



Elder Lesbian Alliance of Southwest Michigan

Welcome!

We're so glad you decided to join us here in Southwestern Michigan.

We think you'll be pleased to discover yourself in a vibrant ,caring community. Midwestern Nice tends to apply to most Michiganders but you should find it generally experienced behavior amongst those in our groups. As more and more research highlights the importance of community for longevity you should quickly learn ,given the wide variety of interests and events ;there is definitely a space reserved just for you.

After the repercussions and isolation of Covid and the current political climate ,we need each other now more than ever.

Events are weekly ,monthly and yearly . In addition there are small gatherings ,dinners, dances, music ,pop up trips to the movies. Are there potlucks? Of course, but not exclusively. At our age it's time for someone else to cook.

Below you will find a kind of guide to the resources and events by category of interest or need. It is not exhaustive but should give you enough to get started and find a way to new friendships and support. As Bette Davis said, "Growing old ain't for sissies." And ,as the Beatles reminded us.. we get by with a little help from our friends.

So get up off that couch and come join us ;if you have trouble getting off the couch ,let us know we'll come and give you a boost.

Hope to see you amongst us soon.

Encounters of the First Kind

There are many lesbian friendly groups in the area but the two that are most active and keep folks up to date on what's happening and where, are LL50+ and Sapphoasis. Both are good starting points for introducing yourself to the community and finding those activities you might enjoy participating in.

LL50+ is available on Facebook ;River is the administrator for the site. They host a weekly brunch at a local restaurant and this is a good way to both introduce yourself and meet others. While they don't publish a monthly calendar ,you'll learn a lot about what's going on locally if you join in the chat. They sometimes also arrange a pop up movie night when we gather to watch together. (you can imagine how fifteen of us reacted while watching the Barbie movie)

BTW the LL50+ stands for Local Lesbians aged 50 plus,

Sapphoasis ;it's purpose is kind of in the name ,a safe place for women. You can contact them at Sapphoasis@gmail.com or call (269)254-1830.

They host the monthly Dinner Night Out ,held at different local restaurants; typically on the third Tuesday of the month. They also sponsor an annual women's dance ,Winter Holiday Party and an annual women's music night.

In the summer months they have patio parties where women gather to socialize ,listen to music and eat good food. In the Winter they have smaller, more intimate dinner parties.

You will also want to check out Outfront Kalamazoo's website .They offer multiple services and resources for the LGBTQA community. For people of our age there is a group called Seasons that meets frequently ,reference the website for where and when.

These organizations and events are just the tip of the ice burg for what's available in the area. As you meet and get to know people other opportunities will open to you. We should add here that we ,as a group, are cognizant of the current national environment and are very protective of women's privacy. Please come join us

Sports

If you're into bowling or would like to join other women walking local trails or the mall in the Winter..check in at LL50+.

Several women play pickle ball at the Portage Y and many also attend the line dancing class taught there.

Small groups occasionally form for card games ,playing the ukelele ,kayaking or fishing. Your best chance of joining these groups will be through the connections you develop when attending local events. Also check in with LL50+ in their chat function.

And, hey ,chances are good ,if you start a group of your own ,there'll be others interested. Depending on the focus of the group ,you'll find

organizations that are happy to help get out the word. Obviously LL50+, Sapphoasis ,possibly The Clover Room and several local churches.

Arts and Music

If you live near Kalamazoo ,then you're near a college town with all the attendant events with music and the arts. It is a very rich environment and a simple Google search will open that world to you.

As to events that feature or focus on women in our community once again we would suggest checking in with the LL50+ chat or with Sapphoasis. If you are of a certain age or simply find current technology beyond your skill set one of the women in each of these groups may kindly alert you to events you'd be interested in via phone or your preferred technology.

Many of us like to frequent sessions with Team TED who often play at The Thirsty Hound and other venues across the region. They suggest checking in with LL50+ or Sapphoasis to see where they're playing next. In preparation to attending their events you might want to brush up on your Beatles lyrics.

