

Caring with Pride: Welcoming and including the LGBTQ community at Front Porch

When Brian Horrocks and his partner of 43 years began looking for a senior community, they explored several options, including a community that was marketed exclusively to the LGBTQ community. “It was nice,” Brian says, “but I’m very glad that we decided on San Francisco Towers, a community that is extremely welcoming but diverse.”



After the first few months, the couple’s first impressions were confirmed. “We have met all kinds of people,” Brian says. “I think the majority of people here are straight, but there are lesbians and gays and, for all I know, transgender individuals. The community has been unusually welcoming in making sure that people are not isolated and provides all kinds of introductions. People are uniformly friendly.”

“Pride Month is a demonstration of caring through respect and celebration of our differences,” says Front Porch CEO John Woodward. As part of Pride Month, Front Porch dedicated its monthly resident and staff “Strength of Community” video chat to sharing stories from LGBTQ residents, staff, and those who are working toward greater inclusion of the LGBTQ community. “Creating welcoming, diverse, and inclusive communities is Front Porch’s priority all year round,” John explains.

Jerry Brown, Senior Director of Affordable Housing, shared the work he has been doing with the Long-Term Care Equality Index (LEI), an initiative of the Human Rights Campaign that helps senior communities understand what steps they can take to ensure members of the LGBTQ community feel welcome. The two-year LEI process helps communities evaluate their policies and procedures, and works to educate staff on LGBTQ concerns. “Communities start with the basics: just the mission statement being included in the personnel policy, but it also goes out to contractors, contractors that come in from the outside to your building, to make sure that they’re going to be inclusive and welcoming of LGBTQ folks when they come into contact with them.”

“We really should all feel very proud of our organization,” Jerry says. “We did everything we could to keep residents safe during the pandemic. Inclusivity is about safety too. Making members of our community — gay men like me — feel welcome at a community is really about feeling safe.”

Among the featured guests for the chat were residents who have spent their lives fighting for LGBTQ rights. Long before she moved to Wesley Palms in San Diego, Beth Coye lobbied for the repeal of the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. "My life for the first 42 years on earth revolved around the US Navy," she shares. Her father was a naval officer and went on to be an admiral. Beth herself then joined the Navy and was on active duty for 21 years.

From 1978-1980, Beth was Commanding Officer of a shore station. While up for promotion to captain, Beth learned that she had been tailed by her boss to determine if she was a lesbian. She chose to retire early, and "began to come out to anyone who would listen to my story." She lobbied for the end of Don't Ask, Don't Tell "to help free others from unnecessary pain and agony." She helped compile a series of letters called *We Are Family Too* from military personnel who had been affected by Don't Ask, Don't Tell. In part due to Beth's actions, Don't Ask, Don't Tell was repealed in 2011.

Now at Wesley Palms, Beth has a rainbow flag on her patio. "Cara, who's our director of sales and marketing, said the prospects really like the fact that we have diversity," Beth says. "I think, there are little things like that that you can do too if you really are serious about wanting to bring in more people from our community."

"America's attitude and values have dramatically changed since I was tailed 42 years ago by my boss for being possibly a lesbian," says Beth. "New laws and policies are giving hope for liberty and justice for all."

Brian agrees. "It's a lot different than it was 43 years ago. My experience and my partner Henry's experience over the years is that as we have been a little bit forthright in who we are, that the response has been almost overwhelmingly positive with very few exceptions, both in our families and in the communities we've lived in."

You can watch the Strength of Community chat on the Front Porch Retirement YouTube Channel. You can subscribe to future chats [here](#).