

## Thirty-One Days of Hope

*Let's end 2025 with 31 days of hope. We can hope for an end to hateful politics, peace in our country and around the world, and enough food and shelter for all. We can also hope that SAGE stays strong to meet the needs of those who depend on us. And we're hoping for help to meet this goal. Please consider giving, and tell your friends and supportive businesses about the initiative. It's getting darker outside, but there is light in hope. Here are some ways to share your spark during the 31 days of December.*

### Double your impact:

Generous SAGE donors are standing by to match donations that are made during *31 Days Of Hope* up to \$3,000 (this may increase). Matching gifts allow your donation to go twice as far toward reducing isolation and promoting healthy aging for LGBTQ communities. Visit [sageupstate.org](http://sageupstate.org) for new online giving options, or use the form on the back of this issue.

### Holiday Shop

Starting December 1, our Holiday shop will offer necklaces, bracelets, rings, backpacks, t-shirts, and other fun items. All of the items have been donated, so 100% of what you spend goes to programs for older LGBTQ people. New items will be added all through the month. Holiday hours will be posted at [sageupstate.org](http://sageupstate.org), or call ahead and visit.

### Happy Everything

Join us on December 20th from 2 - 4 pm in the SAGE Upstate Center for a celebration of everything anyone is celebrating this month. It'll be a "Whisker Wonderland" for those who'd like holiday pet photos, those who are interested in learning more about pet rescues, and those who just like to hang out with pets and other SAGERS.

### Holiday Gift Swaps

in Syracuse and Utica, see page 6



### Thank you Community Dinner Sponsors



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### Whisker Wonderland

Have your pet's picture taken in front of a variety of holiday backdrops or with Santa. The event will also include presentations on pet rescue and pet safety, homemade dog biscuits, cat treats, human treats and punch. Join us on Saturday, December 20, 2-4 pm.

Photoshopping is available for pets who'd rather stay at home bring or email a picture!





SAGE Upstate News is published monthly and features articles

and resources on issues affecting older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) people in Central New York. SAGE Upstate is a not-for-profit organization that offers programs to reduce isolation and improve health for LGBTQ communities. SAGE Upstate board meetings are open to the community. For more information contact Kim Dill at 315-478-1923 or [kdill@sageupstate.org](mailto:kdill@sageupstate.org). All SAGE Upstate activities are accessible unless otherwise noted. Interpreters and large print publications are available on request.

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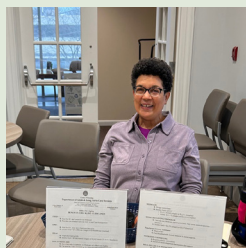
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## Neighborhood Advisor News: Masani Tyler

### HEAP and SNAP Updates for 2025-2026

From the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) on November 14, 2025: <https://otda.ny.gov/snap-benefits-shutdown-faq.asp#expanded>

The federally-funded Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) remains delayed until further notice as New York awaits funding from the federal government. Households lacking resources that can't afford a fuel delivery or are facing a utility shutoff can apply for Emergency Assistance through their local department of social services.

New York State has completed issuing full November SNAP benefits using federal funds. December SNAP benefits will be issued on a regular schedule without delay. The recently enacted federal spending bill also fully funds SNAP through the end of the federal fiscal year 2026.



Looking this holiday season for easy recipes that are affordable AND healthy? Check out SNAP-Ed New York's Recipe Finder! <https://snapedny.org/recipes/>

*The Neighborhood Advisor Program is funded by the Onondaga County Office of Adult & Long Term Care Services.*



## Coming in January: Eating Better On A Budget

1/6: Eating Better on a Budget

1/13: Plan Meals Ahead

1/20: Purchasing Veggies and Fruits at the Best Price

1/27: Preparing Health Food and Beverages

*All workshops will be held at SAGE at 11:30 am and lunch will be provided. To sign up, please contact Leslie at [llamb@sageupstate.org](mailto:llamb@sageupstate.org) or 315-478-1923.*

## **The Struggle**

### **By Johna Melius**

From an early age,  
We take the first steps of our journey.

As we grow,  
our internal feelings  
become discordant  
with our outer appearance.  
This is our struggle.

We try to put words to our feelings,  
Because of social norms.  
These words sound different,  
To us, making us  
question our sanity.  
This is our struggle

Our family, friends, and community  
See the cover of the book  
The wrapping of a gift  
And judge on what they see.  
This is our struggle.

The struggle of self  
The struggle of identity  
The struggle of childhood,  
The struggle of adulthood and parenthood,  
This is our struggle.

Facing family, friends, and community  
As we bring the inside out  
Becoming one  
This is our struggle.

