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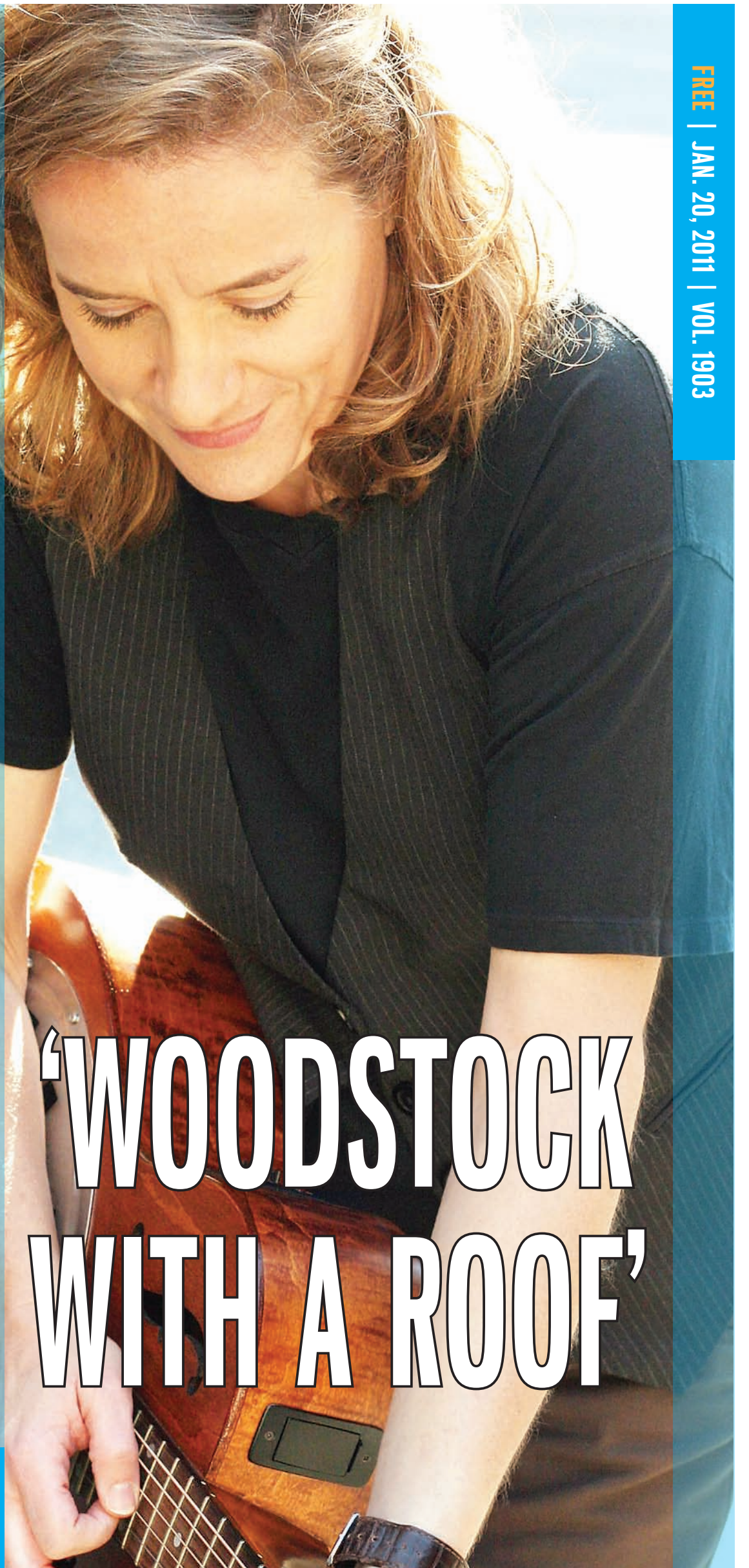
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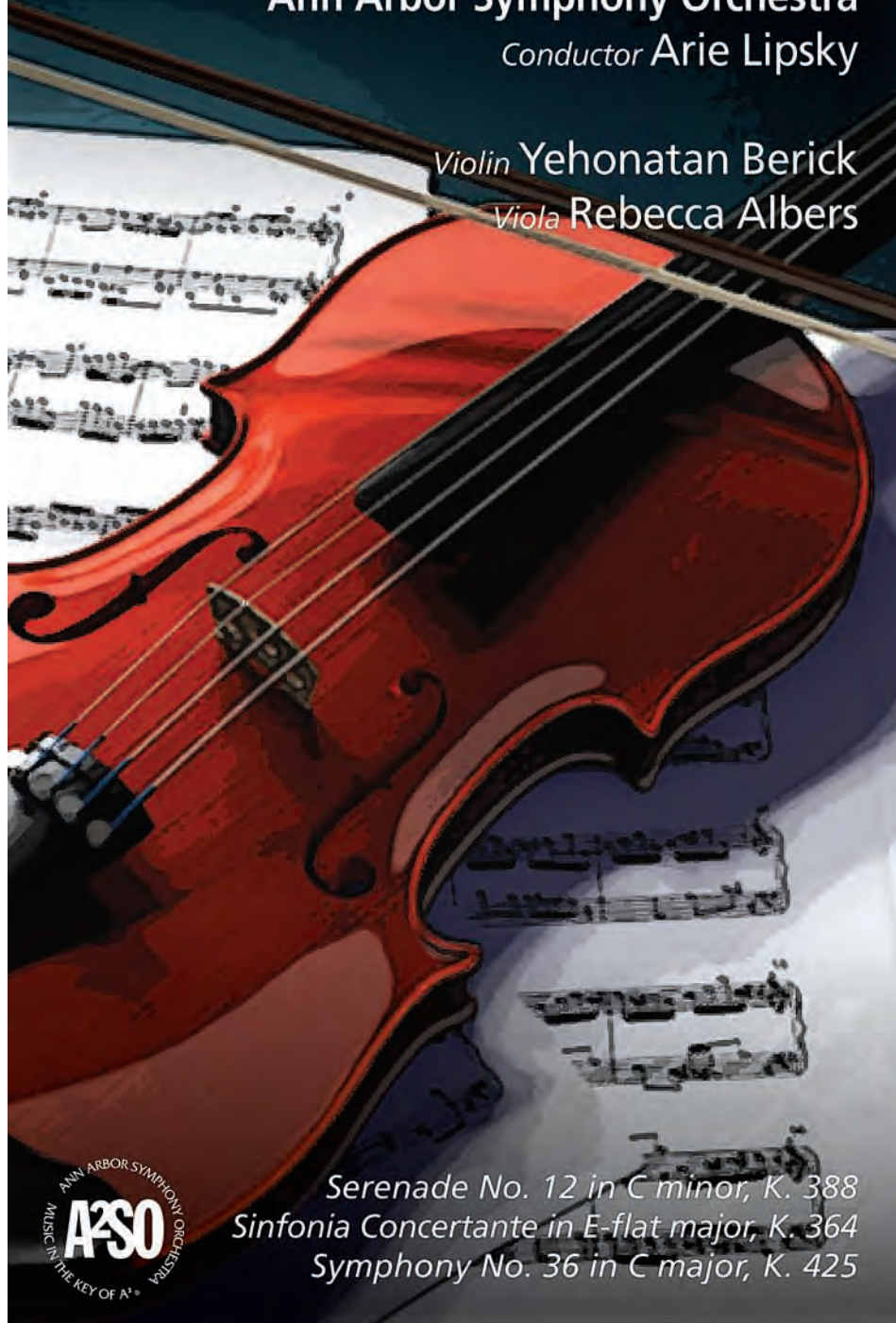
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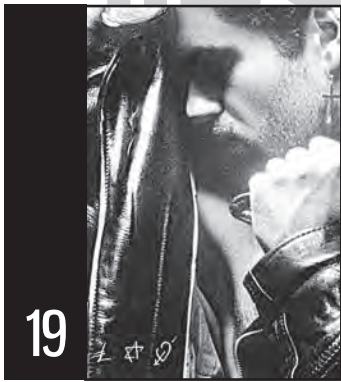
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Susan Werner emcees the 34th Ann Arbor Folk Festival on Jan. 28 and 29. Photo courtesy of Susan Werner



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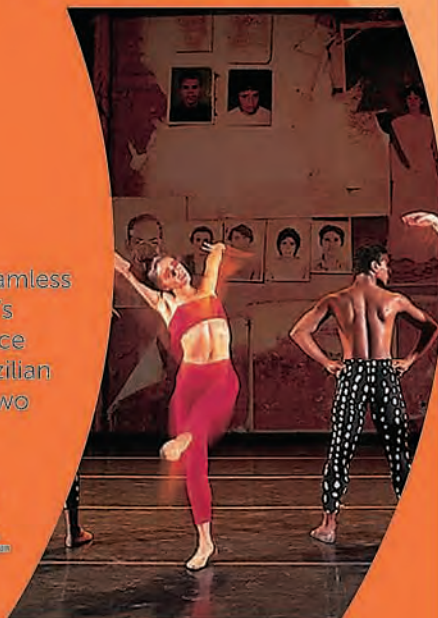
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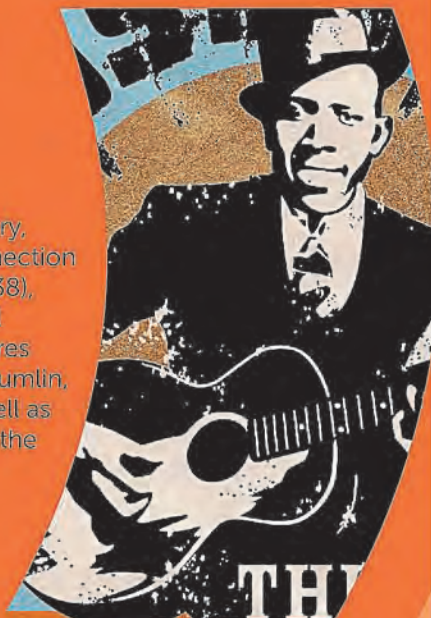
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Civility after Arizona

As the nation reels from the horrible tragedy in Arizona, it's important to consider what lessons we can draw from this awful episode. Over the past few years, the political debate in this country has become increasingly shrill, even hateful at times, as people have fought over highly contentious issues. In the immediate aftermath of the Arizona shootings, some commentators decried the volatile rhetoric of recent years and speculated on its role in the tragedy. While none of us know the true motives of the shooter, it is undeniable that the political climate in this country has become toxic. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Arizona, had spoken out against this toxicity prior to the shootings. Now, as she fights her way back from a gunshot wound to the head, the rest of us have a chance to consider how we can bring some healing to the country's political discourse.

We in the LGBT community know a little bit about the power of language. In 2010, the news was filled with stories of young people killing themselves after enduring taunts and verbal harassment because of their real or perceived sexual orientation. Just last month, a member of Congress suggested that repealing the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy would threaten the very existence of the United States of America. Oftentimes when someone is called to account for their harsh words in a political debate, their defense is that the First Amendment protects their right to say things like this. Constitutionally, that is correct. But people should remember that with rights come responsibilities.

President Obama very eloquently spoke about civility in his moving remarks at the Tuscon Memorial Service. Though the political debates of this nation did not directly cause the carnage, the president observed that those who participate in the country's civic life have a special responsibility to those who died and were injured. Perhaps the most tragic fatality was Christina Taylor Green, the innocent 9-year-old girl who was so interested in politics at her young age that she went to see a congressperson do her work on the day of the attack. Certainly, as the president said, we owe this little girl the dignity of civility in our political debates as we go forward.

As the recipients of violent and hateful words, the LGBT community can contribute a lot to making our political discourse more civil. We should never use harsh words to respond to bigotry. That does not mean, however, we should

back down from political confrontations. Rather, it means standing up for what we believe in a way that fosters justice and pride, not pain. Giffords is a true LGBT role model because she has the courage of her convictions. Even after her district office was vandalized when she voted for health care reform last year, she continued to meet with constituents in public settings. Giffords has been strongly supportive of LGBT equality during her four years in the House. She has recognized the risks of some of her progressive political stands in a relatively conservative area, yet has not shrunk from taking controversial positions on issues. We can also emulate Giffords' volunteer,

Daniel Hernandez, the man who bravely tended to her wounds after she was shot and helped to save her life, yet proclaimed later that he didn't think himself to be a hero. This courageous hero also happens to be a proud gay man.

People should remember that with rights come responsibilities.

The coming weeks should involve a great deal of soul searching by all Americans. What sort of country do we want to be? Harsh words have been used in politics since ancient times. Other countries are far more violent than our own, and citizens in other places live in much more fear than people generally do in the U.S. However, there is brutal violence in this country, and people often use harsh words in political debates. Because of the unique liberties that all people are supposed to enjoy in this nation, we should hold ourselves to the highest standards of a free and democratic nation. The U.S. must live up to the ideals embodied in our founding documents—liberty, equality, and self-government. No matter what the motivations of the Arizona killer, the tragedy should motivate all of us to elevate our political debate to a higher level, consistent with our values as a nation. In the end, that will be the best memorial we can erect to the victims of the Arizona massacre.



SPEAK OUT

To offer messages of support to Rep. Giffords, visit her House website:

<http://giffords.house.gov/>

Text of President Obama's remarks at the Tuscon Memorial on Jan. 12:

<http://tinyurl.com/47wg38q>

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From Stork to Finish

Two gay book clubs, one great city

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

FERNDALE – The city is full of book clubs, and the LGBT community is about to add two more to the collection. Simultaneously springing up are the GLBT Book Club at Como’s and the Queer for Books, which will meet at the Ferndale Public Library.

“I like book clubs because you get to learn from their different perspective.”

GLBT book club at Como’s

Ann Cox and Jackie Walker, members of Metropolitan Community Church, are the founders of the GLBT Book Club. The group will meet at Como’s Restaurant on the NE corner of Woodward and 9 Mile on Jan. 25 from 6:30-8 p.m. There is no obligation to purchase food and everyone is welcome.

The first book selected for the group is “Zeitoun” by Dave Eggers, which is about a man who struggles to survive Hurricane Katrina only to be arrested and detained by military police who abuse him.

“Ann and I had both read this book and liked it. It’s pretty popular and since it took place in New Orleans during Katrina, it’s got lots of things to discuss,” said Walker, who has been with MCC “off and on” since 1975. “We’ve had book clubs before at that church, but we thought having one at Como’s might be a nice way to have a nice night out.”

