



**Mystic Tea Sponsored
by
Mystic Valley Elder
Services**



Mystic Valley Elder Services started Mystic Tea nearly 8 years ago to provide an affirming, comfortable gathering place for LGBTQ older adults and anyone who wants to meet, eat and socialize with a lot of very interesting and welcoming people! And within that time, participation in the monthly meetings has remained robust, and newcomers to the Mystic Valley LGBTQ senior community have joined the gathering, finding companionship, acceptance, and the enjoyment of shared experiences.

“It’s a space where you don’t feel inhibited,” says Frank Lapiana, a regular participant in the group. “You may have grown up in an environment where you were mistreated or where you were made to feel like an outcast but this group setting is very comfortable and welcoming.”

Mystic Tea is a gathering for anyone with a focus on serving lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender older adults in the Mystic Valley region and beyond. LGBTQ Mystic Tea is held on the third Tuesday of the month from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at Mystic Valley Elder Services, 300 Commercial Street, in Malden. LGBTQ Mystic Tea is open to LGBTQ adults from anywhere in Massachusetts. The “tea” includes coffee, tea, and a hearty meal, but more importantly, good company and conversation.

Frank says it’s a comfortable group, always ready to make a first-timer feel welcome and embraced. And he notes that for some of the participants, it’s the only LGBTQ-specific space they ever encounter and they feel connected to each other.

For the several dozen regular attendees of Mystic Tea, both male and female, the monthly event has become central to their social calendars. Sometimes there are special guest speakers, presentations on senior nutrition or help navigating Medicare. Many of the members come every month and have made new friends.

“It gets you out of the house and adds variety to your week,” says Christopher Mason. “Mystic Tea is a place where I can be myself and feel comfortable in conversation.”

“We want all older adults in the Mystic Valley region to feel safe, comfortable, independent, and supported,” said Dan O’Leary, Chief Executive Officer of Mystic Valley Elder Services. “We treat all seniors equitably, and equitable treatment sometimes means reaching a bit further, trying a bit harder, and doing a bit more to create a welcoming and hospitable agency—and community.”

An important part of independent living for older adults is community and/or family support. Too often, however, LGBTQ seniors are alienated from their families, and do not know how to

find community members who would affirm their identities. Mystic Tea creates a welcoming community space for these individuals to socialize, develop trusting friendships, and build a peer support network.

Peer support and connection have proven health benefits for seniors. A sense of community improves seniors' emotional wellbeing and outlook, which in turn has a beneficial impact on health—including appetite, activity, memory, and intellect. Mystic Tea provides the members of our senior community with a safe and welcoming place to build this peer support and share with each other.

The participants may enjoy the meal served, but it's the company that keeps folks coming back, month after month and year after year.

For more information about Mystic Tea, please call 781-388-2303.