Not knowing from an early age,  
Who will be there,  
Feeling alone as the journey continues  
Hoping someone will see us for  
who we are inside  
This is our struggle.

We hear the slurs and see the posts  
Fear politics and hear of those like us  
Who has died, by fear or someone's reaction  
Do we run and hide  
Or stand up and fight.  
This is our struggle

We try to find a community that is accepting  
Find new friends and chosen family  
Because our blood doesn't  
They let religion and politics  
rule their heart,  
Having to choose happiness and sanity  
over family.  
The struggle is real and lived by us all.  
This is the Struggle.

*Johna Melius volunteers at SAGE Upstate, leading Trans Outreach*

## **Digital Memorial To Preserve Trans Stories**

Hundreds of trans people have lost their lives to violence and suicide since Trans Day of Remembrance was established in 1999. Violence against transgender people has escalated in recent years "Trans people—especially Black trans women—continue to bear the brunt of discriminatory policies, political scapegoating, and violence," said Bahari Thomas, Director of Public Education for Advocates For Trans Equality (4TE). In addition to facing violence, 41% of trans people attempt suicide at some point.

Unfortunately, A4TE notes, numbers documented on trans deaths are almost certainly incomplete due to underreporting. Often, law enforcement, media, and family members misidentify or refuse to acknowledge the true name and gender of trans people lost to violence. Thomas does not count the number of deaths "as just a record of loss—it is a call to action. The work to end anti-trans violence begins with honoring the truth: that trans people deserve to be seen in their full humanity and live long, safe, and authentic lives."

A4TE has created a digital memorial for trans individuals who have passed this year, so their stories will not be lost. Find it here: <https://www.transremembrance.org/in-memoriam>

# December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 5:30 Walking group 6 pm Monday Men's Group	2 11:30 Lunch & Learn: Healthy Homes 6 pm Bonding Brothers	3 5:30 Writers 6 pm Wellness Group	4 9:30 String Cheese 10 am Walking 6 pm Dinner Out	5 2 pm, Sophie's Gotcha Day	6 10 am Yoga : Chair or Mat 2 pm Utica Potluck Gift Swap
7	8 5:30 Walking group 6 pm Monday Men's Group 6 pm Breathwork	9 9:30 String Cheese Acoustic	10 5:30 Writers 6 pm Wellness Group	11 9:30 Breakfast Out 10 am Walking	12	13 10 am Yoga : Chair or Mat 7:00 Gender Blend
14 2nd Sunday Potluck in Syracuse: 3pm social time, 4pm Gift Swap; Performance by String Cheese Dinner follows	15 5:30 Walking 6 pm Monday Men's group	16 6 pm Bonding Brothers	17 5:30 Writers 6 pm Wellness Group	18 10 am Walking 12:30 Lunch Out	19 7 Men's Night Out	20 10 am Yoga 2- 4 pm <b>Whisker Wonderland</b>
21	22 5:30 Walking group 6 pm Monday Men's Group 6 pm Breathwork	23 11:30 Lunch & Learn: Healthy Relationships	24 5:30 Writers 6 pm Wellness	25 Office Closed	26 Office Closed	27 10 am Yoga : Chair or Mat
28	29 5:30 Walking group 6 pm Monday Men's Group	30	31 5:30 Writers 6 pm Wellness Group			

Bonding Brothers: Men's social/support group, 1st and 3rd Tue. at 6 pm.

Breathwork: Feel more peaceful and grounded, and experience better emotional, physical, and spiritual health by working with breath. 2nd and 4th Mondays

Gender Blend: 2nd Sat. social/support for Trans/Nonbinary communities. In person/ on Zoom ( Zoom link at [sageupstate.org](https://sageupstate.org)).

Handicrafters: For Knitters, Crocheters, Fiber artists and other handicrafters. This group won't meet in December, but will start again in January

Meals OUT -- Dinner on the 1st Thursday, Breakfast on the 2nd Thursday, and Lunch on the 3rd Thursday, See details next page

Men's Night Out: Social for SAGE guys, 3rd Friday, 7 pm

Monday Men's Group: closed support group that takes new members a few times a year.

Second Sunday Potluck in Syracuse. Gift Swap-- see page 6

String Cheese: learn and play stringed instruments. Now preparing for 2nd Sunday potluck performance. Bring a bag lunch for after.

Utica Potluck 1st Sat. 2- 4 pm, for all in the Utica area and beyond. Gift swap-- see pg 6. Bring a dish to pass if you are able.

Walking Group Mondays & Thursdays: The group meets at the benches by Panera at Destiny. Mondays: 5:30, Thursdays: 10 am

Wellness Group: Intern Kris Kadaji is coordinating a group about "wellness" and how to achieve it. On Wednesdays at 6:00

Writers Group, Wednesdays at 5:30 pm: All genres and experience levels welcome. Offered on Zoom only-- link at [sageupstate.org](https://sageupstate.org)

Yoga-- every Saturday at 10:00, led by intern Kris Kadaji. Use a chair or mat.