Walker said she belongs to other book clubs, but hopes this can be a good one for the GLBT community. “I like book clubs because you get to share what you’re reading with your friends. You get to learn from their different perspective.”

Queer for Books at FPL

Mark McMillan of Ferndale got the idea of starting a book club after reading about other groups at the Ferndale Public Library. “I honestly hadn’t really thought about a gay book club until I saw an ad for a science fiction book club,” McMillan said. “I immediately thought of a gay book club, saw that there wasn’t one and contacted Darlene Hellenberg and have been working with her at the Ferndale Library since October last year.”

McMillan’s group, called Queer for Books, was supposed to start in December. But the library closed down due to flooding after a water storage tank leaked from the upper level and destroyed the carpeting and some of the staff work area. It is expected to reopen in February, and Queer for Books will be one of the first events, meeting there Feb. 26 at 3 p.m.

The First Book is “Me” by Ricky Martin. It’s the autobiography of the pop star who sold more than 60 million albums. He was adored by millions as part of the boy band Menudo, lusted after by men and women during his popular solo career in the 90s and beyond, and has struggled to come to terms with his sexuality. “After months of consideration, I decided on Ricky Martin because of his celebrity status and broad cross-section appeal,” McMillan said.

Queer for Books will feature a variety of books to appeal to a range of readers. In March they’ll read “Sweet Swagger” by Mike Warren, a steamy crime novel full of lust and betrayal.

For more information on Queer for Books or any of the other book clubs held at the Ferndale Public Library, please check out <http://www.ferndale.lib.mi.us>

Affirmations answers tough questions

George Westerman leads the pledge drive as it pays off debts

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

FERNDALE – Affirmations Community Center has been plagued by financial difficulties since it opened its new \$5.3 million building in downtown. The move, along with unexpected expenses and a harsh economy, has put the community center \$1.2 million in the hole. The center has drastically cut back on hours, staffing and programming, keeping only the essentials along with programs that are grant-funded.

But there is hope. Longtime volunteer and former Board President George Westerman is leading the “Campaign for the Future,” a drive to raise the \$1.25 million needed to give Affirmations a strong balance sheet and capital structure. Thus far the campaign has raised \$540,000, although only \$350,000 has been collected.

“Several people who committed early in the campaign have been holding back from making their contributions,” said Interim Executive Director Kevin Howley. “This re-launch, with the very, very, very clear use of proceeds, has gotten people re-engaged. They want the debt paid off and a clean start for the new executive director.

Howley stressed that funds collected have already been allocated appropriately based on the campaign’s goals. “Of the total collected, \$200,000 was applied to our outstanding mortgage, \$100,000 was used for amounts owed to vendors from previous periods, and \$50,000 was used toward outstanding obligations for grants previously received.”

Westerman took time to answer questions about the campaign and his decision to take the reins in bringing Affirmations back to financial stability.

1. Why did you decided to take on leadership of the campaign?

Affirmations is important to me. I was a member of the board of directors when it decided to undertake this campaign to resolve some current debt obligations and to position Affirmations for the future with some board-restricted reserve funds. Because of my experience as a board member and as a leader for Affirmations’ capital campaign, I was asked to assist with this next phase. There is already a group of smart, dedicated people who’ve been working on the campaign to this point.

2. Have you run successful campaigns before? What did you learn from those experiences?

I was the volunteer campaign director for Affirmations’ “Open the Doors Capital and Endowment Campaign” which began in 2003 and completed in 2006. This was a \$5.3 million campaign to raise funds to build the current community center building and to create an endowment fund for Affirmations. This campaign was successful due to the hard work of dedicated staff and more than 70 volunteers over the course of 2 1/2 years, not to mention a committee that



“A community center provides a place where people can be themselves and, more importantly, connect with other great people.”

–George Westerman

worked preceding the campaign to complete a thorough feasibility study. Donors responded wonderfully to the campaign and we raised \$5.7 million, building a 16,000 square-foot state-of-the-art facility. The most important thing I learned from managing the campaign is that people will respond when there is a compelling case.

3. Why is supporting Affirmations important to you?

I grew up in an area where I had no support for coming to terms with my sexual orientation. It became a big secret that I had to keep and there was no one to turn to for support or as a role model. This is not healthy for a kid, and I prayed each night that I would either wake up “normal” or not wake up the next day. If there had been an organization that provided the sense of community that Affirmations strives to create, I wouldn’t have had to endure the tremendous anxiety I put myself through. A community center provides a place where people can be themselves and, more importantly, connect with other great people.

4. Do you worry about Affirmations’ future? Why or why not?

I think anyone who is dedicated to a non-profit organization worries about that organization. They want it to thrive financially, to fulfill its mission well, and to continually evaluate its performance against its mission and expectations of community members. Volunteers, staff, board members, and community members all want this. So yes, I worry. I did when I was a board member and I do now. That’s why I am so glad that there is a strong and dedicated board, and staff, who put in tremendous hours of sweat and brain-power, and amazing volunteers who show up every day to keep the programs running.

5. Have you encountered people who are concerned about Affirmation’s financial stability? How do you respond to those who may think money is mismanaged, or that the future is hopeless?

Many people are concerned about Affirmations’ financial stability. It’s a difficult economy and many non-profits find themselves in a similar situation. It is

expected that after building a new facility, an organization can experience hard times because of a number of factors: demand for services that was previously constrained by a lack of physical capacity, and donor fatigue are among them. We saw this happen in GLBT community centers in San Francisco and Ft. Lauderdale when they built new facilities, and we were prepared for it here. What we were not prepared for was a simultaneous downturn in the economy that would be so severe. But the future is not hopeless. The community still believes in Affirmations, and people continue giving their time, expertise and financial resources because the center is so vital to Southeast Michigan.

6. How long have you been a member, and what is your involvement on the board?

My partner Cliff and I became members in 1992 and have been members and donors ever since. I joined the board in 2000 and left the board in 2010. I was president of the board from 2009 to 2010.

7. What methods are you using to promote the campaign – website, social networks, fundraisers etc?

We have focused on approaching donors who contributed to the Open the Doors campaign at the higher levels, and new donors that have been identified along the way. We will continue doing that, but are adding to our strategy. The campaign will become more public this year but the specific methods will be determined by the committee and staff. We will approach community members at all levels in appropriate ways, and seek to attract new supporters. There is a place for everyone in keeping the doors open.

8. Any other comments or information you want to add?

It is so important for members of our community to give to the organizations that do so much for us. There are many excellent organizations that focus on youth, discrimination, HIV/AIDS support and prevention, civic engagement, and community building. Whether we give our time or our money, we have to keep them going so that they can continue their good work.

How to improve the school climate

Stalled state action prompts local work to stop bullying of LGBT Students

BY TARA CAVANAUGH

What is a “climate”? You can’t touch one or carry one. Weather-wise, a climate is defined by a variety of factors, such as rainfall, elevation, temperature and so on. But what about the climate of an organization? What about the climate of a school? How do you define that?

And if the climate were broken, how would you fix it?

This is the problem with LGBT bullying in schools. The intangible climate depends on a host of factors, and if that climate is conducive to bullying, then it needs a host of solutions.

Here’s a look at the state and local hands-on efforts to improve school climates.

Attempts at a statewide law

Michigan is one of six states that does not have any kind of statewide anti-bullying legislation, said Jay Kaplan, staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan’s LGBT Project.

Matt’s Safe Law, a Michigan anti-bullying law, was introduced in 2006. Enumerated versions of the bill (that include specific language to protect LGBT students) and non-enumerated versions of the bill have languished.

Emily Dievendorf, director of policy at Equality Michigan, has been pushing for the enumerated version of the bill to pass because “we know that LGBT kids are disproportionately affected by bullying, so we don’t feel we can neglect to address that. It’s increasingly frustrating when people assume that we can’t make progress on this, because our argument is solid.”

“The dialogue with PTO’s, school boards and administrations needs to come first.”

—Jim Toy

Even though the argument is solid, the current political atmosphere at the state level may not be ready to deal with it this year, said State Senator Glenn Anderson, D-Westland. Anderson introduced the bill in 2006.

“Opponents (of an enumerated anti-bullying policy) claim local districts can do this already. Well of course they *can*,” Anderson said, flustered. The problem school districts and school boards face on the local level is a lot of fear and resistance, especially in conservative areas, he said.

Grassroots efforts

Kaplan said state legislation would be helpful, but it’s not necessarily the only goal.

“I think it’s naïve to think a state law is going to change or remove this problem because we know the majority of (school) districts have anti-bullying policies,” Kaplan said. “It’s not worth the piece of paper it’s written on if people aren’t informed about what it means.”

LGBT students at schools that have an

enumerated anti-bullying policy still report feeling unsafe, Kaplan said. “There’s a hesitance on the part of some districts... they talk about the umbrella of bullying, but they don’t want to talk about gay students specifically, and you have to. You have to take the proactive steps. We have to work towards changing the culture in our schools.”

The Jim Toy Community Center held a bullying summit Jan. 9 to brainstorm ways to address bullying. More than 50 people attended, including Anderson and local students.

The summit created six task forces to come up with ways to address school administrations, offer trainings, and push state legislators. The task forces will meet as early as this week, Toy said, and the center hopes to have another summit this year.

At the summit, Toy said some solutions were posed for dealing with bullying in schools:

Sync with school administrations

“The dialogue with PTOs, school boards and administrations needs to come first,” Toy said. “You can’t just walk in and schedule a training.”

One way to help get those kinds of school leaders on board is by getting support from the teachers union too. There might be resistance from the union, but it’s worth a try, Toy said, because unions have tremendous influence in school districts.

Looking for allies is also important. Toy suggested banding together with local church leaders that are supportive of LGBT equality to help talk with school administrations and to offer school trainings.

Train teachers, staff and students to talk

Proper training is more than just recognizing

and punishing the act of bullying, Toy said. Everyone needs to know his and her rights.

The problem encountered by Jay McDowell, the teacher in Howell who kicked a student out of class for his anti-gay views last year, was that the student wasn’t doing anything wrong by expressing himself, Toy said. Teachers can express their views too, as long as they don’t prevent students from participating in class activities while doing so.

For example, on the Day of Silence, teachers must accept written answers instead of verbal answers from students, and give students credit for participating in class activities. The teacher cannot force the student to stop expressing his or her support of the Day of Silence.

Toy said McDowell could have used the student’s views as a way to facilitate a classroom conversation and learning opportunity.

“I think when we look at the issue of bullying we have to look at all the ways we can change that discourse. We’ve heard a lot lately about civil discourse. That really comes from training and education,” Kaplan said.

Prepare schools of education and social work

“Teachers and social workers and counselors need to be supportive,” Toy said. They also need to be aware of bullying and be prepared to deal with it in their careers.

Keep talking

“The local folks, students especially, don’t be afraid to share your personal stories,” Anderson said. “I think they should share their stories by writing letters, reaching out to the legislators, and even writing to the newspaper if they’re not afraid to do that.”

More than movies at QUEERIES Night

The monthly film series offers an alternative social scene

BY HANNAH SCHWAB

GRAND RAPIDS—Wealthy Street Theater Director Erin Wilson is extremely proud to offer QUEERIES Night, a once-a-month film night that features LGBT and ally-friendly films.

The theater has hosted many nonprofit events, some catered to the LGBT community, but Wilson wanted a permanent event that focused on LGBT-related issues.

“(W)e knew many metro areas have regular LGBT programming and Grand Rapids did not,” Wilson said. “Informal conversations with nonprofit partners led us to realize that very few non-bar/non-club related LGBT events took place in the city. These conversations were the spark that led us to explore ways we could fill a need in our community: social, safe, compelling, entertaining and thoughtful gatherings that occurred on a regular basis.”

Wilson teamed up with Grand Valley State University’s LGBT Resource Center Director

Colette Beighley to plan the series and submit a grant proposal to fund it. Beighley approached the Arcus Foundation about underwriting QUEERIES Night.

The Arcus Foundation specializes in promoting projects and events that further social justice and conservation issues. The LGBT community is one sect Arcus specifically promotes. While their focus is international, Arcus has a branch in Kalamazoo and has worked with GVSU in the past.

With funding from Arcus and other local sponsors, Wealthy Street Theater launched its first installment of QUEERIES Night March 2010.

“The turnout for the kickoff event, Hedwig & The Angry Inch, was huge – an outstanding validation of what we had hoped for in putting the series together,” Wilson said.

Besides the subject matter, QUEERIES sets itself apart from other film series by getting community feedback.

“The series purposely involves the community in selecting what movies are screened,” Wilson said. “We often choose our titles by polling the community online.”

Often, the night offers more than just a movie. Wilson usually offers a question and answer session or a guest speaker to accompany the films.

Wilson said some speakers have traveled from Chicago and New York to talk about the films, but he usually tries to feature someone who has a thematic connection to the LGBT community.

“While this series belongs to the greater community, it is undeniably an LGBT series and we’re exceedingly proud to facilitate this ongoing opportunity for wider conversations about issues that affect our ... community members on a daily basis.”

Wilson said he was surprised by the positive feedback he has received.

“Grand Rapids is – to the surprise of many

– comprised of very progressive community and city leaders,” Wilson said. “The city proper is populated by a majority of liberal residents who are very supportive of the diverse content featured at Wealthy Street Theater. Even if someone disagreed with a presentation or its themes, there is a general acknowledgment that a greater good is served by the availability of diverse content.”

“I can honestly say there has been no resistance to this series,” Wilson said.

“We all wanted this to be ... not only welcoming to our LGBT community, but (also) inviting to the greater community. And this has been the case. While the majority of attendees are in fact gay, attendance consistently includes non-LGBT community members, as well.”

The next QUEERIES Night, a showing of “Xanadu,” is 8 p.m. Jan. 28. A full schedule of events is available at <http://www.grcmc.org/theatre/> and <http://www.facebook.com/wealthytheatre>.

 **Heard on Facebook**

Should Michigan have a statewide anti-bullying law for schools?

Yes, it absolutely should! Parents should be the front line, but that isn't happening, nor is it going to change overnight. I have kids in kindergarten to high school but our school district does not take bullying seriously – I mean at all. If there were a law they would be forced to take parental concerns under consideration, instead of feeding us the “kids will be kids” line. Bullying has cost too many their lives and self-esteem. Collectively we need to make a stand against this offensive behavior. This law would send a clear message to the schools that bullying is a serious issue that needs to be addressed on a daily basis.

–Cheryl Nolan Hooten

No. It's the responsibility of the parents to teach their kids not to bully, and how to handle bullying. It's not the job of the government. Bullying has always existed and will not stop just because there is a law. Education is better than making a new law.

