

AGING

WELL

WINTER

2024





happy

NEW
YEAR

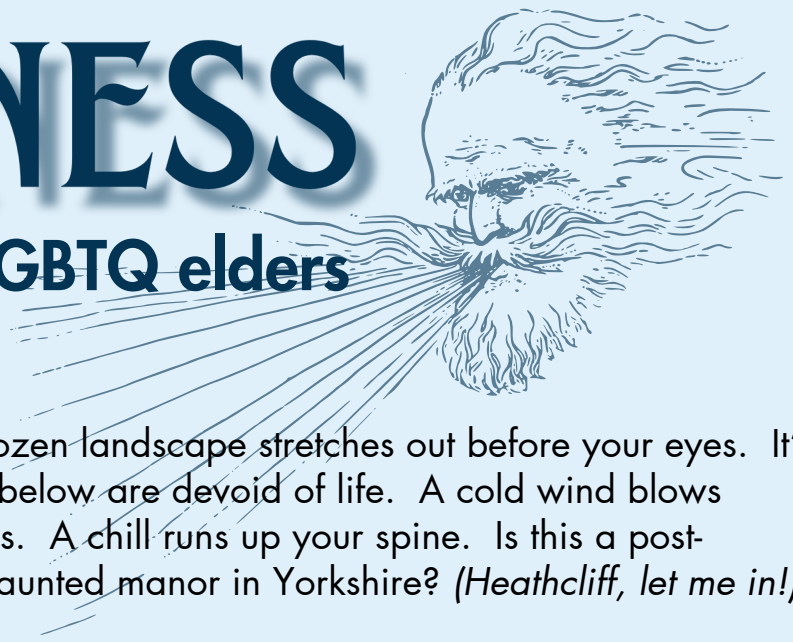
From Aging Services



Howard Brown
Health

LONELINESS

among LGBTQ elders



Eva Trampka
Associate Director of Aging Services

You peer between your drawn curtains. A frozen landscape stretches out before your eyes. It's dark—why is it so dark already? The streets below are devoid of life. A cold wind blows tendrils of snow between salt-stained buildings. A chill runs up your spine. Is this a post-apocalyptic dystopia? Are you in a drafty, haunted manor in Yorkshire? (*Heathcliff, let me in!*)

No—it's merely January in Chicago.

It's after the holidays when winter starts to weigh heaviest. Despite the solstice having come and gone, bringing with it longer days, sunset is still woefully early. For older adults, this is when the twin spectres of loneliness and isolation loom largest. For LGBTQ elders, who are twice as likely to live alone than their heterosexual counterparts, loneliness can come at a great cost.

Research has shown that loneliness not only causes depression and anxiety, but is also associated with increased risk of chronic medical conditions. In a 2016 study led by Newcastle University epidemiologist, Nicole Valtorta, PhD, loneliness was linked to a 30% increase in risk of stroke or the development of coronary heart disease ([Heart, Vol. 102, No. 13](#)). Dr. Valtorta, in discussing these findings, reports that this increased risk likely stems from behavioral, biological, and psychological factors. Valtorta says, "loneliness has been found to raise levels of stress, impede sleep and, in turn, harm the body." Other studies have linked loneliness to an increased risk of dementia, as well.

Suffice it to say, loneliness and social isolation are not to be trifled with. How can we address this serious health issue within ourselves and for our community?

"I would describe this feeling as a deep ache which we can experience throughout our bodies," writes Danie Muriello, a trans woman and elder in the community. "It is painful, sometimes profoundly painful. And there's a very important reason why it's painful. This pain has purpose. It is meant to get us into action." Danie explains that her way of dampening the ache of loneliness is to be proactive and seek out social connection. "We can't just wait for others to reach out to us," Danie writes. "We're going to have to take steps ourselves. I have done this. It's hard and can be scary. But the truth is, we have to play a role here".

When you reconnect with others you are not only giving a gift to yourself, you become a gift to others. Keep reading for a list of ways you can reconnect to your community!

