

June 17, 2026

We are thrilled to highlight [Southern Arizona Senior Pride](#), the inaugural recipient of the SAGECollab Partner of the Year Award, in this conversation with Executive Director Mary O'Donoghue. Rooted in the spirit of collaboration, mentorship, and community leadership that defined Reynaldo Mireles, Jr.'s legacy at SAGE and beyond, this recognition celebrates organizations advancing equity and connection for LGBTQ+ older adults. In this conversation, Mary reflects on the organization's journey, the needs of the community, and the work ahead to ensure LGBTQ+ elders can age with dignity and support.

How and when was Southern Arizona Senior Pride founded? What has changed since then?

Southern Arizona Senior Pride began in 2004 as a program of Wingspan, Tucson's LGBTQ community center, focused on social connection and programs for LGBTQ older adults. When Wingspan closed in 2014, a group of dedicated volunteers ensured programming continued for our community. Since incorporating as an independent 501(c)(3) organization in 2020, Senior Pride has become a leader in the LGBTQ+ and aging non-profit sectors in Southern Arizona. By deepening community partnerships, expanding and reimagining programming, and cultivating a robust staff and an intergenerational cohort of over 80 volunteers, Senior Pride has elevated its mission of celebrating, supporting, and uniting LGBTQ+ older adults. The organization has further developed its creative and healthy aging programming aimed at reducing loneliness, improving health outcomes, and building community, while expanding its supportive services to include assistance to individuals in-home and at care facilities, an emergency assistance fund, peer-led support groups, advance medical care planning, training for care providers, and advocacy on critical LGBTQ+ aging issues. Ultimately, this work ensures older LGBTQ+ community members in Southern Arizona can age with connection, dignity, and respect, while their lives and histories are celebrated.

What are the most pressing needs facing LGBTQ+ older adults in Southern Arizona today?

In Southern Arizona, LGBTQ+ older adults face many of the same challenges as other older adults—access to affordable housing and healthcare, transportation, and financial security—but they also contend with additional, compounding risks and challenges tied to their identities. These include a shortage of culturally competent and transgender-affirming care, higher rates of isolation and loneliness (especially among those aging solo, estranged from family or living in rural areas), greater vulnerability to discrimination in care settings, and barriers navigating benefits and legal protections that may not recognize chosen families or nontraditional relationships. Addressing these needs requires culturally responsive aging support, targeted outreach, and coordinated partnerships that acknowledge these unique risks.

What programs or initiatives are you most proud of, or have had the greatest impact on LGBTQ+ elders?

Southern Arizona Senior Pride's programs support LGBTQ+ older adults to age healthily, safely, and with meaningful social connection. We are proud of the collective impact Senior Pride and partnering organizations have had on our community. This impact is clearly visible in the evolution and reach of Senior Pride's Community Cares Program (CCP). In 2025, over 30 CCP volunteers and a dedicated staff member provided more than 3,300 individual services, such as phone calls and text messages, friendly visits, transportation to appointments and errands, pet care, home maintenance and yard work, and caregiver relief. 2025 also saw the introduction of a CCP emergency assistance fund that has helped program recipients stay in their homes and access urgent medical care. CCP, like all of Senior Pride's programs, is made possible by our dedicated staff and volunteers that are passionate about ensuring LGBTQ+ older adults age safely at home, navigate difficult moments and life changes, and remain connected to their community.

How have partnerships, such as SAGE/SAGECollab and other local collaborations, supported your work?

Partnerships—especially with local collaborators and SAGE/SAGECollab—are essential to the reach and impact of our healthy and creative aging initiatives and supportive services. Our work is focused and familial, grounded in a community-centered approach that mirrors how the LGBTQ+ community cares for one another.

That makes local partnerships vital not only for sharing resources and information but for recognizing and addressing the unique histories, needs, and cultural nuances of our elders in Southern Arizona. Through these collaborations we serve as a referral source, connect constituents to supports, provide training in culturally competent care, and collectively weave a stronger tapestry of connection. SAGE has been a consistent source of support—offering critical guidance, information, and workshops—while SAGECollab connects us to similar programs nationwide so we can exchange ideas, troubleshoot challenges, and uplift each other's work. These partnerships are the cornerstone of Senior Pride's success; SAGE's involvement has been instrumental to that achievement.

What are your priorities for next year, and are there any upcoming initiatives you're especially excited about?

Next year we will deepen and expand services that help LGBTQI+ older adults thrive—strengthening healthy and creative aging initiatives and growing our Community Cares Program beyond its current reach so more community members receive the supports they need. We're especially excited to host our signature conference, *Aging with Pride*, a day-long event with multi-track workshops on navigating benefits and healthcare; estate and end-of-life planning; aging and HIV/AIDS; sexual health in later life; housing during transitions; and more. Even amid challenges, we celebrate our resilient elders whose lived experience—rooted in moments like Stonewall—inspires both protest and pride; we stand on their shoulders as we build forward.

Is there anything else you want to share or uplift about LGBTQ+ Aging, Southern Arizona Senior Pride, or your work?

The work we do is both essential and profoundly consequential: while we provide care and support for our older LGBTQ+ friends and neighbors, we're also making a larger statement—being visible and helping build a more diverse, inclusive Southern Arizona. Our strength has deepened as we recruit younger volunteers and allies who bring energy, new skills, and an intergenerational perspective, strengthening connections across generations and the broader community. I love hearing the life stories of our LGBTQ+ elders; though their journeys differ, they share a powerful common thread—resilience in the face of adversity, commitment to community, care, and love. Their lessons guide us now, in this challenging moment, showing us how to move forward with courage, compassion, and purpose.