



For Immediate Release Waterloo Region

KW Counselling Services, SPECTRUM, and Hospice of Waterloo Region are partnering to present a conference for service providers working with older adults who identify as LGBTQ+.

Aging with Pride 2.0 is a one-day conference that will take place on September 19, 2017. The organizers hope that the 50 participants will come away with insight into the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ seniors, a checklist for making accessible spaces, and practical information from multiple training sessions on a range of related topics.

The conference follows an Aging with Pride conference organized by KW Counselling Services and SPECTRUM in 2015. SPECTRUM has an ongoing Aging with Pride Committee that is committed to creating events, supports and providing education in response to the needs of the community. They work with local senior serving organizations to make them aware of the needs of LGBTQ+ older adults. To that end, they advocate and collaborate with stakeholders to ensure that new and existing supports or services are inclusive and responsive. Jim Parrott, Co-Chair of SPECTRUM's Aging with Pride Committee says, "As an aging member of the LGBTQ+ community, I want to know that I will receive the same care and respect from senior-serving institutions as others do, without having to pretend to be someone I am not. That is why SPECTRUM's Aging with Pride initiative is so important to me."

Aging with Pride 2.0 is made possible by a Community Fund grant from the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation that also included funds allowing KW Counselling Services to provide free counselling for LGBTQ+ people aged 30+ in 2016-2017. "Older adults who identify as LGBTQ+ are a vulnerable population," says Leslie Josling, Executive Director of KW Counselling Services. "We are working to ensure that the service providers who work with these adults are well-equipped and trained in how to respect the unique needs of this population."

Both SPECTRUM and KW Counselling Services offer public education and consultation on diversity and LGBTQ+ issues upon request but this conference is a great opportunity for service providers to learn some best practices for working with older LGBTQ+ adults.

Washington Silk, Coordinator of the OK2BME program at KW Counselling Services notes that, "homosexuality was only completely removed from the official psychiatric manual of mental disorders 30 years ago. That means LGBTQ+ people who are over the age of 30 grew up in a time when being gay was considered to be a mental illness. Further, middle aged adults recall a

time prior to 1969 in Canada when their sexual orientation was punishable by law. These folks have different stories than younger LGBTQ+ people and we want to make sure that as many services as possible in Waterloo Region are welcoming and respectful of those stories.”

Barb Jones of Hospice of Waterloo Region says “we understand the importance of working to ensure older LGBTQ+ individuals in Waterloo Region can access all the supports available to those living with life limiting illness, their caregivers and those who are bereaved.” Dale Gellatly of Hospice of Waterloo Region notes “The opportunity to come together with organizations and community members committed to improving access to services, providing education and encouraging important conversations to support the needs of the older LGBTQ+ community is greatly appreciated.”

Hospice of Waterloo Region, in partnership with ACCKWA, offers a Rainbow Bereavement Support Group. As part of their commitment to providing quality end of life services to the LGBTQ+ community, Hospice of Waterloo Region has begun a year long process of becoming recognized as a positive space service provider.

People interested in booking public education or consultations on LGBTQ+ issues can contact Washington Silk at 519.884.0000 x213 or ok2bme@kwcounselling.com