Ready to take that first step? Here are a few ways to get started:

- **Participate in a support/social group**
 - Join us for Thrive with Pride Chicago, offered virtually on the 1st Wednesday and 3rd Friday of every month. Contact us for more information.
- **Volunteer for a local organization**
 - Howard Brown Health has several volunteer opportunities perfect for older adults. If you need help finding somewhere to volunteer, contact us!
- **Join a program at the local senior center**
 - [The Center on Addison](#) has a wealth of programming available to the older adult LGBTQ community; see their program calendar on the next page for more details.
- **Sign up for an exercise class**
 - Howard Brown's Aging Services has a low-impact fall prevention class called Otago that we offer every Wednesday—come join us!
 - The City of Chicago's Chicago Fitness Plus Program offers free comprehensive fitness and strength training classes at 48 senior centers across the city, offered twice per week. Call 312-744-4016 to find out more.
- **Schedule weekly activities with a friend**
 - Sometimes, the biggest hurdle to socializing is the planning itself. Try scheduling an activity on the same day every week or every month so that you always know you have something to look forward to.
- **Consider a roommate**
 - Not only does shared housing reduce costs, but the daily interaction can prevent isolation.
- **Pets can be medicinal**
 - Researchers have found that regular interaction with a pet can be therapeutic for older adults. Consider discussing whether rescuing a cat or a dog would be a good fit for you—shelter staff can help you determine if the pet's care regimen is the right fit for your home and mobility.
 - Is rescuing a pet not the right option for you? Consider volunteering for a shelter or attending a [cat café](#), or ask a friend to bring their dog over for a visit.
- **Use tech to keep in touch**
 - Websites like Meetup.com have senior-specific meet-up groups who plan gatherings and events.
 - Join a free chatroom—but make sure to keep yourself and your information safe! Read more about free chatrooms for older adults and how to keep yourself safe [here](#).
- **Still struggling? Maybe therapy can help**
 - [31% of LGBTQ older adults experience symptoms of depression](#), and loneliness and social isolation can only exacerbate feelings of despair. Talk to your doctor about referring you to counseling services.



SENIOR CALENDAR

CENTER ON ADDISON
806 W. ADDISON

CITY OF CHICAGO: *Dine In or Grab n Go* **Golden Diners Hot Meals**

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM

TUESDAY, THURSDAYS,

BOXED LUNCHES ON SATURDAY

9 AM - 10:30 AM

SENIOR COFFEE BAR, CENTER ON ADDISON

TUESDAYS

Our Senior Programs are available in-person with the exception of Meditation.

Senior Discussion Group

1 - 2:30 pm • Free + open 55+ • CoH Room 203

The "Senior Discussion Group" meets to converse on current topics on a range of issues from world events to the LGBTQ community.

CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

773-472-6469 ext. 426

- Assistance applying for benefits
- Information and referrals
- Employment assistance



CENTER ON 806 W. ADDISON

THURSDAYS

SENIOR VOICE

10-11 am • 55+ • CoH Room 203

Senior Voice offers opportunities for new and seasoned LGBTQ advocates an opportunity to learn from one another and special guest speakers.

GRIEF & LOSS SUPPORT GROUP

12-1 pm • 55+ • CoA Conference Room

Peer lead support group is an informal way to connect with others who have experienced loss. No RSVP required.

SENIOR YOGA *w/ Bob Klunk*

4:30 - 5:30 pm

A therapeutic yoga session. Calms the mind, reduces stress, promotes stamina and strength, and helps to find balance. Beginners to experienced. Free and open to those 40+. Mats provided.

VIRTUAL MEDITATION *w/ Shelly*

1:00 - 2:15 pm • Free + open 40+

For thousands of years, people have used meditation to move beyond the mind's stress-inducing thoughts and emotional upsets into the peace and clarity of present moment awareness.

Yoga w/Tony Perez, Saturdays.

1:00 - 2:00 pm

In-Person BINGO is Back! Last Saturday of every month.

12:30 - 1:30 pm

In-Person Movies

12 - 2 pm • Free + open 55+

First Three Saturdays. CoA Lounge

Come catch a flick with community

ASSSG

(AIDS Survivors Syndrome Support Group)

12:30 - 2 pm • Free + open 55+ • CoA Conference Room

Provides a safe, supportive and welcoming space for individuals who lived through the AIDS pandemic, experienced loss and grief over losing loved ones and friends or family.

REIKI

Third Saturday of every month • 10:45 am - 12:15 pm

20 minute sessions • CoA Conference Room

Japanese energy modality that leaves you feeling calm, centered and at peace. Limited space RSVP required.

SATURDAYS

Please check out this calendar, call, or email for future events. For Zoom links and phone numbers please RSVP with Todd Williams.

