

Millbrae Patch

July 2, 2011

Peninsula Family Services Expands LGBT Services For Seniors



Credit Peninsula Family Services
LGBT Program Coordinator Arquimides Pacheco

San Mateo-based Peninsula Family Service recently added three LGBT volunteer peer counselors and an LGBT program coordinator to its Senior Peer Counseling Program, part of its Older Adult Services. The additions allow Peninsula Family Service to expand its services to the entire San Mateo County LGBT population, and to offer a unique service to the aging baby boomer population. The program, available to older adults aged 55 and above, fills an unmet need by making available volunteers who are not only of the same age, but have similar experience, wisdom, values and culture. The volunteer counselors undertake a nine-week training course taught by licensed professionals, and provide opportunities for interactions, encouragement and suggestions of resources to their clients. One of the few services of its kind on the Peninsula, the program provides a more accessible resource to adults who may have considered traveling to San Francisco or San Jose. Peninsula Family Service is currently accepting clients to its LGBT Senior Peer Counseling Program. The service is offered free of charge and without the necessity of a referral to residents of San Mateo County.

“The LGBT Senior Peer Counseling Program offers up services that aren’t known in the area,” says Arquimides Pacheco, the new LGBT program coordinator at Peninsula Family Service. “The big issues for LGBT older adults are identifying as LGBT, and finding resources for themselves with people who can understand their experiences.”

The program currently offers one-on-one peer-to-peer interactions, with hopes to add group sessions in the future.

The Senior Peer Counseling Program is in its fourth year at Peninsula Family Service. The program offers peer counseling to the LGBT community with issues such as loneliness, depression, caregiver problems, and illness-related problems. Sessions take place anywhere the client and peer counselor feel comfortable, including at the client's home or at a local senior center. Information exchanged during the meetings is confidential, and privacy is assured.

For more information on how to inquire about the program, call Peninsula Family Service at (650) 403-4300. The service is also open to clients who speak Spanish, Mandarin, Filipino, and Cantonese.

Peninsula Family Service, a private nonprofit organization, has provided skills and resources for communities throughout the Peninsula for more than 60 years. Serving nearly 20,000 people annually, Peninsula Family Service provides a comprehensive array of multi-generational programs – in multiple languages – to all children, families and older adults who need help regardless of their ability to pay. Programs include child development, financial empowerment and career re-training for older adults. For more information, visit www.peninsulafamilyservice.org.