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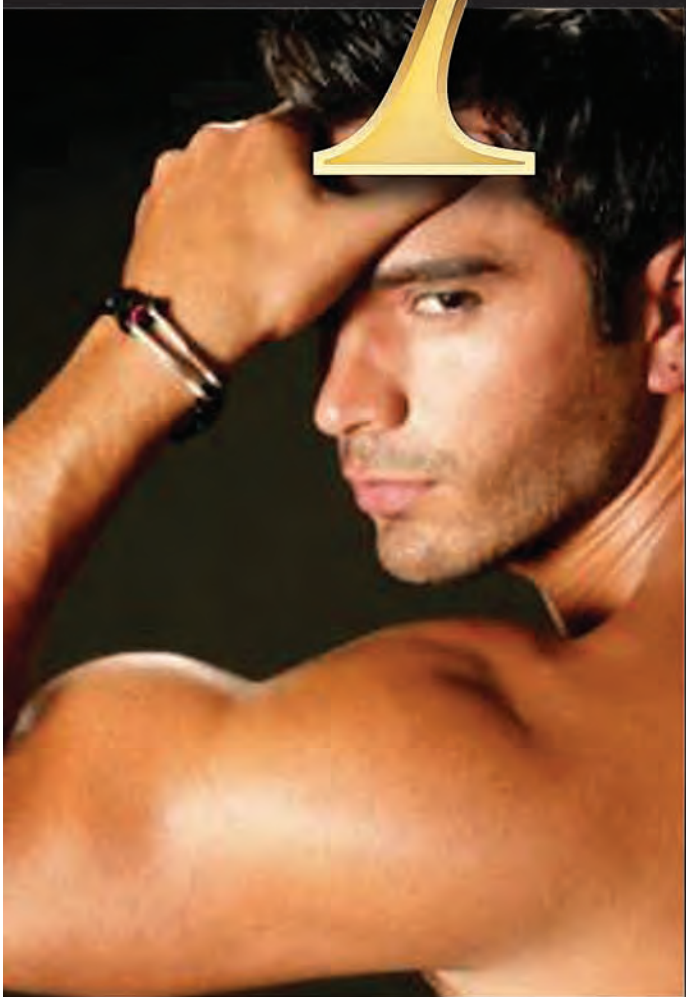
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10



14



23



25

News

5 | Speak out

Let's keep fighting for equality in 2011

6 | Teens for justice

These teens are changing their communities for the better. So what if they're only 17?

8 | Transgender man marries, has marriage revoked the same day

8 | Alma Wheeler Smith joins Equality Michigan board

11 | 2010: Michigan highlights and lowlights

School bullying, state politics made LGBT headlines

11 | Peace Prom seeks donations

14 | 2011 looks hopeful

Community gained more than it lost in 2010

16 | N.C. ruling jeopardizes same-sex parent rights

The ruling calls into question the validity of all other second-parent adoptions in the state

Opinions

10 | S/he said

More to do after DADT

10 | Heard on Facebook

What BTL's Facebook fans say about discrimination and our new governor

12 | BTL Editorial

It takes a village

12 | 2010: Hope to be found

Transmissions

13 | Parting Glances

A HD is forever

14 | Creep of the Week

Michael Medved

Life

19 | The 'Hole' Story

Out director John Cameron Mitchell on his big Nicole Kidman feature

20 | Cool Cities: Ferndale

Ring in the "Blue" year!

21 | Winter Blast launches in February

Detroit event to feature live music, family fun and cold-weather festivities

23 | Hear Me Out

Keyshia Cole phones in "Calling All Hearts." Plus: Crystal Bowersox's debut

25 | Curtain Calls

There's a situation goin' on at Go Comedy!

26 | Happenings

Featured: University of Michigan's Spectrum Center celebrates 40 years

Rear View

28 | Dear Jody

29 | Horoscopes

30 | Puzzle

31 | Classifieds

32 | Cocktail Chatter

34 | Deep Inside Hollywood

Cover

Emma Upham, a 17-year-old from Saline, Mich., works for social justice.

Photo by Andrew Potter



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Let's keep fighting for equality in 2011

While progress can seem slow, the LGBT community has made enormous strides toward greater equality in the past two years. The most obvious achievement was the recent repeal of "don't ask, don't tell." In his eloquent remarks prior to signing the repeal, President Barack Obama spoke movingly of the many gay and lesbian soldiers who have fought for our nation's values since the Revolutionary War. For those who have doubted the president's commitment to LGBT equality, his recent statement and action on DADT should serve as a reminder that we have a strong ally in the White House.

The proof of the president's values is not just in the repeal of DADT, but also in other actions. Soon after taking office, Obama extended a number of domestic partner benefits to government employees. The U.S. State Department has ended its policy of preventing foreigners with HIV/AIDS from entering the country. After too many years of political wrangling, Obama signed a comprehensive hate crimes law that includes sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories. Following a hospital's notorious decision to prevent a woman from visiting her dying partner, Obama issued a directive to Medicare-recipient hospitals (covering the vast majority of U.S. hospitals) to allow patients to choose their visitors.

Clearly, the LGBT community is in a far better place today after two years of Obama than we were during the divisive two terms of President George W. Bush. Some supporters of LGBT equality have complained that Obama has not been more forceful in advancing pro-equality measures during his time in office. Political realities, however, have required careful action by the president in fulfilling his campaign pledges. He worked very methodically with the top leaders in the military to gain their support for an end to DADT, and then surveyed the troops in an effort to gauge the best way to integrate lesbian and gay soldiers into the ranks of the services. The president's strategy paid off, despite overwhelming odds against success.

What's next? One glaring example of discrimination in this country is the prohibition in most states on same-sex marriage. Last year, a federal district court in Massachusetts declared the federal Defense of Marriage Act to be unconstitutional. In California, a federal court has already invalidated that state's anti-gay marriage amendment. Obama seems to be softening his opposition to gay marriage (he has long supported civil unions), and Vice President Joe Biden recently stated that same-sex marriage is inevitable in the U.S. It's becoming clear that the courts may be the best chance to end marriage discrimination.

Though DADT has been repealed legislatively, the policy remains in place. The

DADT repeal requires that the president and military leaders certify that the military is ready before ending the policy of excluding gay and lesbian soldiers. Obama has clearly stated his view that the military should not drag its feet as it prepares to end DADT. Our community should take the president at his word, and hold the military leaders accountable as they move to end discrimination.

Passage of the comprehensive Employment Non-Discrimination Act appears to be stalled now that the Republicans are in charge of the House. State action on this issue is probably unlikely in many states, including Michigan, as the Republicans solidify their hold on state legislatures and governorships. We should continue to alert our political leaders to the reality that workers still can, and do, lose their jobs every year because of their sexual orientation

and gender identity. All available legal action should be taken to defend employees who are unfairly terminated because of anti-LGBT

discrimination.

Over the next two years, the LGBT community may have to play a bit of defense against the regressive efforts of right-wingers to deny people equal rights. Thankfully, Obama is in position at the federal level to block the more egregious efforts of Republicans to discriminate. But defensive action will not advance LGBT equality. Our movement must stay active in both the legislative and judicial arenas. We should continue to pursue lawsuits that challenge discriminatory laws, and we must continue to educate the public on the reality of discrimination against LGBTs. Some of the greatest advances in civil rights occurred during eras when the political branches were controlled by opponents of equality. The lesson of our nation's history is that equality is the birthright of every citizen, no matter what.

Stay updated on the progress of DADT repeal:



SPEAK OUT

www.defense.gov/home/features/2010/0610_gatesdadt/

New Beginning Initiative--a collaboration of several national LGBT groups to track progress on equality at the federal level:

www.thetaskforce.org/newadmin/newbeginning_intro.html

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From Stork to Finish



Think teens these days only care about texting and Facebook? Think again. We happen to know a few high school students who are working their tails off for social change. In the past year, Emma Upham, Kyle Sims and Ian Hoopingarner have stood up to adults, educated their peers, and shaken up their communities. These kids are fearless, feisty, and dedicated to the work it takes to make the world a better place.

The quiet leader

Emma Upham is a small-town teen making a big impact

BY TARA CAVANAUGH

SALINE – With her chin-length bob and geek-chic glasses, Emma Upham looks like any other bookish teen from a small town. Sitting in a coffee shop, the tiny young woman picks at a muffin, tears through a thick book of crossword puzzles, and appears as harmless and forgettable as anyone else there.

But don't let her appearance fool you.

This past fall, the 17-year-old helped propel the pristine town of Saline to statewide spotlight. President of her high school's GSA, she pushed the school board for an LGBT-inclusive non-discrimination policy. As a result, the school board received hundreds of e-mails from concerned citizens from all over the state, and was even threatened with a lawsuit from the American Family Association of Michigan.

"She led that whole effort for five months," said Laura Wernick, who works at the Neutral Zone, a teen center in Ann Arbor. The Neutral Zone is home to Riot Youth, an LGBT group Upham helps lead.

The addition of LGBT-inclusive language into the district's non-discrimination policy eventually failed in a 4-3 vote. A few members of the school board appeared uncomfortable with including transgender students in the policy, and after an attempt to remove such language failed, they voted against it. But Upham is unfazed.

She said Saline High's GSA, Spectrum, will "definitely" bring the issue to the board again. "We want to get that policy in there. We want to make sure it stays there through different administrations, different (leaders)," she said. In fact, the GSA still sends members to the often yawn-inducing school board meetings, just to remind the board they're still there.

Upham knows that the school board could eventually be persuaded to vote in favor of changing the policy because of how much her school and town were affected last fall.

"There was a campaign some of the teachers did, where they wore little rainbow ribbons on their nametags. And there are (Human Rights Campaign) stickers everywhere now," she said, beaming in between bites of muffin.

Even better, the issue piqued the genuine curiosity of other teens. "I got asked all the time about it," she said. "All the time!"

Upham explained to students – many who had never talked to her before – what it's like to be an LGBT student in high school, and how changing the non-discrimination policy could help change the often-homophobic high school climate. "There are a lot of people who don't feel safe in school," she said. "I have friends who don't feel safe in school coming out or even admitting to themselves that they might be questioning, and that's very reflective of the climate."

Upham still explains this to students, because they keep asking her questions.

"She's someone that people talk to," Wernick said. "She's not Miss Popularity, but people really look to her as a leader.

"You've got the spokespeople, the ones who give the inspirational speeches," Wernick said. "And then you've got the actual leaders – the ones who lead the movements behind the scenes. She's one of the most important people we have."

Upham, who readily admits that she's "a lot more comfortable on an individual level with people," became president of Spectrum by accident. She said it took her months to stop shaking when she started attending meetings at the Neutral Zone.



Emma Upham at the Neutral Zone in Ann Arbor. BTL photo: Andrew Potter

"She's more interested in the good of the whole than about herself," Wernick said. "She's really concerned about how to move forward and not just let one person dominate the conversation."

"It's a lot of listening, it's a lot of reading people and a lot of like alright, so how's the group doing now ... how do we want to focus more so we can get to that deeper place with the conversation," Upham said.

Upham tries to make sure everyone in each group she leads is reached.

"The quiet, shy kids come in and they're just looking for a place to find some community and blossom into cool, leader, outgoing people," she said. "Which is totally what happened to me."

How did that happen? "There are all sorts

of opportunities for subcommittees or projects or whatever, and I just kept volunteering. And from that I got to meet people and find a place there and then it just took off and kept going," she said, shrugging. "The more I push myself, the more I grow."

So what's next for the teen, who drops words like "heteronormativity" as easily as she does "totally" and "cool"?

For now, she's creating a coalition to help other high schools create their own GSA's. As for her post-high school plans, she has no idea. "I'd like to keep doing this, but I'm not sure how," she said.

Whatever she ends up doing, there's no doubt this quiet leader will keep pushing, growing, and getting noticed.

"You've got the spokespeople, the ones who give the inspirational speeches. And then you've got the actual leaders – the ones who lead the movements behind the scenes." –Laura Wernick

Bullied into action

Kyle Sims stops bullying in its tracks

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

SWARTZ CREEK – Middle school was not a lot of fun for Kyle Sims.

“From the very first day, kids started saying things to me and calling me gay, and I had never heard that word – ever,” he recalled. “I didn’t really understand what that was. I started to question myself and it was a really, really hard time for me.”

As a result, Sims started to self-destruct.

“I did horrible in school, I got all Es,” he said. “I was just very depressed. I really didn’t have any friends. It was hard for me to deal with and I gained a lot of weight. Then kids started making fun of me for that. And around the end of the seventh grade I developed an eating disorder.”

Eventually, things began to turn around for Sims, but the process was slow.

“I made some friends that I guess accepted me, but I didn’t tell them anything about myself,” he explained. “But, at least, they didn’t make fun of me, which I liked about them. Around eighth grade, I was kind of discovering myself, but I dated girls.”

It was in high school that the butterfly began to emerge from the cocoon of self-doubt.

“I had never had any gay friends and when I went into high school, I met my very first gay person,” said Sims. “Almost immediately, I came out to him. Then I slowly told all my friends and they weren’t surprised by it. I didn’t lose a single friend over it.”

The rest of the school body, however, was not as embracing.

“My peers around me did not take it well,” Sims said. “What confused me about it was that they had been taunting me for years, and then when I came out they taunted me even more.”

Though Sims had so far only had to deal with verbal bullying, things escalated once he entered Swartz Creek High School.

“(W)hen I was in gym class I would not want to get dressed in the locker room,” Sims remembered. “I felt uncomfortable. I would get dressed in a stall. ...Kids would throw things at me, like water bottles.”

“I didn’t feel like anyone at the school was there for me. I didn’t feel like I had anybody there to tell about it, so I basically just kept it to myself.”

Then, in his sophomore year, Sims met Andrea.

“She was a senior and she wanted to create a club at the school,” Sims said. “There was a huge

issue with bullying and we knew we needed to do something about it. So I worked with her to create this club. We called it Common Ground, and basically that was just our name for a gay-straight alliance.”

