

Fun, Games,
and a
Door Prize

Second Sunday With SAGE:
March 13 . 4:00 pm
on Zoom

Inside:

In Person Drop In Hours
Standing Up Against Hate
Thursday with Trish
SAGEVets
Calendar of Programs

Reclaiming Veteran Status: *Dale Pierce's Journey*

Dale Pierce enlisted in the Air Force at age 17 in 1961. In less than a year she was discharged and told she was not entitled to any veteran benefits or acknowledgment. "I never questioned it," Dale says, "I just buried it." More than fifty years later she saw an article in the SAGE Upstate News about veteran Grace Lynch and his discharge from the Air Force. "This is my story," Dale thought. "but mine was 20 years earlier." She had not talked about it since 1961, but after seeing the article, she reached out to SAGE.

Dale's boyfriend Phil was in the Air Force, stationed in Syracuse at Skytop near the University. He told her that serving in the Air Force was a good life. That was before Phil was caught up in an Air Force purge of homosexuals. "I wonder how many of them have the option for restoration of honor now" Dale said. "Gay men and lesbians all over the country were affected." In New York State, the Restoration Of Honor Act became law in 2019.

Dale made it all the way through basic training, then was transferred to Goodfellow Air Force Base in Texas to await further education. Around this time Phil was identified in the purge. Some letters from Dale were discovered among his things, so she was scrutinized too. "I came back to my room one day and all my belongings were spread out on the bed," she said. There were two Air Force Special Investigation Officers waiting for her there



too. "Word spread fast in the barracks. My roommate asked to be put in a different room. A few weeks later a group of very drunk Air Force members came into my room and beat me. I went to the hospital after that." She felt the hospital was the only place she would be safe on the base.

While recovering there, the Investigation Officers interrogated her. "They wanted me to identify other gay men, and tried to get me to admit to things I had not done," she said. In the hospital she was treated for anxiety and depression and a sleep disorder that affects her still, all of these years later.

Dale was told she would be prosecuted and she expected a "Less than Honorable" discharge. But the Officer representing her argued that no law had been

Continued on p. 2



Dale Pierce, cont'd from p 1

broken by her actions, her only offense was being gay in the military. She received an Honorable Discharge, but was told she was entitled to nothing in the way of veteran benefits. She didn't question it. "The only way to survive it was to block it," she said.

The people she dealt with and the circumstances were not all bad, Dale remembers. The Officer fought hard for her discharge. The people in the hospital treated her well. Even the fact that she had to wait four months to be discharged because her paperwork was lost was not all bad. "It was found when they were moving an office around – it had slipped behind a cabinet," she said. If she had been discharged from the Air Force immediately, she says, the Army would have sent her to Vietnam, and how she had been identified would have gone along with her.

She felt "a lot of shame" when she returned home in December 1961. "I made up a story about being discharged for medical reasons and only my mother and a few close relatives knew what had happened." Her brother, who was 15, did not know then, but later he wrote a letter for her case which read, "I knew when my brother came home, he was changed, and at first I thought it was maturity or getting older. Then I realized he was not the same person."

Rita Gram and Wanda Martinez-Johncox told Dale that SAGEVets could help. She asked Ashton Stewart, coordinator of the SAGEVets program at SAGE USA, whether too many years had gone by. Ashton assured her that she still had a case. He listened and supported her, compiled her information and connected her with a Veterans agency in Albany. Now she waits

for the results. Her medical discharge was submitted retroactively, and she has been diagnosed with PTSD. She will need to be evaluated by a military doctor in a few months and Ashton will be with her when that happens. Dale could be eligible for veterans benefits and maybe even a pension. "That would be life-changing," she said.

Dale had a hard time identifying as a veteran. In fact while filling out some paperwork the question "are you a veteran?" stumped her. "I think I am, is what I thought. I called Ashton and he said, yes you are." Dale said.