773-472-6469 etc 426 or email toddwilliams@centeronhalsted.org

centeronhalsted.org/seniors.html

Center for Disability and Elder Law, 4th Tuesday of every month. 9am - 1pm

CDEL can help with many legal matters such as advanced planning, wills, and landlord/tenant disputes. RSVP is required. Prescreening required.

PROJECT SCUM

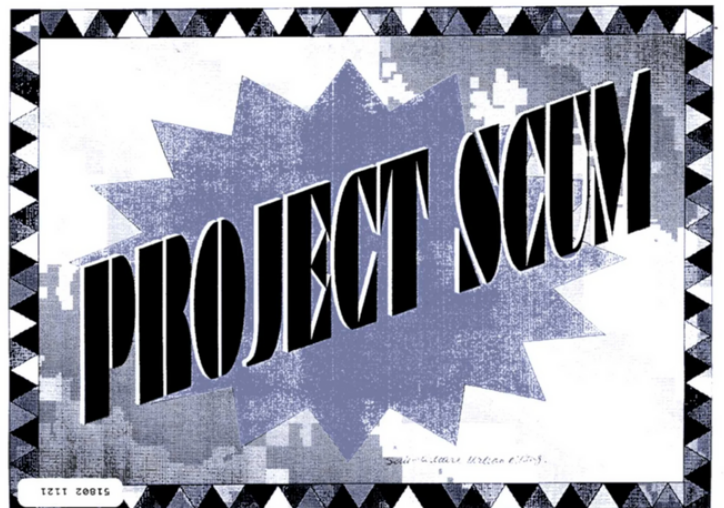
Arnold Aprill
Community Outreach Coordinator

When corporations market their products to communities they despise, they sometimes cannot resist calling these initiatives by acronyms that reveal the roiling contempt behind their sunny messaging. A classic case of this phenomenon is Project SCUM, an acronym for "subculture urban marketing". Project SCUM was a plan proposed by R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company in 1995 to increase cigarette sales to members of the "alternative lifestyle" in San Francisco, focusing specifically on the LGBT community in the Castro neighborhood and on the homeless population in the Tenderloin district. Big tobacco in this period was unselfconscious about their disgust for their new marketing targets, as reported in these excerpts from Harriet A. Washington's investigative article "Burning Love: Big Tobacco Takes Aim at LGBT Youths":

"Winston honcho David Goerlitz sneered that the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company had built its fortune by marketing to "the young, poor, black, and stupid." A tobacco executive who risked such candor today might add, "the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and Hispanic."

An anti-smoking campaign called "Truth" targeted R. J. Reynolds for Project SCUM, arguing that it not only showed the usual exploitative tobacco marketing techniques but added to them an explicit contempt or even hatred for the people it was trying to market its products to.

Marlboro, the most popular cigarette brand among gay men, has flaunted the brand's rugged hypermasculine image in venues calculated to appeal to gays. For example, one large billboard features a close-up of a substantial male crotch clad in weathered jeans with a carton of Marlboros slung in front of it. The image hangs between 2 gay bars in San Francisco's Mission district.



source: lgbtqminustobacco.org

...The health advocacy backlash to Big Tobacco's first flirtation with gay media was swift and sure. The Coalition of Lavender Americans on Smoking and Health (CLASH) issued a press release that read in part, 'This is a community already ravaged by addiction: we don't need the Marlboro man to help pull the trigger.'"

The offensive nature of the Project SCUM label led to the plan being renamed Project Sourdough, perhaps as a nod to San Francisco sourdough bakeries, or maybe even to mean "sour dough" as in "spoiled money"--but contempt by any other name still smells rotten. The plans for Project SCUM targeted the Castro and the Tenderloin neighborhoods partly because these were home to drug users who would be highly susceptible to increased tobacco use. Philip Morris, another tobacco giant, at one point was giving away key rings with its Alpine Extra Light cigarettes that concealed a screw-top glass vial that could be used as a drug stash.

Big Tobacco and Liquor invested money in LGBT-friendly media outlets that badly needed the advertising income; some even gave donations to LGBT causes and cultural institutions to deflect criticism. Here are excerpts from an analysis of the double-edged nature of corporate philanthropy around LGBT issues by N. Offen, E.A. Smith and R.E. Malone:

From Adversary to Target Market: the ACT-UP Boycott of Philip Morris

"In 1990, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP) sparked a year-long boycott of Philip Morris's Marlboro cigarettes and Miller beer. The boycott protested the company's support of Senator Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina), a leading opponent of AIDS funding and civil rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. ACT-UP demanded that Philip Morris sever its ties with Helms and acknowledge its responsibility to the LGBT community and to people with AIDS.