The club caught on quickly, averaging 25 members a meeting, even though it was not school-sponsored and, as a result, could not be advertised in the school announcements. Then, the following year, Andrea graduated, and it was Sims’ turn to pick up the mantle and run the club on his own.

“From the time we started this club there was a huge change in the atmosphere around the school,” Sims said. “We got T-shirts and kids were aware of it, even if they weren’t going to the meetings. Since the club started, I have not had any kind of instance where I’ve been bullied at the school. So we definitely felt that the club was a success ... and things just kept getting better.”

As he started his senior year, Sims felt that the time had come to take Common Ground to the next level.

“I wanted to expand it for the entire school and not just focus on the gay issue, because there were obviously a lot of other kids being bullied for a lot of other things,” he said. “So I worked with our assistant superintendent, Dave Simanek, who was basically going to run this club called the Power of 100. It was the club’s goal to get at least 100 students to come to these meetings for the sole issue of tackling bullying in the school.”

“We’ve had a huge turnout,” Sims continued. “So many kids are in support of this club and it’s

completely changed our school. I think that our school is safe now for kids.”

Sims, now 17, currently serves on the leadership council for the Power of 100, and as he enters his last semester, he’s proud not just of his accomplishment, but of the school’s.

The experience has inspired Sims to consider a career in activism.

“I’m trying to figure out what I want to do,” he said. “I really love activism ...that’s where my true passion lies.”



Photo courtesy of Kyle Sims

“So many kids are in support of this club and it’s completely changed our school. I think that our school is safe now for kids.” – Kyle Sims



Stepping up for social justice

Ian Hoopinger gathers hundreds to out-protest the Westboro Baptist Church

BY TODD HEYWOOD

EAST LANSING – The week before the notorious Westboro Baptist Church showed up to protest at Ian Hoopinger’s high school, he said the student body was abuzz.

“That was the only topic of conversation at lunch that day, of course,” said Hoopinger, 17. “The impression I got was that everyone wanted to do something, but they didn’t know what to do.”

He said the students found out about the impending visit by the church, known for its provocative anti-gay rhetoric and signs, after East Lansing High School Principal Paula Steele sent an e-mail to the faculty of the school. That e-mail, Hoopinger said, asked staff not to discuss the impending visit until the district figured out how to handle the protest.

Westboro said the church targeted the school

because some of the students had sent letters criticizing its protests against the funerals of fallen soldiers. The Kansas church claims the soldiers are dying because of America’s tolerance for homosexuality. Prior to harassing mourners at military funerals, the church was making headlines protesting at the funerals of those who had died from AIDS. They also protested the funeral of Matthew Shepard, a young Wyoming gay man who was beaten and left strung up on a fence atop a hill by two assailants who robbed him.

“The WBC slammed us pretty hard on their website,” said Hoopinger, a high school junior. “I think they just knew how to push our buttons. That’s their job, to push people’s buttons.”

Soon Hoopinger heard about a community meeting to strategize a response to the protest.

“Decisions are made by the people who show up,” he said of his reason for appearing at that Monday night meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church, located directly behind the high school.

Hoopinger stood up, told the crowd that

“Decisions are made by the people who show up.” – Ian Hoopinger

students wanted to do something, and proposed a fundraising idea. The idea was not new, but it was readily accepted.

Under his leadership, the group raised more than \$1200 on the day the church protested, and donated it to groups like Equality Michigan, the Lansing Area AIDS Network and the Southern Poverty Law Center. The donations were made in WBC’s name.



Ian Hoopinger. BTL photo: Andrew Potter

On top of proposing and coordinating the fundraising activity, Hoopinger also stepped up and acted as a spokesperson for the counter-protest organized by a coalition of community members. That group, called Unity in our Community, hosted an alternative protest

See Teen justice, page 16

Alma Wheeler Smith to serve on Equality Michigan Board

Equality Michigan's political action organization has added a Michigan state representative and a long-time progressive activist to its board of directors.



Alma Wheeler Smith

State Rep. Alma Wheeler Smith, D-54, is a former state senator and the first black woman to run for governor on Michigan's democratic ticket. In addition, she has served as president of the Washtenaw County school board, as a county commissioner, and was the first woman to lead an appropriations caucus in the state legislature.

Wheeler Smith lives in Salem Township and has three adult children.

Equality Michigan Action Network is the arm of Equality Michigan that lobbies the Legislature for equality-based legislation and policy. With headquarters in Detroit and an office in Lansing, Equality Michigan works to achieve full equality under the law and respect for all Michigan citizens regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Transgender man marries, has marriage revoked the same day

BY TODD HEYWOOD

PONTIAC – Jordan Swan, who is a female-to-male transgender man, said he went to the Oakland County Clerk last week to marry his fiancée. The two paid for their marriage license, swore their oaths and signed on the dotted line. Then they were off to the chapel to get married... or so they thought.

Swan told Fox 2 News that shortly after the happy couple left the clerk's office they received a call telling them they had to return to the offices to get a refund for their marriage license fee. The reason they were offered when they got to the offices? Swan is not a man because he doesn't have a penis.

It should be noted that Swan presented a letter from his doctor showing he completed gender reassignment surgery in March. Under Michigan law, that affidavit is enough for Swan to have his gender switched out on his birth certificate.

But for Oakland county officials, under the leadership of Secretary of State-elect Ruth Johnson, the key to the whole matter is having a

Shortly after the happy couple left the clerk's office they received a call telling them they had to return to the offices to get a refund for their marriage license fee. The reason they were offered when they got to the offices? Swan is not a man because he doesn't have a penis.

penis. Penis construction for transgender men, Swan said, costs "thousands and thousands" of dollars, and is something he simply can't afford right now.

Fox 2 asked their legal analyst on the issue: Does a penis make a person a man?

"If a doctor signs an affidavit that says you've had the sex reassignment, you can take that to the courthouse and you can get a new

birth certificate," explained Fox 2 legal analyst Charlie Langton. "You don't need a penis to become a man."

Earlier this year, Oakland County Clerk Ruth Johnson came under fire from LGBT activists after she did an about-face on issues impacting the gay community. The move was widely seen as a way to challenge Rep. Paul Scott, R-Grand Blanc, who was gaining steam in the Secretary of State race by vowing not to issue new licenses to transgender people who have completed gender reassignment surgery.

Michigan Messenger reported Johnson, who won the Republican primary and then the November election, said, "No, I do not support allowing people to change their gender on their license as a result of surgery or lifestyle."

Swan said he plans on getting the new birth certificate, and then will be back to the clerk's office so he can marry the woman he calls "the love of his life."

Originally published on www.michiganmessenger.com

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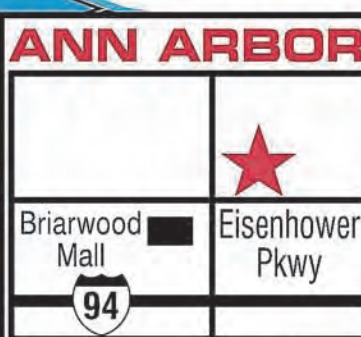
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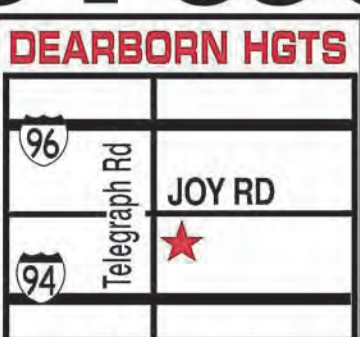


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 **Heard on Facebook**

Discrimination is getting worse, according to a new survey in Michigan. Do you agree?

From a straight point of view, I think things have gotten much better, especially with young people who seem to be very accepting and even consider it a non-issue.

—Nancy Janoch

While gay people have done much to make society aware of anti-gay bullying, we haven't made a dent in the problem that gays have when it comes to bullying EACH OTHER ... I never thought we would be going backwards but in short, the ability to get married someday will mean nothing if we have no idea how to relate to each other. We can't all live in our own bubbles forever. Its time we start caring about other LGBT's other than ourselves!

—Jonathon Lund

What advice would you give to our new governor, Rick Snyder? How should he handle LGBT issues?

Keep with the Republican philosophy of small government and keep his effing nose out of matters that the government shouldn't have any hand in.

—Curtis Ray

Treat us like people instead of roaches. Keep the church/state separate.

—Frank Vaca

Comments have been edited for grammar and length.

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Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

— *First Amendment, U.S. Constitution*

S/he said
More to do after DADT repeal

COMPILED BY HOWARD ISRAEL



L.Z. Granderson

“President Obama can sign a bill into law. The judicial system can enforce it. But only everyday people can breathe life into the greater, cultural and personal significance behind the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ repeal. And that is, we don’t have to hide.”

—L.Z. Granderson, in his column titled “‘Don’t ask’ repeal frees up everybody,” <http://edition.cnn.com>, Dec. 22.

“President Obama said that repeal of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ will strengthen our national security. I cannot think of anything more dangerous to our national security and the ongoing strength of our nation than the collapse of our sense that there are objective rights and wrongs. When we sanction ourselves to make everything up, who can the God that our Declaration of Independence refers to possibly be? Why should Americans take the words of our constitution, that are a few hundred years old, seriously when we dismiss the truths of words that are thousands of years old?”

—Star Parker, in her column titled “‘Don’t ask, don’t tell’ Repeal a Mistake,” <http://townhall.com>, Dec. 27.



Rick Santorum

“‘Don’t ask, don’t tell’ was not about men and women serving in the military. Men and women who are gays and lesbians can serve in the military right now. That’s not the issue. This is about a larger issue of the secularization of our society. It’s a larger issue about the left just, you know, trying to, you know, put government in control of this country, and trying to move faith, trying to move any people of faith and religion out of the

public square, out of America, trying to transform what America’s all about.”

—Rick Santorum, chairman of America’s Foundation, a political action committee committed to conservative principles, in a discussion about the repeal of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ on Fox News Channel’s *The Sean Hannity Show*, www.newshounds.us, Dec. 23.

“Given the president’s support of gay rights in other contexts, his opposition to marriage equality raises the question of whether the struggle Obama referred to is between politics and principle. If so, we hope principle will prevail. The president could spare himself that struggle if he would analyze the issue logically. Civil unions, while a vast improvement over the absence of any recognition of same-sex relationships, are almost by definition second-class arrangements. What should determine his position is logic and the fact that same-sex couples across America, not just those in his circle, yearn for recognition of their relationships. Enough agonizing, Mr. President. Support marriage equality.”

—In a *Los Angeles Times* editorial about President Obama’s statement that he is “struggling” with whether to endorse same-sex marriage, www.latimes.com, Dec. 30, 2010.



“The end of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ will finally allow our brave women and men in uniform to defend their country without having to defend or hide their true identity, and will eliminate their fear of being fired from our nation’s largest employer based solely upon who they are. But this measure will not alleviate that fear for millions of other Americans who worry daily that they will lose their jobs if someone discovers — or even thinks — they are LGBT.”

—Chris Hartman, director of Fairness Campaign, an LGBT rights organization in Louisville, Ky., in his column titled “Barriers have fallen in military, but others remain,” www.courier-journal.com, Dec. 26.

2010: Highlights and lowlights

School bullying, state politics made LGBT headlines

BY TODD HEYWOOD

While lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people saw gains at the federal level in 2010, Michigan saw the ugly side of anti-gay animus with straight pride celebrations in local schools, a rash of national and local teen suicides and the death of LGBT-specific legislation in the Republican-controlled state Senate.

Bullying deaths draw local action

Nationally-covered teen suicides, many of them related to anti-gay harassment, prompted public mourning and increased calls for anti-bullying legislation.

At Michigan State University hundreds gathered in early October for a candlelight vigil to remember those who had been lost to suicide and to send the message that students were not alone on the campus.

At Oakland University, students gathered for a more somber remembrance as they recalled their friend Corey Jackson, 19. Jackson's body was found in a wooded area on campus where he had apparently hanged himself.

The suicides, however, did nothing to push the state's anti-bullying legislation through the state Senate, where Republicans declared it dead on Nov. 2 following a landslide night for Republican candidates in the state. Prior to that, State Sen. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland, was chastised by Gov. Granholm for claiming the bill was stalled over the definition of bullying.

But activists saw a glimmer of light for anti-bullying legislation in the next legislative session when Gov.-elect Rick Snyder's pick to head the Michigan State Police said she would be a "strong supporter of addressing bullying in our state."

Straight Pride celebrations, products appear in the state

Between The Lines also reported this year on the appearance of a small straight pride movement rearing its head in Michigan. The first report came during a Tea Party Express rally in Lansing. There, a t-shirt proclaiming "straight pride" was offered for sale.

In another move, students from three rural mid-Michigan school districts created a Facebook "straight pride" day and event. The movement was soundly condemned by school officials as well as national and local LGBT leaders. The event went on at the schools without incident.

LGBT state politics

During this past year's election, the LGBT community saw itself not only represented by out politicians, but also targeted by politicians and activist groups.

In the August primary, Democrat Dale Kildee, D-Flint, saw a challenge from openly gay resident Scott Withers. Withers lost his bid to



Former Assistant Attorney General Andrew Shirvell is seen harassing UM Student Body President Chris Armstrong last spring. By the end of the year Attorney General Mike Cox was forced to fire Shirvell for his attacks on Armstrong. BTL photo Jessica Carreras.

unseat Kildee, who went on to win the November election.

But generally, when LGBT issues came up in the past year in politics, it was negative. The negativity began with Rep. Paul Scott, R-Grand Blanc, targeting transgender people in his announcement that he would seek the Republican nomination for Secretary of State. Paul continued to support his anti-transgender crusade throughout his race.

He was beaten by Oakland County Clerk Ruth Johnson. Johnson was criticized by the LGBT community when she made an about-face on community issues.