–Jay Topham

Yes, because sadly too many parents fail in their responsibility to teach their children right from wrong. Many times the parents were, and are, bullies themselves. I agree with Jay that no law will stop the bully but if enough of them are punished, maybe the rest will get the idea it isn't right.

–Jack Miller

Getting parents, friends, and teachers to be aware of and involved in situations – as necessary – doesn't require a new law. Kids need to be taught how to handle the bullies, 'cause they will encounter them for the rest of their lives. Don't stalking, assault and battery laws already cover most of the very worst behaviors?

–Alex Hardesty

Jack and Alex make very good points, though with a majority of both parents needing to work to make ends meet, it's getting difficult.

–Jim Bale

Comments have been edited for grammar and length.

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– *First Amendment, U.S. Constitution*

S/he said LGBT movement, hate crimes

COMPILED BY HOWARD ISRAEL



Jonathan Rauch

“In a messy world where rights often collide, we can't avoid arguing about where legitimate dissent ends and intolerable discrimination begins. What we can do is avoid a trap the other side has set for us. Incidents of rage against ‘haters,’ verbal abuse of opponents, boycotts of business owners, absolutist enforcement of antidiscrimination laws: Those and other ‘zero-tolerance’ tactics play into the ‘homosexual bullies’ narrative, which is why our adversaries publicize them so energetically. The other side, is counting on us to hand them the victimhood weapon. Our task is to deny it to them.”

–Jonathan Rauch, in his column titled “The Majority Report,” about the growing majority of people in mainstream society who support LGBT people/issues, www.advocate.com.



Mark Potok

“By examining FBI data, it is possible to make reasonable estimates of the rates of victimization by various targeted minority groups.... The figures show that homosexuals are 2.4 times more likely to suffer a violent hate crime attack than Jews, 2.6 times more likely to be attacked than blacks; 4.4 times more likely than Muslims; 13.8 times more likely than Latinos; and 41.5 times more likely than whites, according to the FBI figures. The basic pattern holds by years as well as across the years. The bottom line: Gay people are more than twice as likely to be attacked in a violent hate crime as Jews or blacks; more than four times as likely as Muslims; and 14 times as likely as Latinos.”

–Mark Potok, in an article titled “Anti-Gay Hate Crimes: Doing the Math,” about data compiled by the Intelligence Project of The Southern Poverty Law Center, www.splcenter.org, Winter 2010 Issue.



Daniel Hernandez

“Why should the sexual orientation of this eminently competent, compassionate person keep coming up in this tale? It matters because guys like Arizona Sen. John McCain, who described the repeal of ‘Don't Ask, Don't Tell’ as ‘a very sad day,’ still think that orientation has an effect on whether or not a person can ably serve in the military. It matters because the notion that two people of the same sex can love each other and build a life together is still considered in many parts of the country, including Arizona, a threat to what is laughably referred to as ‘traditional marriage.’”

–Mary Elizabeth Williams, in her column titled “The Giffords shooting's gay, Hispanic hero – Daniel Hernandez helped save the congresswoman's life – and yes, his sexuality and ethnicity matter,” www.salon.com, Jan. 10.



“To all the amazing kids that watch our show, and the kids that our show celebrates who are constantly told ‘No’ by the people and environments, by bullies at school that they can't be who they are or have what they want because of who they are. Well, screw that kids!”

–Chris Colfer, 20-year old actor, the character “Kurt Hummel” on “Glee,” during his acceptance speech at the Golden Globes 2011, after receiving the Best Supporting Actor in a Television Series award, www.tvsquad.com, Jan. 16.

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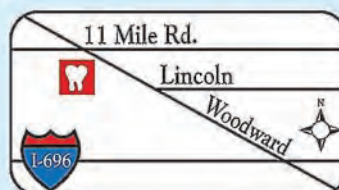
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BTL EDITORIAL

Why does it matter that Giffords' heroic intern is gay?

Daniel Hernandez, the intern who is credited with saving Arizona Rep. Gabrielle Giffords' life, received two waves of attention in the aftermath of the tragic shootings: The first for his fast thinking and aid to Giffords after she was shot, and the second when The Dallas Voice broke the news that the 20-year-old was gay.

The news was broken as a proud celebration, an affirmation that gay people are proud and active citizens, even in the home state of anti-gay figurehead Sen. John McCain. But this celebration is a stark contrast to the case of another gay hero 36 years ago.

Oliver Sipple, a Detroit, Michigan, U.S. Marine and Vietnam War vet who was credited with saving President Gerald R. Ford's life during an assassination attempt in September 1975. It was the second such attempt that year. Sipple was in a crowd, watching Ford leave a hotel in San Francisco, when a woman close to him pulled out a gun and began firing. Sipple grabbed the gun, diverting the shot. A local taxi driver was grazed with the bullet and survived.

Sipple, a gay activist, was hailed as a hero. But he wasn't out to his family, or his employer, so he requested that the media not report on his sexuality. A week after the assassination attempt, the San Francisco Chronicle reported that Sipple was gay and a close friend of Harvey Milk. Other papers followed suit.

After his unwilling outing, Sipple was estranged from his family. He received a thank-you letter from the White House, but Milk assumed Sipple's gayness prevented him from getting an invitation to meet the president in person. In 1979, Sipple filed a \$15 million lawsuit against the seven papers who outed him. After a five-year battle, the lawsuit was dismissed.

The Washington Post interviewed Sipple's brother and friends in 2006 about the hero. Sipple likely suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder after his war tour, and after his unwilling and national outing, drank heavily. He died in 1989.

The news was broken as a proud celebration, an affirmation that gay people are proud and active citizens, even in the home state of anti-gay figurehead Sen. John McCain. But this celebration is a stark contrast to the case of another gay hero 36 years ago.

In 2011, the gayness of a hero is applauded—or even just shrugged off. Comments on websites such as The Huffington Post and The Dallas Voice question the need to describe Hernandez as gay. But back in 1975, the gayness of a hero was a perplexing distraction and cause, as the Post put it, for Sipple and his family to “be hounded” by reporters.

Things are different today. Hernandez's life, and his label as a hero, isn't negatively affected by the public knowledge of his sexuality. In fact, Hernandez sat next to the First Family during the memorial service for the victims of the shooting last week. And during his speech, President Barack Obama specifically pointed to Hernandez as a hero—not because he was gay, or in spite of his being gay, but because he is a true hero, and that was the only thing that mattered.

Read the Washington Post interviews at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/30/AR2006123000160.html>

THE GAY MORALIST



Babies: not so bad

While it's true, in one sense, that babies don't DO anything, that is a great part of their charm. In a world full of agendas, they remind us of the joy of simply being.

BY JOHN CORVINO

This is my first column after a month's hiatus.

My biggest news during my break was the birth of my niece, Tess, followed a few weeks later by the birth of my partner's niece, Hadley. This is our first venture into uncle-hood.

I have never been a “baby person.” I would smile when people would show me baby pictures, but only because it's polite. If they tried to hand me their babies to hold, I would find any excuse to demur. (“Sorry; nasty cold.” “Can't lift; bad back.” Or, as a last resort: “Go away—I hate children.”)

It wasn't just that I was afraid that I might break them or something. (“Support the neck! Support the neck!”) It's that babies don't DO anything. They just lie there and make funny noises and poop. I didn't get the appeal.

I get it now.

In the last few weeks, I have become one of those “baby people.” I want to hold my nieces, press my face against theirs, share their pictures with absolutely everyone.

In the past, the only thing I appreciated about babies is that they weren't yet toddlers. Babies stay put in their little carrying cases, unable to run amok and break things. Now, oddly, I eagerly look forward to the day when my nieces are self-propelled.

My obsession with my nieces may be partially connected to my growing sense of my own mortality. I've been dwelling on that a lot lately.

In the latter part of 2010, I lost two dear friends my own age (41). Last month, a 59-year-old colleague in another department apparently committed suicide (car left on a bridge; body not found). Then, a couple of weeks ago, a former chair of my department died at the ripe old age of 92.

Even relatively minor events have prompted me to dwell on big questions. I've been at my current academic job for over a dozen years. The old brick building which housed my first office was recently demolished, reminding me in a

rather tangible way of the inevitability of change.

Birth, death, change. Which brings me back to the subject of my nieces. (I warned you I talk about them constantly.)

I don't plan on having children of my own. Even my newfound appreciation of babies hasn't sparked that desire. My nieces, therefore, may end up being the closest thing I have to progeny.

Progeny serve certain practical needs, of course. I will try to help keep my nieces out of trouble in their youth, and they, in turn, may help keep me out of trouble in my dotage. It's a fair bargain. I hope that my nieces will love me enough to stick by me when I get “difficult,” as I surely will, even more so than I already am.

But the value they add to my life goes far beyond the practical. Indeed, their biggest value to me thus far has been teaching me something about savoring the moment.

It's not just that “they grow up fast,” although I'm constantly reminded by friends that they do. It's that, when I'm with them, there's little more to do than enjoy their presence. (That, and change diapers.)

Our nation's Protestant work ethic, for all its value, has put the contemplative life increasingly out of reach. Modern technology promises “connectivity” yet paradoxically makes it harder to enjoy one another's presence. Our “to-do” lists are constantly expanding.

So while it's true, in one sense, that babies don't DO anything, that is a great part of their charm. In a world full of agendas, they remind us of the joy of simply being.

Happy New Year, readers. May 2011 bring us all a better balance between “being” and “doing.”

John Corvino, Ph.D. is a writer, speaker, and philosophy professor at Wayne State University in Detroit. Read more about him at www.johncorvino.com. His recent hour-long talk at Skepticon is posted in full on YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRTbzeTgHvU>



Parting Glances

Then & Now

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Whatever floats your boat

Alfred Kinsey – the sexologist who 62 years ago turned American morals head over heels (position sound familiar?) – said that “sex is an ocean.”

We’ve been swimming, backstroking – naked to be sure – in that ocean ever since; so much so that these days it seems we’ve lost sight of the shoreline.

Kinsey’s “Sexual Behavior in the Human Male,” published in 1948, offered the then-shocking statistic that 37 percent of the male population had gay sex with orgasm.

I shared Kinsey’s oceanic observation with a playwright friend, Harvey Keith, who wrote under the pen name of Kercheval Devonshire, after the Grosse Pointe streets he grew up on and auditioned for varying, center-stage, campy parts.

Harv quipped, “Yes, Dear Heart, and we’re making our umpteenth crossing.”

Most of Harv’s crossing was done Off Broadway. He’s remembered if at all today by two plays that were briefly staged: “Run Children Run” and “Shoes at the Door.” Harv – Heaven’s Actor’s Equity bless him with angelic roles – alas, ocean crosses no more.

(I still sail gaily on in all kinds of weather, even if it means going by raft, rowboat, or occasionally by hand-pumped inflatable dinghy. That I rarely get blown into port or docked for even a modicum of gay cruise boarding doesn’t mean I’m not ship shape. Try me.)

The same year that Kinsey’s groundbreaking study of male human sexuality appeared, a new photographic innovation also hit the market: The Polaroid Camera. It was quickly put to innovative documentary and pornographic use by a DePaul University English professor, Samuel M. Steward (aka pornographer Phil Andros), recently part of an “In The Life” TV special.

(I need not point out that current technology has greatly facilitated hand-held “advances” in camera erotomania, both for rank amateurs and randy professionals in ways dreamed impossible in Steward’s time. What these techno/homo/photo pluses – and the Internet – have done to Post Office snooping and prosecution is another interesting story.)

Steward (1909-1993) is the subject of a new, well-written, amazingly researched biography – the title tells it all – “Secret Historian: The life and times of Samuel Steward, professor, tattoo artist and sexual renegade,” by Justin Spring. (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York. \$32.50.)

Following the death of his mother and crass abandonment by an alcoholic father, Steward was raised by three religious aunts. He indulged himself early on with a thumb-nosing, zealous sex life. As a teenager he began documenting his encounters in diaries, journals, and eventually a file system numbering 750 cards, with thousands of contacts, and many succinct and humorous details.

Conquests include 1920s actor Rudolph Valentino (whose public hair Steward adoringly kept in a golden-halo’d altar monstrosity), “Our Town” playwright Thornton Wilder (a ten-year hush-hush affair for prissy Thornton), and an up-and-down back elevator encounter with Rock Hudson, when the actor-to-be was working in a Chicago department store.

And, just for the hell of it, Steward tracked down Oscar Wilde’s snobbish lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, then 63, and bedded him. Steward thought piss-elegant Bosey a lousy lay.

Steward was friends with Gertrude Stein and her partner Alice B. Toklas, visiting them regularly in Paris, recording many happy conversations. A highly popular DePaul University English professor, he was fired for also being Phil Sparrow, a tattoo artist, working South Chicago at a time when only sailors, convicts, and Hells Angel types got tattoos.

He and Kinsey became friends in the 1950s. Kinsey was fascinated by Steward’s seemingly nonstop sex life, and Kinsey’s Institute took motion pictures – its first such filming venture – of Steward engaged in ardent S/M bottoming. Certainly, an academic no no for DePaul.

“Sexual Renegade” provided me with vicarious summer reading, as I rearranged lounge chairs on my own mental ocean liner. Ship ahoy! All hands on deck. Sink or swim. Any portly in a storm.

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The edge is experience, The payoff is performance!

Joseph Allen

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

For many years people have been trying to figure out what makes a person gay. Scientists, psychologists, and theologians alike have been stumped.

Of course, all they have to do is ask Schenectady City Council member Joseph Allen. He knows what makes kids gay: advertising.

You see, in Schenectady, New York, an LGBT advocacy group called In Our Own Voices, along with the state Department of Health, began a billboard campaign that's part advocacy and part HIV prevention. And let me tell you, the billboards are scandalous.

(You might want to shield your eyes before reading this next part because just a mere description of one of these billboards could make you gay or, if you're already gay, even gayer.)

One billboard has a photo of a young African-American man surrounded by his family. It looks like his mom and his dad and maybe his brother. Or his boyfriend. That part is not clear. Next to the photo it reads, "I AM GAY" and underneath says, "And this is where I stay," followed by, "We have always been a part of this community." The billboard also contains IOOV's website and phone number.

According to the Schenectady Daily Gazette, the other two billboards in the series include photos of gay black men in church and playing basketball. Each billboard includes "I AM GAY" and the message about community.