Philip Morris used the boycott to its own advantage. It exploited differences within the community and settled the boycott by pledging large donations to combat AIDS. Through corporate philanthropy, Philip Morris gained entrée to the LGBT market without appearing gay friendly."



source: lgbtqminustobacco.org



source: marketingtherainbow.info

This Parliament print campaign from 1994-1998 illustrates how the tobacco industry targets different audiences.

Can you guess which version was published in *OUT Magazine*, and which one was published in *Cosmopolitan* and *Rolling Stone*?

These are the sorts of contradictions we are living with today. The dissonance between our community's demand to be respected versus our limited access to the resources held by those who still see us as "scum" continues to be part of our struggle. We are living in an era where there is a wider range of innovative LGBTQ content available on our streaming services than ever before, while at the same time, Ron DeSantis is blocking Disneyland's corporate commitment to diversity. Target stores were boycotted in June for selling the same Gay Pride merchandise that the chain had been offering for ten years without incident. RuPaul's Drag Race is entering its fifteenth season, while Bud Light was targeted for sponsoring one brief promotional video by trans influencer Dylan Mulvaney.

We are living in a Dickensian "best of times, worst of times", but in place of a Tale of Two Cities, it is a tale of two nations: one corrupted by a fantasy of retribution, and the other committed to seeking justice.

Ready to quit smoking?

Call the Tobacco Quit Line: 866-QUIT-YES
Or ask your primary care provider how to get started

APPLY TO JOIN

THE VERNITA GRAY COUNCIL FOR PHILANTHROPY

The **Vernita Gray Council** is composed of up to 25 influencers and innovators who further the **mission** of Howard Brown Health. This auxiliary board specializes in fundraising, engagement, and outreach.

MEETS ON 2ND TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH FROM 6 - 8 P.M.

EDUCATION

Learn **ways to support** Howard Brown Health and how we work to eliminate disparities in healthcare for LGBTQ+ people including:

- Young people experiencing housing insecurity and poverty
- People living with and vulnerable to HIV and AIDS
- Trans and nonbinary patients needing gender-affirming care



FUNDRAISING

- AIDS Run & Walk
- Trans Media Fashion Show
- Donor Cultivation Events
- Peer-to-Peer Fundraising

OUTREACH

- Broadway Youth Center Donation Drives
- Prepare safer sex kits
- Street & pride festivals

TOURS

- Broadway Youth Center
- The Brown Elephant
- Clinics



Named after Vernita Gray, the VGC honors a longtime champion of the rights of LGBTQ+ people, African Americans, and women. She served as a community volunteer, donor, and advocate.

We are committed to diversity as it relates to age, class, color, disability, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, national origin, orientation, race, religion, and all marginalized identities.

Vernita Gray, Chicago LGBTQ+ Activist

Photo by Hal Baim/Windy City Times

Website • Requirements • Apply

Questions: Steven Solomon (he/him) | Community Impact Officer

Stevens@howardbrown.org | 872.269.3422

Volunteer Showcase

At Howard Brown Health, we have the privilege of working with incredible, dedicated volunteers. We asked two of them to tell us about their experiences serving the community.

Are you interested in getting involved? Find details on how to begin volunteering with Howard Brown Health on the page after our showcase.



Tom Valente

Tom volunteers with HBH to help with the Market Days beer booth, Halloween parade, Broadway Youth Center Holiday Assembly, and more!

"As a physician with a lifetime commitment to improving health and quality of life, I am grateful for the comprehensive and compassionate care that Howard Brown provides to the LGBTQ community since its humble beginnings. To meet the ever expanding needs of the community, Howard Brown has met these challenges and expanded services and locations with the new flagship clinic on Halsted. These efforts require tremendous planning and financial support that cannot be met by service revenue alone. Philanthropy is a critical component to help insure the viability and health of Howard Brown in the long term. The Venita Gray Council has the ability to enhance resources and revenue for the health center to meet the present and future needs of our community.