The campaign season also saw controversy from the Campaign for Michigan Families, a conservative group headed by American Family Association of Michigan President Gary Glenn. Earlier in the year, Glenn was chastised by an Allegan County newspaper for "creating a climate of homophobic hysteria" in the county with his group's attacks on Allegan County District Judge William A. Baillargeon. Baillargeon had been involved with the Triangle Foundation and Affirmations, two LGBT organizations in the Detroit area.

The Allegan chastisement, however, did not stop Glenn or the Campaign for Michigan Families. At the end of October, the group launched an attack ad targeting openly lesbian candidate for state representative Toni Sessoms. This led to a powerful, ironic and funny YouTube video from Sessoms countering the allegations in the ad. Sessoms lost her bid.

But no issue garnered more attention than a battle between the openly gay and elected student leader of the University of Michigan Chris Armstrong and conservative Assistant Attorney General Andrew Shirvell. Shirvell ran a blog attacking Armstrong and had shown up at his off-campus house. Shirvell's behavior made national headlines when Anderson Cooper featured his story on CNN.

Armstrong sought a personal protection order against Shirvell, though he ultimately dropped the bid, and U-M barred Shirvell from the campus. That ban was later changed to allow

him to be on campus but not have contact with Armstrong. While Attorney General Mike Cox, a Republican, started by defending Shirvell, he ultimately brought administrative charges against him. The hearing led to Shirvell's dismissal from the AG's office for using state equipment to blog about Armstrong and lying to state investigators.

State and local officials struggle to move LGBT equality issues

Finally, the state saw a series of state and local policy moves to push a pro-LGBT equality movement forward.

On a state level, the Michigan Department of Corrections booted an anti-gay ministry – Corduroy Ministries – out of its ministry programs after the Lansing group lost its national affiliation with the ex-gay group Exodus International.

In addition to the MDOC move, the State Civil Service Commission took up and then tabled a proposal to extend health care benefits to Other Eligible Individuals. OEI is a policy program created by Michigan State University and cloned at other locations to address a 2008 state Supreme Court ruling that found same-sex partner benefit programs violated a constitutional amendment passed by voters in 2004 which made marriage a union between one man and one woman.

In East Lansing, the week after the SCSC tabled its OEI proposal until the new year, the East Lansing City Council directed staff to prepare to implement such a program in July for city employees.

In Holland, officials were asked to consider an ordinance protecting LGBT people from discrimination in the conservative community. The community had come under fire after Hope College, located in the city, refused to allow Oscar-winning writer Dustin Lance Black to appear on campus. Two groups were formed out of that movement. The Holland Council sent the proposal to its Human Relations Commission, which sent it back to the body in November.

Ruth Ellis Center hosts foster parent orientation

Ruth Ellis Center, the Midwest's only agency dedicated to homeless, runaway and at-risk youth who are lesbian, gay, bi-attractional, transgender or questioning, is partnering with the Michigan Dept. of Health and Human Services and Wayne County Child and Family Services to host an orientation for individuals interested in becoming foster parents.

The orientation will take place 5:30-8:30 p.m. Jan. 11 at the Ruth Ellis Center's Drop-in Center on 77 Victor St. in Highland Park. Attendees must RSVP by Jan. 6 by calling 313-252-1950.

"So many young people we see at Ruth Ellis Center are under the system's radar and can't access foster care or age out of the system without receiving proper training or guidance to transition into independence," said Laura Hughes, the center's executive director. "The occasion to create a united front with the state, county and ACLU to address this issue and work with potential foster parents provides our young people with an unprecedented opportunity."

The orientation at the Ruth Ellis Center is the first of three trainings required by the state and county for people who are interested in fostering. The ACLU will also be present to share an overview of policies and procedures regarding second parent adoption in Michigan.

Peace Prom seeks donations

The Jackson High School GSA needs help funding its second annual Peace Prom.

The Peace Prom allows LGBT youth to attend a prom without harassment from their teachers or peers. More than one hundred teens, some from as far as Detroit, attended the prom last year.

"It was really good to see so many people who were willing to come and be open," said Cylor Fagan, president of the GSA. Cylor started the prom last year after he and his partner were verbally harassed by other students at a homecoming dance.

Fagan is planning the prom for the end of March, but only if the GSA gets the \$400 it needs.

If you'd like to help, write a check to the Jackson High School GSA and send it to Between the Lines, which will send the money to Fagan. The address for Between the Lines is: 11920 Farmington Road, Livonia, MI 48105.



e-mail: EditorialCartoon@QSyndicate.com

"Wow! USS ENTERPRISE CAPTAIN OWEN P. HONORS JR. AND HIS RAUNCHY, HOMOPHOBIC FILMS HAVE SWEEPED THE NOMINATIONS FOR WORST PICTURE, WORST DIRECTOR, WORST WRITER, WORST ACTOR, AND WORST ACTRESS!"

BTL EDITORIAL

It takes a village

The beginning of almost every New Year has that soulful, energized feeling for many of us. The slate is wiped clean with a full 365 days ahead to accomplish our agendas.

For 2011, our community begins with an amazing legislative victory. Of course the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell" is not the whole "gay agenda" that we continue to work towards, but it is – as the blogs and much of the media have said – "historic."

It builds on over 50 years of courageous, hard work in the post-World War II U.S.; from a time when only a few hundred people were willing to begin the fight for our dignity and full equality during the Mattachine and Daughter of Bilitis years, to the present when activists handcuffed themselves to the White House fence.

In between, we have watched our Marches on Washington for LGBT rights grow, not only as an acronym beginning in 1978 with "gay" rights – and 100,000 marchers, to additional marches in the '80s and '90s and 2000s where millions have participated for "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights."

During this period, several generations have grown up and participated in, recorded and made our LGBT history.

We have learned from our elders (sometimes) and we have listened to our youth (sometimes) and somewhere in between experienced what is possible when coalitions of people come together and help realize that "long arc of justice" Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired all of us to dream of.

In the past 50 years we have been fortunate enough to build communities locally that provide much needed resources and support,

The next generation of allied and LGBT youth are rising up and speaking out for a fully inclusive world

encouragement and friendship. On a national level we have watched the emergence of several powerful organizations some older, some younger – delivering the message for full equality through checkbooks, lobbying, votes and yes, handcuffs on the White House fence.

It will continue to take this whole village – this beautiful, possible rainbow village – to realize our full equality.

The next two years will be challenging ones nationally, as a Republican House is certain to squash any efforts at moving the Employment Non-Discrimination Act into law. But one thing is certain: the next generation of allied and LGBT youth are rising up and speaking out for a fully inclusive world.

In this issue we proudly feature three of Michigan's emerging young people – the very kind of young people our new Gov. Snyder says he would like to see live and work right here in our state. The Emma Uphams, Kyle Sims and Ian Hoopingarners are exactly the kinds of visionaries that are building a stronger future and surely one day soon we will get to watch as the next piece of the equality agenda is signed into law.

TRANSMISSIONS



2010: Hope to be found

People fought over inclusion, over the still dead Employment Non-Discrimination Act, over 'don't ask, don't tell,' and – more than anything – over a single six letter word – tranny – and who could use it when.

BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

When I sat down to write about 2010, I wanted to tell you how horrible the year was.

With the election year politics, the Tea Party, the return of the Right and a president who seems to be willing to compromise away, well, everything, one does feel that there's not even table scraps left. Certainly, to borrow from many, this is not the change that was voted for in 2010.

Meanwhile, the volume was raised within our community. Transgender people pitted themselves against our gay and lesbian siblings in an increasingly vocal war of words. People fought over inclusion, over the still dead Employment Non-Discrimination Act, over 'don't ask, don't tell,' and – more than anything – over a single six letter word – tranny – and who could use it when. The latter fight seems to be a battle not yet truly over.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention that anti-transgender violence continued at the same rates as many other years. We saw tales like that of the murder of 17-month-old Ray A. Jones, killed by his 20-year-old babysitter because this supposed caregiver was "trying to make him act like a boy instead of a little girl."

On top of all this was a study by the National Center for Transgender Equality in conjunction with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Its findings were equally distressing, with half of those surveyed reporting discrimination in the workplace, transgender people twice as likely to live in poverty, and harassment common in school.

In the midst of such awful news, however, there were some positives. At first, I wished to dismiss them as mere crumbs. Yet the more I looked at them, the more I realized their overall importance.

One – actually coming in December of 2009 – was the appointment of Dylan Orr as special assistant to Assistant Secretary of Labor Kathleen Martinez in the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the Department of Labor, followed shortly by Amanda Simpson to a senior technical advisor post in the Commerce Department under President Obama. Both have now weathered their first years in their positions, with initial attempts to derail them largely going unnoticed.

Second was the tax season victory of Rhiannon O'Donnabhain, with the courts agreeing that treatment for Gender Identity Disorder is indeed medically necessary and deductible from one's taxes.

The third was in the middle of the year, as the U.S. Department of State issued new policies around passports. The change in rules allows for a transgender person to get the gender marker changed on their license with certification from an attending medical physician.

Finally, in the 2010 election we saw Stu Rasmussen win reelection as Silverton, Oregon mayor, Kim Coco Iwamoto reelected to the Hawaii Board of Education, and Victoria Kolakowski elected as a Superior Court judge in Alameda County.

Each of these shares a common thread. The appointment of Simpson and Orr, as well as the victories at the ballot box, each show that we do have the ability to serve in higher offices. The religious right particularly took Simpson to task, but has long since weathered this. Rasmussen and Iwamoto showed that their transgender status did not affect their ability to serve, and Kolakowski has broken new ground.

Meanwhile, in somewhat mundane matters like passports and taxes, we've seen transgender people gain. The new rules on passports are the first real instance where the federal government has clearly understood the real need for transgender people to be recognized legally in their preferred gender regardless of surgical status, while tax law now acknowledges the necessity of transgender-related procedures.

These aren't the sorts of victories one can easily shout from the rooftops. None of these stories exist above the fold in major newspapers. Tax law, passports, and school board elections are, well, considered mundane by many. These are not as big a deal as, say, the repeal of 'don't ask, don't tell,' a bill that will not serve transgender people directly, but will have some benefits to us indirectly. It is not like the passage of a transgender-inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act, nor any other big-ticket protections for transgender and gender variant people.

Yet that is the importance of them as well. These may be viewed as less than extraordinary, but their value is huge. More so, that they're so far out of the mainstream radar speaks well to each of us being viewed as, well, just people.

Don't get me wrong. After some 16 years, I would much prefer to see ENDA pass. But knowing that transgender people can write off medically necessary expenses and can get a passport in their preferred gender without surgery is huge in its own ways. Likewise, that we can be mayors, school board members, judges, and Presidential appointees should send hope to transgender people young and old, showing that they too can reach for greater things.

So in 2010, perhaps it was really about the quieter victories over the shouting matches – and maybe this is a stepping-stone on to much bigger things in 2011 and beyond. So ever onward I say, to bigger and even better things to come.

Gwen Smith wishes all the happiest of new years. You can find her on the web at www.gwensmith.com



Parting Glances Then & Now

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

A HD is forever!

Arriving in the afterlife one unexpected Sunday, the result of a left turn onto a one-way street, Mr. Average Southern Baptist Joe was met at the Pearly Gates by an angel of great radiance, who greeted him like a long-lost Alpha-Omega frat brother with, "Hi, Bro! You finally made it."

"Take a seat on the straight-and-narrow bench. There's 150 newbies ahead of you. (St. Peter's conferring with the pope on some priestly matters of, shall we say, youthful and costly delicacy)."

Average Joe – not fully recovered from his sudden accident occasioned by sipping too much New Year's champagne – did as he was bidden by the Welcome Wagon angel (tagged Last Supper Bruce). And, awestruck by the immensity of his surroundings, Joe's jaw dropped repeatedly. "There's enough gold here to fill a thousand Fort Knoxs," he mused.

Minutes passed. Each a small eternity. (The experience was not unlike waiting in the dentist's office, only there were no Time, Newsweek, Good Housekeeping, Penthouse magazines, only gilt-edged Bibles, words of Jesus in red, printed in 24-pt English Gothic typeface.)

Fortunately, Joe's wait was retroactively dreamy, thanks to the

It occurred to Joe – out of the wild blue yonder – that #146 looked like someone he had befriended either on Facebook, or – some naughty X-rated site...

music piped in: hymns, interspersed with vocals by George Beverly Shea, Johnny Cash, and – what could be more unearthly – Mahalia Jackson, Patsy Klein, Bing Crosby, and Holiday with Cher.

"My God, er, gosh, it's so blindingly bright," stammered Joe, audibly enough to be heard by nearby waitee #148. "The light's so dazzling. It's brighter than a zillion NFL nighttime football fields beaming together."

No sooner had Joe reflected on this than a celestial angel – ID: 'Rock' of Ages: Grade B, Junior – surprised the bejesus – er, heck – out of him by handing him a pair of gold-framed, Urim & Thummin, Angel Moroni peepstone sunglasses.

"They're rose colored," said Angel Rock. "They'll glitter you up a bit. By the way: you're now #147. St. Pete's back. The holdup's because numbers 2 and 3 used Windows instead of user-friendly Apple. Even here there's computer gate crashers."

Before Joe could ask what in – er, heck – that was all about, Angel Rock was off in a flash, quicker than you could say Amen! Selah! Press ESC!

"What's with crashes and computers?" Joe asked #146 sitting next to him, now that he could see the long roll of newbies clearly through the trifocal – tri, as in Trinity – sunglasses he wore.

(It occurred to Joe – out of the wild blue yonder – that #146 looked like someone he had befriended either on Facebook, or – oh, let's hope not, dear PG unsaved mortals – some naughty X-rated site he just happened once or twice to come across.)

"Well, Brother Joe – anyone seated here I'm certain I can call 'a Holy Facebook friend' if he's presumed washed in the Blood of the Lamb. Yea, verily! It seems that Heaven's finally gone high tech. Beatin' the old devil at his Mark-of-the-Beast, One World, 666 game.