Four years after her discharge, when she was 22, Dale traveled to California and wanted to come back as a woman. "I knew there were treatments and surgeries there. But it wasn't my time to do it then." When she returned home she found that most of the other trans people she knew were in sex work or jobless. "There weren't many places for them to work," she said, so she put off her transition. She was able to find work as both a hair stylist and a photographer. "I've always loved doing hair," she said, "and my photography exhibits have been shown all over the country and as far away as Madrid." She did transition finally in recent years.

The process of reclaiming her veteran status has been emotional. "I thought after so many years it couldn't hurt me, but it has." She still gets a little emotional every time she talks about it, but she is committed to keep talking. "If hearing my story can help even just one person, it will have been worth it," she said. "When I saw the story in the SAGE Newsletter, everything stopped. I reread it two or three times. It changed my life– I want to do that for someone else."

Are you LGBTQ+ and a veteran?

sageVets
Is here for you



Tuesday March 22, 6 pm on Zoom:
La Wanda Mobley & Dale Pierce

For Women's History Month, two female veterans- two wars, two widely different experiences serving in the U.S. Military predating Don't Ask Don't Tell. Join other LGBTQ veterans on the fourth Tuesday of every month for socializing, info on benefits, and resource sharing. Find zoom link at sageupstate.org or call in at 929-205-6099. Passcode: 1969 Meeting ID: 871 5736 4984

LGBTQ Veterans:

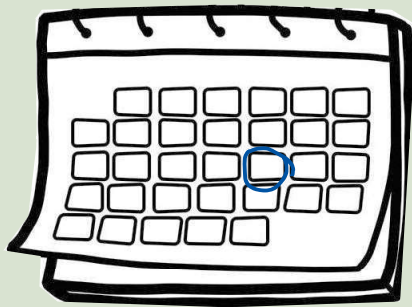
Would you please share some info?
Fill out a brief survey to help us better serve LGBTQ Veterans. Everyone who does a complete intake form by March 15 will be entered in a drawing for a \$25 Amazon gift card. Find the survey on the SAGE Upstate website or at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/N332LHX

SAGEVets in WNY

Niagara Pride WNY LGBTQ+ Health and Wellness Fair, Saturday, March 22, 10 am to 3:00 pm. NCCC, Main Gym in the Athletics Building, 3111 Saunderson Settlement Rd, Sanborn, NY 14132, Look for the SAGEVets table.

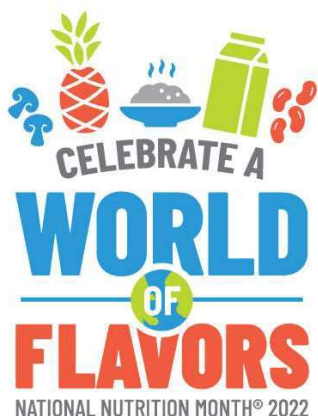
Chess Club for Veterans: Wednesdays, 2:00 - 3:30 pm at the Veterans Outreach Center, 447 South Ave. Rochester, NY. For beginners and experienced players; learn about the ultimate strategy game.

Thursday
Third Tuesday With Trish



Neighborhood Advisor Trish Johnson's monthly program has moved to the Third Thursday of every month at 6:00 pm. It's not just a presentation, it's a dialogue. Join Trish and others to socialize and hear about things you might find helpful. Trish covers one or more wellness issues at every meeting, but time is always set aside for fun. This month, join Trish on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, at 6 pm. Find log-in or call-in info on the calendar page or sageupstate.org

March is National Nutrition Month



eat right
Academy of Nutrition
and Dietetics

To find out more about nutritional meal options, understanding food labels, or healthy recipes, ask Trish or visit ongov.net/aging/nutrition-education.

Stand Up Against Hate

The SAGE Upstate board is committed to actively work against the anti-LGBTQ laws and policies that are being enacted across the country. These cruel laws and policies are designed to attack and harm LGBTQ people by denying us the basic civil rights we have struggled for years to achieve and by reducing us yet again to 'wedge issues' in the culture wars.