I have enjoyed working with Steve Solomon at Christmas creating care packages, during Market Days selling beer, and participating in the annual AIDS Walk and Run. All of these activities have given me the insight into the importance of fundraising and the need for more creative, strategic and committed ways of raising funds. Active participation from all members is critical in achieving these objectives. We warmly welcome any one with interests, passion and commitment to the Venita Gray Council. Ensuring the long term viability of this great healthcare organization is our goal with your talent and participation."

Diane Fields

Diane volunteers with HBH to help with Vernita Gray Council meetings, Volunteer Orientations, Market Days beer booth & more!



1. Why did you become a Howard Brown volunteer?

"As an older lesbian who has seen and experienced the discrimination, death, untreated illnesses, etc. against the queer community, I feel it is so important to contribute to not only assist older queer people as they transition into the next phase of life, but to also remind younger queer people of the battles we have fought, the jobs we have lost, the family members who estranged us, the lack of resources to treat our community, the lives we have lost, etc. The strength of the queer community to fight the battles, advocate for themselves and their resources would not be provided to develop them ourselves. All we currently have can so easily go away and it cannot be taken for granted. I also just love to be around queer people, we are SO MUCH FUN."

2. What volunteer activities have you done?

"I have volunteered for Halsted Street Market Days & Pride Fest at the refreshment booth (what fun meeting new people and just being around happy, joyful people), Volunteer Orientations (love seeing new people excited about providing volunteer services), Vernita Gray Council for Philanthropy, Open Houses for different facilities, Supply Organizer at clinics, Halloween Parade (the Pride Parade on steroids, such fun), Donor Events, and a computer project for teaching older adults computer technology."

3. What are some of your favorite volunteer experiences and why?

"As listed above, all of them have been "favorites." Just being around the queer community and seeing how we have banded together to be our own advocates and the strength our community exhibits. You cannot limit us, if the political process won't help, we will resolve our own issues. It is also so great to meet new people in the queer community, we are so diverse and so much FUN!"

4. Any advice that you want to share with potential volunteers (50+) who read Aging Well?

"Stay active, stay involved. After I retired from my career as a social worker, I found myself becoming forgetful and lethargic. I decided I was not going to succumb to "old timer's disease." If you don't exercise your brain, don't exercise your body, don't exercise your social habits, they will diminish. Life as an older adult can bring so many gifts, but also so many losses. Embrace the moment because that is all you have. When I shifted my attitude toward fear as being more welcoming and inquisitive, a fundamental shift occurred for me. Instead of spending time tensing up, I learned that I could connect with the freshness of the moment and relax."



Volunteer Program

In 1974, Howard Brown was founded by four volunteers that made an impact and changed healthcare for the LGBTQ+ community. With 11 health clinics, 3 resale shops and events across Chicago, we have many opportunities for you to support our programs and projects.

Note: Volunteering with Howard Brown Health is contingent upon successfully completing our pre-volunteer screening process which includes your (1) application, (2) orientation, (3) CANTS Form submission, (4) Self-Paced Trainings, and (5) MBI Background Check. To learn more & apply, visit: www.howardbrown.org/volunteer

Questions

Steven Solomon (he/him) Community Impact Officer | volunteer@howardbrown.org

Current Ongoing Volunteer Opportunities

- HBH-Halsted | Greeter: Greeting, directing, and assisting patients, visitors, and other guests to navigate the building. May assist with internal package delivery in the building.
- HBH-Sheridan | Lobby Navigator: Greet patients and ensure patient registration occurs timely working with clinic staff. Collect patient satisfaction surveys.
- HBH-Sheridan | Organizer: Help organize hygiene products and other essentials for patients and clients. Sort and count inventory along with pick up boxes.
- HBH-63rd St. | Community Advisory Board (CAB) Meeting | Greeter: Greet and check-in registrants for CAB Meeting. Help with event/food set up and clean up.
- Brown Elephant-Andersonville, [Lakeview](#) or Oak Park | Retail Volunteer: Sort through, categorize and add pricing labels to donations. Help tidy up store including back-of-house areas.
- Broadway Youth Center | Drop-In Support: Support staff with daily operations including organizing the drop-in spaces. Help youth with access laundry, showers, sleeping room along with meals (breakfast & lunch), and other internal services and staff. Assist young people with entering and exiting the building. Create and build relationships with young people through conversations and playing games.

Transcendence

An in-person support group for trans* older adults 50+
offered monthly by Howard Brown Health Aging Services

Join us every 2nd Wednesday of the month

6:30 - 8 p.m.

and every 4th Wednesday of the month

10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Howard Brown Health Clark St.