"What happens now when you kick the bucket is that your computer, iPad, cellphones, text messages are miraculously appropriated for final judgment of time spent, thoughts thought, actions taken, for good or, in some cases – say Islamic terrorists – for nefarious deeds. Big Brother really, truly, does know all.

"Me, I'm not worried," #146 boasted. "I was – still am – computer illiterate. For a good born-again-er like me – and presumably yourself, Joe – you part your hair on the right side – illiteracy can be a salvation. You can waste your mind. Just don't waste your soul."

"Thank God, I erased my hard drive for New Year 2011," beamed Joe smugly to himself, as overhead the heavenly loud-speaker hymned away, "Count your many blessings. Name them one by one. You'll be surprised to see what God has done."

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Michael Medved

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Happy New Year, everybody! And just in case you wondered if 2011 would find the anti-gay right as fixated on the complicated genital equation of penis + penis/ vagina + vagina ≠ penis + vagina, worry not. It will always, deep in their hearts (or hearts and web browsing histories), come down to crotch shots for these folks.

Case in point: Michael Medved, conservative radio talk show host and self-proclaimed expert on the ins and outs of gay sex.

At the tail end of 2010, inspired by the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell,” Medved declared on his website, “The New Year brings a new policy to America’s military that mandates acceptance, and even endorsement, of open homosexual behavior.”

I think Medved might have the specifics of the DADT policy confused with the XXX “military training videos” he rents. He seems to think DADT was the only thing keeping the military from devolving into an orgy of public man-on-man and/or woman-on-woman sex. Unless, of course, he means something more innocent by “open homosexual behavior,” like handholding and slow dancing. But I kind of doubt that.

So the United States military is essentially blind to sex and gender now just because it's no longer legal to kick gay and lesbian service members out? Sure, Medved. That makes total sense.

He goes on to claim that the DADT repeal “denies the vast and crucial distinction between males and females – insisting that men and women are interchangeable when it comes to forming a valid, constructive intimate relationship.”

Oh? So the United States military is essentially blind to sex and gender now just because it's no longer legal to kick gay and lesbian service members out? Sure, Medved. That makes total sense.

And despite Medved’s opinion to the contrary, it certainly takes more than slapping two people of the opposite sex together to form a “constructive intimate relationship.” Goodness knows the military is no stranger to damaged straight folks hooking up while on duty (Lynndie England and Charles Graner Jr., anyone?).

But, of course, for Medved it all comes down to penises and vaginas.

“If men and women are profoundly different – and both science and common sense tell us they are – then an all-female couple is even more different from an all-male couple than either homosexual bond differs from a heterosexual union,” Medved writes.

In other words, to quote Sesame Street, “One of these things is not like the other, one of these things just doesn’t belong.”

He continues, “This distinction helps explain the oft-noted quirk in public attitudes that sees stronger opposition and denunciation, in the Old Testament and elsewhere, to a physical relationship between two males and intimacy between two females.”

In other words, this explains why two chicks kissing in a bar are greeted with cheers and two guys kissing are greeted with fists.

“A physical connection between a female couple, like a physical connection between man and woman, is based primarily on acts of affection. The most common sexual practice between two men involves an act of aggression – inflicting more pain than pleasure for at least one of the parties,” he writes.

Um, okay. So when it comes to homosex, Medved prefers donut bumping to sword fighting because the first is sweet and soft and the other is hard and violent. Duh.

As far as anal sex “inflicting more pain than pleasure for at least one of the parties,” that doesn’t explain anal sex’s popularity with folks from all over the orientation spectrum. In other words, a lot of heterosexual folks are into butt sex. A commenter on his site said it best: “Michael: Read a book, buy some lube, and try some foreplay first.”

As Dan Savage points out on The Stranger blog, “So lesbian sex is okay – with Michael and with God – because lesbians don’t have anuses.”

The Lord, as they say, works in anatomically mysterious ways.

2011 looks hopeful

Community gained more than it lost in 2010

BY LISA KEEN

1. Congress passes a bill to repeal ‘don’t ask, don’t tell.’

Anyone who was paying attention in 1993 knows what a devastating setback the community suffered with the codification of the military’s ban on gays. The community itself had asked the newly elected Democratic president, Bill Clinton, to end the military’s long-standing policy banning gays from service. But instead, Senator Sam Nunn, D-Georgia, orchestrated a parade of testimony and innuendo to suggest that the mere presence of gays would violate the “sexual privacy” of heterosexual servicemembers. Not surprisingly, 56 percent of the public opposed allowing “homosexuals” to serve “openly” in the military in 1993. In December 2010, only 21 percent of Americans felt that way. And Democratic President Barack Obama, using a strategy of sticks and carrots that sometimes angered the LGBT community, helped drive through passage of a bill that will eventually lead to a dismantling of the ban.

What does that say about 2011? Given the shaky economy, high unemployment, and intense partisan divide in Congress, there is little likelihood the Obama administration will take on another piece of pro-LGBT civil rights legislation in 2011. The presidential election campaign of 2012 begins in earnest now, and President Obama must tend to a wide variety of constituencies, as well as Middle America in general. But he has shown – even before repeal of DADT – that his administration is willing to use its power to adopt more LGBT-friendly regulations and policies that will advance the LGBT civil rights ball down the field.

2. Federal judge rules Proposition 8 unconstitutional.

U.S. District Court Chief Judge Vaughn Walker ruled Aug. 4 that California’s voter-approved constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage violates the U.S. Constitution’s guarantee of equal protection and due process. The result came following a three-week-long trial in San Francisco during which famed conservative attorney Ted Olson and famed liberal attorney David Boies mounted a comprehensive case against Proposition 8, which was passed in 2008.

They showed how the initiative harmed gay people as a minority and was driven by the fear and animus of those who sought its passage. The participation of Olson and Boies has made this the most high-profile legal challenge in LGBT history. And it seems almost certain to bring before the U.S. Supreme Court the question of whether the bans in California and in 44 other states (by law or decree) are permissible. The 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals will weigh in on the dispute in 2011.

What does that say about 2011? The appeal before the three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit, on Dec. 6, seemed to go well for opponents of Proposition 8. Questions from the judges seemed to indicate they are seriously considering whether Yes on 8 proponents even have standing to bring their appeal. But regardless of how they rule – on standing and/or on constitutional issues – their decision(s) will almost certainly be appealed to the full 9th Circuit bench and then, eventually to the U.S. Supreme Court. The composition of the current Supreme Court, coupled with the activist tendencies recently demonstrated by its conservatives, makes an outcome there completely unpredictable. A ruling on the constitutional issues will probably not be in front of the highest court until late 2011 at the earliest, and more likely 2012. But a win at the 9th Circuit level – even if later overturned by the Supreme Court – would go some distance to undermine the political argument that Walker was just an “activist judge.” It would also provide another boost of momentum for public opinion to continue its journey toward getting used to the idea of gay couples obtaining marriage licenses.

3. Republicans win control of the House.

History has shown that, to be successful at passing pro-gay legislation, it’s best to have a Democratic president and Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress. For two years, the LGBT community has experienced that generally supportive political climate in Washington. But on Nov. 2 Republicans won enough seats in the House to take over majority control starting in January 2011. They also increased their margin in the Senate, from 41 seats to 47.

What does that say about 2011? Immediately, there will be “zero” chance of any pro-gay legislation passing in the next Congress, says Rep. Barney Frank and others. No movement on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, no movement on immigration rights for

gay couples, no movement on ending tax penalties for gays who provide health coverage to their partners or spouses through work. It also means the LGBT community must switch from an offensive mode in Congress to a defensive one. Given the largely unbroken Republican opposition to repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell,” it would not be a surprise to see the new Republican chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Buck McKeon, R-Calif., hold a hearing about whether DADT repeal can, in fact, be implemented without negative consequences to military readiness. In November, he said he would hold a hearing to examine the Pentagon’s report regarding repeal implementation. How far might Republicans try to leverage their power in the new Congress? Note this: The new chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security just announced he would hold a hearing on the “radicalization of the American Muslim community.” Apparently, the sky’s the limit.

4. The U.S. Supreme Court issued two gay-helpful decisions.

The nation’s highest court issued two decisions in June that bode well for the LGBT community, both on cases from the 9th Circuit. First, in *Doe v. Reed*, it upheld a Washington State law that requires that petitions for putting issues on the ballot be made public. And second, in *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez*, it upheld a California college’s policy of banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in campus group membership. In *Doe*, the high court held that state laws requiring public disclosure of petitions for ballot measures protect the integrity of the electoral process. A group opposed to domestic partnerships had argued its petitions should be protected from disclosure, claiming petition signers would be harassed by people with a different view. In *Christian Legal*, the decision was of greater symbolic value than legal: It refused to say that religious beliefs always trump non-discrimination policies. A Christian student group at a public law school in San Francisco had claimed free exercise rights to get around the school’s non-discrimination policy.

What does that say about 2011? As much as the *Doe* decision was helpful, it was also indecisive. Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the 8-1 majority, suggested to plaintiffs that they might get a better result if they limited their challenge to how the state law impacted petition signers for the

domestic partnership referendum specifically. The plaintiffs said they would, so the case is almost certainly going to be back, probably in 2011. And there seems little doubt that Christian Legal, or some other right-wing religious entities, will find a way back, too. Such a group has a petition pending before the court now, challenging the city's right to prevent them from mounting a ballot initiative against D.C.'s marriage law.

**For the foreseeable future,
Congress is like a ship on a
stormy sea of waves, rolling to
one side and then the other.**

5. Republican Scott Brown wins Ted Kennedy's seat.

Martha Coakley, Massachusetts' pro-gay attorney general, was supposed to be a walk-in to win Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy's seat in the U.S. Senate after his death. But a relatively unknown Republican state senator Scott Brown trounced her in the special election last January. The Boston Globe called it "one of the biggest upsets in Massachusetts political history," but it was bigger than that. It completely changed the dynamics of the 111th Congress and quashed the "hope and change" prospects the LGBT community expected from the inauguration



President Barack Obama signs the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010 during a ceremony at the Interior Department in Washington, D.C., Dec. 22, 2010. Official White House Photo by Chuck Kennedy.

of Democratic President Barack Obama and a Democratic majority in the House and Senate. Brown's election took from Democrats the 60th vote they needed to ensure that legislation reached the floor of the Senate. And Republicans used that advantage throughout the year to thwart the advancement of numerous pieces of legislation, including a measure to repeal 'don't ask, don't tell.' The Senate became a quagmire

of partisan warfare for the sake of partisan gain though neither side really gained much from it.

What does that say about 2011? For the foreseeable future, Congress is like a ship on a stormy sea of waves, rolling to one side and then the other. The LGBT community has already demonstrated it knows how to shift its own balance in order to keep that ship moving in the

right direction. It somehow convinced Brown and five other Republicans to jump the GOP ship and join the Democrats to enable DADT repeal to come to the floor of the Senate and be passed. Strengthening those alliances, however temporary and issue-specific, will be important to defending current civil rights gains and pushing for others in the future.

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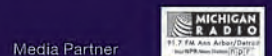


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N.C. ruling jeopardizes same-sex parental rights

BY DANA RUDOLPH

The North Carolina Supreme Court on Dec. 20 voided the adoption by a lesbian mother of the child who she and her former partner, the biological mother, were raising together. The ruling jeopardizes the legality of all other such “second-parent adoptions” in the state.

State Senator Julia Boseman and her former partner, Melissa Jarrell, planned for a child together, and Jarrell consented to Boseman adopting the child in 2005, when he was almost three, according to court documents.

Boseman was the first out member of the state General Assembly but did not seek reelection this past fall.

The couple split in 2006, and Boseman sought joint custody. Jarrell first tried to initiate a class action lawsuit to invalidate all second-parent adoptions in the state. Under pressure from the American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina and others, she dropped the suit.

Jarrell acknowledged in court that Boseman was “a very good parent” but nevertheless petitioned for sole custody, claiming the adoption should never have been granted to Boseman because North Carolina law does not permit second-parent adoptions. A trial court granted joint custody but did not rule on the adoption, which had been granted in another district.

Jarrell first appealed to the state Court of Appeals, which upheld both the custody order and the validity of the adoption. Then, she appealed to the state Supreme Court, which upheld the lower court ruling granting Boseman joint custody. But a 5-2 majority overturned the appeals court ruling in regards to the adoption.

The majority said the adoption granted to Boseman was invalid from its beginning. Associate Justice Paul Newby, writing for the majority, said state statutes permit adoptions only if the existing parent gives up all parental rights or is married to the person seeking to adopt, as in the case of a stepparent. Because this was not the situation for Boseman, the adoption court did not have the authority to grant the adoption, said the majority.

Two justices dissented. Patricia Timmons-Goodson and Robin E. Hudson said Jarrell had

The ruling calls into question the validity of all other second-parent adoptions in North Carolina. Such adoptions have been granted in only two counties and impact perhaps several hundred families.

not appealed within the proper time limits. And Timmons-Goodson noted that state law requires adoptions to be final because that is in the best interest of minors. The law allows challenges, she said, only “in narrow circumstances,” none of which applied here.

Hudson also wrote that she felt the matter of the adoption court’s jurisdiction was, at most, “an error of law” and should not have led to a voiding of the adoption.

The ruling calls into question the validity of all other second-parent adoptions in North Carolina. Such adoptions have been granted in only two counties and impact perhaps several hundred families, according to Ian Palmquist, executive director of Equality North Carolina. (An exact count is impossible because most adoption records are sealed.)

Shannon Minter, Legal Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said the court was unclear about whether existing adoptions are now automatically void but he believes they are now more vulnerable to challenge. Minter urged all parents who have obtained second-parent adoptions in North Carolina to consult a knowledgeable family law attorney.