Or during the warmer months Sapphoasis sponsors Patio Parties where local women musicians are featured and are often accompanied by good food and definitely good company.

The Clover Room is another place that supports women and music. Google their website to see who/what's happening. They also rent out space should you want to start your own group or sponsor an event.

Medical

Fortunately we are no longer at a place where there's only one female doctor in Kalamazoo and we all go to her. In general you will find most of the medical community at least neutral to issues around sexual orientation ;if not supportive. Frankly ,the issue's not likely to come up ,unless you want or need for it to and fortunately ,there are few ,if any ,medical issues that are exclusive to our demographic.

As with many things ,if you're completely new to the area and would like some guidance as to medical personnel, most organizations provide biographies. It is also a frequent topic at social functions as people deal with various health issues. (Often referred to as the Organ Recital)

We all enjoy talking through our health issues ;offering and receiving advice. Which doctor is best at knee or hip replacements? Who listens and who spends most of their time interacting with the computer. We are replete with opinions and advice ;just ask us. Mostly we advise listening to your medical professionals ;but that doesn't stop us from complaining about the indignity of it all.

If you are new to the area ,don't have the benefit of friends or family near by and a health issue sneaks up on you there are several organizations that can be of assistance. If Sapphoasis or LL50+ are unable to provide you with the help you need perhaps one of the following organizations can.

Milestone serves both Kalamazoo and Calhoun counties. Their goal is to help seniors stay in their homes. They can help with repairs or making your home safer. They also act as a connection with Meals On Wheels

;those meals can be delivered short term after a surgery or illness or on an ongoing basis. The Area Agency on Aging is another good resource.

For more intense or long term situations that require constant care try Centrica Care Navigators or Rose Arbor.

Again these are just suggestions ;good places to start and you'll want to do your own research.

Mental Health

A good portion of life is a series of transitions. Folk our age are known for resisting change but in truth we are frequently confronted with life changing events. The loss of a, or several ,loved ones ;changes in health or mobility ,changes in important relationships. Having lived this long, most of us have encountered and survived these events ,but sometimes too much happens all at once or we find ourselves unable to cope as we used to. Friends come in handy here but there are times when some understanding professional help comes in handy.

While there are many local mental health professionals who are supportive of our community having someone who's walked a similar path brings a shorter route to empathy.

Members of our community have found the following people helpful; though ,obviously it's up to the individual to determine which person or methodology meets their current need or issue.

Here's a place to start:

Dana Scott-contact via Facebook Messenger

Elizabeth Ritzman LPC- contact via her webpage elizabethritzman.com

Spiritual

Finding supportive religious organizations in the area is as simple as Googling but here are a few that are well known in their support .

- Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Southwest Michigan
We are especially fond of them and know how affirming they are because they have ,kindly ,agreed to host our webpage. How's that for committed? They're located in the southwestern part of Portage.
- People's Church is located in Kalamazoo. A number of women in our various groups attend here.
- Check the Outfront Kalamazoo resources page for a more comprehensive and diverse listing.

Need Help?

Legal-

Here are a couple of names of local women who have been identified as supportive and understanding of issues pertinent to our community.

Sydney Parfet in Kalamazoo (269) 382-5300. Google for more information.

Kristin C. Duffy in Vicksburg (269) 649-3000. Also Google for more information.

Check Outfront Kalamazoo's resource guide for other suggestions

Technology-

If you don't have patient family members or can't afford the Geek Squad some Senior Centers have classes or volunteers. Or ask around at Brunch or Dinner Night Out ,there are some knowledgeable old ladies out there.

Outfront Kalamazoo have some people on staff who can be helpful or may know someone who can be, It's not easy for us old folk to keep up in a high tech world but it keeps us young (or elevates our blood pressure) learning new stuff ALL the time.

Around the House

Milestone ,Senior Centers and Googling are good ways to find help here .Or you can use the old fashioned method of asking your neighbors ,friends or the women you meet at brunch or Dinner Night Out.

Always check references and do due diligence by getting multiple bids for projects.(Even if so and so's cousin will give you a good deal)