Stony Brook ELIH Hosting Its First LGBTQ+ Outreach Forum

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One crucial issue often discussed within the LGBTQ+ community is limited access to comprehensive — and compassionate — healthcare.

Recognizing the importance of cultivating understanding and improving communication among a diverse group of residents, Stony Brook Eastern Long Island is encouraging the public to participate in its next outreach program, titled “LGBTQ+ and Healthcare: Empowering Health, Embracing Diversity.”

On Wednesday, March 20 at 4:30 p.m. at the Peconic Community Center, speakers will outline the healthcare challenges specific to individuals who identify as part of the LBG'TQ+ community and offer insights on how they can be more effectively addressed and understood.

Stony Brook Southampton Hospital’s Cristina Witzke, site director of the hospitals Edie Windsor Healthcare Center — Long Island’s first and only LGBTQ+ focused healthcare facility, is among the speakers.
The center offers comprehensive primary and family medical care, HIV/AIDS services, free HIV Rapid testing, STI testing, mental health counseling and other resources.

Ms. Witzke said the center wants to work closely with its counterpart in Greenport — which does not have a specific LGBTQ+ clinic — to help provide these needed services.

In 2021, Stony Brook Medicine issued a survey to LGBTQ+ adults living in Suffolk and Nassau Counties, for which they received an estimated 1,150 completed responses. Some of the key findings included nearly 44% of respondents who said they had fair or poor mental health, few respondents reporting receiving routine preventative medical care and 37% of respondents saying their past experiences with healthcare providers had been “disrespectful or “non-affirming.”

Ms. Witzke said she and the other speakers will inform participants about what “affirming” healthcare means, the barriers and disparities faced by the LGBTQ+ community, proper terminology and how healthcare providers, business owners, parents, family and friends can become allies.

“LGBTQ+ individuals need a welcoming environment with providers who have the cultural competence to use the correct name, use the language and the terms that are affirming,” Ms. Witzke said. “Using a name, language or a term, it may not seem like a big deal to some people, but those microaggressions, those small things, can add up for a person.”

The official flyer for the event is below. For more information, call 631-477-5164.