

National Conference Considers Gay/Lesbian Aging

Robert Zeuner

How are older gay and lesbian persons treated in a straight society? Very well if SAGE has anything to do with it. SAGE stands for Senior Action in a Gay Environment. Operating out of offices in New York City, SAGE sponsors rap groups, dances, brunches, pen pals, workshops, friendly visitors, and advocacy programs for members of the older gay and lesbian communities.

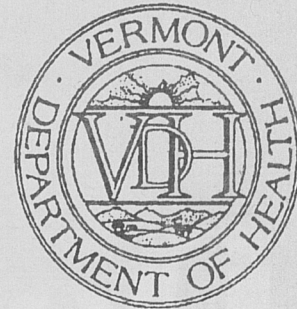
At a National Conference held in New York City from September 17th-20th, persons interested in expanding SAGE activities on a national level came together to assess needs outside the New York area. Gay and lesbians, particularly in a rural environment like Vermont, often do not feel comfortable with organized gay activities, conference participants learned. For older people, the gay world is often a strange place. Consequently, older gays and lesbians are often invisible members of the gay community. Often this invisibility is self-imposed since being out when young meant loss of jobs, homes, friends and even personal freedom.

But the invisibility all too frequently arises from a form of ostracism by the gay community itself. Gays and lesbians have often excluded older persons from welcome participation in their bars, organizations, literature, and social activism. Many older gays and lesbians do not feel comfortable with what straight programs for the aging have to offer.

Growing out of the Conference, a group interested in the needs of gays and lesbians over 50 will be meeting to consider opportunities for SAGE-like programs in Vermont. Those interested should call Robert Zeuner at 658-5136 for time and date of the first meeting. Gender and age are irrelevant. ▼

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