In any case, some folks in Schenectady are super pissed about these billboards and so they took their concerns before the City Council at their Jan. 10 meeting.

According to the Gazette, Rev. Alfred Thompkins, who likened gay people to "thieves and liars," told the council he was "really bothered by the message these send" to young people. "A 13-year-old looks at these billboards and says, 'That must be it, I must be gay,'" Thompkins said. "That goes directly against God's purpose."

Exactly. What gay person doesn't remember seeing his or her first billboard and deciding right then and there to be gay? Thompkins clearly understands how this whole gay thing works.

The Gazette also reported that a woman who provides daycare to a 2, 4, and 8-year-old accused the billboards of promoting "inappropriate sexual expression" and argued that they should be limited to "adult business zones," which the Gazette described as "industrial areas at the outskirts of the city." She said she didn't want her daycare kids exposed "to such content."

And who can blame her? Gay men with their families? Gay men in church? Sick. It's enough to make a child's eyes explode into pools of flamin' hot blood.

You have to hope that the people on the Schenectady City Council have some sense even if some of their constituents don't.

That's where councilmember Joseph Allen comes in. He agreed with both of the people who spoke out against the billboards and offered his own searing insight.

"Now, I don't care if you're gay, straight or whatever, but I don't think it's necessary to advertise for them," Allen said according to the Gazette. "This is not kosher, as far as I'm concerned."

It is not clear from the news story whether a rabbi was consulted, but Allen did worry about the impact of the billboards on kids.

"An adult, fine, you can do what you want," Allen continued. "But who's going to read these? Young people, vulnerable kids. They don't say, 'Adult only.'"

But they should. Because Allen apparently thinks that there's something pornographic about the word "gay" paired with a photo of a gay man and his family. And by claiming that "vulnerable" young people would read the billboards, he's perpetuating the completely false idea that gays somehow recruit kids.

The truly vulnerable young people who read those billboards are, indeed, the LGBT kids who "have always been a part of this community." And maybe the billboard messages will have an impact on them. Not to "make" them gay, but to make them think, "Hey, maybe I do have a future here. Maybe I don't need to kill myself. Maybe I am okay."

But in Allen's Schenectady that's apparently a negative message. Seeing as he "called for legislation that would require billboard owners to get their messages approved by the council" (which was quickly smacked down per the whole freedom of speech thing), it's frightening to think what he would deem appropriate.

Justice Dept. appeals rulings that struck down DOMA

HRC to Obama: Support same-sex marriage now

BY REX WOCKNER

Obama has said he supports civil unions for gays but thinks marriage is for straight couples.

The Human Rights Campaign called on President Barack Obama Jan. 13 to abandon his opposition to same-sex marriage.

Obama has said he supports civil unions for gays but thinks marriage is for straight couples. But he also has said his thinking on the issue is "evolving" and "it's pretty clear where the trendlines are going."

As such, "it's time for him to help lead the American public toward full equality for all Americans," said HRC President Joe Solmonese. "We ask him to fully recognize the dignity of LGBT Americans and their families by supporting marriage equality."

Solmonese's exhortation came as the Department of Justice appealed two federal court rulings from last July that struck down as unconstitutional the part of the Defense of Marriage Act that prevents the federal government from recognizing states' same-sex marriages.

The section states: "In determining the meaning of any Act of Congress, or of any ruling, regulation, or interpretation of the various administrative bureaus and agencies of the United States, the word 'marriage' means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word 'spouse' refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife."

(The other section, which gives states cover to refuse to recognize other states' same-sex marriages, was not targeted in the lawsuits.)

The administration said it has a duty to defend U.S. laws, including those such as DOMA that the president opposes.

Obama has said he supports civil unions for gays but thinks marriage is for straight couples.

HRC disputed that claim and urged the DOJ to "at the very least ... acknowledge that (DOMA) is unconstitutional."

In its appeal to the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the government argues: "... DOMA is rationally related to legitimate governmental interests. Congress passed DOMA in 1996, at a time when states and their citizens were just beginning to address the issue of marriage rights for same-sex couples. Since that time, some states have enacted statutes or issued court decisions that permit same-sex couples to marry, and other states have promulgated statutes or constitutional amendments that define marriage as between a man and a woman. Other states do not allow same-sex couples to marry under their own laws, but nonetheless recognize same-sex marriages from other states. DOMA, which implicates over 1000 federal laws, reflects Congress's reasonable response to this still-evolving debate among the states regarding same-sex marriage. The Constitution permitted Congress to enact DOMA as a means to preserve the status quo, ensure consistency in the distribution of federal marriage-based benefits, and respect policy developments in the states without implicating other states or the United States, pending the resolution of the debate taking place in the states over whether to permit same-sex marriage."

In striking down DOMA, the federal District Court in Boston ruled that it violates the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by treating married gay couples differently from married straight couples without any rational basis for doing so, violates the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by intruding in areas of exclusive state authority, and violates the Spending Clause in Article 1 of the Constitution by forcing Massachusetts to discriminate against its married gay citizens in order to receive certain types of federal funding.

The government's appeal disputes all three determinations.

In 1996, when Obama was running for the Illinois Senate, he told the Chicago gay newspaper Windy City Times that he favored legalizing same-sex marriage, but since that time he has expressed support only for civil unions for same-sex couples. Very recently, however, he has suggested that his feelings on the matter may be in flux.

In December, he told The Advocate: "My attitudes are evolving on this. I have always firmly believed in having a robust civil union that provides the rights and benefits under the law that marriage does. I've wrestled with the fact that marriage traditionally has had a different connotation. But I also have a lot of very close friends who are married gay or lesbian couples. And squaring that circle is something that I have not done yet, but I'm continually asking myself this question, and I do think that - I will make this observation, that I notice there is a big generational difference. When you talk to people who are in their 20s, they don't understand what the holdup is on this, regardless of their own sexual orientation."

He made similar remarks to gay blogger Joe Sudbay last October.

Maryland expected to legalize same-sex marriage

BY REX WOCKNER

Maryland's Legislature is expected to legalize same-sex marriage this year.

It also is expected to pass a bill outlawing anti-trans discrimination.

Equality Maryland Executive Director Morgan Meneses-Sheets said the marriage bill is being introduced in the

House by Majority Leader Kumar Barve and Delegate Keiffer Mitchell, and in the Senate by Majority Leader Rob Garagiola and Sen. Richard Madaleno.

The measure is believed to have enough support to pass both chambers, and Gov. Martin O'Malley has vowed to sign it into law if given a chance.

Maryland already recognizes same-

sex marriages that take place in other states and countries.

The trans-rights legislation will ban discrimination based on gender identity or expression in employment, housing and credit. Gays, lesbians and bisexuals already are protected under state law.

Openly gay intern honored

BY LISA KEEN

Daniel Hernandez Jr., the openly gay intern who ran to the rescue of U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords during the Jan. 8 shooting in Tucson, was seated next to President Obama Jan. 12 during a memorial for the victims of that shooting.

President Obama and others repeatedly referred to Hernandez as a "hero," but Hernandez himself urged that the title belongs not to him, but to Giffords and other public servants.

"Though I appreciate the sentiment, I must humbly reject the use of the word hero because I am not one," said Hernandez. "The people who are the heroes," he said, were Congresswoman Giffords, members of her staff, the first responders to the shooting, and the doctors caring for Giffords.

"We have all come together to realize that what defines us is not the differences," said Hernandez. "It is that we are all together, we are all a family, we are all Americans."

"Daniel, I'm sorry, you may deny it, but we've decided you are a hero," said President Obama during his remarks. He was interrupted by applause. "You ran through the chaos to minister to your boss and tended to her wounds and helped keep her alive."

Hernandez received a standing ovation when he arrived at the podium during the memorial service. In addition to being seated next



Emergency personnel and Daniel Hernandez, an intern for U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, second right, move Giffords after she was shot in the head outside a shopping center in Tucson, Ariz. on Saturday, Jan. 8, 2011. AP Photo/James Palka

to the president, Hernandez was seated next to former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who was accompanied by Justice Anthony Kennedy.

Hernandez, 20, is a student at the University of Arizona but began working as an intern in Giffords' Tucson office on Jan. 3. He ran toward Giffords when the shooting broke out and, once he saw her head wound, used his hand to apply pressure to curb the bleeding and held

her upright to prevent her from choking on the blood. Doctors have credited Hernandez's quick response with having saved Giffords' life.

President Obama visited Giffords before Wednesday evening's memorial service. He told the audience that, shortly after he left her room, Giffords opened her eyes for the first time. Her husband Mark Kelly, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, New York Senator Kristin Gillibrand, and Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz,

President Obama and others repeatedly referred to Hernandez as a "hero," but Hernandez himself urged that the title belongs not to him, but to Giffords and other public servants.

D-Fla., were with her at the time, according to the Washington Post.

Giffords suffered a gunshot to the head Saturday while conducting a meet-and-greet event for constituents in Tucson, Arizona. Six people, including a federal judge and a nine-year-old girl, were killed during the shooting. Thirteen others were injured. Police arrested a 22-year-old man with apparent mental instability after several constituents at the scene were able to subdue him while he attempted to reload his semi-automatic weapon.

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Log Cabin refuses to back off DADT case

The Republicans want to speed up the official start of repeal

BY REX WOCKNER

The Log Cabin Republicans are refusing to pause their federal case against the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” military gay ban even though Congress has authorized the military to repeal the policy.

The ban was struck down as unconstitutional last October by U.S. District Judge Virginia Phillips in Riverside, Calif.

The Obama administration, however, appealed the ruling to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and obtained a stay of Phillips’ injunction that had halted the ban’s enforcement worldwide.

Now the administration wants the court to put the appeal on hold while the Pentagon moves on implementing DADT repeal – a process that could take months.

But Log Cabin isn’t interested in delaying the proceedings.

“Log Cabin Republicans are acutely

“Log Cabin Republicans are acutely aware President Obama and his administration desperately want our case to just go away. That is not going to happen,”

—LCR Executive Director R. Clarke Cooper

aware President Obama and his administration desperately want our case to just go away. That is not going to happen,” said LCR Executive Director R. Clarke Cooper. “The Obama administration’s continued defense of this failed and unconstitutional policy is a mystery. ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ was rejected by Congress, by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and most notably by the American people. It is time for the president

to stand by his commitment and end this policy of discrimination.”

LCR attorney Dan Woods expressed defiance.

“Despite what the government has led the American people to believe, ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ has not been repealed and will likely remain the law of the land until the end of 2011,” Woods said. “In the meantime, openly gay individuals

are not free to enlist in our armed forces, current service members must continue to live a lie, and the government continues to investigate and discharge service members. What’s more, the government is trying to delay the briefing and argument on its appeal from the judgment and injunction obtained by Log Cabin Republicans.

“The government asked us to agree to the delay and we were willing to do so on one condition: that the government halt all pending investigations and discharges during the period of delay,” Woods said. “The government refused, and its attorneys said that investigations and discharges will continue. For these reasons, Log Cabin Republicans’ case is still alive and kicking. Our filing today (Jan. 10) opposes the government’s motion to delay the appeal and asks the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, in the alternative, to stay all investigations and discharges in the event it is prepared to grant the government’s request for delay.”

International Briefs

BY REX WOCKNER

Gay senator leads Irish president race

A poll has found that openly gay Irish Senator David Norris leads the pack seeking to be the nation’s next president.

The Red C poll conducted in early January found that Norris, 66, is favored by 27 percent of voters, followed by Member of the European Parliament Mairead McGuinness at 13 percent, former Prime Minister Bertie Ahern at 12 percent, Dail member Michael D. Higgins at 11 percent, and MEP Brian Crowley and charity executive Fergus Finlay at 10 percent.

The poll found that 13 percent of respondents support none of the candidates and 5 percent do not plan to vote.

In a famous 1988 gay rights case, Norris took the Irish government before the European Court of Human Rights and forced the nation to decriminalize sex between men.

Gay Portuguese journalist killed in NYC

Well-known openly gay Portuguese journalist Carlos Castro, 65, was killed in his New York City hotel room Jan. 7.

Reports said he was tortured at length, poked in the eye with a corkscrew and castrated at the InterContinental Times Square hotel.

Castro’s traveling companion, 20-year-old model Renato Seabra, reportedly confessed to the attack, told police he isn’t gay anymore, and said he castrated Castro to get rid of homosexual demons.

Seabra has been charged with second-degree murder.

Correspondent Joao Paulo from PortugalGay.pt said Castro “was a very well-known journalist here in Portugal and a dear friend of mine.”

“Despite what we have seen in the U.S. news, he was not seen as a gay activist in Portugal, but he was a gay man who was also a part-time activist, especially on the HIV fight,” Paulo said.

For 18 years, Castro had organized the annual “Gala dos Travestis” event to support Associacao Abraco, Portugal’s leading HIV/AIDS charity, Paulo said.

McDonald’s Wi-Fi blocking gay news

McDonald’s has come under fire in New Zealand for blocking access to gay websites on the free Wi-Fi available at restaurants. The banned sites included GayNZ, PFLAG, and Rainbow Youth.

The company responded that it uses filtering software to be sure pages viewed at its locations are “child-friendly.”

Following media coverage, the chain unblocked Rainbow Youth and PFLAG but refused to budge on GayNZ.com, saying some of the advertisements placed on the site by third parties are not “friendly” to children or families.

GayNZ was a finalist last year in the Qantas Media Awards in the investigative-journalism category.

Canadian court: Officials can’t refuse to marry gays

Marriage commissioners in Canada’s Saskatchewan province cannot refuse to marry

same-sex couples, the Court of Appeal ruled Jan. 10.

The top court ruled in advance on a proposed law that would have let commissioners opt out of performing gay marriages for religious reasons.

The court said: “It is not difficult for most people to imagine the personal hurt involved in a situation where an individual is told by a governmental officer, ‘I won’t help you because you are black (or Asian or First Nations) but someone else will,’ or ‘I won’t help you because you are Jewish (or Muslim or Buddhist) but someone else will.’ Being told, ‘I won’t help you because you are gay/lesbian but someone else will’ is no different.”

The legislation was proposed after a commissioner who did not want to marry gays had exhausted legal options in appealing rulings against him.

Transgenders killed in Honduras

Several transgender people have been killed in Honduras within the past month, with two of them being set on fire, according to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.

The victims include Alexis Alvarado Hernandez, 23, who was stoned and set alight in the city of Comayagueela; Oscar Martinez Salgado, 45, who was stabbed and set on fire in her Tegucigalpa home; and “Cheo,” who was found stabbed to death on a Tegucigalpa street.

