



# ★ STAFF SPOTLIGHT: ★ Tracy Roach



When I was 12, I told my only friend that I was attracted to girls. She said it was just a phase. When I was 20, a friend of mine wrote the word bisexual on the white board outside my dorm room. I panicked and immediately erased it. I didn't want anyone to know that I had feelings for girls, or worse, that I had feelings for both girls and guys. When I was 24, in a relationship with a man, I felt like a part of me was missing and I didn't know how to express it. As a monogamous bisexual, I didn't know how to be in a relationship and still feel pride about who I was. I didn't see any representations of myself on TV. Willow from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* - finally a bisexual character! Except that they labeled her as gay after she came out, despite having two prominent male love interests before that. I slowly came out to the people in my life one by one during my 20s, encountering many biphobic reactions along the way. Have you ever cheated on anyone? You're greedy. You're confused. You really don't know if you're going to marry a woman or a man? What percentage of you is attracted to men? No bisexual is a certain percentage straight or gay. They are 100% bisexual, with their own unique challenges that go along with that identity. But still, I awkwardly answered: I don't know, 60%? Ok, 60%? That means you're straight. I wished, for a long time, that I was just straight or gay.

When I was 30, I met a group of friends that I went to karaoke with every week. Five of them, including me, identified as bisexual. I had found my community. These people got it. The struggles of coming out. The struggles of being who they were despite negativity and poor representation in the media. After many conversations, I was becoming more comfortable with my identity. But as much as I had ached for this community I now had, I also wanted to be myself around my straight friends. When I came out to my best friend, Katie, she went above and beyond. She researched bisexual issues, listened to how I felt, and understood that being bisexual was a core component of my identity. Bisexuals are often invisible within the LGBTQ+ community. In addition to little and inaccurate media portrayals, bisexuals are often discriminated against within their own community. I have had lesbians and straight men who wouldn't date me solely because I am bisexual. I have been to pride events where bisexuals were not represented or even made fun of. Just five days ago, at the pride picnic, there were many different flags hung from the LGBTQ+ community- but not a bisexual or pansexual flag in sight. Visibility matters. Representation matters. For bisexuals to be freely who they are, they need to feel accepted by both society and within the LGBTQ+ community. I am proud to say that, despite many times of feeling invisible, I like who I am. I celebrate my bisexuality with pride and urge you to make the bisexuals in your life feel seen, heard, accepted, and loved.



# Caregiving in Rochester as a Same-Sex Couple

written by Katy Allen



**Beth, Dogley, and Pat**

**Photo Credit: Annette Dragon**

Pat Uleskey and Beth Bloom make their home in a quiet Rochester neighborhood with their dog, Neo and their two cats, Phyllis and Burt. Following a date at SPOT Coffee nine years ago, Pat and Beth knew almost immediately that they were meant to be together. Call it, “almost love at first sight!” Beth, 64 had lost her partner to breast cancer some years earlier and Pat, 56, was divorced. That first date led to a life of love and more recently, a love-filled caregiving journey.

As I visited with Pat and Beth on their porch, one couldn't help but notice two things: that their neighborhood is filled with houses displaying Pride flags and signs of welcoming inclusivity and that you can't miss their love and dedication to each other and to Neo, affectionately called “Dogley,” who joined us.

Pat and Beth began their caregiving journey in 2018 when Beth's dad, Edd Bloom who was 86 at the time moved in with them. Following a text from her brother in Atlanta with whom Edd had been living, Beth had one caveat before she told her brother yes to his request that Edd move to Rochester. She said first she needed to discuss it with Pat. Pat never hesitated. Having lost her own mom in 2013 and dad in 2009, Pat embraced the opportunity to support Beth and build a relationship with Edd, not just as her partner's father, but as a father figure for herself as well. Beth, with a little more hesitancy, did what good daughters do and together they said yes. Welcoming Edd into their home was a little more complicated than just getting him from Atlanta. They had no first-floor bedroom and only one bathroom in the house. They renovated their home, turning the dining room into a private bedroom for him and with support from the VA, they added a fully accessible second bathroom. Just recently, as Edd's personal care needs have increased, he moved to a local facility. Beth and Pat spent almost 3 years balancing their own jobs, Covid, Pat having to switch to working from home, the home remodeling, PT, OT, and nursing scheduling in the home, being sure Edd was eating okay, managing his weight, trips to the Henrietta VA, which often lasted most or all of the day along with watching football on TV and developing a love of all things Michigan State. Edd doesn't like to miss a game!