6500 N. Clark St.

Chicago, IL 60626

2nd Floor Conference Room

For more information, email agingservices@howardbrown.org.

LGBTQ History Corner: Chicago's LGBTQ Nightlife

John Matz
Aging Services Case Manager

source:
advocate.com



35 "Bohemians" Seized in Raid on "Green Mask"

The "Green Mask," a resort of Bohemians at 10 East Grand avenue, was raided again this morning. Twelve women and twenty-three men were loaded into the patrol wagons. The police entered the place after standing outside for some time listening to what they say was the reading of indecent poetry by George Lexington. Agnes ("Bunny") Welmer, owner of the cafe, was booked as keeper of a disorderly house.

source: advocate.com

source:
outtraveler.com



Long before the existence of LGBTQ organizations like Howard Brown Health, queer Chicagoans seeking refuge found it in bars and clubs. Venues of nightlife have long been a cornerstone of Chicago's LGBTQ community and didn't just serve as a place of entertainment--they were the birthplaces of queer advocacy. The book **Last Call Chicago: A History of 1001 LGBTQ-Friendly Taverns, Haunts and Hangouts**, written by St Sukie de la Croix and Rick Karlin, looks back at the makings of Chicago's LGBTQ nightlife and documents its rich history.

In their book, the authors track down mostly forgotten speakeasy LGBTQ clubs such as the K-9, a club that hosted multiple nightly drag shows in River North before the end of Prohibition. The existence of another Prohibition-era LGBTQ speakeasy, the Green Mask Tearoom, can only be confirmed via newspaper reports of its raids and arrests by police, charging patrons with public indecency. Located in the basement of a River North brothel at 10 E. Grand, the Green Mask Tearoom was a lesbian café owned and operated by chorus girl and burlesque dancer Agnes "Bunny" Weiner and her lover, silent movie actress Beryl Boughton.

In the 1960's, the Volli-Bal, located at 2124 N. Clark, was a popular lesbian bar that was plagued by police raids. Until 1973, Chicago law dictated that women were required to wear at least three pieces of feminine apparel. When the police arrived, patrons had to rush into the bathrooms and butch lesbians swapped clothing with their femme counterparts.

On the Southside, Bronzeville's jazz clubs and cabarets were intergrated in both race and sexual orientation. Throughout the 30's, 40's, and 50's, Black and white, straight and queer patrons enjoyed drag shows long before Boystown existed. Club DeLisa at 5516 S. State St., known as "Chicago's Cotton Club", was a middle-class establishment that attracted mostly LGBTQ patrons. According to [Out History](#), Club DeLisa was a favorite haunt of the 1930's most famous jazz musicians, including Bertha "Chippie" Hill and Albert Ammons. Red Saunders, resident band leader from 1937 until the club's closing in 1958, was known to have played with Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. Alternately, the Cabin Inn at 3119 S. Cottage Grove attracted working-class patrons to its nightly drag performances with clarinetist Jimmie Noone leading the band there.

The Jeffery Pub at 7041 S. Jeffery Ave. is one of the country's longest-running black-owned gay bars. As bartender Lee Davis told Chicago Magazine, the Jeffrey Pub was initially a straight bar, with Maxine's operating as a gay bar down the street. When Maxine's closed, the Jeffrey Pub slowly grew into a gay bar by the mid-1960s. The Jeffrey Pub has long been black-owned, with Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame member Clarence Wood having a proprietary role for many years. Current owner Jamal Junior has worked hard to preserve Jeffrey Pub as a haven for black and brown LGBTQ South Siders.

Jimmie Noone on clarinet with drag performers at the Cabin Inn, 1939
source: Black Beauty, White Heat: A Pictorial History of Classic Jazz, 1920-1950

Patrons at Club DeLisa
source: [OutHistory.org](#); photo by Wayne F. Miller



Read more about Chicago's historical LGBTQ nightlife

Books:

[The Boys of Fairy Town: Sodomites, Female Impersonators, Third-Sexers, Pansies, Queers, and Sex Morons in Chicago's First Century](#)
by Jim Elledge

[Last Call Chicago: A History of 1001 LGBTQ-Friendly Taverns, Haunts & Hangouts](#) by Rick Karlin and St Sukie De La Croix

Online articles:

[Advocate.com: Last Call Chicago](#)

[TheDailyBeast.com: Chicago's Forgotten Roaring Twenties Gay Scene](#)

[OutHistory.org: Queer Bronzeville](#)

(reading this on a printed copy? Email AgingServices@howardbrown.org to request these links!)