We want to work against efforts that would ban classroom discussions about sexual orientation and gender identity, deny us access to appropriate mental and physical health resources, threaten us with legal punishment, restrict our participation in sports, and devalue who we are and what we contribute. It is an attempt to erase the histories and accomplishments we fought to win over the years.

Look at Texas, where, as the Trevor Project reports, "Governor Abbott unlawfully instructed the state's Department of Family and Protective Services to investigate transgender youth and prosecute their parents as 'child abusers'."

Look at Florida, where HB 1557, under the guise of parental rights, bans discussions of sexuality and gender in certain grade levels. It requires schools to notify parents about what is being taught and gives them the right to bring legal action.

Look at the Supreme Court, which will take up, as a free speech issue, the case of a Colorado graphic designer who wants to post on her website her policy of not accepting commissions for same-sex unions or other weddings that violate her Christian faith. This case is about protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination, from the humiliation of having doors slammed and services refused based on their identity.

We as a board – as LGBTQ elders – want

to act now. We want to support LGBTQ people and organizations, both locally and nationally, as we confront this hatred.

Older LGBTQ people have been standing up against bigotry and cruelty for decades, and we will continue to do that. We want to assure LGBTQ people of all ages— especially our youth— that we see you. We value you. We have your back.

We want to create more safe spaces where LGBTQ people can find the support and the resources that they need to live their very valuable lives fully and openly and without fear.

Amy Bartell has generously donated the 8 x 10 poster below to be shared here in CNY, across the state, and nationally. If you are interested in joining us in the work, contact SAGE at kdrill@sageupstate.org or 315-478-1923.

— Margaret Himley, SAGE Upstate Board



Protect your space, your thinking -- your sphere of influence - by naming what is not welcome. By insisting on an inclusivity. By demanding compassion and empathy. Post this on your window, your door, your mailbox - make it the backdrop of your zoom call, your office - let it frame your face. I created this piece using a rainbow wash of colors. I intended the boldness to be a signal of conviction. The letters are hand-cut. There is strength and certainty in the image. -- Amy Bartell



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Syracuse, NY 13202

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- ☐ Check enclosed
- ☐ Bill my card one time
- ☐ Bill my pledge monthly until I stop

Mail to
SAGE Upstate, 431
E Fayette St.
Syracuse, NY, 13202

Can we recognize your gift in SAGE Upstate publications? ☐ Yes ☐ No

March 2022

SUNDAY

MONDAY



TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

WEDNESDAYS AND THURSDAYS: CENTER DROP-IN HOURS 1:00 - 4:00 PM		1	2 5:30 Writers 7:00 Knitters DROP-IN HOURS 1:00 - 4:00	3	4 11 am Fitness Class	5
6	7 11 am Fitness Class 6 pm Monday Men's	8	9 5:30 Writers 7:00 Knitters DROP-IN HOURS 1:00 - 4:00	10	11 11 am Fitness Class	12 Utica Social, 5pm
13 2nd Sunday With SAGE, 4 pm 	14 11 am Fitness Class 6 pm Monday Men's	15	16 5:30 Writers 7:00 Knitters DROP-IN HOURS 1:00 - 4:00	17 6:00 pm 3rd Thursday With Trish	18 11 am Fitness Class 7 pm Men's Night Out	19 7 pm Trans Social
20	21 6 pm Monday Men's	22 6:00 pm SAGEVets	23 5:30 Writers 7:00 Knitters DROP-IN HOURS 1:00 - 4:00	24 5:00 pm SAGE Upstate Board	25 11 am Fitness Class	26
27 Oswego Social	28 11 am Fitness Class 6 pm Monday Men	29	30 5:30 Writers 7:00 Knitters DROP-IN HOURS 1:00 - 4:00	31		