Greg Nevins, Supervising Senior Staff Attorney at Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, agreed the status of the other adoptions remains unclear at this point, but “at a minimum, (the ruling) is causing a lot of anxiety.”

Nancy Polikoff, professor of law at American University, said that she believes the ruling makes all second-parent adoptions in the state “void.”

“When the issue of legal parentage arises,”

said Polikoff, “...the adoption decree will be a meaningless piece of paper.”

A separate North Carolina law prohibits unmarried couples from jointly petitioning to adopt a child, although gay and lesbian people may do so as individuals.

A number of ultra-conservative organizations submitted friend of the court briefs in support of Jarrell, including the American College of Pediatricians—a group of conservative doctors who split from the mainstream American Academy of Pediatrics when the latter endorsed adoption by gay parents.

Groups submitting briefs in support of Boseman included Lambda Legal, the Equality North Carolina Foundation, the American Academy of Pediatrics (North Carolina Chapter), the ACLU of North Carolina Legal Foundation, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers, and several adoption policy centers.

Of the five justices who voted against the adoption, two hold leadership positions in churches with strong anti-gay views.

Associate Justice Edward Thomas Brady devotes an entire section of his official court biography to “Religious Convictions.” He sits on the Board of Directors of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, which in 2006 voted to sever ties with churches that approve of homosexuality. The group has also promoted the work of Exodus International, a well-known umbrella organization of “ex-gay” groups that claim to offer “freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ.”

Brady has also represented his church at the national Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), which believes that homosexuality is “not a valid alternative lifestyle,” according to its Web site.

Newby, who wrote the majority opinion, is an Elder, Sunday school teacher, and youth leader at Christ Baptist Church (CBC) in Raleigh, according to his court biography. CBC is a member of the SBC and an offshoot of Providence Baptist Church, which lists Beyond Imagination, an Exodus member ministry, among its local ministry partners.

Neither of the dissenting justices lists their religious affiliations in their court biographies.

Minter called the decision “a complete outlier.” Even when second-parent adoptions have been challenged in conservative states, such as Texas, he said, courts have refused to set aside existing adoptions.

In a similar recent case in Minnesota, an appeals court ruled against a woman who was trying to void her former partner’s second-parent adoptions of their twins. The court said the partner had waited too long to challenge the adoptions, but did not rule on her claim that second-parent adoptions are unlawful.

In two other states where second-parent adoption was ruled illegal – Colorado and Connecticut – the legislature then stepped in to allow them. In North Carolina, however, Republicans have taken over the General Assembly and are considering a state constitutional amendment banning same-sex couples from marriage.

“We don’t anticipate any legislation related to adoption to be put forward in the near term,” Palmquist said.

Polikoff noted that conservative groups like the Alliance Defense Fund “are willing to work on any case seeking to undo any parenting by a non-biological mom” but does not believe the attack on second-parent adoptions in North Carolina heralds a trend.

Nevins said that, because Boseman’s custody was upheld, “This won’t be much of a rallying cry.”

And Minter said anti-gay groups are unlikely to succeed with similar suits because “most LGBT parents have too much integrity to attack second-parent adoptions.”

The decision, he said, is “callously oblivious to the impact of its decision on children and families. I don’t think it will have much if any effect outside of the devastation it has wreaked in North Carolina.”

Of the five justices who voted against the adoption, two hold leadership positions in churches with strong anti-gay views.

Equality Michigan receives \$160,000 from Arcus

Equality Michigan received a financial boost last month, thanks to a \$160,000 grant from the Arcus Foundation.

“This grant clearly illustrates the Arcus Foundation’s continuing support for fairness and equality in our state,” said Equality Michigan Interim Executive Director Denise Brogan-Kator. “We shared our strategic plan with Arcus and I believe this grant demonstrates their confidence in that plan. We’re humbled and honored to receive this grant and promise to put that money to good and immediate use in furthering the cause for equality.”

The grant is earmarked for the organization’s general operating fund and is in addition to the \$500,000 grant awarded to the former Triangle Foundation in 2009.

“The Arcus Foundation is deeply committed to advancing social justice and LGBT rights in the state of Michigan, the home state of the Foundation. We are pleased to offer our support to Equality Michigan to ensure long-term sustainability of this state-wide organization working to promote equality and eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression,” said Fred Davie, interim executive director of the Arcus Foundation.

► Teen justice

Continued from p. 7

location at a local church. The event included free snacks and drinks as well as a DJ spinning tunes while nearly 1,000 protesters lined Albert Ave., a busy thoroughfare in East Lansing, and held up signs opposing the church and its message.

That move brought Hoopingartner to the attention of East Lansing City Council member Nathan Triplett. Triplett sponsored a city resolution honoring Hoopingartner’s contribution to the positive response to the Westboro protest.

But the teen is shy when it comes to the honors.

“I think it was important to have people step up and be leaders in this situation,” Hoopingartner said. “But

I think part of leadership is knowing you don’t have to necessarily be in the spotlight anymore.”

He said he is definitely an ally to the LGBT community, but is not involved in his school’s Gay Straight Alliance. In the hallways of the school, he said, anti-gay sentiments are present but subtle.

He said when he sees anti-gay harassment, he calls it out.

“But it’s really hard to find an instance where it is very blatant. It’s comments dropped in the middle of something else. It’s there but it’s really hard to pinpoint it sometimes. You don’t get people standing up in the hallways saying ‘God hates fags.’ It’s just the stereotypes...It’s something I struggle with.”

And while the anti-gay sentiments are there, he said they are not very

present.

“I don’t think it’s a pervasive thing,” he said. “I don’t think there is a culture of gay bashing. I think it is kids hearing things people say outside of school and it just becomes part of their lexicon.”

Hoopingartner said he wants to be a doctor working for an organization like Doctors Without Borders. For him, the goal of being a doctor, preferably a surgeon, is about being able to help someone, and see the results of his actions, he said.

As for his sense of social justice, he’s not sure where it came from.

“My parents said I always had a very strong sense of justice,” he said. “It really bugged me when I thought things weren’t right. It’s been like that for a while.”



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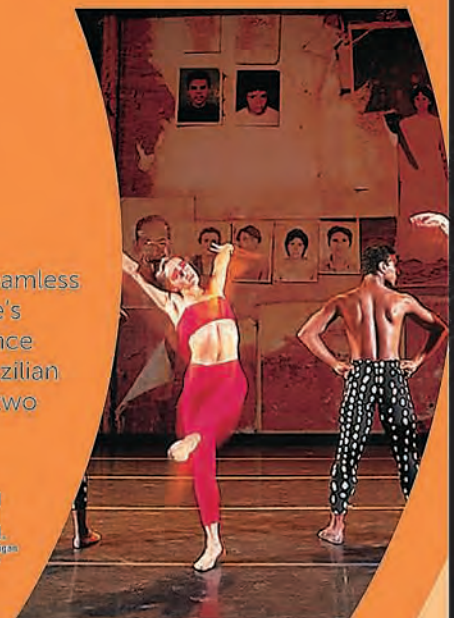
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The Hole Story



Nicole Kidman in John Cameron Mitchell's "Rabbit Hole." Photo: Lionsgate

Out director John Cameron Mitchell on his big Nicole Kidman feature, 'Rabbit Hole'

BY LAWRENCE FERBER

In "Rabbit Hole," a little boy's death tears his parents' lives apart. Actor-turned-filmmaker John Cameron Mitchell ("Shortbus," "Hedwig and the Angry Inch") connected deeply with the material – adapted by David Lindsay-Abaire from his own Pulitzer Prize-winning play – and won over star/producer Nicole Kidman, snagging his first high-profile, Hollywood feature directing gig.

As close to a sure bet for an Oscar nomination as one can get, Kidman delivers a stunning, natural performance opposite an equally strong Aaron Eckhart. While somber in tone, the film's wit-bitten dialogue, smart editing, alternating flashes of humor and explosive emotion, and excellent supporting actors – including Sandra

Oh, Dianne Wiest and newcomer Miles Teller as the teenager who accidentally caused the child's death – combine to make a memorable, compelling and entertaining new classic.

Aside from "Rabbit Hole," Mitchell recently directed a stunning online short film for Dior starring Marion Cotillard and Ian McKellen as a burlesque siren and a wheelchair-bound fan, respectively (he says that more spots will follow), and is also producing graphic novelist Dash Shaw's debut animated feature. Just prior to a "Rabbit Hole" press conference with Kidman and Eckhart at New York's Trump Soho hotel, Mitchell sat down for a revealing one-on-one.

When you were a teenager your 4-year-old brother died, and you witnessed firsthand how that can break up a family,

which served as a significant personal connection to "Rabbit Hole." But have you ever experienced a loss or tragedy that tested an adult relationship of yours?

My most serious relationship was with someone who had a drug problem. Over many years it was an off and on element because he was in rehab at times. It was too much. It was too much for us. And it wasn't just the drugs, it was other issues, but it was a very loving relationship and he passed away soon after we broke up. That was six years ago.

I lost a brother when I was 14, a very different experience from losing a lover, but (there were) the same symptoms. There's this horrible period right after, and guilt – rational or not, usually not – and then this kind of exhilaration of that

'Rabbit Hole'

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period is over and then it comes back. So the last six years have been a bit of a roller coaster where the dips get longer and shallower as you go. I haven't really talked about that much. But this was necessary to think about and release some stuff about both of them.

See Hole, page 24



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Ring in the 'Blue' year!

Who Wants Cake? opens 2011 season with John Guare's classic 'The House of Blue Leaves'

FERNDALE – Who Wants Cake? kicks off the new year with a fresh look at John Guare's classic dark comedy, "The House of Blue Leaves." Playing at Ferndale's Ringwald Theatre for an exclusive three-week run from Jan. 14-31, "The House of Blue Leaves" will feature Detroit favorite Dave Davies and Lisa Jesswein (formerly of 96.3's Blaine & Lisa in the Morning).

"The House of Blue Leaves" is set during the Pope's 1965 visit to New York City, which brings the hope of answered prayers and a few unexpected guests to an apartment in Sunnyside, Queens. Described best as a farcical black comedy, "The House of Blue Leaves" features fussy nuns, a political bombing, a GI headed for Vietnam, a zookeeper who dreams of making it big in Hollywood as a songwriter, and his wife Bananas, a schizophrenic destined for the institution that provides the play's title.

John Guare's other plays include "Bosoms and Neglect" and "Six Degrees of Separation," which received the NY Drama Critics Circle Award in 1991 for

its LCT production and the Olivier Best Play Award in 1993, and the currently-running "A Free Man of Color." He also wrote the lyrics and co-authored the book for the 1972 Tony-winning Best Musical, "Two Gentlemen of Verona." His screenplay for Louis Malle's "Atlantic City" earned him an Oscar nomination. "The House of Blue Leaves" won an Obie and NY Drama Critics Circle Award for the Best American Play of 1970-71 and four Tonys in its 1986 Lincoln Center revival. It is scheduled for another Broadway revival this spring starring Ben Stiller, Edie Falco and Jennifer Jason Leigh.

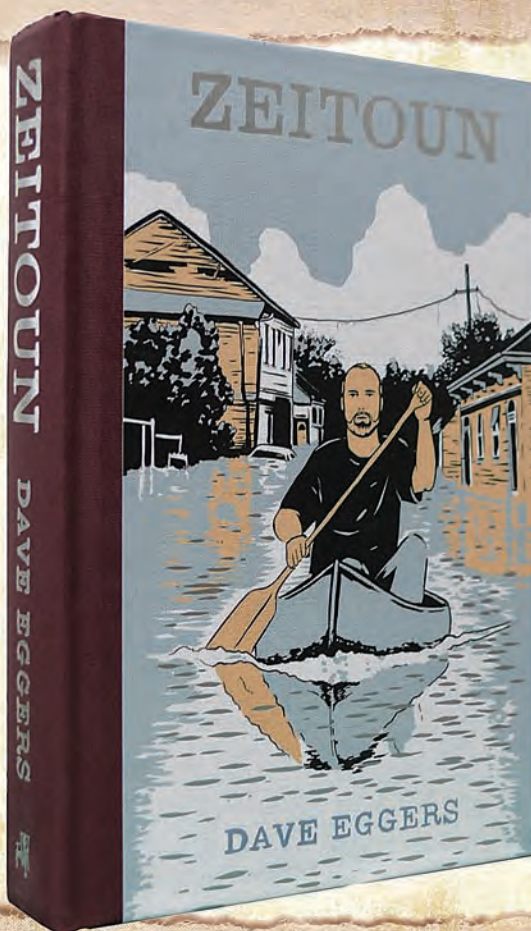
"The House of Blue Leaves" plays from Jan. 14-31 and ticket prices are \$20 on Friday and Saturday nights at 8 p.m., \$15 for 3 p.m. Sunday matinees and 8 p.m. Monday performances are half-off normal ticket price at \$10 a ticket. Please note first Sunday matinee on January 16 is pay-what-you-can. The Ringwald Theatre is located at 22742 Woodward Ave. in downtown Ferndale. Reservations may be made by phone at



Ronnie Shaughnessy (Vince Kelley, front) has a special present for the Pope and his family (back row, left to right: Lisa Jesswein, Dave Davies, Melissa Beckwith) in John Guare's "The House of Blue Leaves," playing January 14-31 at Ferndale's Ringwald Theatre. Photo: Colleen Scribner

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Annual event to feature live music, family fun and cold-weather festivities in Detroit park

DETROIT – The Motown Winter Blast returns to Campus Martius Park in downtown Detroit for the seventh consecutive year Feb. 11-13. The celebration of winter and family fun, dining and music welcomes several new sponsors, including the General Motors Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and GalaxE.Solutions, and will provide visitors with a non-stop lineup of winter activities.