RISING PHOENIX

**an in-person support group for adults 50
and older living long-term with HIV.**

**MEETS THE 1ST THURSDAY
OF EACH MONTH FROM**

6:30 - 8 P.M.

HOWARD BROWN HEALTH CLARK ST.

6500 N. CLARK ST.

CHICAGO, IL 60626

2ND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

For more information, please email
[**agingservices@howardbrown.org**](mailto:agingservices@howardbrown.org).



Howard Brown
Health

How Could They Not Have Known?

Heteronormative constraints regarding what is “normal” and “socially acceptable” were programmed into the belief systems of our older LGBTQ generations when we were all still very young. This engendered a tragic waste of invaluable human potential as millions of us were forced to lead secretive and suppressed lives. Nonetheless, because of the inherently creative and exploratory nature of childhood curiosity, many of us remained unselfconscious about our interests and activities that fell outside the limits of received notions of social acceptability.

In Alison Bechdel’s acclaimed graphic memoir *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, the gifted cartoonist illustrates a defining moment in her childhood involving a substantive ring of keys hanging from the belt of a woman who wore men’s clothes. This experience served as an important portal into knowing who she really was. When her memoir was adapted into an award-winning Broadway musical, her childhood interest in that woman’s ring of keys inspired the song that would become foundational to the show’s entire musical score.



These early insights into our true selves, by providing pathways for sidestepping societal pressures to pretend to be people that we just aren’t, can serve as building blocks for forging our own self-possessed adult identities. As someone who struggled as an adolescent to find my own self-acceptance, I was surprised (and gratified) when looking at a 50s snapshot of myself as a child to see the bravado of a little boy displaying a level of self-assurance that I would later need to recover to carry me through my decades of self-doubt. These contradictions that we grew up with created a widespread cultural cognitive dissonance that effectively short-circuited crucial communications between LGBTQ folks and the families and communities in which we grew up.

So, what are some remedies for resolving that dissonance? I was lucky enough to be invited by my colleagues Scott Vanderweele and Randy Gresham to co-develop with them the “ComingIn to ComingOut” project, in which we record interviews of fellow members of our older LGBTQ community. Our focus is not on documenting “coming out” stories, but rather on capturing the different ways that members of our older community became *ready* to come out and assume their authentic public presences. (Folks over 55 who are interested in participating in the ComingIn to ComingOut project can contact Scott at scottvanderweele@bscchgo.com.) The narratives we are recording are as varied as the members of our community, but one consistent theme we are finding across many of these stories concerns choices that we made and actions that we took as young people that should have been clues to our families that we were not on a heteronormative trajectory. Here are a few examples:

As an adolescent, my primary access to images of bare-chested male bodies was through paintings of Greek myths, and I decided to recreate some of those images for myself through art I made to display in my bedroom. I was especially drawn to the myth of the god Apollo and his mortal lover Hyacinthus. As the story goes, the god and the young man were playing catch with a discus when the jealous west wind Zephyrus, also in love with the mortal youth, sent a gust of wind to push the discus into striking Hyacinthus and fatally wounding him. As the grieving Apollo held his dying lover in his arms, wherever Hyacinthus' blood dripped to the ground a hyacinth flower sprung up in its place. I chose to represent this story as a bas relief etched into a sheet of copper foil, and was so aroused by molding the lover's bodies that I punched my stylus all the way through the metal sheet when making the indentation to form the dying Hyacinthus' left nipple. It surprises me to this day that my family didn't seem to notice that my bedroom was full of mythology-themed homegrown gay erotica. Or, why they never questioned my costume choices when we celebrated the Jewish holiday of Purim (in which children dress up as the characters in the Book of Esther) and I chose to dress up as Queen Esther herself rather than as any of the male characters in the story.

Scott Vanderweele, as a young person, was an award-winning baton twirler who would receive ovations from the crowds at football games while the less flamboyant marching band looked on jealously. Not the iconic image of a heterosexual young man.



