

For Lesbian,  
Gay, Bisexual,  
& Transgender  
Older Adults

# RAINBOW ELDER NEWS

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2006

Edited by: Rainbow  
Elders

## Mary Jo—Longtime Activist

### Facts of Interest:

*Project Visibility*, Boulder County Aging Services' LGBT sensitivity training for providers of services to older adults, wins another award!

*Project Visibility* won an n4a (National Association of Area Agencies on Aging) Aging and Innovation Award for Ethnic and Cultural Diversity. This makes two awards. The first was the NACo (National Association of Counties Innovation and Achievement Award. Support this program by sending a check to Aging Services Foundation, PO Box 471, Boulder Colorado 80306. Write LGBT programs on the memo line.

Mary Jo came out in 1981 while teaching at a United Methodist seminary in Chicago. Without tenure, she was quickly let go because of "budgetary reasons." She instigated legal proceedings and won a settlement. Mary Jo says: "That was really the beginning of my activism." She co-founded a women's center called Kinheart where she focused on anti-homophobia education and support groups for women in the process of coming out.

Shortly after moving to Boulder county in 1992, Mary Jo became editor of *Open Hands*, a quarterly magazine produced by national LGBT groups in eight Protestant denominations and the Church



Mary Jo with her partner  
of 44 years

of Canada.

For the last few years, Mary Jo has been a primary caregiver for her partner of almost 44 years who was diagnosed with dementia/Alzheimer's. "Being the caregiver of a partner is very, very hard. So many dynamics have to change in your relationship. It has been a

tremendous learning journey for both of us." Mary Jo moved her partner into a memory care assisted living facility in January 2005, sold their large home, and spent the last year renovating a small ranch house for herself.

"Now, I'm finally able to reclaim some pieces of my life that got put on hold as my partner's illness progressed." She recently wrote an article for *Care Connections* and became the program coordinator for Northern Colorado OLOC (Old Lesbians Organizing for Change). She also agreed to represent Rainbow Elders on the County-wide Leadership Council doing visioning and action work to meet the growing needs of seniors in Boulder County.

## Don't Miss Out On All the Fun This Fall & Winter

If you missed the August picnic you missed a great time. This fall and winter the Rainbow Elders have many special events planned that you won't want to miss.

We are hosting a writing workshop with Ellen Orleans, a noted local author who contributes regularly to *Weird Sisters* and has a number of books in publication. The workshop is free of charge and will consist of four

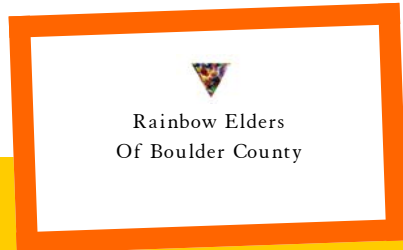


Flagstaff venue for August  
Rainbow Elders picnic.

sessions, Wednesdays, October 4, 11, 18, 25 from 9:30-11:30 AM at the First Congregational Church. RSVP to 303-441-3583 or 303-441-4995 by October 2.

We are partnering with Bent Lens Cinema on an elder gays in film day. The films to be shown are *Goodnight Bill* and *When I'm 64* on November 19th at the Dairy Center (Matinee-time TBD)

This year's dance (*Winter Lavender Gala*) happens Friday December 8th.



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**FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, & TRANSGENDER OLDER ADULTS**

*Sponsored by Boulder County Aging Services Division & the Open Door Fund, a fund of the Community Foundation Serving Boulder County*

We're on the web at  
[www.co.boulder.co.us/cs/ag/programs/glb.htm](http://www.co.boulder.co.us/cs/ag/programs/glb.htm)

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• **The Rainbow Elders of Boulder County (REBC)** is  
• a fun-loving, passionate, loosely structured social  
• group of older LGBTs and friends who support each  
• other, offer information, and share common experi-  
• ence. The group meets the **third Tuesday** of the  
• month from **4-6pm**. Meetings alternate between  
• Longmont and Boulder. **Odd-numbered months**  
• meetings are in **Boulder** at the **First Congrega-**  
• **tional Church** and **even-numbered months** at  
• the **Longmont Senior Center** in **Longmont**. Af-  
• ter meetings, folks usually go out to dinner at a local  
• restaurant. Come join us.  
•  
• **October 17**, Longmont Senior Center  
• 910 Longs Peak Avenue, Longmont  
• **November 21**, Hospice Grief & Education Center  
• 1585 Patton Drive, Boulder  
• **December 8**, Winter Lavender Gala  
• East Boulder Senior Center  
• 5660 Sioux Drive, Boulder  
•  
• **To be added to the Rainbow Elder e-lert or mailing list**  
• **call 303-441-3583.**

## **The Question of Elder**

From time to time, we get negative feedback on the word “elder” which is part of the name of the group, Rainbow Elders of Boulder County. A few years ago, the members of the group voted on this name, and it seemed to fit. Most of our members are well into their 60s, although we do have some younger members, and some older. The negative feedback we get is from people in their 60s and 70s who would never consider themselves to be “elder.” I now wonder if we need to change the name of our group.

The word elder does not mean elderly. To me, as someone who has studied gerontology and who has been in the aging field for some time now, the word elder brings up an image of vibrancy and solidity that is inspiring. The elders I know are active and curious. They face aging with slight knowing smile and go on to discover new and wonderful worlds and states of being. While at Naropa University, I had the pleasure of studying with Reb Zalman, then the holder of the World Wisdom Chair. I think he says it best with the following:

*Elders are the jewels of humanity that have  
Been mined from the Earth, cut in the rough,  
Then buffed and polished by the stonecutter's  
Art into precious gems that we recognize for  
Their enduring value and beauty. We sense  
Their radiance in our youth, but we cannot  
Contain it. It requires a lifetime's effort to  
Carve out the multifaceted structure that can  
Display our hidden splendor in all its glory*  
Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalom

**What do you think? Feel free to contact me at [tdeanni@co.boulder.co](mailto:tdeanni@co.boulder.co).**