IGLHRC said that since the 2009 coup d’etat, there have been at least 31 murders of Honduran LGBT people.

Canada bans broadcast of old Dire Straits song

The Canadian Broadcast Standards Council on Jan. 12 banned the old Dire Straits song “Money for Nothing” from the airwaves because the lyrics contain the word “faggot.”

The council said broadcasting the word violates both the Canadian Association of Broadcasters’ Code of Ethics and its Equitable Portrayal Code.

The song says: “The little faggot with the earring and the makeup. Yeah, buddy, that’s his own hair. That little faggot’s got his own jet airplane. That little faggot, he’s a millionaire.”

CNSC determined: “(L)ike other racially driven words in the English language, ‘faggot’ is one that, even if entirely or marginally acceptable in earlier days, is no longer so. The Panel finds that it has fallen into the category of unacceptable designations on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or physical or mental disability.”

More reports of vandalized newspaper boxes in Canada

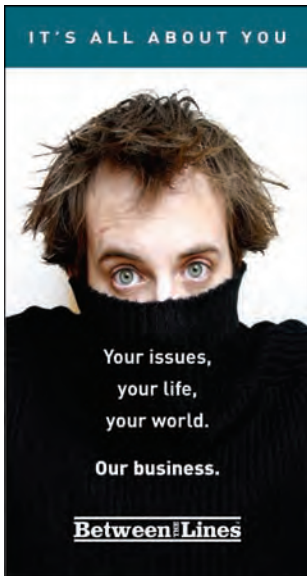
The Toronto gay newspaper Xtra says its newspaper boxes are under attack from suspected homophobes.

The hapless containers have been stolen, set on fire, glued shut, filled with garbage and defaced with the word “fag.”

Xtra’s sister paper in Vancouver has been similarly targeted. Fourteen Xtra West boxes have seen their front windows dismantled and their papers purloined.

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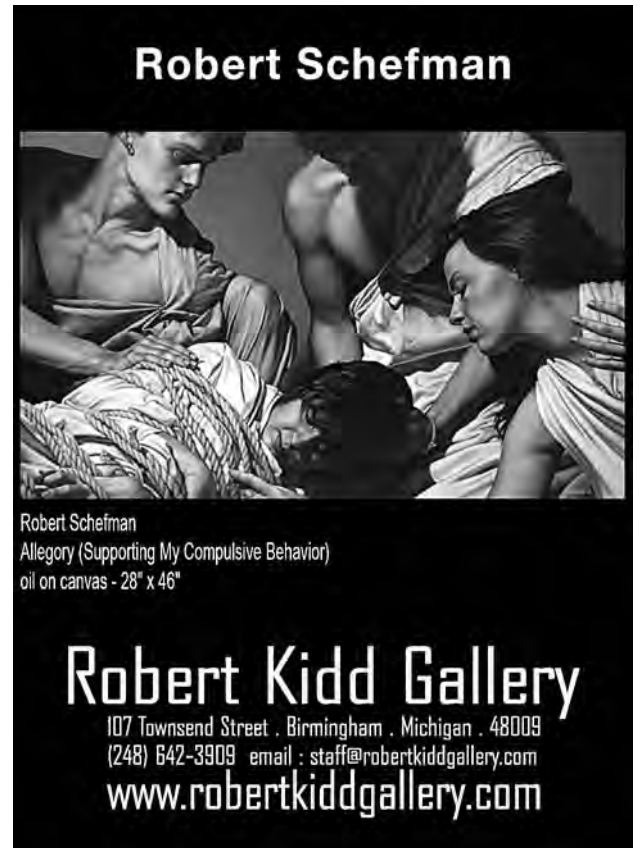


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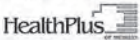


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RuPaul's new 'Race'

Drag icon on what to expect during Season 3 of Logo hit

BY LAWRENCE FERBER

On Jan. 24, the third season of Logo's hit "RuPaul's Drag Race" exits the gate at full speed, and it's running on some seriously premium fuel this year: fiercer contestants; more elaborate challenges; higher profile guest judges including LaToya Jackson, Sharon Osbourne, Lily Tomlin, Margaret Cho and Chloe Sevigny; and a game-changing surprise to be unveiled in the 90-minute premiere episode.

Yet again ruling the proceedings both in and out of drag, RuPaul – who will release a new album this spring – dished about contestants old and new, the effects of sleep deprivation on drag queens (hint: emotional breakdowns) and what else is in the works.

What do you make of season three's group of contestants, and how do they differ from their predecessors?

The honest to God truth, they're so much more skilled, and also on an even-keeled level. These kids came with their A-game like I've never seen before. I don't know if it's our casting or what's happening with the girls out there since the show debuted, but these kids are skilled. And the bonds they forged early on with each other is probably the most amazing element.

See RuPaul, page 20



Photo: Mathu Andersen



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Life MUSIC



Ann Arbor Folk Festival: 'Woodstock with a Roof'

Susan Werner buzzes about emceeing, new country album and Vince Gill in a dress

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

This is how Susan Werner remembers the Ann Arbor Folk Festival last time she hosted in 2005: "It's Woodstock with a roof, basically."

Playing the part again this year at The Ark's fundraiser, an annual music lover's dream on Jan. 28 and 29 at the Hill Auditorium, the Chicago singer-songwriter promises new songs from her unreleased 10th album, "Kicking the Beehive," out March 1, along with rapier-like wit, Ohio knocks and Ann Arbor scoop.

"There's all kinds of things about Ann Arbor that maybe people in Ann Arbor don't even know," she says. "And then I'm planning to compile a set of facts denigrating the state of Ohio, to feed into the rivalry. It's there, so why not throw some metaphorical stink bombs?"

But there's more to hosting than being saucy – or pulling a Cher, as Werner vows to do ("If you go through the whole evening in one wardrobe, you failed") – when an event as treasured as this one's underway. Big acts like The Avett Brothers and The Swell Season headline each

night, respectively, with many other acts – including Vienna Teng, Citizen Cope, Mavis Staples and Judy Collins – filling out the lineups. Werner's biggest drill? Remembering names.

"I'll have to study up, but I'll be waiting until that week and then doing a crash course on everybody," she says.

Werner knows how awkward it is if she doesn't. Friend and fellow folk artist Trina Hamlin, whom Werner returns to Ann Arbor with in February for her own show at The Ark, was introduced as Shemekia Copeland one year. "Here comes this really tall white woman with a harmonica named Shemekia Copeland. I mean, there was nothing about this that was right," she recalls, laughing.

"The emcee's primary job is to pronounce the names of the acts correctly and introduce the acts in the correct order. If I can get that right, then I'll probably have done what is really the most important job."

In previous years, most recently with hosts Jeff Daniels and Patty Larkin, the emcee also wedges in some music between acts to keep the show's musical momentum from stalling. Werner plans to as well, whipping out upbeat songs from her new disc.

"Part of what I'm supposed to do is tap dance between acts, let's face it," she admits. "But also, part of it is to have a thread that runs through the evening, to give it some coherence – otherwise the acts may not have anything to do with each other. But if the emcee has a through-line for the evening, it helps the whole evening

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hang together better and, ideally, makes for a more satisfying experience for everybody that's there."

The crowd, which she speaks of almost like some type of divine miracle, is "so tuned in, so in the mood. And they're sitting there in seats facing forward."

Of course they are. Folk music fans are some of the most disciplined, sit-up-straight-and-listen audiences out there, and anyone who's seen a show at The Ark knows so. But folk, according to Werner, is more than just a genre. It, like all music, taps into the human condition.

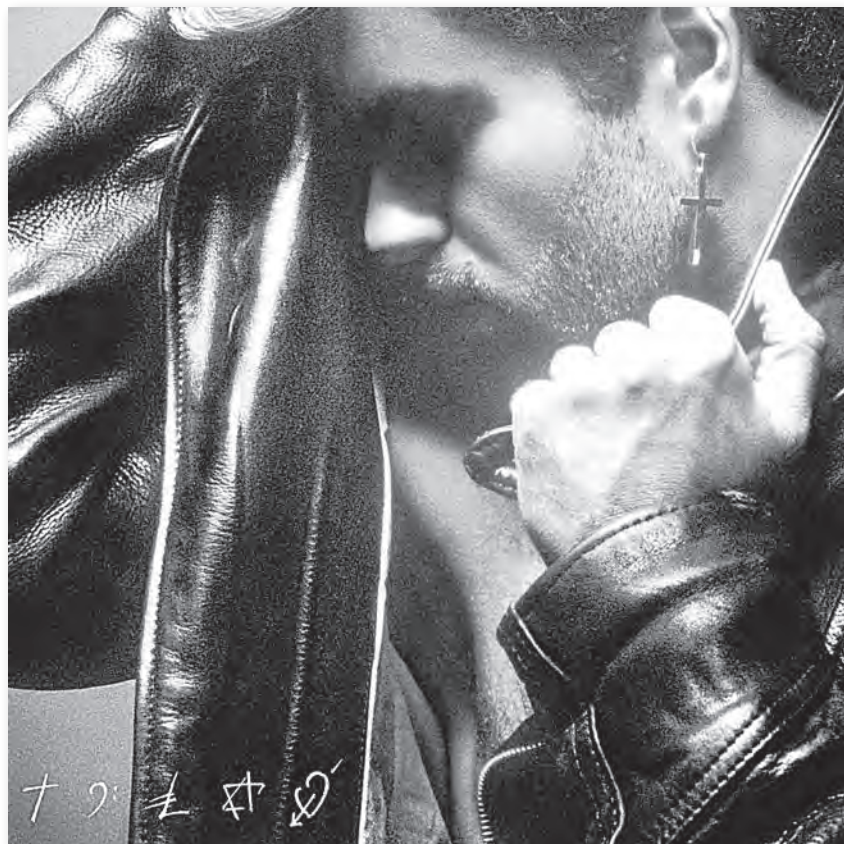
"If music is just a pleasant listening experience, it overlooks a whole part of what it is to be a human being," she says. "As a human being there are moments when we're angry, when we're funny and when we want change. And folk music embraces all of those impulses. Somebody's got to put something at risk and say something that makes the audience slightly uncomfortable. We're here to throw that stink bomb and say the thing that no one's saying."

Werner does so on "Kicking the Beehive," an 11-song Americana album

See Susan Werner, page 22

PRIDESOURCE
DOT COM

George Michael's 'Faith' gets remastered. Plus: Natasha Bedingfield bores



George Michael, 'Faith (Special Edition)'

When he wasn't setting his own monkey free, George Michael was singing about it. The single "Monkey" was, and remains, one of the weakest tracks on this classic – but on a 10-song album full of diamonds, it's like getting a pearl. With the fantastic remaster of "Faith," the British pop star's genesis from boy band to sexually liberated solo act, the rerelease of the 1987 watermark shows an artist in bloom, boldly pushing buttons ("I Want Your Sex" would still turn heads today for its unapologetic straight talk) and setting the stage for a legendary career. The timeless hits – "Father Figure," the title track and one of the best ballads of all time, "One More Try" – are all intact on one disc; the other two, a DVD and another CD, include corresponding music videos and rarities packaged with a hard-bound book of interviews and photos. A very candid, in-depth chat from the late '80s is the highlight on the DVD; another, "Music, Money, Love, Faith," is an interesting behind-the-music making of. Both features add perspective to a masterwork that remains not only an era marker, but – even now, 24 years later – one of immaculate pop prowess. (Out Feb. 1) *Grade: A*



Natasha Bedingfield, 'Strip Me'

So that pocketful of sunshine might be hurting Natasha Bedingfield more than she thought. She's stamping smiley faces all over her third U.S. release, sounding like she's written the soundtrack for a late '90s chick flick; but her "journey of hope" seems less like an exploration and more like a destination she's already reached. "Little Too Much" is so cute you can practically see Julia Robert's pearly whites in it. The reference might seem dated, but everything about "Strip Me" is – from how generic it sounds (even producer Ryan Tedder, with the gimmicky title track, gives Bedingfield the same drumbeat he's criminally bestowed upon Beyoncé and Kelly Clarkson) to how blandly safe it is. Even the elementary lyrics go way back with clichés about playing a lover like a musical instrument – in this case, on "No Mozart," a piano. What really sours "Strip Me," though, is the uncharacteristic vocal lunges Bedingfield throws herself into during the disc's almost-unlistenable last half, particularly on the overreaching ballad "Recover," where she really wants you to feel what she's singing – even if she has to scream it to you. *Grade: C-*

Also Out



Keri Hilson, 'No Boys Allowed'

You know something's up when a song features an "anus/famous" rhyme. The sad part is that said line, courtesy of a Nelly cameo on "Lose Control," will go down as the most memorable moment of the siren's second album, a drab follow-up to 2009's "In a Perfect World." So much of Hilson's pop-soul sophomore CD slips through the cracks (sorry, couldn't help it) that we're left with a middling album of hookless sonic slop whose only triumphs are the ones with the most attitude.



Regina Spektor, 'Live in London'

No offense to Regina Spektor, who impresses during her first live release, but the DVD is a mess. Shot in 2009 with what appears to be webcams, it does no justice to this folk-bending talent who is completely absorbing during her set, also available on an accompanying CD. "Samson," one of her best, is sadder and sweeter live – and you can't help but love the buoyant bounce of "Folding Chair" – but the real surprise is the unreleased "Love, You're a Whore," a cheeky country closer.



Corinne Bailey Rae, 'The Love EP'

Didn't see this one coming: the "Put Your Records On" soulstress doing Prince? Yep, Rae gets funky on the sexy "I Wanna Be Your Lover" as part of this digital-only release of covers for Valentine's Day. Her silky-smooth voice works magically, and it's cool to hear her cut loose just after her very serious "The Sea." Other tracks on the EP include the haunting rocker "Low Red Moon" and the sweet Paul McCartney & Wings song "My Love." Put this record on, for sure.

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► RuPaul

Continued from p. 17

Yet again the first challenge is a photo shoot with Mike Ruiz. Do you forgive him for his ridiculous hair on "The A-List: New York"? It looked like a bowl of lubed squid ink pasta.

(Laughs) I've heard people talk about it. But I don't know because I've never seen it. That's funny!

Can you share a behind-the-scenes factoid about Season 3 that may enhance our viewing experience?

Well, we're working on so little sleep; the schedule is so fast because we're basically shooting every day. It's tough, grueling. So these kids come on the show and think, "I'm fierce and bad," but can you do it day-in, day-out for 15 hours per day? It may look like everyone's relaxed, but nobody's getting any sleep at all.