# Lifespan Celebrates & Honors ROC Pride Month

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Beth, having come out to her parents fairly young, said her dad has always been accepting of her being a lesbian. Like many parental relationships, she says she and her dad have their challenges, but he has always accepted her and he and Pat have formed a strong and loving bond. They both recognize this as a substantial plus in caregiving for a parent as an LGBTQ couple. It often doesn't happen. Beth spoke passionately about how family of choice is something that is vital and should be asked about and valued in caregiving relationships for the LGBTQ+ community.

Pat and Beth's journey as caregivers for one partner's parent was pretty typical until Beth was diagnosed with cancer herself and then add in that global pandemic. With Beth's frightening diagnosis, Pat approached caregiving for Beth much like she approaches all of life, with a love-filled heart, the organizational skills of a powerhouse project manager and together she and Beth have the great skill of surrounding themselves with hugely supportive friends. They also say that an enormous part of their success as caregivers and going through a health issue has been having excellent employers. Employed by Gannett (Pat) and East House (Beth) is a gift they don't take lightly.

Beth went through many tests, appointments, scary conversations, sleepless nights and two surgeries...and her most recent doctor's visit noted no signs of cancer. (yes, you may stop reading now and cheer! 😊) Back to our story...

When I asked Pat and Beth in what ways being a same-sex couple has impacted their caregiving journey, they were both quick to point out that we are incredibly fortunate to live in a welcoming and inclusive community, reflected in all of Edd's and their own health care providers as well as with their employers. They are keenly aware that many people would not have had the positive experience they've had over the past 4 years of caregiving. For many LGBTQ+ couples, they are faced every day when attending an appointment for themselves or for someone for whom they are providing care with the primary worry about themselves or their loved one's health and THEN must always consider the secondary concern, 'will my healthcare provider (or the social worker or whomever we have to meet) be cool with who we are? Will they allow my loved one access? Will they be kind and welcoming and mostly, will we receive the best care possible without bias?'

Beth mentioned that the Assistant Director of the facility where dad is now living is a lesbian and that has, of course led to an enormous feeling of comfort with dad's placement. Staff at Edd's new home are very welcoming to them as a couple.

Pat and Beth shared that what they want professionals working with folks who are LGBTQ+ to know is that when you start working with anyone, the more inclusive your language, actions and attitude can be, the more at ease your clients will feel....and of course, if you are extra attentive to their dogs and cats, well that's just the icing on the cake!



# Evelyn Bailey, local LGBTQ+ Historian, Activist, and All-Around Good Human Dies July 13th, 2022

written by Katy Allen



<https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2022/07/14/rochester-lgbtq-historian-evelyn-bailey-dies-at-75/65372849007/>

<https://www.wxxinews.org/local-news/2022-07-13/evelyn-bailey-longtime-lgbtq-activist-and-historian-dies-at-75>

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/evelyn-bailey-obituary?pid=202395423>

<https://ffrpl.libraryweb.org/shoulders-to-stand-on-endowment-fund/>

Back in the early 2000's, I had the great fortune to cross paths with Evelyn Bailey when she approached me at my old job to see how her tutoring company might work together with the Community Place of Greater Rochester's clients, staff and the Foster Grandparent program. As the Aging Services Director at the agency, Evelyn called me and we scheduled a time to meet. Within moments of meeting each other, Evelyn and I connected as friends and I also knew immediately that Evelyn was not just an enthusiastic person, but she was wholly committed to her work, her community and to making sure the Gay Alliance (later the Out Alliance) continued as a beacon of support and a safe space for the LGBTQ+ community. Evelyn and I worked together outside of my day job for the next year+ raising money for the Alliance. It was a wonderful volunteer opportunity for me to put to use my skills and experience, to learn from the best and more importantly, a joy to get to know a true community leader on a personal level. Evelyn firmly believed that if we do not know our history, that we must learn it, in order to never repeat it. She was dedicated to ensuring every issue of The Empty Closet, New York State's oldest continually running LGBTQ newspaper was digitized and archived and she was a leader in building the Shoulders To Stand On project that gathers and preserves Rochester and the surrounding communities' LGBTQ history.

When Evelyn was recently honored by the county, with Monroe County Executive Adam Bello naming June 14th Evelyn Bailey Day, she continued her message to all of us in her acceptance speech that the work is not finished.

"I challenge each and every one of you to take up the baton of openness, embracing the differences that exist within our community and outside our community," she implored. "There is no room in the LGBTQ life for discrimination, bigotry or hatred."



Click on the links to above to learn more about Evelyn and learn how you can support the Shoulders To Stand On project.