Find Zoom links at www.sageupstate.org OR call in at 1-929-205-6099

Drop-In Hours at the Center, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, every Wednesday and Thursday	SAGE Upstate Board, 4th Thursday, 5:30 pm Meeting ID: 876 4687 0636 Passcode: 1969
Fitness Class led by Barb Genton -- exercises to build strength, improve balance. Mon/Fri, 11 am Meeting ID # 894 0192 9890 Passcode: 1969	Second Sunday With SAGE, 4:00 pm Meeting ID: 893 1950 6041 Passcode: 1969
Knitting and Fiber Arts, Wednesdays at 7 pm: Fiber arts and conversation Meeting ID: 812 6815 6658 Passcode: 1969	Third Thursday With Trish: On the 3rd Thursday of every month, Trish offers a program for socializing and finding out about health resources. Meeting ID: 896 9963 6095 Passcode: 1969
Men's Night Out: Third Friday at 7 pm Meeting ID: 817 6668 1893 Passcode: 1969	Trans Social, 3rd Saturday, 7 pm: Trans-identified people meet for socializing and support. Meeting ID: 896 9963 6095 Passcode: 1969
Oswego Social: 4th Sunday, 2:00. Join other SAGE folks from Oswego and beyond for a social gathering Meeting ID: 821 3206 5529 Passcode: 1969	Utica Social: Join other SAGE folks from Utica and beyond for a social gathering on Second Saturday, 5 pm. Meeting ID: 854 4360 4277 Passcode: 1969
SAGEVets: 4th Tuesday, 6:00 pm Join other LGBTQ veterans for socializing, programs about benefits, and resource sharing. Meeting ID: 871 5736 4984 Passcode: 1969	

SAGE Upstate Center is Open for Visits

1:00 - 4:00 pm Wednesdays & Thursdays

Stop in and say hi, use computers, borrow a book or to meet our Neighborhood Advisor Trish Johnson. We hope to be opening for programs in the near future.



SAGE received a grant to purchase furniture and update computers from the Onondaga County Department of Adult and Long Term Care Services in late 2021. Come in and try out the computers or hang out on the couches -- or, borrow a book from the lending library.

We ask that visitors to the SAGE Upstate Center be fully **vaccinated** (including boosters). Please do not visit if over the 14 days prior you have experienced symptoms, or tested positive, or had close contact with anyone who has COVID. When you visit, please show proof of vaccination -- we scan your vaccine card and keep it on file so you only need to show it once. Visitors are also asked to **sign in and out**. You will have the option to share how comfortable you are with social distance by wearing a nametag that says "hugs ok," "elbow bumps preferred," or "prefer no close contact." Finally please **wear a mask** in the Center-- both masks and hand sanitizer will be provided.

The Center **capacity is set at 20**. Two large room airpurifiers will used, and all surfaces, including light switches, doorknobs, tables, and chairs will be cleaned before and after visits to the center. At this point, visitors will not be able to share food or supplies. Participants who test positive for COVID within 2 weeks of visit are asked to notify SAGE. **In common areas of the building**, masks must be worn and 6 feet of distance maintained. Bathroom use is kept to 1 person at a time, and elevator use 2 people at a time.

Guidelines will be reevaluated monthly.

Come in and find out more bout the Neighborhood Advisor Program

Trish Johnson will be on hand to tell you more about how she can help. She has info and is available to assist you in finding and apply for resources and benefits you might be eligible for, including health care, legal advice, transportation, housing, nutrition, exercise, social programs, or caregiver issues. Also, Neighborhood Advisors can help you get your COVID booster or vaccine, apply for SNAP, or heating assistance, social security benefits and more.

And if you need help in some area not listed here, call anyway. Chances are, Trish will be able to point you in the right direction. Do you live outside of Onondaga County? No problem -- Trish can assist with finding someone to help in your area.

Unable to come on Wednesdays and Thursdays during drop in hours? Contact us to make and appointment.