

# Old Dykes Home

## Planning for a Lesbian-Friendly Old Age

BY FRAN MORAVCSIK

**W**here and how will you be spending those years when you are no longer able to maintain the living arrangements you now enjoy? For many of you, this may be a problem that seems part of the distant future, far, far down the road. For

ten women who gathered at a home in downtown Burlington in November to discuss an Old Dykes Home, however, it is beginning to seem just around the bend.

At present we are all doing nicely, thank you, but nevertheless we agreed that for the best solutions, we need to plan ahead. Each person came with some particular concerns along with suggestions on how to handle them, and as we went around the circle a plan began to take shape.

The original vision of an Old Dykes Home started with one of us who had noticed a building standing vacant that might be useful to our purposes. We started to dream of keeping lesbian community alive through the later years. What about a mix of ages and abilities, so those who needed a bit of help to maintain their independence could be matched with those who needed a bit of help in affording housing? What about shared dining, to promote not only sociability, but also better nutrition than is apt to happen when cooking for one?

Another person, who currently lives in senior housing, said that a similar effect could be achieved by moving into an existing facility as apartments come on the market, thus building the community gradually. She pointed out another advantage of living close to others: friends could

more easily check on one another regularly to make sure no one is in an emergency and needs help. As for shared dining, the facility has public space for that. We all agreed to hold our next meeting as a potluck at that location, look around, and check out the situation. If you would be interested in joining us, look for more information at the end of this article.

Bread, for future needs of their own. Matching up women who need some care with those who need some money, as mentioned above, would also require some sort of central connection. A person would be needed to organize it, handle emergencies, and create a website. This way we would have computer-based communication, both within

discussing similar projects around the country, one woman mentioned that she had connections with a place in Key West. What about exchange programs with women there, or with another community in Arizona?

We discussed many other issues, such as pets, partners, Section 8, and what health care requirements would be more than we could cope with. This obviously is brainstorming, not a project ready to roll; but we are starting small, getting acquainted, building trust, and thinking of some services we could provide even now to the elders of our community.

If you have read this far, you probably have ideas of your own, and we would love to hear them. You do not have to be on the verge of elderhood. As mentioned, we are interested in multi-generational connections. If you would be interested in joining us, the next meeting is Sunday afternoon, December 10. ▽

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In order to be ready to move as soon as an apartment becomes available, without breaking a lease or selling too quickly, we need to have a network of lesbians with accessible spare rooms who are willing to share for a month or two. This might also come into play for stays during recuperation from an illness or accident, when a person might temporarily not be able to handle things alone.

Another of us had already been thinking about organizing a network of women who are not yet living in the facility. They could perhaps volunteer their services and in return receive paper credit, such as Burlington

the community and with others who are interested in joining.

In fact, one woman who was pretty sure she would never use this kind of housing nonetheless liked the idea of sharing meals and social events with residents, and keeping up with what was going on there. The residents, in turn, would undoubtedly not only need to go out to shop, see doctors, and so on, but would also enjoy trips for visits and events. Shared transportation would serve those who no longer drive, be environmentally friendly, and would be, all agreed, more fun.


As the scope of our vision expanded, one final input really widened our horizons. In

➔ The next meeting for those interested in the concept of Old Dykes Home will be at 2 pm, Sunday, December 10. For details, call Sophie at 238-4927.

➔ Fran Moravcsik is a former board member of Mountain Pride Media.

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