



PHOTO BY DANNY PETERSON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

An Aging with Pride discussion group at the Q Center's library draws participants Margaret Ann Jones (from left), Peggy Hackenbruck, Ricki Coleman, Janet Martinez, and Busch. Thanks to a community fundraising campaign, the library ceiling will undergo repairs, along with other upgrades in the next year, the first maintenance done to the Q Center building in 10 years.

On Stronger Footing

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ated to be completed by June of next year, the first upgrade to the building in 10 years, Busch said.

Whitten said the organization is launching a "Colorguard" membership program this month that is especially geared for community members to make monthly contributions of \$10 or more to help keep the facilities and services running. Their goal is to recruit 40 monthly donors by the end of summer.

Ricki Coleman, a retired former Q Center volunteer, said she looks forward to the continued support for helping keep a valuable community resource open.

The Q Center was created to provide a culturally diverse and emotionally and physically safe place for members of the LGBTQ+ community, an outreach that helped Coleman find footing as a trans-woman when she moved to Portland 11 years ago.

The fact that the Q Center, which was founded in 2005, had a phone number for people in the LGBTQ+ community to call and find resources, was fundamental to starting a life here, Coleman explained. She later volunteered to answer similar calls for people interested in moving to Portland on behalf of the Q Center, as a receptionist.

"They ask about housing, they ask about the community in general: is it safe to be out and visible? And then people who walk through the door the first time, that is, that's pretty special. That's what gets me right here," Coleman said, tapping her chest.

Margaret Ann Jones, a senior African American community activist and co-chair of the Resilience Campaign, said the Q Center was key to finding acceptance.

"As a woman of color, as a black woman, there are not a lot of places I go into my own community, to the black community here. There are a lot of us that have been rejected by our families and

all like that. So this is where I've come, my chosen family I've met here," said Jones, who came to Portland in 1992. "This is my port in the storm, so to speak, when things get insane out in the larger community, where I know that because I'm a black woman and because I'm a lesbian woman that I'm not accepted in a lot of places, but I'm accepted here. This is my place, my safe place."

Jones added that she's developing a discussion group at the Q Center to cover topics for people of color, such as police shootings and other topic where people "will not be judged and share what they feel."

"And be supportive," added Peggy Hackenbruck, also a member of the senior LGBTQ+ community.

"I come here for activities, for community, and just feeling like it is such an important place in Portland, so that we have a place to meet and have lots of activities going on," Hackenbruck said.

The Q Center has been a great place for LGBTQ+ seniors to receive services through their Aging with Pride program, which provides information, education, and social events for the elderly. Hackenbruck, in addition, is also part of a Services and Advocacy for Gay Elders program at northwest Portland's Friendly House, the only other program geared toward queer seniors in the city, of which Jones is also a member.

Hackenbruck, Jones, and others meet regularly at the Q Center's Aging with Pride discussion group in its library, which is filled with donated LGBTQ+ literature, which Hackenbruck said is another valuable asset for gay community members.

"If I were coming out now—I'm 76 now—if I were coming out now, I could come in here and read the things that are about who I am and the stuff I couldn't read 40 years ago when I was coming out," she said.

"We can just be ourselves, without ridicule, without judgment, without censure," Busch added.

In addition to serving the LGBTQ+ senior community, providing information and referrals, and fronting fiscal sponsorship of other, smaller nonprofits whose aim complements their mission, the Q Center also hosts nearly 50 support groups and provides spaces available for rent, which have often been utilized by Mississippi Business Association, for example.

Films that are not in wide release or that hold an important milestone for the LGBTQ+ community are also sometimes screened at the center, Coleman added.

The Q Center also raises aware-



PHOTO COURTESY Q CENTER

Community activist Margaret Ann Jones said coming to the Q Center helped her find acceptance as a black lesbian woman.

ness on how to deal with hate crimes and what constitutes the mentality that fosters violence. Q Center Program Coordinator Page Smith facilitated public discussions on the topics in the wake of

back-to-back bias assaults in the community. To find out more about the Q Center, located at 4115 N. Mississippi Ave, visit pdxqcenter.org or call 503-234-7837.



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