One typically isn't very detail-oriented when sleep deprived, correct?

No, they're not, and they're drawing on a lifetime of experience because this show's challenges are based on things I had to do on a daily basis in my own career. Anyone in the business has to be multi-tasking and wear a lot of hats. You can't just be good at one thing. We do something, "Queens in Space," where the kids shoot competing trailers for a sci-fi movie and it is hilarious. Most people think, "I



The cast of "RuPaul's Drag Race." Photo: Mathu Andersen

can do this," but you have to come with some acting skills, the ability to take direction. Our challenges put them through it, they really do.

Did the selection process change this season, or was there a shift in emphasis as far as the kinds of queens you looked for?

It doesn't change. The truth is we're looking for showgirls. We want girls who work at doing drag for money, for a career. The things we ask them to do, a novice wouldn't be able to. We're looking for them to be marketing execs, managers, designers, strategists, performers, models, you name it. And the novice wouldn't be able to do that. They'd buckle. And throw in the sleep deprivation and

schedule, and you have to be in it to win it. This can't be something you do on the side.

One contestant already buckles under the pressure and breaks down in the first episode. Did that happen a lot, and how do you typically respond to it?

They definitely break down because of sleep deprivation. Emotions are very fragile because they're in a new environment; we're putting them through the paces, and I have to give them pep talks from time to time: "This is your opportunity, the world is watching." You can't say, "Oh, I feel like I didn't get my chance." Well kiddo, you are on now. You are on. There are no second chances – you have to bring it.

How much do you miss saying "Pan-dor-a Boxx"?

I miss (all the former contestants), actually, because even before they're on the show, we're living with audition tapes. It's a lot like casting a play – we have to have the sassy one, the ingénue, the sweet one. And sometimes the person in the role of the sweet one gets swapped out for someone else who works better in the ensemble, so we are actually living and loving and feeling these girls way before they even get to Hollywood, and then when they're dismissed it's heartbreaking to me.

How has this show changed your life since its inception?

Well, I pretty much have to stay in L.A. For almost 30 years I've had a nightclub act I performed around the world constantly. And the last gig I did was October 2009. With both shows it's really kept me here in L.A. working. I'm also an introvert masquerading as an extrovert, so I've had to spend a lot more time with people than I normally do!

What other projects are in the works?

I'm writing a sequel to (my 2007 film) "Starrbooty." The challenge is I want to do it G-rated but nastier, more subversive. In the immortal words of Elvira, there's nothing wrong with G-rated movies as long as there's lots of gratuitous sex and violence.

"RuPaul's Drag Race" premieres at 10 p.m. Jan. 24 on Logo, with a first-ever casting special airing at 9 p.m.

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Search for meaning in prisoner's last days

BY MARTIN F. KOHN

There are many ways of being condemned. One kind comes in a court of law, and while a death sentence sets events in motion in "A Lesson Before Dying," there are other forms of condemnation to be considered.

Ernest J. Gaines' novel and Romulus Linney's stage adaptation now at Detroit Repertory Theatre are set in a small Louisiana town in the segregated 1940s. Convicted in the robbery-murder of a white man, a young black man named Jefferson (Gabriel Johnson) is facing electrocution, but it's quickly evident that he experienced the additional condemnation of never having had a chance in life.

During the trial Jefferson's own lawyer characterized him as barely human, little more

REVIEW

'A Lesson Before Dying'

Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. Thursday-Sunday through March 20. \$17-\$20. 313-868-1347
www.detroitreptheatre.com



Romulus Linney's stage adaptation of "A Lesson Before Dying" is now playing at the Detroit Repertory Theatre. Photo: Bruce Millan

than a hog. Jefferson's Aunt Emma (Barbara Jacobs-Smith), who raised him, disagrees vehemently and asks Grant Wiggins (Harold Hogan), who teaches at an all-black country school outside of town, to visit Jefferson in prison and educate him sufficiently to show the world that Jefferson is a man, not a hog, and allow him to die with dignity.

Because Linney's play starts after the trial – the novel begins with it – there is the

sensation of jumping on a moving raft in the middle of a river, rather than being present at the launch, understanding how and where the voyage began. That can be an effective device, but here it's disconcerting; so much back-story must be told to bring the audience – and teacher Grant Wiggins – up to speed.

To read the complete review, log on to ...
www.EncoreMichigan.com or PrideSource.com

'The Agony' – it only hurts when I laugh

BY JOHN QUINN

Nicky Silver's dark comedy of ill-manners, "The Agony & The Agony," is a tale of lonely has-beens and never-beens seeking comfort in dysfunctional associations. So how come it's so damn funny?

Much of the credit belongs to the playwright's inventive script, his ear for cutting dialogue and talent for writing wicked one-liners. All this would be lost if it were not coupled with the sensibilities of director Lisa Melinn and her cast. The Magenta Giraffe Theatre Company's production is full o' fun.

Hapless, hitless playwright Richard Aglow lives in a tony Manhattan apartment in a "marriage of convenience" with Lela Smith-Aglow, an out of work actress but a financially well off one. Crushed by the stinging rejection of his last script, Richard is house-bound by agoraphobia tempered with an addiction to serial group therapy

REVIEW

'The Agony & The Agony'

Magenta Giraffe Theatre Company at 1515 Broadway, 1515 Broadway St., Detroit. Thursday-Saturday through Feb. 5. \$18. 313-408-7269
www.magentagiraffe.org



Keith Kalinowski and Jonathan Davidson in Magenta Giraffe Theatre Company's "The Agony & The Agony." Photo: Charles Nowak

sessions for addictions he doesn't have. Richard and Lela's marriage is sexless – Richard is gay – so their agreement is she can discreetly seek satisfaction with whomever she chooses. She's snagged Anton Knight (Alan Madlane), the noted theatrical producer, and invited him over for "drinks," another way of saying she wants a role and will get it by any means necessary. Richard has suddenly overcome

his writer's block, and is in no mood to host the very producer whose scathing rejection letter was the speed bump in his career.

Hold on. This is where it gets weird. Lela has been messing with a hottie named Chet (Dalibor Stolevski) she met in acting class. Chet is all brawn but otnay ootay ightbray, if you catch my drift.

To read the complete review, log on to ...
www.EncoreMichigan.com or PrideSource.com

Mesmerizing night of theater at The Ringwald

BY JOHN QUINN

"The House of Blue Leaves" defies classification. There's no pigeonhole big enough to hold it. Who Wants Cake? Theatre's press release describes it as "dark comedy," but that's just starters for describing this complex, fluid work. There's comedy enough, even farce and burlesque, but an undercurrent of tragedy drives the narrative. The combination is both mesmerizing and disturbing.

John Guare's opus opened off-Broadway in 1971 and won both the Obie Award and the Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best American Play. But it was written earlier, against the backdrop of simmering war in Vietnam. It is, in fact, set on the day in 1965 that Pope Paul VI arrived in New York City to address the United Nations in a plea for peaceful resolution. While that means the play is performed as a period piece, you would be wrong to label it outdated. The tragedy in Tucson has opened national debates on our treatment of mental

REVIEW

'The House of Blue Leaves'

Who Wants Cake? Theatre at The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Friday-Monday through Jan. 31. \$10-\$20. 248-545-5545
www.whowantcaketheatre.com



Ronnie Shaughnessy (Vince Kelley, front) has a special present for the Pope and his family (back row, L to R, Lisa Jesswein, Dave Davies, Melissa Beckwith) in John Guare's "The House of Blue Leaves." Photo: Colleen Scribner.

illness and the extreme steps one will take to "be someone," and this piece comments eerily on those themes.

Artie Shaughnessy (Dave Davies) is zoo keeper by day, frustrated song writer by night. Though his "Moon/June/Spoon" lyrics will never win him an Oscar, he dreams of getting a leg up in Hollywood with the help of his childhood friend, big-time director Billy Einhorn (Jamie Richards). There are two flies in Artie's ointment. His wife, whom we only know as "Bananas," is schizophrenic. The name alone speaks to the disregard he has for her. He's taken a mistress – of sorts

– the brash Bunny Flingus. Artie's intent is to institutionalize "Bananas," get a Mexican divorce and live happily ever after with Bunny in Hollywood. The institution in question is "the house of blue leaves," so named by Artie.

To read the complete review, log on to ...
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► **Susan Werner**

Continued from p. 18

that's raucous and real in its bald commentaries about homelessness, addiction and isolation. The set, her follow-up to 2009's "Classics," is her first disc without a concept since 2001's "New Non-Fiction," and it's another departure for the always-evolving musician (she must have made Liza Minnelli proud with 2004's "I Can't Be New," a cabaret detour).

"The thing that pulls this album all together is that every song and every performance is more Southern-fried than anything I've ever done before," Werner says, marveling over the landscapes, two-lane roads, juke joints and even the barbecue during her blues pilgrimage through the Mississippi Delta. "It's sort of like an Iowa girl goes downriver."

"I wanted to get out of the city limits. I wanted to have to rely on some new understandings and make a record that got out of town, and this record gets outside of town."

Producer Rodney Crowell helped take it there, pushing Werner to cut the record live off the floor, something she had reservations about but now appreciates what it did for the album's ambiance.

"There's an urgency to the performances,"



she says. "The record sounds like it was made in Nashville in the very best way. Every song has some dirt under its fingernails."

Recording in Music City embellished that sound, one she says couldn't have been rendered as well anywhere else but in Nashville.

"Everybody there gets it. Instead of just talking about it, people just do it. You have a drummer from Mississippi. Vince Gill's from Tennessee. You have these people who just speak the language; it's their first language."

She worked with Gill on "Red Dress," a

loose country cut with chomping guitars and less obvious pronouns. Who's the dress for? She says, "You can read into it multiple ways. And for those of us who put the bacon in the GBLT sandwich" — like she does — "this is our public service to create these songs that somehow work for everybody."

Even Gill got in on the gender-bending fun: "It was funny because Vince Gill's sitting in on that track and everyone is making jokes about Vince in a red dress."

But for whatever romps were had in the studio, several songs are serious — and seriously heartbreaking: "Doctor Doctor," for instance, is from the perspective of a lesbian whose partner is dying. Then there's the protest anthem, "I Know What I Want," about equality.

"What I'm proudest of with this record is the balance between ballads that really draw you in and songs that deliver on just plain loud, driving-down-the-highway, crank-to-11 fun."

That same balance, of pure and pushing it, should make for two memorable nights when Werner anchors the Folk Festival. She thinks of the gig like this: "I'm the host of the party. Somebody else brings the appetizers, but my job is to make sure everybody meets each other and has a drink and a good time."

She pauses long. "And I'm bringing the bacon!"

Happenings

For expanded listings, visit www.pridesource.com



EDITOR'S PICK

Not every musician can transition from genre to genre as gracefully and seamlessly as Nellie McKay has. The singer-songwriter and actor has transitioned from Caribbean, to rock, to jazz, to reggae and back, releasing an entire tribute album to the incredibly talented Doris Day and making her Broadway debut in "The Threepenny Opera" along the way.

McKay has a niche all her own with her charmingly classic voice and quirky and comedic lyrics. To support the release of "Home Sweet Mobile Home" last year, she'll play Sunday, Jan. 23 at The Ark in Ann Arbor. Tickets are on sale at www.theark.org.

OUTINGS

Wednesday, Jan. 19

Ties Like Me Professional Networking, 4:30 p.m. The historic Whitney mansion evening for networking and friendship, beginning the New Year with a Hair Fashion Show. Azenza Salon and Spa of Birmingham, 4421 Woodward Ave, **Detroit.** 248-379-9527. rlalicki@wowway.com tieslikeme.org

LGBT In the Park, 5:15 p.m. Interactive Social Group, 18+ meeting for conversation, speakers, and game nights. Nine Mile Road and John R Road, **Hazel Park.** 248-460-3251. jffryoliver@yahoo.com

Friday, Jan. 21

LAHR Dinner, 6:30 p.m. RSVP via e-mail by Jan. 21. Diner is responsible for cost of meal. No other fees. Lansing Association for Human Rights, 225 Ann Street, **East Lansing.** 517-525-1732. garyatmsu@aol.com lahronline.org

Womyn's Film Night, 7 p.m. Film: Gaudi Afternoon. Cassandra, a solitary writer in Barcelona gets a call for help from a stylish woman named Frankie who wants Cassandra to find her husband. Along the way, this solitary and somewhat disconnected and bewildered writer frees herself to finish a novel and re-establish a broken relationship. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale.** 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Saturday, Jan. 22

Partnerships in Parenting, 1 p.m. Promoting the importance of relationship and family development for LGBTQ parents and their children. Seeking to build a stronger connection between parents and children through social networking and community outreach. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale.** 734-574-5953. ky.intimates@gmail.com GoAffirmations.org

Elvis is in the Building, 5:30 p.m. Benefit coffee house supporting the Homeless Ministries of Starr Presbyterian Church. Family friendly, free. Silent auction and cake walk. 1717 W. 13 Mile Rd., **Royal Oak.** 248-288-3230. kvkelly08@gmail.com starrchurch.org

The Show Must Go On! Out Loud on Broadway, 7:30 p.m. A night of Broadway favorites performed by Washtenaw County's original, mixed LGBT chorus. Tickets:\$10 in advance, \$13 at door, \$5 students. Out Loud Chorus, 4800 E Huron, **Ann Arbor.** 734-973-6084. outloudchorus@gmail.com olconline.org

Metro Detroit LGBT Softball League Party, 8 p.m. Softball League's party, open to all. No Cover. Karaoke, drink specials and food. Metro Detroit LGBT Softball League Party, 22628 Woodward Ave., **Ferndale.** 586-945-4029. cchwarren@aol.com mdsl.org

Sunday, Jan. 23

The Show Must Go On! Out Loud on Broadway, 3 p.m. A night of Broadway favorites performed by Washtenaw County's original, mixed LGBT chorus. Tickets:\$10 in advance, \$13 at door, \$5 students. Out Loud Chorus, 4800 E Huron Dr, **Ann Arbor.** 734-973-6084. outloudchorus@gmail.com olconline.org

Wednesday, Jan. 26

Caring Caregivers:Memory Loss Support Group for LGBT Caregivers, 5:30 p.m. This support group will be having an educational presentation prior to its weekly support group meeting called The Basics. Free to the public. Affirmations and Alzheimers Association, 290 W. Nine Mile Rd., **Ferndale.** 248-996-1053. Karen.Sarmir@alz.org al.org/gmc/documents/DET_Caring_Caregivers.pdf

Thursday, Jan. 27

Organize! Organize! Organize!, 12 p.m. There is no movement without organizing. Those who want change have to bring others together others who experience similar conditions and share their desires for a different world. A conversation about examples of organizing witnessed and admired. Grand Valley State University LGBT Resource Center, 1 Campus Drive, **Allendale.** 616-331-2530.

