and ideas I originally wrote about over three years ago. Getting to facilitate this workshop helped me to connect with a variety of my skills. I am so grateful to the whole group for their willingness to go on this journey with me, to the local artists who helped me, Jason & Kadie for all their tireless behind the scene work, and to everyone at The Center who helped to make this possible! ★ Bryant Mehay “August Celestial” ★

The Center's Schule of Drag 2024



For more photos go to:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lgbtqcolorado/albums/72177720314801237>



MEMORIES OF AN OLD MAN

By Ken Felts

I - Black Sunday, Saturday, April 14, 1935

The event forming one of my earliest memories occurred when I was almost five years old. My father, mother, two brothers and I lived on a small farm on the west side of Dodge City, Kansas. My father worked for the Santa Fe Railroad as an engine mechanic. On the several preceding days, we had seen varying amounts of dust in the sky, always limiting visibility. On this particular day, the wind began blowing the dust early in the morning, and by noon it was almost impossible to see streetlights in downtown Dodge City. A wall of dust, over 600 feet high, was rolling across the prairie, pushed by winds blowing 50 to 60 miles an hour. We hurried to our fruit cellar near the back door and settled in for as long as necessary.

The rains had stopped in 1930, the year I was born, and for almost 10 years, the drought persisted in the mid-west, particularly in southwest Kansas. For several years we endured frequent dust storms. There were very few days on which our visibility exceeded 1000 feet, clear days were a rarity occurring only four or five times a month. The devastation was widespread in terms of loss of livestock and crops. Dust pneumonia was rampant, and many died of the illness. Millions of acres of topsoil were blown away. Animals and fowl quickly suffocated if they were out in the open. People tied a rope around their waist and the other end was attached to the dwelling if they were going out to the barns or outhouse, as once in the dust, there was no sense of direction, and if you were lost, death was almost certain.

I became ill with pneumonia and was put to bed in the southwest corner bedroom. My father rigged poles above the bed, and to combat the dust he hung wet sheets over them to keep out as much powder dirt as possible where I lay asleep. The windows, both inside and outside, and doors were sealed as much as possible, but the fine particles of dirt could not be stopped, and by morning, small mounds of dust lay on the windowsills. I soon recovered and was back in school in a short time. The storms continued without abatement until about 1938. But our salvation had come when my father accepted a promotion on the railroad and we moved to Raton, New Mexico, in 1937.



THE CENTER'S GOT TALENT!

Join us for a variety show of talented LGBTQ+ folks, hosted by Steve-Anne, CowPoke Avi, and August Celestial!

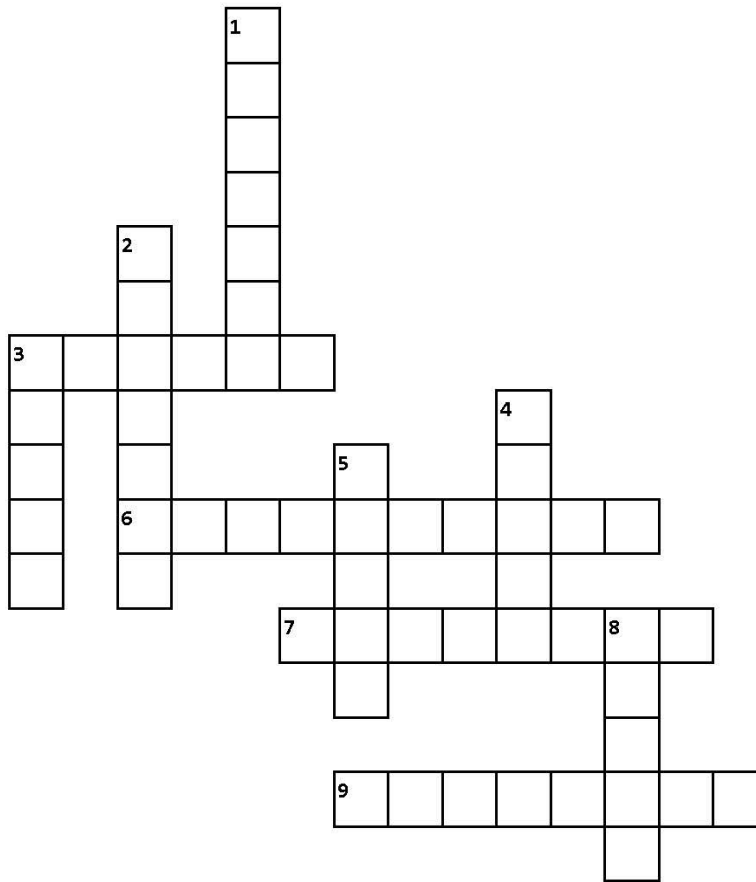
★ Friday, March 29 ★
★ 6:30 - 8:30 PM ★
★ 101 Lawrence Way ★
★ Denver, CO 80204 ★



To get your tickets, scan the QR code or visit lgbtqcolorado.org/event/centers-got-talent/



West of 50 Crossword



Across

- 3. This month is The Center's Got _____
- 6. The movie we watched for our VDAY movie night
- 7. WOF's yearly rooftop Pride Party
- 9. Where we went for our January trip

Down

- 1. WOF has a new machine that makes this snack
- 2. Each year WOF hosts The _____ Party & Art Show
- 3. This performer from Kansas has entertained you all 5 different times
- 4. Bryant led a series of groups based on _____ Therapy
- 5. WOF has a group called Older ____ Sexually Smarter
- 8. Pride is hosted in ____ Center Park

March 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 10:30 Move 11:45 Med w/ Quana 1:30 DPSG	2
3	4 10 Lesbian 1:30 Story 6:15 Stitch	5 10 Men's Cof- fee 2 Sex	6 10:30 SS yoga 1:30p AARP	7 10 Art 1+talks	8 10:30 Move 1:30 DPSG	9
10	11 10 Lesbian 1:30 Story 6:15 Stitch	12 10 Men's Cof- fee 2 Sex	13 10:30 SS yoga 11:45 Life- Plan 1:30p AARP	14 10 Art 1+talks	15 10:30 Field Trip: Powwow 1:30 DPSG	16
17	18 10 Lesbian 1:30 Story 5:30 S&D 6:15 Stitch	19 10 Men's Cof- fee 2 Sex	20 10:30 SS yoga 1:30p AARP	21 10 Art 1+talks	22 10:30 Move 1:30 DPSG	23
24	25 10 Lesbian 1:30 Story 6:15 Stitch	26 10 Men's Cof- fee 2 Sex	27 10:30 SS yoga 1:30p AARP	28 10 Art 1+talks	29 The Center's Got Talent 6:30pm	30
31	Key Lesbian: Lesbian Lounge Story: Telling Your Story Stitch: Stitch & Bitch Sex: Older Wiser Sexually		Smarter S&D: Sex and Disability AARP: Community Group Art: Open Art +alks: LGBTQ+alks		Move: Movement Med: Meditation DPSG: Disability Peer Support Group	