## Lunch & Learns this month

### Healthy Homes

Tuesday 12/2 @ 11:30am

Stephanie Carbone is a Public Health Educator for the Onondaga County Health Department for the Lead Poisoning Prevention and Healthy Neighborhoods Programs. She will be providing education on Lead Poisoning Prevention, Healthy Homes and information on how to keep seniors safe and healthy!

### Healthy Relationships

Tuesday 12/23 @ 11:30am

Are you interested in learning about healthy relationships and what that means? Learn to recognize potential signs of abuse and the things you may not recognize as abuse.

*Please contact Leslie to RSVP: [llamb@sageupstate.org](mailto:llamb@sageupstate.org) or call 315-478-1923 to reserve your spot. Let us know of any dietary restrictions.*



**Sage Upstate & FAIRNY**

**PRIDE IN EVERY DROP**

 American Red Cross

**LGBTQ Syracuse Blood Drive**

including our Community Partners:  
**SAGE Upstate & FAIRNY**

**Friday January 2, 2026 |**  
**10am – 3pm LIVERPOOL LIBRARY**  
Donate blood and get an exclusive Red Cross long sleeve T-shirt (limited qty.), receive a Red Cross Pride Pin and you will also be entered for a chance to win 2 tickets to Super Bowl LX in California! Please register today!

**CELEBRATE PRIDE. GIVE BLOOD.  
BUILD COMMUNITY.**

## Talk Time, Yoga with Kris

SAGE now offers one-on-one counselling sessions with Kris Kadaji, a Clinical Mental Health Counselling student at Le Moyne. Kris works from a holistic approach, honoring your mind, body, spirit, and the experiences that shape who you are. Sessions are relaxed, personal, and focused on giving you space to breathe and be yourself. Curious to try a session? Call or text Kris @ 702-530-1272

### Yoga: Chair/Mat

All levels are welcome in a chair or on a mat. We have mats available. Saturdays at 10AM



### Happy 'Gotcha' Day Sophie! 12/5 2- 4 in the Center



We invite you and your furry family members to join us on 12/5 at 2 pm to celebrate Sophie! She was rescued from a horrible situation but has thrived over the last 4 years bringing more joy and happiness than I thought possible. She enjoys cuddles, belly rubs and head pets, begging for snacks and being EVERYWHERE I am. There will be treats (human and pet) and an overload of cuteness!



by Leslie Lamb, Program Director

## Program News



### Open Mic Night!

Saturday  
January 10  
4 pm

It is FINALLY going to happen! Many of you have been asking about an open mic night for a while now, and we decided to start 2026 by making that happen! Do you like to sing? Dance? Write poetry? Do magic? Do you have any hidden talents you would like to share? Be sure to sign up early to reserve your spot at our SAGE Upstate Open Mic! *Stay tuned for more details ...*

### Meet your SAGE friends for a meal

**1st Thursday Dinner: 12/4, 6 pm**

Spaghetti Warehouse, 689 North Clinton Street in Syracuse

**2nd Thurs. Breakfast, 12/11,**

**9:30 am,** The Eggplant, 5781 Bridge Street, East Syracuse

**3rd Thurs. Lunch: 12/18,**

**12:30 pm,** Vietnamese Noodle House, 3801 Milton Ave.  
(Across from Costco) Camillus



by Tim Lattimore

**Strike  
A  
Pose**



Top to  
Bottom:  
Tim and  
Roslyn;  
Potluck at  
SAGE;  
Aging with  
Pride;  
CNY Pride

## ✧ Chosen Family & Cultural Joy ✧

### *Celebrating the Holidays in LGBTQ+ BIPOC Communities*

For many LGBTQ+ BIPOC folks, the holiday season is more than just twinkling lights and festive dinners—it's a time to honor chosen family, reclaim traditions, and create new ones that reflect our vibrant identities.

Across cultures, from Afro-Caribbean Kwanzaa celebrations to Indigenous winter storytelling circles, and Latinx Nochebuena feasts, queer BIPOC communities are infusing ancestral customs with queer joy. Whether it's drag performances at holiday potlucks, queer caroling in community spaces, or crafting ornaments that reflect intersectional pride, these moments remind us that joy is resistance—and celebration is survival.

This December, let's uplift the magic of chosen family: the friends, lovers, and community members who show up, hold space, and make the season

bright. Share your traditions, start new ones, and remember—you deserve a celebration that feels like home.