The Caregiver Support Group, 6 p.m. For more information please call or E-mail. Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer Street, **Kalamazoo.** 269-349-4234. tracy@kgllrc.org kgllrc.org

Mental Health Matters: Seasonal Affective Disorder, 6:30 p.m. Learn about symptoms of SAD and how a person might treat it. Presenters: Dr. Joseph Rieman and Suzanne Love. Sandwiches and drinks. RSVP by phone or e-mail. Free. Community Mental Health Authority, 812 E Jolly Road, **Lansing.** 517-346-9512. solce@ceicmh.org ceicmh.org

Friday, Jan. 28

Womyn's Film Night, 7 p.m. Film: Desi's Looking for a New Girl. When Desi's lover moves out of their apartment after falling for another woman, heartbroken Desi can't make a connection with any woman she meets. Affirmations, 290 W. West Mile Road, **Ferndale.** 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Tuesday, Feb. 1

GLSEN Southeast Michigan Volunteer Openhouse, 6 p.m. This gathering will demonstrate how to involved in helping create a safer school environment for LGBT youth. GLSEN Southeast Michigan, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale.** 248-716-0106. glsensemig@gmail.com

Friday, Feb. 4

Bisexual Peer Group, 7 p.m. Bisexual social group. All are welcome. 319 Braun Court, **Ann Arbor.** 734-678-2478. BiPrideAnnArbor@gmail.com groups.google.com/group/semibi

Womyn's Film Night, 7 p.m. Film: We Have to Stop Now: Season 1. Lesbian therapists and longtime couple Dyna and Kit put their own relationship up for scrutiny when a documentary camera crew shows up to film their daily interactions. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale.** 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Wednesday, Feb. 9

TransCend, 6:30 p.m. Open to persons 18 and older. Younger are welcome with parent or guardian permission. Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer Street, **Kalamazoo.** 269-349-4234. tracy@kgllrc.org kgllrc.org

Thursday, Feb. 10

Meet 'n Greet, 7 p.m. A meeting for LGBT and allied people ages 18-33 for dinner, drinks and conversation. 20 Somethings, 222 E. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale.** the20somethings.org

Friday, Feb. 11

Womyn's Film Night, 7 p.m. Film: The Black American Experience: Mary McLeod Bethune, a 20th-century educator, and Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman in the U.S. Congress. Through interviews with friends, family, colleagues and scholars, the programs follow the women's journeys. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale.** 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Saturday, Feb. 12

Partner Yoga: A Romantic Workshop for Couples to Celebrate Valentine's Day, 2:30 p.m. No Yoga experience necessary. Diversity honored: all couples, ages & skill levels welcomed. Tickets:\$60 per couple; \$5 discount if registered by Feb. 5. Register by phone or e-mail. Partner Yoga, 220 S Main St, **Ann Arbor.** 248-981-6858. annarborpartneryoga@gmail.com

Tuesday, Feb. 15

Transgender Partner Support Group, 6 p.m. A support group for partners. Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer Street, **Kalamazoo.** 269-349-4234. kgllrc.org

Friday, Feb. 18

Womyn's Film Night, 7 p.m. Film: Mo'Nique: I Coulda Been Your Cellmate! Curvaceous comedienne Mo'Nique goes bigger than ever before in this unconventional outdoor stand-up show held in the yard of the Ohio Reformatory for Women. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale.** 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Saturday, Feb. 19

Metro Detroit LGBT Softball League Party, 8 p.m. Softball League's party open to all. No cover. Drink specials, Italian style food, DJ. Metro Detroit LGBT Softball League Party, 611 W 12 Mile Road, **Madison Heights.** 586-945-4029. cchwarren@aol.com mdsl.org

MUSIC & MORE

CLASSICAL

The Whiting "An Evening of Romance with Jim Brickman" Tickets: \$23-\$53 1241 E. Kearsley, Flint. 8 p.m. Feb. 11. 810-237-7333. TheWhiting.com

The Whiting Flint Symphony Orchestra "From the Eternal City" Performing works by Corelli, Verdi and Mahler. Tickets: \$8-55. 1241 E. Kearsley, Flint. 8 p.m. Jan. 29. 810-238-1350. thefim.org

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Kafka Fragments" Professors Freda Herse, mezzo-soprano, and Andrew Jennings, violin, present György Kurtá's 1986 Kafka Fragments. Apse, 525 South State Street, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Jan. 22. 734-763-UMMA. umma.umich.edu

CONCERTS

Olympia Entertainment "Rain" A tribute to the Beatles, part of the My Foxtown Theater Series. Tickets: \$30-75. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 7 p.m. March 7, 8 p.m. Jan. 21-22. ticketmaster.com

Kerrytown Concert House "Bartok and Beyond" Kalamazoo Symphony principle cellist David Peshlakai and Hungarian violist Csaba Erdelyi present an evening of Eastern European folk music. Tickets: \$10-25 general, \$5 students. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 North Fourth Avenue, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Feb. 10. 734-769-2999. kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Kerrytown Concert House "Oblivion Project" The sultry, darkly beautiful dance music of Argentina is brought to life in the Northern Hemisphere by the Midwest's foremost tango band. Tickets: \$15-30 general, \$5 students. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 North Fourth Avenue, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Feb. 11. 734-769-2999. kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Kerrytown Concert House "Available Jelly" A five-piece group featuring some of the Netherlands' top improvisers on the scene today. Ticket price to be posted online. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 North Fourth Avenue, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Feb. 18. 734-769-2999. kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Motor City Casino "Rick Springfield" A performance by the hit Grammy Award-winning singer of "Jessie's Girl." Tickets: \$44-49.50. Sound Board Theater, Detroit. 8 p.m. Feb. 18. motorcitycasino.com

Motor City Casino "Macy Gray" Tickets \$35-\$50 Sound Board Theater, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 8 p.m. Jan. 28. 866-752-9622. motorcitycasino.com/eventdetail.aspx?contentid=1592

Olympia Entertainment "New Jack Swing" Starring Heads of State, En Vogue, Tony! Toni! Tone!, Sisters With Voices. Tickets \$49-79 Fox Theater, 2211 Woodward, Detroit. 8 p.m. Jan. 29. 313-471-6611. olympiaentertainment.com/events/eventDetail.jsp?id=4164

Palmer Woods Association & Creative Arts Collective "Music in Homes: Mardi Gras Celebration with Ron Kischuk's Tartarsauce Jazz Band" New Orleans sounds & Creole tastes in one of Palmer Woods most palatial homes with trombonist Kischuk, vocalist Judy Cochill, cornetist Johnny Trudell, bassist Marion Hayden, reedman Gene Parker, pianist Chuck Shermetaro & drummer Bill Cairo. Tickets: \$35 online. Address provided with ticket purchase, Detroit. 8 p.m. Jan. 29. 313-891-2514. palmerwoods.org

Kerrytown Club Series "Mr. B's Birthday Bounce" Jazz, boogie woogie and blues pianist Mark Lincoln Braun returns for annual birthday performance. Tickets: \$15-30 general, \$10 students. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 North Fourth Avenue, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Feb. 12. 734-769-2999. kerrytownconcerthouse.com

FESTIVALS

City of Ferndale "Ferndale Blues Festival" All proceeds go to charity. Various Locations in Ferndale, Ferndale. Jan. 28-Feb. 5. ferndalebluesfestival.org

FILM & VIDEO

Michigan Theater "Honey, I Shrank the Kids" Part of the Family-Friendly Film Series. Tickets: \$9 adults, free for kids 12 and under. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. 1:30 p.m. Feb. 13. michtheater.org

Olympia Entertainment "Our Vietnam Generation" Film Premiere" Shocking history of the Vietnam War. Tickets: \$25-35 Fox Theater, 2211 Woodward, Detroit. 7:30 p.m. Jan. 28. 313-471-6611. olympiaentertainment.com/events/eventDetail.jsp?id=4204

Sundance Film Festival U.S.A. "Encore" Nine films dispatched from Park City to cities across America, providing audiences the opportunity to experience screenings direct from the Festival in their hometown art houses. Tickets: \$15. Michigan Theater, 603 E Liberty Street, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Jan. 27. 734-668-TIME. michtheater.org

OTHER

Campus Martius Park "Motown Winter Blast" Detroit's celebration of winter experiences, dining, music and family fun. One Campus Martius, Detroit. 11 a.m. Feb. 11-13. 313-963-8418. winterblast.com

Detroit Derby Girls More information online. Tickets: \$15-20 Cobo Arena, 301 Civic Center Drive, Detroit. Dec. 18-April 16. 313-471-6606. detroitderbygirls.com

SHOWS

North American International Auto Show "North American International Auto Show" Experience the next generation of transportation at the 2011 North American International Auto Show. See more than 500 vehicles on display, representing the most innovative designs in the world and experience North America's largest and most prestigious automotive showcase. Tickets: \$6-\$12 Cobo Center, One Washington Blvd, Detroit. Jan. 15-Jan. 23. 313-877-8777. naiaas.com

Olympia Entertainment "Cirque du Soleil Dralion" The fusion of ancient Chinese circus traditions and the avant-garde style of Cirque du Soleil. Tickets: \$31-103 Joe Louis Arena, 600 Civic Center Drive, Detroit. Feb. 16-Feb. 20. 313-471-6606. olympiaentertainment.com/events/eventDetail.jsp?id=4009

The Whitney "Kimberly Fairchild Live" Sexy, Sassy Detroit Diva entertains a diverse crowd with eclectic song selections in one of Detroit's most beloved historical landmarks. The Ghost Bar, 4421 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. Oct. 15-Jan. 28. 313-832-5700. kimberlyfairchild.com

THEATER

BENEFITS & FUNDRAISERS

Void Where Prohibited A fast paced, family-friendly improv show in the style of "Whose Line is It Anyway?" to raise funds to restore Gray's Opera House. Tickets: \$10. Gray's Opera House, 231 N. Main St., Romeo. Jan. 21. 810-305-3221. pjmprov.com

CIVIC/COMMUNITY THEATER

1940s Radio Hour \$17. The Village Players, 34660 Woodward Ave., Birmingham. Jan. 21-Feb. 6. 248-644-2075. birminghamvillageplayers.com

Ain't Misbehavin' \$18-\$22. Kalamazoo Civic Theatre at Parish Theatre, 426 S. Park St., Kalamazoo. Through Jan. 30. 269-343-1313. kazocivic.com

Almost, Maine \$14. Riverwalk Theatre, 228 Museum Dr., Lansing. Through Jan. 23. 517-482-5700. riverwalktheatre.com

Canton One Acts Festival \$10. TLC Productions at The Village Theatre at Cherry Hill, 50400 Cherry Hill Road., Canton. Jan. 21-23. 734-394-5300. tclprod.wordpress.com

God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater \$17-\$22. Ann Arbor Civic Theatre at Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. Jan. 27-30. 734-971-2228. a2c2t.org

Leading Ladies \$18-\$22. Kalamazoo Civic Theatre, Civic Auditorium, 329 South Park Street, Kalamazoo. Jan. 28-Feb. 12. 269-343-1313. kazocivic.com

Ordinary Days \$15. Peppermint Creek Theatre Company at Creole Gallery, 1218 Turner Street, Lansing. Jan. 27-Feb. 5. 517-927-3016. peppermintcreek.org

See How They Run \$15. Players Guild of Dearborn, 21730 Madison St., Dearborn. Through Jan. 30. 313-561-TKTS. playersguildofdearborn.org

Wait Until Dark \$16-\$18. Stagecrafters at Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette Ave., Royal Oak. Through Jan. 30. 248-541-6430. stagecrafters.org

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY THEATER

Happy Holy Days \$8. Michigan State University, Auditorium Arena Theatre, 113 Auditorium, East Lansing. Jan. 25-30. 1-800-Wharton. whartoncenter.com

Night Blooming \$15. Eastern Michigan University Theatre at Quirk Dramatic Arts Building, E. Circle Drive & Best Hall, Ypsilanti. Through Jan. 23. 734-487-2282. emich.edu/emutheatre

So Far From God \$20. Western Michigan University, York Arena, 1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo. Jan. 27-Feb. 6. 269-387-3227. wmutheatre.com

PROFESSIONAL THEATER

3 Guys, 1 Jar A Late Night show. \$10. Planet Ant Theatre, 2357 Caniff St., Hamtramck. Through Jan. 22. 313-365-4948. planetant.com

A Lesson Before Dying \$17-\$20. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. Through March 20. 313-868-1347. detroitreptheatre.com

Ain't Misbehavin' The Fats Waller Musical Jazz Cafe at Music Hall, 350 Madison St., Detroit. Jan. 23. 313-887-8500. jazzcafedetroit.com

Blast From the Past \$39.95. The Williamsburg Showcase Dinner Theater & Conference Center, 4230 M-72 East, Williamsburg. Jan. 21-March 26. 231-938-2181. cateringbykellys.com/dinner-theater

Colin Mochrie & Brad Sherwood \$25-\$50. The Whiting, 1241 E. Kearsley St., Flint. 8 p.m. Jan. 22. 810-237-7333. thewhiting.com

Corktown Previews Jan. 20-23 & 26-27 (\$20-\$30), \$25-\$40. The Purple Rose Theatre Company, 137 Park St., Chelsea. Jan. 20-March 5. 734-433-7673. purplerosetheatre.org

Fridays and Saturdays at Go Comedy! \$15. Go Comedy! Improv Theater, 261 E. Nine Mile Road., Ferndale. 248-327-0575. gocomedy.net

Jersey Show-Season 1 (Abridged) Every Thursday. \$10. Go Comedy! Improv Theater, 261 E. Nine Mile Road., Ferndale. Through Feb. 24. 248-327-0575. gocomedy.net

Mindgames \$30-\$35; dinner & show packages \$79.95-\$89.95 per couple. Andiamo Novi Theatre, 42705 Grand River Ave., Novi. Jan. 26-30. 248-348-4448.