“Through the years, Winter Blast has touched the community in many ways,” said Jonathan Witz, event producer, in a press release. “The festival serves as a backdrop to bring people from all over metro Detroit and beyond to the downtown area. It’s a great economic boom for the City of Detroit. We are also excited to announce extended hours as we will now open on Friday at 11 a.m., instead of 3 p.m., thanks to the support of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan.”

“The Motown Winter Blast is one of my favorite events and I am proud that it is back in Detroit for its seventh year,” said Detroit City Council President Charles Pugh. “The 2011 festival will showcase the many

great things our city has to offer not only during the winter months, but all year long.”

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM) will also be the title sponsor of snowshoeing, an activity that offers festival guests the opportunity to enjoy a fun, casual physical activity at the festival. BCBSM’s support of the festival will allow an earlier opening on Friday. There also will be a special link on the website homepage called “Get Fit at Winter Blast courtesy of BCBSM” that will describe ways festival-goers can engage in exercise activities at the festival.

“Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is very excited about the opportunity to bring this family-focused, physical activity to the festival,” said Andy Hetzel, vice president of Corporate Communications at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. “Our organization is committed to building a healthier Michigan by supporting initiatives that get people moving and eating healthier.” One of those healthy initiatives is the opportunity to ice skate for free at the Campus Martius Park skating rink courtesy of Charter One Bank; and Winter Blast is the only time each

year where Metro Detroiters can skate at no charge in the fabulous and fun skating rink.

“Since its inception, Winter Blast has served the community in so many ways,” said Robert Ficano, Wayne County executive. “The festival is an outstanding way to showcase our region, support local businesses and help unite neighbors in a common cause. Wayne County is proud to be home to Winter Blast.”

Winter Blast organizers are also excited to announce new activities for the family and a warm weather getaway opportunity courtesy of Radio Disney AM 910 and the DMC Children’s Hospital of Michigan. On Feb. 12 and Feb. 13, Radio Disney AM 910 and DMC Children’s Hospital of Michigan will be inside the Meijer Family Tent. From the Meijer Family Stage, B.C. and the AM 910 Radio Disney Road Crew will rock out during the D-Tour, a one-hour high-energy show full of games, music and tons of prizes for the whole family.

Everyone 16 years of age and under are encouraged to visit the Radio Disney AM 910

See Winter Blast, page 22



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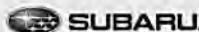
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► Winter Blast

Continued from p. 21

booth to enter a drawing for a chance to win a family trip to attend ESPN The Weekend at Disney's Hollywood Studios March 3–6, 2011. Also on Saturday and Sunday, children will be able to try out their Sports Casting skills live on the air.

"The support from our new sponsors is a huge lift for the festival. It's great to see the General Motors Foundation and Blue Cross Blue Shield so involved in Detroit," added Witz. "The new activities brought to the festival by Radio Disney AM 910 and the DMC Children's Hospital of Michigan will truly bolster our family offerings."

For the second consecutive year, the Winter Blast will partner with Matrix Human Services and the Grosse Pointe Rotary in support of "Breaking the ICE on the cycle of Poverty" program. Volunteers from each organization will help collect nonperishable food items, new clothing and books at the festival gates as part of a special Detroit's Winter Blast voluntary "admission fee." All donated items will be used to support a massive service project that will fight hunger in metro Detroit. Last year, more than 600,000 pounds of items were collected, and this year the festival wants to exceed that mark.

"We are thrilled to join Motown Winter Blast for the second year in a row to fight hunger in southeast Michigan," said Marcella Wilson, Ph.D., president and CEO of Matrix Human Services. "It is through the generosity of our

community that we will make a difference in the lives of those with the greatest need."

Another new sponsor of the festival is GalaxE.Solutions, which recently moved into the Campus Martius Park neighborhood. "Downtown Detroit, Campus Martius and the Woodward Avenue corridor helped attract us to this city to build a health care IT hub," said Tim Bryan, chairman and CEO of GalaxE.Solutions. "We are proud to join our neighbors in ensuring this outstanding event takes place in 2011, attracting people to the city and one of the country's finest urban parks."

Snowmaking returns to Winter Blast with special snow cannons that will add to the festive, winter environment. The cannons will augment natural snow to guarantee snowshoeing and snow hills for children to enjoy. In addition, many other favorite outdoor activities from previous years will return, such as marshmallow roasting, professional and amateur ice skating exhibitions, and brilliantly carved and lighted ice sculptures. Three stages will boast more than 50 performing musical acts. All Winter Blast concerts are free. The festival also will offer an arts and crafts area, food from 10 restaurants and caterers, and other entertainment.

The three-day festival will be open from 3 p.m.–11 p.m. Feb. 11, 11 a.m.–11 p.m. Feb. 12 and 11 a.m.–9 p.m. on Feb. 13. Originally created as the backdrop for Super Bowl XL, the festival attracted more than 75,000 people last year. For additional public information, visit www.winterblast.com or call 313-963-8418.

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Keyshia Cole phones in 'Calling All Hearts.' Plus: Crystal Bowersox's debut



her way with songs like the feisty "Kiss Ya" and the particularly memorable title track, where she breaks from her abusive mother. But as invested as she is – her name's on 10 of 12 songwriting credits, helping to accentuate her as an artist rather than simply a reality TV spawn – there's a sense that she's being stretched beyond her comfort zone: "Lonely Won't Come Around," easily the most radio-ready of the bunch with its ill-fitting KT Tunstall chirp, is a prime example. Let Mama Sox do her own thing, people. *Grade: B-*

Also Out



The Black Eyed Peas, 'The Beginning (Deluxe Edition)'

I gotta feeling, and that feeling is confusion: How could a band that once seemed promising turn into complete sellouts? The Black Eyed Peas' sixth album pounds and thumps through 15 of the longest songs ever, shamelessly clubbing up a "Time of My Life" cover and pitching a corny graduation galvanizer called "Own It." But their all-night carousing cuts as deep as a scrape, and even their greatest asset, Fergie, sits out in the corner. If the world's as lucky as they've been, this is "The Beginning"... of the end.



ABBA, 'Gold: Greatest Hits (Special Edition)'

You're not human (or gay) if you don't know the songs "Dancing Queen," "Mamma Mia" and "Lay All Your Love on Me" – all the classics that one of the most iconic bands recorded throughout their '70s prime. Nineteen of them wind up here, on the Swedes' retrospective – a refined cash-in of their greatest hits compilation first released in 1992. This time, though, with a DVD of music videos (mostly very no-frills, except for a cartoon take on "Money, Money, Money") that will make you feel like a, uh, dancing queen.

Reach Chris Azzopardi at chris@pridesource.com.

Keyshia Cole, 'Calling All Hearts'

All hearts, little life is the problem plaguing Keyshia Cole's stodgy fourth album, one rich in soulful confessionals but without everlasting beats. Single "I Ain't Thru" is so dead on arrival – think of a blander Mary J. Blige – that even magic-making rapper Nicki Minaj, who can elevate just about any collaboration, can't send it into survival mode. "Tired of Doing Me" sounds like Blige leftovers too, a sound Cole wisely resisted on her last studio album, "A Different Me," which went for a sexier, dance-funk-soul amalgam. Without that singularity to distinguish her from her peers, Cole's the kid who'd rather fit in than stand out. Look to "Last Hangover," and there's super producer Timbaland. Look to "Thank You," and there's the stock song for the Lord. Too much of it's forgettable, save for a few golden moments: "Take Me Away," a snappy groove that could've easily fit on her last CD; "If I Fall in Love Again," with vocal match Faith Evans; and "Sometimes," a gentle softie about pushing on that perfectly frames her vulnerable voice. Singing from a real place that never feels filtered isn't her problem. But a body needs more than a heart. *Grade: C*



Crystal Bowersox, 'Farmer's Daughter'

Let's not kid ourselves: Image is everything on "American Idol," the sing-off show Crystal Bowersox graduated from last year in second place with a degree in Showing You What's Up. Her talent overruled her constantly ridiculed hippie mom look (no wonder the nickname Mama Sox), something she embraces on her debut, "Farmer's Daughter," which sounds more like the title of an Emmylou Harris record than something "Idol" birthed. But, though she's from Ohio, Bowersox is a Red Dirt Girl through and through, cloaking all these rock 'n' roll ruminations in roots music. She's in her element when she's thrashing her bluesy wail across charged wallops of drums and guitars on "Holy Toledo," a blasted ballad that casts her as Melissa Etheridge in the making. Bowersox is on

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► Hole

Continued from p. 19

You went from working with unknown indie actors and bohemian gender-benders to Nicole Kidman. Strange?

Well, Nicole's about to play a tranny in a film (called "The Danish Girl"). And of all the A-list female stars, I think of her as the most adventurous. It was surprising that I found myself on this job but she really heard how passionate I was when I spoke about it with her. And it was this instinctive thing. She's like, "I have a feeling – I want to work with (writer) Lars Von Trier." Kate Winslet doesn't do that. Even Meryl Streep. These are brilliant actors, but when was the last time they threw themselves a little bit in the gutter the way Tilda Swinton or Nicole do?

What difference was there between directing "Rabbit Hole," which was a work for hire, and your previous films, which were auteur projects you curated and controlled from beginning to end? Was there any specific instance where this version of the filmmaking process worked out for the better?

It was the first time I didn't have the final say, but it was great because it was three people, (myself and two producers), making the decisions. If there are only two people, there's no tie-breaker and sometimes trouble. And we all had different taste. Somewhere in between we knew this was an audience-friendly film. We're not necessarily going for the same treatment of the material. And it's not "In the Bedroom" where there's more schematic of going to get revenge.



Director John Cameron Mitchell and Nicole Kidman on the set of "Rabbit Hole." Photo: Lionsgate

I liked Miles as the teenager who accidentally ran over the child. So sullen and restrained, yet I read that he plays the goofy, outgoing Chris Penn character in the upcoming remake of "Footloose."

He's actually quite different from that ("Rabbit Hole") character. He's quite happy-go-lucky. At the wrap party he was dancing like Michael Jackson. He's a really brilliant dancer.

After tons of false starts a la "Milk," a film of Larry Kramer's seminal play about the AIDS crisis, "The Normal Heart," is finally getting made with "Glee" creator Ryan Murphy at the helm. In the early 1990s, you appeared in Kramer's stage sequel to "The Normal Heart," "The Destiny of Me." Although you're semi-retired from acting, would you seek any involvement with "The Normal Heart"?

"Of all the A-list female stars, I think of (Nicole Kidman) as the most adventurous. It was surprising that I found myself on this job but she really heard how passionate I was when I spoke about it with her. And it was this instinctive thing. She's like, 'I have a feeling – I want to work with (writer) Lars Von Trier.' Kate Winslet doesn't do that. Even Meryl Streep. These are brilliant actors, but when was the last time they threw themselves a little bit in the gutter?"

– John Cameron Mitchell, director of "Rabbit Hole"

I am semi-retired, and periodically a part makes me want to step out, but it has to be something I have to do emotionally and there are very few of those. Oddly, one of them was playing Laura Bush in a reading of Tony Kushner's play about her in 2004, a brilliant one-act play. Tony makes me want to act. I'm gonna act again. It's just timing.

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There's a situation goin' on at Go Comedy!

BY DONALD V. CALAMIA

The highest-rated series in MTV's history gets spoofed when Ferndale's Go Comedy! Improv Theater launches its weekly original comedy "Jersey Show Season 1 (Abridged)" beginning Jan. 6. While poking fun at the phenomenally successful "Jersey Shore" might seem simple and easy to do, Lesley Braden-Phillips talked recently to *Between The Lines* about the highly detailed process she and co-creator Kathleen Lietz followed to craft their finely-tuned comedy – and what theatergoers can expect every Thursday night through Feb. 24!

You're the co-author of (and one of 10 actors in) the upcoming "Jersey Show - Season 1 (Abridged)" at Go Comedy! Are you a fan of the show it spoofs: "Jersey Shore"?

Well, originally I wasn't a fan. Until this past year, I had no idea this culture existed. In fact, I purposefully avoided taking the bait for a long time, but one Saturday in the spring I found myself flipping through midday programming and couldn't move past it. I had stumbled upon one of MTV's signature marathons of Season 1 and I settled in.

At this point I'm definitely a fan. Bottom line, "Jersey Shore" is very entertaining to watch.

I've seen a couple of episodes, and quite frankly, it's like watching a train wreck; you can pretty much figure out what's about to happen in every episode – the cast is that predictable.

I agree. It is like watching a train wreck. Oh, and the train is covered in the green, white and red colors of the flag of Italy and a hot pink Ed Hardy graphic T-shirt - you know, to class it up.

There's no doubt that the cast makes it easy on the post-production team by telegraphing the storyline of each episode. In fact, it's almost formulaic when the purpose of every episode is to drink and party until something explosive happens between house mates. However, they do keep it fresh by keeping the fashions coming and the tans deepening.

So what's the appeal of "Jersey Shore"?

For me the appeal is MTV's default position as a network of...excess. Too much, too fast, too often...did I mention too much? The cast mates or stars of "Jersey Shore" all possess huge personalities.

That almost makes it too easy to spoof, then, doesn't it?

To spoof the show you have to make it even bigger than it already is. That was the question: Can we make it much, much bigger?

So what prompted you to create the show?

(Co-author) Kathleen Lietz and I had been talking about writing a comedy or parody with a topic that hadn't been broached. We each had a handful of shows in various stages of completion, but we really wanted to create something together from scratch. We have very similar taste in comedy and both enjoy the art of storytelling.

One day we were working out some ideas,

PREVIEW

'Jersey Show Season 1 (Abridged)'

Go Comedy! Improv Theater, 261 E. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 8 p.m. every Thursday through Feb. 24. \$10. 248-327-0575.

www.gocomedy.net



Lesley Braden-Phillips is the co-author and one of 10 stars in the original comedy "Jersey Show Season 1 (Abridged)" at Go Comedy! Improv Theater.

and we had one of those "water cooler" moments where I recounted a ridiculous moment from Season 1 of "Jersey Shore." Within minutes we were watching clips online, and Kathleen was hooked.