In the meantime, here are three retro Queer BIPOC movies that you can stream that I recommend...

*Single All The Way*- A perpetually single man convinces his friend to pretend to be his boyfriend for the holidays. (Hilarious!)

*A Jenkins Family Christmas*- After a death in the family, another surprise happens when one of the Jenkins siblings brings his boyfriend home for Christmas.

*The Bitch Who Stole Christmas* - a tightly-wound fashion journalist is sent on assignment to cover a notorious Winter Ball competition. Starring RuPaul.

From my heart to yours, Happy Holidays everyone! And as always, take care of yourselves and BE KIND to one another.



### **Gift Swap Potlucks: Syracuse 12/14, Utica 12/6**

Syracuse: Sunday December 14  
3:00 pm Social Time  
4:00 pm Gift Swap and  
Holiday Songs with String Cheese  
Dinner follows

Utica: Saturday, December 6, 2 pm

#### **Here's how it works:**

Bring a new, wrapped gift of \$5 value or less. We'll play a fun game to swap gifts.

**Can't bring a gift? Come anyway,** we'll have extras. Everyone goes home with a holiday gift. Potluck supper— bring a dish to pass if you are able.

# Staying Connected Through the Holidays: You Are Not Alone

by Kris Kadaji



As the holiday season approaches, many of us look forward to familiar traditions, shared meals, and time spent

with the people we love. But for many older LGBTQI+ adults, this time of year can also bring complicated emotions. Some of us may feel disconnected from family, lonely in our homes, or reminded of loved ones we've lost. If you're feeling this way, you're not alone—and you're certainly not the only one.

Social isolation is something many in our community have felt at one time or another. LGBTQI+ elders carry unique histories of

resilience: decades of navigating stigma, loss, and creating chosen families in a world that did not always welcome us. While those experiences shaped our strength, they also mean that the holiday season can be especially bittersweet. Some may remember years when they had to hide who they were; others may miss partners, friends, or community spaces that once provided comfort. Even for those who enjoy solitude, this time of year can feel heavy.

The good news is that connection—real, meaningful connection—is still within reach, and our community is here to support one another. Reaching out, even in small ways, can make this season feel a little warmer. A short conversation, a moment of shared laughter, or even sitting

together quietly can remind us that we are part of a community that cares.

Beyond individual conversations, see the box below for a few ideas to help nurture connection this season.

The holidays can stir up many emotions, but they also offer opportunities to care for ourselves and each other. Our community has always been built on resilience, authenticity, and chosen family. This year, let's continue that tradition.

If you feel isolated, please know: you matter, you belong, and you deserve connection. And if you'd like someone to talk to, I'm here. -- Warmly, Kris

*Kris Kadaji is a Clinical Mental Health Counselling Intern at SAGE. She is available for phone calls and one-on-one sessions at the center throughout the holiday season. Whether you want to talk about what you're experiencing, reflect on memories, share a cup of tea, or simply spend time with someone who understands, you are welcome in a space where you can feel seen, respected, and supported. There is no pressure or expectation, and you might be surprised by how much lighter you feel after. If you're interested, you can call or text me to set up a time at 702-530-1272 or let a staff member know you'd like to schedule a session.*

**Reconnect** with someone from your past—a friend, a cousin, a former neighbor. A simple hello can rekindle warmth.



Explore a **new program** at SAGE, even if you're unsure. Being around others, even quietly, can help soften feelings of loneliness.

Create small **rituals**—listening to favourite music, lighting a candle, writing a memory—things that ground and comfort you.



**Reach out** for support if you need it. Asking for help and having the ability to be vulnerable is a sign of strength, not weakness.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	9:30 Walking group 6 pm Monday Men's Group	6 pm Bonding Brothers	9:30 Henna Chats 5:30 Writers 6 pm Wellness Group	10 am Walking 6 pm Dinner Out	5	6 11 am Hugs 2 pm Office Potluck
7	8 5:30 Walking group 6 pm Monday Men's Group	9 6 pm Bonding Brothers	10 9:30 String Cheese 5 pm Henna Chats 5:30 Writers 6 pm Wellness Group 7 Handicrafters	11 9:30 Breakfast Out 10 am Walking	12	13 11 am Hugs 12:00 Gender Blend
14 2nd Sunday Potluck in Spacese Thanksgiving 3:00 social time 3:30 dinner	15 5:30 Walking Potluck in Spacese 6 pm Breathwork 6 pm Monday Men's Group	16 Veterans Day Office Closed	17 5 Henna Chats 5:30 Writers 6 pm Wellness Group	18 10 am Walking 12:30 Lunch Out	19 7 Men's Night Out	20 11 am Hugs 2 pm Waterman Potluck
21	22	23	24	25	26	27



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