We grew up in an era of "love that dare not speak its name," which not only made it hard for us to fully represent and validate our own experiences, but also made it difficult for biological families, even truly caring and supportive ones, to acknowledge the full range of their children's lives. How could they not have known who we were when the evidence was right there before them? Well, often they did know, but they didn't have sufficient access to language or affirming social discourse that would have made it safe enough to acknowledge it—not even the knowledge of their own children. And now, in this time of increasing anti-LGBTQ legislation, it is more important than ever for us to break the silence, to have the difficult conversations, and to acknowledge the LGBTQ elephants in every room.



ARE YOU INTERESTED IN...

- Advising Howard Brown Health staff on how the organization can **improve our Aging Services?**
- **Having a voice** in decisions that Howard Brown Health's Aging Services makes about current and future programming?
- Helping Howard Brown Health staff understand **what the older adult community needs?**
- **Engaging with** fellow LGBTQ community members

JOIN

THE HOWARD BROWN HEALTH AGING SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

- The Advisory Board meets monthly via Zoom, 3rd Tuesdays of the month at 11A
- If you are interested in applying to participate on the board or have any questions, contact **Eva Trampka** at **872.269.3945** or **agingservices@howardbrown.org**

REQUIREMENTS

- Be a current Howard Brown Health patient OR an LGBTQ 50+ community member involved in Howard Brown Health services
- Submit an application and take part in a brief interview
- Regularly attend monthly meetings and provide thoughtful, respectful feedback
- Assist with promoting Howard Brown Health's Aging Services to the older adult community



Chinese Congee

Makes 4 servings

Dairy free, meat optional

Lunar New Year is February 10th!

While congee isn't one of the many traditional dishes served to celebrate the Year of the Dragon, it is a hearty, comforting, and easy meal to make on a cold winter day made with ingredients you probably have in your pantry already.

The ancient dish many recognize as congee is known by as many terms as there are variations: muay in Hokkien, chok or khao tom in Thai, cháo in Vietnamese, hsan pyok in Burmese, bābār in Khmer, bubur in Malay and Indonesian, lugaw in Tagalog, and okayu in Japanese!



For the congee:

- 1 cup white rice, rinsed well
- 6 cups chicken, beef, vegetable, or bone stock
- Optional: roughly chop a half-inch knob of ginger
- Optional: for a richer congee, add shredded leftover chicken meat and/or bones

Garnishes:

- thinly sliced green onion
- fried shallots/garlic
- soy sauce
- sesame oil
- wilted greens, like bok choy
- a soft-boiled egg

Directions

1. Add your rice to a strainer and rinse very well, until the water runs mostly clear.
2. Put the rinsed rice into a medium-sized pot; add your stock, ginger, and chicken/bones if using.
3. Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and partially cover.
4. Continue simmering for about 1.5 hours. Yes, that long! Stir the congee occasionally while cooking; this will help the rice break down and become creamy. Once your congee is a consistency that you like, remove from heat. If the congee has become too stiff, add more liquid and continue to simmer.
5. Remove ginger pieces and bones; garnish; serve. Enjoy!



Danish Risengrød

Makes 6 servings

Can be prepared vegan

Do you want to enjoy rice porridge on a cold winter day, but prefer sweet over savory? Try risengrød, as this Scandinavian rice porridge is known in Denmark. Traditionally served on Christmas Eve, what the Danish call risengrød is known as risengrynsgrøt in Norway and risgrynsgröt in Sweden.

Scandinavians have been preparing porridge for a thousand years; barley, oat, buckwheat, and millet porridges were a staple of the Viking diet. In the 18th century, the exportation of rice from Asia to Europe brought with it an update to the traditional recipe.



Ingredients

- 1 cup white rice, rinsed well
- 1.5 cups water
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 4.5 cups milk (can be made with dairy-free milk)
- Cinnamon sugar, to taste
- Extra butter, to taste

Directions

1. Add your rice to a strainer and rinse very well, until the water runs mostly clear.
2. Add water, 1 tbsp butter (or margarine/dairy-free butter if preferred), and salt to a medium pot and bring to a rapid boil over high heat.
3. Pour in the rice, stirring constantly to prevent sticking.
4. Reduce the heat to low, stirring the rice until boiling is reduced to a simmer.
5. Cover the pot and simmer for 10-15 minutes, until the rice has absorbed most of the water.
6. Add the milk to the rice, stirring to incorporate. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring constantly, then immediately reduce the heat to low.
7. Once boiling has reduced to a simmer, cover the pot and allow it to cook, without stirring, for 45 minutes. Be careful here to avoid it scorching!
8. Serve warm with cinnamon sugar and butter to taste. Enjoy!