It seemed unlikely that no other improv theater had staged a parody of "Jersey Shore," but we couldn't find evidence of a production, so we started working on it immediately.

Was there a specific goal you and Kathleen set out for yourselves when you decided to create the show?

One of the goals was to create something very funny that anyone could enjoy. We wanted fans to appreciate the attention to detail we added with certain references and jokes, but we also wanted to create something that would act as a primer for nonfans.

Is there cultural or social statement you're making with your script?

I think Americans have already made a social statement about "Jersey Shore" by making it the highest-rated series in MTV's history. To use the word "escapism" seems too easy, and I no longer buy into the theory that we watch shows that make us feel more intelligent by comparison.

I do, however, subscribe to the belief that we watch shows like "Jersey Shore" because it's entertaining to watch people live by their own rules with overt confidence.

Given how much source material you had to pull from, was the script ridiculously easy to put together? Or were there challenges you didn't expect?

Great question! Kathleen and I always knew we wanted to create an abbreviated version of the first season, but we never expected it to be as challenging as it was. Kathleen would say, "You can't write material this funny," so we tried to use as many of the incoherent one-liners as possible. There is such a problem as having too much material to work with.

In the beginning, we marveled at the ease of the task in front of us because the dialogue and – I use this word loosely – "plotlines" were already there. However to really start the process, we had to transcribe every episode word for word to see what we had to work with. The process was daunting, and we soon realized that a lot of what was said on the show lacked sentence structure and basic grammar. Solution: Write it that way!

So what's the show about? What can we expect to see in the comedy?

The show, "Jersey Show Season 1 (Abridged)," is just that: the entire season

boiled down to the major highs and lows.

In addition to the eight house mates, we added two narrators to help navigate and play not only the memorable but also the trivial fringe characters from Season 1.

The plot – again I use that word loosely – takes us from the first meeting to the hook ups, the insults, the clubbing, the fighting and the making up - complete with a big Italian helping of hair gel, bronzer and Jersey fashion. The fashion is worth the price of admission.

Which character was the most difficult to cast? And why?

I added my input in the casting process, but ultimately Kathleen made the final decisions. I don't think any one character was more difficult to cast than another. I will say that casting a show based on real people, especially ones with known, dare I say "iconic," physical attributes is very challenging.

Having said that, there isn't a thing we couldn't fix with fake abs, spray tan, makeup, wigs, hair extensions, high heels, copious amounts of hair gel and great costumes.

Once you got into rehearsals, were there any surprises? Or changes you didn't expect?

I think Kathleen and I were surprised by how funny it was to hear the script read out loud the first time, but as I mentioned, we went through a lot of script changes during rehearsals. We found out early that reality television doesn't exactly translate well to the stage. We didn't expect the script to evolve as much as it did with improvisation, but it did in an organic way. The final product includes a lot of scenes that were improvised and then scripted.

The only surprise was finding out that no matter how deep you think your fake tan is, it still isn't enough under stage lights. We really have to go crazy with the bronzer!

And what should we look out for when we come to Go Comedy! to catch the show?

Look for the larger-than-life characters you've come to love or love to hate. Come to laugh with the "Jersey Show" cast - and at them.

As they say on the "Jersey Shore," "We've got a situation going on."

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Once a cheater, always a cheater?

Q. I have a problem and I'm not sure what to do about it. First, let me tell you that my partner and I have been together for 23 years. We have raised three children and are respected and loved by our families. We have had our ups and downs throughout the years but for the most part we are happy and in love.

Two years ago I found out that my partner "Sharon" was having an affair. Apparently it started out on the Internet in a chat room and was just friendship but over time developed into an affair. This woman, "Connie," lived about one hour from our house. They started meeting for coffee and pretty soon it wasn't an Internet affair, anymore, but a full fledged physical affair.

I knew at the time that Sharon was spending a lot of time on the computer chatting with her friends, but I didn't suspect that anything was going on with any "special" friend. I really didn't have a clue until some friends saw her out with Connie.

Sharon has a job that is demanding and has varied hours, so I always just believed her when she said she had to work. When I confronted her she admitted the whole thing, stopped seeing Connie, and we went into counseling to help us deal with this and get over the pain.

I have had a hard time trusting her since this happened but I am working on it.

The problem is that in the last few months Sharon has started to be on the computer more and more. She will sometimes get up in the middle of the night to "chat" with friends. She says it's because she can't sleep and it's just something to do. I just can't help but think it is starting all over again. (Our commitment to each other is monogamy.) When I ask Sharon about it, she says I am just being paranoid and I need to just trust her. Her attitude is that I need to get over it.

I am trying to "get over it," but when I see her sitting in her office, using chat rooms for hours, it is hard for me to not think that she is starting the whole thing all over again. I asked her if I could look in to see what she's doing on the chat lines, so I wouldn't

worry, but she tells me it's none of my business and I should respect her boundaries, and then gets all crazy saying that I should trust her.

I don't know what to do because I can't seem to control my thoughts about this issue. I am not sleeping at night and feel anxious all the time. I asked Sharon to go back into counseling with me, but she just says it is a waste of money since there is nothing going on this time, other than my paranoia.

I don't know what to do because I can't live like this. It is ruining my life and health. Maybe I am just paranoid, but I don't know what to do to stop the thoughts. I feel like I have no options because I can't stop my suspicions that I have, and I can't live without Sharon. How do I get through this and start trusting Sharon?


Just Not Believing Her

A. I'm not sure how long you and Sharon were in counseling, or which issues you got resolved between the two of you – or didn't get resolved, as seems to me to be the case. Did you both understand and deal with the issues of her infidelity when you were in therapy? This is not just about her continuing her chatting on the Internet (knowing the history of it all, and that this would be upsetting to you), but she seems to disrespect your feelings and fears. I think there are underlying issues in your relationship that you both need to deal with. In monogamous relationships, infidelity is a symptom of a problem or problems that are not being addressed.


I recommend that the two of you need to find a therapist – maybe a different one this time – and get down to the underlying issues that are plaguing your relationship. If Sharon won't go, you go anyway. You need support and help in how to deal with this situation.

Jody's on Facebook! Join "Dear Jody Valley" on Facebook to learn the qualities that make for a good therapist. Also, follow Jody, her partner and dogs on their adventure to San Diego.

Jody Valley spent 12 years as a clinical social worker. She worked with the LGBT community both as a counselor and a workshop leader in the areas of coming out, self-esteem and relationship issues. The "Dear Jody" column appears weekly. Reach Jody at DearJodyValley@hotmail.com. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.



Find the Fake Ad Contest



Search this issue for the Fake Ad

Between the Lines

Each week we'll select a winner to receive a fabulous prize, like a gift certificate for dinner out at a wonderful restaurant, tickets to a great show, CD's, movies and more!

Have fun searching, and good luck!

1. Search this issue of Between The Lines for the one ad that is the fake ad. Here's a clue: the fake ad will include the line "between the sheets" somewhere within the text of the ad.
2. Go online at www.Pridesource.com and click where it says "Click here to win!"
3. Scroll down to the entry form for the fake ad contest and enter your name, etc.
4. In the notes field, put the date of the BTL issue, page number where you found the fake ad and the name of the fake advertiser.

Stay focused, Aries!

BY JACK FERTIG

Mars and Eris in a square provoke war and strife, but Mercury turning direct in Sagittarius opens new ways to negotiate through troubles. Mars is in Capricorn, better placed than Mercury and Eris, so hard work and long-range strategies are the key.

ARIES (March 20 – April 19): Stay focused on your goals and actual accomplishment. A straight-ahead attack is likely to trip you up. Consider different approaches. Get your ego out of the way and try new ways of working with others.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20): Sex can relieve tension and end arguments. It doesn't solve the problems but can create a better mood to work on them. Even if the problem isn't with your partner, a good romp can put you in a more constructive frame of mind.

GEMINI (May 21- June 20): The craziness of the times is working everybody's nerves, so share whatever problems you're feeling most acutely. Talking with your partner or a close friend, even if it's just raving to let off steam, can be a huge relief.

CANCER (June 21- July 22): Integrating partnership and career is a common challenge. Too bad there's no common solution. Discussing it with colleagues can help you get new perspectives at least. Remember: Partnership is also a full-time job!

LEO (July 23 – August 22): Master your art, brush up on your sport and hone your skill at your hobbies. New ideas may seem too contradictory, but consider them at least. Play with those crazy notions and you'll be surprised at how helpful they are.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22): Healing rifts in your family or community will take some creative efforts, but you can do it. Your efforts to persuade people to work together can be a little over-emphatic. A well-considered nudge can be much more effective than a shove.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22): Your efforts at domestic peacemaking are likely to go awry. Drawing out the arguments from either side could help you to understand

the situation better, and it might even get others to hear each other more clearly, but don't go beyond that.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21): Impatience and rushing will get you into awful accidents. Look ahead, think strategically, and only act once you have a good plan in place – and a plan B, even for anything as simple as crossing the street or boiling an egg.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 20): Finally you get to clear up recent misunderstandings and screw-ups. Financial obstacles might be circumvented with some creativity, but think ahead to make sure those strategies are sound. Do not go out on a limb!

CAPRICORN (December 21 – January 19): Nagging worries, especially about household problems, are actually clues to solutions. Straightforward, logical approaches to those problems could make things worse. Check out those odd instincts even if they seem a bit loopy.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18): Inside your head can be a dangerous place. Don't let yourself be caught there alone. Have some laughs with friends to avoid nerves and dithering. Even if you don't feel like laughing, their perspective and some fresh air will help.

PISCES (February 19 – March 19): The future comes one day at a time. You'll get ahead step by step, not fussing over the next decade. Focus on the job in front of you. Well-intended advice is probably ill considered but could be a springboard to a better idea.

Jack Fertig, a professional astrologer since 1977, is available for personal and business consultations in person in San Francisco, or online everywhere. He can be reached at 415-864-8302, through his website at www.starjack.com, and by e-mail at QScopes@qsyndicate.com.

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Solution to puzzle from page 30

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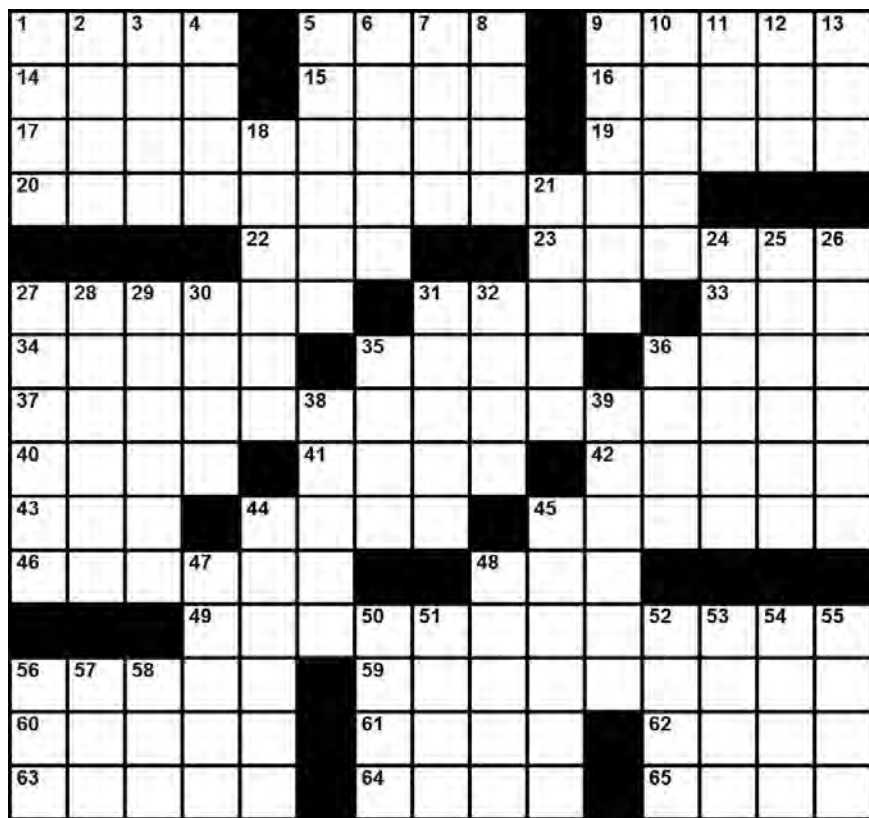
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Solution on 29

Q PUZZLE

He Loves You, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah

Across

- 1 Three-men-in-a-tub event
- 5 Oral attention getter
- 9 So-so grade
- 14 Point of view intro, at Gay.com
- 15 "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning" singer
- 16 Prayer starter
- 17 Hides of hairy guys?
- 19 Workers under Barney Frank
- 20 He had a crush on Beatle John
- 22 Start of MGM's motto
- 23 Dean, and others without causes
- 27 _Bye Bye Birdie_ sounds?
- 31 Burn a bit
- 33 Kit letters
- 34 Two to one, for one
- 35 "Cat on ___ Tin Roof"
- 36 Lacking locks
- 37 Early Beatle song that expressed how 20-Across felt
- 41 Edison's middle name
- 42 Dorothy, to Em
- 43 Three on a sundial
- 44 Joel of "Cabaret"
- 45 Somewhat formal
- 46 Roman orator of note
- 48 Prefix with political
- 49 Where the relationship of 20-Across stayed?
- 56 The Great Garbo
- 59 Rae of "Facts of Life"
- 60 Jam ingredients?
- 61 Stud fee?
- 62 Obscene four-letter word
- 63 Sharon of "If These Walls Could Talk 2"
- 64 Name repeated in a Stein quote
- 65 Country suffix
- for one
- 4 Time for Frida
- 5 Fireplace rods
- 6 Bounds gaily
- 7 Deadly septet
- 8 HIV exam, e.g.
- 9 One that reproduces without sex
- 10 Backup strategy
- 11 ___ Cabin Federation
- 12 Moist ending
- 13 '60s radical org.
- 18 Type of tool
- 21 Muse for Millay
- 24 "My Cup Runneth Over" singer
- 25 Whitman's dooryard bloomers
- 26 Site of Gay Games VI
- 27 Rex Reed, for one
- 28 Where they say "Aloha" when they come
- 29 Not straight up
- 30 Button's place
- 31 Chase of "Community"
- 32 Georgetown athlete
- 35 Ready and willing partner?
- 36 Cheese for Ms. van de Kamp?
- 38 Composer Copland
- 39 Spread open
- 44 Rosie's Broadway musical
- 45 Formal order
- 47 Eulogizer of Diana in song
- 48 Responders to "Bite me!"?
- 50 Tenn. neighbor
- 51 Cry after getting the shaft
- 52 Reactions to seeing a hottie
- 53 RBI to Glenn Burke
- 54 Kett of the comics
- 55 Jack McPhee, in "Dawson's Creek"
- 56 "Jumpin' Jack Flash," to Mick Jagger
- 57 The daily grind
- 58 WWII command

Down

- 1 Lettuce variety
- 2 US citizen
- 3 The king in "The King I,"

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The Pomegranate Cocktail

"I will! I will! I-I wi-ill!" I sang wildly off-key in the shower, where only the Korean family next door and the lesbian phlebotomist with the Phyllis Diller wig below us could hear me. Also Bruce, who was making honking noises outside the bathroom door. Didn't bother me. In crisis therapy, I accepted Craig and Kyle's affair. Therapist Gary and I aired the musty roots of my breakdown, and eventually the stink of emotional rot receded. I'd been half right: My puke-green jealousy came from my mother, my dick and my creationist-like denial of aging. Having unearthed them, I achieved enlightenment. "Om shanti namaste"!

This Nirvana was admittedly eccentric. I stopped swiping sleeping pills from Dan's supposedly secret stash. (Even cretins start with the boyfriend's jockstrap drawer for the drugs, or the money, or that strumpet's phone number.) As for stewing over Craig and jerking off to filthy thrilling images of Kyle every day? I wiped my hands of them (in Kyle's case, literally).

Facts: I'm 53 and have a loving partner and a fine life. No reason to ruin it over some perfect-assed boy with the shoulders of Apollo. My constant put-downs of Craig had to stop. I ceased fishwife-screaming at Dan. But how could I prove my shiny new peace with my buddy Gargantua screwing my tight-as-a-2(x)ist-sport-brief dreamboy?

Solution: cocktails and dinner. Those wretched margaritas Craig adores were considered and rejected; *shanti namaste* had its limits. Still, a fruity cocktail for Craig would show off my fabulous new generosity of spirit, which was entirely absent during *mein psychoticschen episode*.

Cosmically, the very next day a cooking blog featured a pomegranate cocktail. The recipe was vile – more suitable for pomegranate Jujubes. Craig would love it. The insane but inspiring recipe called not only for making your own fresh pomegranate juice (oh, squeeze my ass!) but for adding pomegranate molasses.

What? Waltz into Costco and inquire as to the whereabouts of the pomegranate molasses? I'd sooner slap on an Elizabeth I wig and ask for the meat department. I adapted the recipe for those of us who are not deranged.

Lo: it worked! We all enjoyed a marvelous evening. The drinks were luscious – a little tart, a little sweet and quite refreshing. Craig had three. I had one. Dan was relieved. Craig did a brief impersonation of Dolores Del Rio, which even I found a bit rarified, but Kyle beamed with pride, though Señorita Del Rio's identity escaped him. We adjourned to a steak joint, where Craig polished off a 24-oz. porterhouse, and I made no jokes. This boy was back!

At which point Kyle piped up: "Um, hey guys? Robbie can't find a place for next summer. Nobody else will put up with him. Can he stay with us?" Craig responded in the voice of Helen Lawson: "So Satan's come crawling back to Broad_way! Well, Broad_way_ doesn't take to rudeness and fire-red treasure trails!" But we needed the rent money, so I supposed we'd have to.

Pomegranate Cocktail

2 parts Absolut
1/2 part Cointreau
3 parts bottled pomegranate juice
* "Really" Simple Syrup (optional)

Pour Absolut and Cointreau into a pitcher. Add pomegranate juice. Stir. Taste. Add 1/4 tsp. simple syrup if you like. Pour over ice.

*Put equal parts sugar and water into a jar, seal it tight and shake until the sugar dissolves.

Ed Sikov is the author of "Dark Victory: The Life of Bette Davis" and other books about films and filmmakers.

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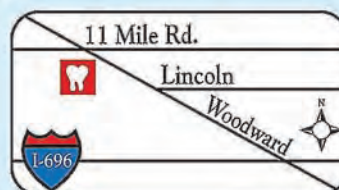
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Robert Downey Jr. gets next to the 'Normal' guys

At this point in his career, all Robert Downey Jr. wants to do is sing. Good thing he's already terrific at that or his next planned project might not turn out so well. As it is he has teamed up with Warner Bros., Tom Kitt and Brian Yorkey. Those last two names are the composer and lyricist of the Pulitzer and Tony Award-winning musical "Next to Normal," and they're working on a musical comedy feature for Downey. The plot, as it is now, seems very much like that of the hit indie musical "Camp," with Downey to star as a down-and-out Broadway songwriter who winds up teaching at a musical theater camp for kids. It also bears a passing resemblance to the premise of a certain Fox TV series that a few people seem to enjoy. Whatever its antecedents, this sounds like just the right costume for Iron Man to try on next, doesn't it?

'Becoming Chaz' and bikini kill docs coming right up

A tale of two documentaries, one financing and one finished: In the starting gate is a film about the already-remarkable career of third-wave feminist pioneer Kathleen Hanna, founder of the band Bikini Kill and early proponent of the Riot Grrrl movement in the early 1990s. Sini Anderson (co-founder of the lesbian/feminist collective

Sister Spit) is the woman raising funds and footage for "The Kathleen Hanna Project aka Who Told You Christmas Wasn't Cool?" that will chronicle Hanna's life from its roots in Oregon to New York, where she lives and works now. And due to premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in late July is "Becoming Chaz" from Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato. Obviously, that one is about the current life of Chaz Bono — son of Sonny and Cher, born biologically female as Chastity — and his ongoing public transition to maleness. It may or may not wind up in theaters but it'll definitely hit cable sometime later in 2011. And it's got to be more interesting than "Burlesque," right?

Bravo needs an 'A List' and they're going to get one

"From The Bottom To The Top." Seriously, that is the working title of the new Bravo reality show. Guess what it's about? If you said, "Lots of gay guys working hard to be as bitchy and horrible and reductive as those people on Logo's "The A List,"" then you'd be correct. It seems that while everyone's favorite gay network (that would be the one with Andy Cohen) was busy with all the housewives, Logo scooped them with buzz and ratings for their own all-gay variant. Not to be outdone, Bravo is now on the trail of fabulously unpleasant gays to cast for a show that will finally re-teach America to dislike homosexuality once and for all. Did you hear that, men? It's time to

go get paid to misbehave for the cameras! First group cast gets to record their own dance single. As for that title, chalk it up to Bravo always keeping it classy.

Chloe Sevigny, Eliza Dushku, Margaret Cho join RuPaul's 'Race'

If "RuPaul's Drag Race" were a cooking show with Emeril, he would say it just got kicked up a notch. Check out this list of celebrity judges for the third season coming Jan. 24, 2011: Wayne Brady, Margaret Cho, Eliza Dushku, Carmen Electra, Fantasia, LaToya Jackson, Sharon Osbourne, Susan Powter, Rita Rudner, Mike Ruiz, Chloe Sevigny, Cheryl Tiegs, Lily Tomlin, Aisha Tyler, Bruce Vilance, Jody Watley, Johnny Weir and Vanessa Williams. Whoever's in charge of filling those seats is working 10 times as hard as the people on that singing competition show who spent last summer slowly trying to find replacements for Simon, Ellen and Kara. So season three is officially going to be interesting now. But with this much star power behind the judging table, at what point will the audience be paying attention to the actual drag queens?

Romeo San Vicente was just inspired by "RuPaul's Drag Race" to go watch "Paris is Burning" for the 37th time. He can be reached care of this publication or at DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.

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ACCOUNTING

Kuderik and Associates, 23
Ameritax Plus, 13

ACUPUNCTURE

Michigan Center For Acupuncture, 29

AIDS/HIV ORGANIZATIONS

AIDS Partnership Michigan, 17
Detroit Department of Health
& Wellness, 33
Michigan AIDS Coalition, 21

ART GALLERIES

Village Picture Framing & Art
Gallery, 13

ART MUSEUMS

Grand Rapids Art Museum, 9

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Detroit Repertory Theater, 5
Purple Rose Theatre Company, 15
The Ark, 24
The Gem & Century Theatres &
Century Club Restaurant, 25
University Musical Society, 17

ATTORNEYS

Frego & Brodsky and Associates, 8
Steven Gittleman, 13
Rasor Law Firm, 9
Marc Shefman, 13

AUTO REPAIR

Minser's Collision, 20

AUTO/DEALERS

Hodges Imported Cars, 21

BAKERIES

Avalon International Breads, 22

BAR / CLUBS

aut Bar, 34
Ice Promotions, 2
Menjo's, 36

CARPET CLEANERS

Hagopian Cleaning Services, 29

CASINOS

Motor City Casino, 9

CHIROPRACTORS

O'Dell Family Chiropractic, 18

COUNSELING

Christine Cantrell, Ph.D., LLC, 29
The Center for Individual and
Family Therapy, 13
Denis Joseph, Ph.D., 13
Rosemary Jozwiak, MA, LPC,
CCBT, DVCE, 13

DENTISTS

Ron T. Williamson DDS, 33

EROTICA

Blue Moon Video/DVD, 32
Hardline, 31
Just 4 Us, 32, 34
Progressive Computing, 31

FLORIST/FORAL DESIGN

Ashley's Flowers, 25

GIFT SHOPS

Just 4 Us, 32, 34

GROCERS

Hiller's, 4

HEATING & COOLING

Flame Heating Cooling & Electrical,
18

HOT TUB RENTAL

Bubbly Tan & Tub, 33

LAUNDRYMAT

The Wash Board, 29

MASSAGE

David Rosenberg, 31

MATTRESSES

American Mattress Gallery, 18

MORTGAGES

Citizens Bank, 15

OPTICIANS/OPTOMETRISTS

Fenton Vision Center, 18

PET SERVICES

Animal Clinic East, 8
Patterson Dog & Cat Hospital, 22
Premier Pet Supply, 28

PHARMACY

Crown Pharmacy, 28

PHYSICIANS

Dr. Paul Benson, D.O., 33
Kobold, D.O. and Smith, D.O., P.C., 5

REAL ESTATE

Gayrealestate.com, 25
Village Green, 4

RELIGIOUS & SPIRITUAL

Metropolitan Community Church
of Detroit, 20, 21
Dignity Detroit, 15
Divine Peace Metropolitan
Community Church, 23
Whosoever Ministry, 27

RESTAURANTS

Como's, 20
Good Girls Go to Paris Crepes, 22
Pete's Place Cafe, 20
The Whitney, 35

VINTAGE HOME DECOR

Vogue Vintage Collection, 20

SOCIAL/COMMUNITY

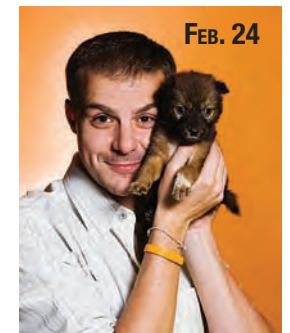
GLBT Book Club, 20
S.P.I.C.E., 29



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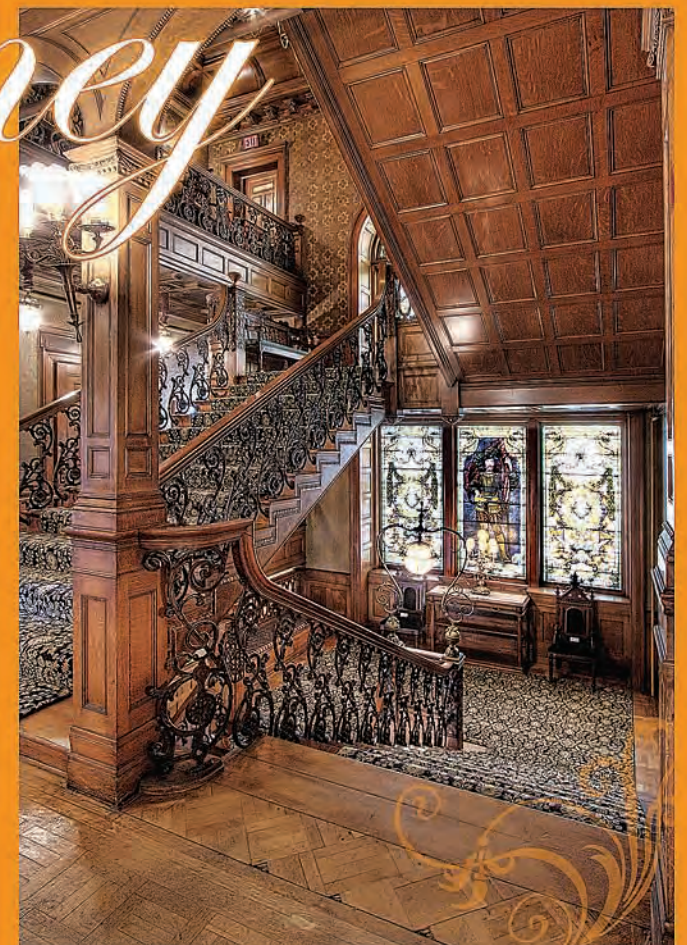
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