Modern Othodox Previews Jan. 19, 20 & 22. Tickets \$32-\$41. Jewish Ensemble Theatre at Aaron DeRoy Theatre at the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple Road., West Bloomfield. Jan. 19-Feb. 13. 248-788-2900. jetttheatre.org

My Mother's Italian, My Father's Jewish & I'm in Therapy \$30-\$35; dinner & show packages \$79.95-\$89.95. Andiamo Novi Theatre, 42705 Grand River Ave., Novi. Through Jan. 23. 248-348-4448. andiamoitalia.com/novi

Oedipus Previews Jan. 27-30 & Feb. 3 (\$15), \$18-\$24. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Road., Williamston. Jan. 27-Feb. 20. 517-655-7469. williamstontheatre.org

Put the Nuns in Charge \$18-\$24. Stormfield Theatre, 201 Morgan Lane, Lansing. Through Jan. 23. 517-372-0945. stormfieldtheatre.org

Rain-A Tribute To The Beatles \$30-\$75. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 8 p.m. Jan. 21. 1-800-745-3000. olympiaentertainment.com

Shen Yun Performing Arts \$60-\$180. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway, Detroit. Jan. 20-23. 313-961-3500. ShenYunPerformingArts.org



EDITOR'S PICK

Winter doldrums got you down? Come out for a great night at Canton's 1st One Acts Festival. In two hours, you will enjoy a little comedy and a little drama for just 10 bucks!

TLC Productions has organized Canton's 1st One Acts Festival, Jan. 21-23 at The Village Theater at Cherry Hill in Canton. Six original plays have been chosen from amongst more than 100 nationwide submissions.

"Joshua Judges Ruth" by local playwright Jake Zinke centers around Stephen, a gay man who turns to the church after his partner leaves him. He struggles with the conflicting views of his mother's conservative church and the affirming Christian faith of a lesbian couple next door. The couple hosts a dinner party to which Stephen brings his date, Audrey. Stephen's friends offer guidance as he grapples with his identity, and they help him to see that faith in God is not meant to be exclusive.

Tickets (\$10) are available by calling 734-394-5300.

Stomp \$25-\$45. Wharton Center for Performing Arts at Cobb Great Hall, Bogue St. & Wilson St., East Lansing. Jan. 21-23. 517-432-2000. whartoncenter.com

Sundays at Go Comedy! \$5-\$7. Go Comedy! Improv Theater, 261 E. Nine Mile Road., Ferndale. 248-327-0575. gocomedy.net

The 39 Steps \$30-\$39. Meadow Brook Theatre, 2200 N. Squirrel Road., Rochester. Through Jan. 30. 248-377-3300. mbtheatre.com

The Agony & The Agony \$18. Magenta Giraffe Theatre Company at 1515 Broadway, 1515 Broadway St., Detroit. Through Feb. 5. 313-408-7269. magentagiraffe.org

The House of Blue Leaves \$10-\$20. Who Wants Cake? Theatre at The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Through Jan. 31. 248-545-5545. whowantscaketheatre.com

The Last Five Years \$16-\$18. What's That Smell? at The Box Theater, 51 N. Walnut St., Mount Clemens. Jan. 21-Feb. 4. 586-954-2311.

The Misanthrope Plays in rotating repertory. \$25-\$30. Hilberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. Jan. 28-March 5. 313-577-2972. hilberry.com

The Mix New Reading Series \$1 to \$6. The New Theatre Project at The Mix, 130 W. Michigan Ave., Ypsilanti. Mondays through Jan. 31. thenewtheatreproject.org

The Problem of Cell 13 \$16. Broadway Onstage Live Theatre, 21517 Kelly Road., Eastpointe. Through Feb. 5. 586-771-6333. broadwayonstage.com

The Queen of Bingo \$24. Tecumseh Center for the Arts, 400 M. Maumee St., Tecumseh. 7:30 p.m. Jan. 22. 517-423-6617. thetca.org

The Teasetown Correctional Facility for Women \$15. The Teasetown Correctional Facility for Women at Park Bar, 2040 Park Ave., Detroit. Jan. 21-22. parkbardetroit.com

The War Since Eve \$25-\$41. Performance Network Theatre, 120 E. Huron St., Ann Arbor. Jan. Through Feb. 13. 734-663-0681. performancenetwork.org

The Water Coolers \$35. Saugatuck Center for the Arts, 400 Culvers St., Saugatuck. 8 p.m. Jan. 21. 269-857-2399. sc4a.org

Thursdays at Go Comedy! \$5-\$10. Go Comedy! Improv Theater, 261 E. Nine Mile Road., Ferndale. 248-327-0575. gocomedy.net

Wednesdays at Go Comedy! \$5-\$7. Go Comedy! Improv Theater, 261 E. Nine Mile Road., Ferndale. 248-327-0575. gocomedy.net

Welcome to the Moon \$15. Michigan Actors Studio, 648 E. Nine Mile Road., Ferndale. Jan. 21-Feb. 5. 877-636-3320. michiganactorsstudio.com

What Can You Do With Lincoln's Corpse? \$20. Blackbird Theatre, 325 Braun Ct., Ann Arbor. Jan. 20-30. 734-332-3848. blackbirdtheatre.tix.com

Winter Colony Fest \$5 per night. Planet Ant Theatre, 2357 Caniff Ave., Hamtramck. Jan. 26-Jan. 29. 313-365-4948. planetant.com

THEATER FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

A Honey Pot of Pooh Stories \$12 adult, \$8 children and seniors. Wild Swan Theater at Washtenaw Community College Towsley Auditorium, 4800 E Huron River Dr., Ann Arbor. Jan. 27-29. 734-995-0530. wildswantheater.org

Beanie and the Bamboozling Adventure Machine \$6. Thebes Players at Lowell High School Performing Arts Center, 11700 Vergennes St. SE, Lowell. Jan. 28-Feb. 6. 897-8545. lowellartsCouncil.org

Rob the Drummer \$14. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 1:30 p.m. Jan. 23. 734-668-TIME. michtheater.org

AUDITIONS & CLASSES

DOWNRIVER YOUTH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - auditions for "Honk, The Musical," Feb. 7-8, 734-671-2202.

ART'N AROUND

Ann Arbor Art Center "Moving Ground" features the works of fiber artist Lois Bryant and photographer/sculptor John Cynar who explore the parallels of man-made and naturally occurring patterns. 117 W Liberty St, Ann Arbor. Jan. 19-Feb. 6. 734-994-8004. annarborartcenter.org

Detroit Institute of Arts "An Intuitive Eye: Andre Kertesz Photographs, 1914-1969" celebrates the photographic achievements of Andre Kertesz, whose groundbreaking work achieved a delicate balance between technical perfection and lyrical beauty. 5200 Woodward Ave, Detroit. Jan. 19-April 10. 313-833-7900. dia.org

Grand Rapids Art Museum "Diana, A Celebration" An exhibit with personal objects of Princess Diana, including dresses, home movies and more. Tickets: \$20 adults, \$18 seniors and college students, \$15 youth. 101 Monroe Center, Grand Rapids. Nov. 9-Feb. 16. artmuseumgr.org

Lawrence Street Gallery "The Best of 2010" Twelve prizewinning artists from the Gallery's four annual juried shows (printmaking, figurative, photography and small works) will be given space to exhibit a larger selection of their work. Lawrence Street Gallery, 22620 Woodward, Ferndale. Jan. 12-Jan. 28. 248-544-0394. lawrencestreetgallery.com

Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum "Artists Portray Artists" An exhibition of 35 portraits and self-portraits. 7400 Bay Road, Saginaw. Oct. 1-Jan. 29. 989-964-7096. marshallfredericks.org

Midweek Meditation Group All ages, backgrounds and traditions every Wednesday for two sessions. Non-religious, non-sectarian group. \$3 donation per person is suggested. The Dharma Room, 195 West 9 Mile, Suite 106, Ferndale. Nov. 3-April 27. 248-547-2987. meetup.com/Midweek-Meditation-Group

Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ "Free Coffee Hour and Music" Featuring local musicians Randy Roy, Tania Hayward and others. Free. All ages. Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ, 125 S Pennsylvania Ave., Lansing. 6 p.m. Jan. 21. 517-484-7434. PilgrimUCC.com

Sherry Washington Gallery "Free Radicals", paintings by Senghor Reid. 1274 Library St, Detroit. Nov. 20-Jan. 22. 313-961-4500. sherrywashingtongallery.com

The Henry Ford "George Washington Carver" An exhibit celebrating the work and life of the extraordinary American. Tickets: \$15 adults, \$14 seniors, \$11 youth. 20900 Oakwood, Dearborn. Nov. 1-Feb. 27. 313-982-6001. thehenryford.org

Toledo Museum of Art "Voices That Taught Me How to Sing" Two- and three-dimensional works by Ohio artist Aminah Robinson. 2445 Monroe Street, Toledo. Nov. 19-Feb. 27. 419-255-8000. toledomuseum.org

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Mai-Thu Perret: An Ideal for Living" The first large scale North American survey exhibition of the contemporary Swiss artist. 525 South State Street, Ann Arbor. Dec. 18-March 13. 734-763-UMMA. umma.umich.edu

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Simon Dybbroe Moller" Sculptures and other works by the Danish-born artist. 525 S. State, Ann Arbor. Nov. 6-Jan. 30. 734-763-UMMA. umma.umich.edu



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Got problems? Send letters to: "Dear Jody," C/O Between The Lines, 11920 Farmington Road, Livonia, MI 48150. E-mail her at DearJodyValley@hotmail.com

Sad over sister's suicide

Q. I'm in such despair that I can hardly function, let alone write this letter, but I feel I must. My youngest sister "Sarah" committed suicide two weeks ago. I was able to get through the funeral with all my friends being around but now I am alone and having a hard time coping. It was such a shock.

I know she had recently broken up with her boyfriend; they had been together for seven years. He cheated on her and that's why she broke up with him, but she seemed to be handling it fine. She was sad, of course, but seemed like she was getting on with her life. She left a suicide note saying, "I just can't handle the pain anymore. I am sorry to hurt all of you but this is best for me."

My sister was my best friend throughout life. We have always been so close to each other. I thought we told each other everything. After her death I found out that she had recently been diagnosed with breast cancer, and come to find out, she was in a lot of debt and about to lose her house. So she had a lot more on her plate than she let me know about. I could have been there for her if she had just told me what was going on.

My friends from the gay community have been there for me throughout this. I have no family to turn to because they all pretty much disowned me when I told them I was lesbian. My family of origin asks me to stay away from the funeral, but I didn't and no one from my family looked at me or spoke to me. So the lesbian community is my family. My sister was the only one in my family that accepted me and supported me. Now she is gone. I feel so alone.

I have so many emotions I am trying to deal with, like incredible sadness, despair, anger, hopelessness, and the biggest one is guilt because I was not there for her. I could go on and on. Right now I just feel like my emotions are out of control. I have been going to work, but that is about all I can muster up the energy to do. When I get home I just sit and cry. I know my friends are out there, but I don't have the energy to see them. It seems like my life is over.

What can I do to deal with my sister's death and get on with my life?

Hurting

A. I am so sorry for your loss. It makes perfect sense that you are having a hard time coping with your sister's death. I'm sure you are also feeling abandoned by your sister, as well as all the other emotions you mentioned. And, this is most likely bringing back your pain around your family's rejection of you. It always hurts to be rejected, one never gets used to it.

I strongly suggest that you join a group for individuals dealing with a loved one having committed suicide. Not knowing where you live, I don't know if there is one in your area. You might check with funeral homes, hospitals or mental health centers to see if they know of any groups in your area that would be helpful. (I have placed some links on my Facebook page for help for those dealing with the death of a loved one due to suicide. If you can't find or deal with looking for a group, let me know where you are located, and I'll help with that.)

I also recommend that you seek individual counseling, if you can. You are in a lot of emotional pain and need some support in order to get through all this. If possible, try reaching out to at least one person whom you think could be a support to you. (Remember how you wished your sister would reach out to you?) My thoughts are with you. Things will get better.

Jody's on Facebook! Check out her page at "Dear Jody Valley."

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.



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Don't be scared, Taurus!

BY JACK FERTIG

Mercury lining up with Pluto in Capricorn helps us to focus our minds, although it can feed obsession over details and plans.

ARIES (March 20 – April 19): Figure out how to reach your goals in life, no matter how long it will take. You should have a major career peak in about seven years. The better it's planned the higher it will be.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20): Push your mind and imagination to their limits. Don't be scared of big arguments or grand ideas or even a bit of controversy. Getting a little out of your comfort zone will be good for you.

GEMINI (May 21- June 20): Some of your darkest, deepest feelings can come up like a geyser. Grief, erotic passion, secret fears and yearnings are at the top of the list. Have a close friend handy who can be trusted with your nastiest, most intimate secrets.

CANCER (June 21- July 22): It may feel like an argument with your partner could kill your relationship, but not airing those issues is deadlier. Taking the chance could deepen your commitment. If single, being that honest will scare away all but those who truly love and deserve you.

LEO (July 23 – August 22): Definitely get that cough looked at. No cough? Still a good time to check any health issues. At work your problem solving skills are at their peak. You may need to work on diplomacy to get others on board with your ideas

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22): Honing your skills in any given sport, art or hobby is fine, but don't get too worked up over something that's supposed to be relaxing and fun. Even if you're looking to go pro remember it's an entertainment, not an obsession.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22): You can unlock family secrets, but are you really sure you want to know? It may be best to let sleeping dogs lie. If you find out you will also learn why it's a secret and why you must guard it just as carefully.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21): You can be trusted to keep a secret, and now your friends are seeing you as a father-confessor. Keeping their secrets and offering counsel may be an honor or a burden. It's not obligatory. Your own mental health comes first.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 20): As bleak as your financial situation may look there are answers and you can figure them out even if they seem out of reach. It will probably take a lot of time and effort, but don't get discouraged. You can do it!

CAPRICORN (December 21 – January 19): You were made to overcome hard times. Even when you feel old and worn out those are signs of your work and accomplishments. Don't forget to rest and charge your batteries, but your perseverance can overcome anything.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18): Your darkest fears and nightmares are keys to powerful revelations. If you can face down your demons and unlock those mysteries you will be stronger than ever. Filthy gossip is the best kind, but it's a terrible distraction from necessary work.

PISCES (February 19 – March 19): The future looks bleak, but your imagination will find ways to make it through. Ignore fair-weather friends and party queens. You need to talk with those you know you can count on through the toughest times.

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 email at QScopes@qsyndicate.com.

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Solution to puzzle from page 26

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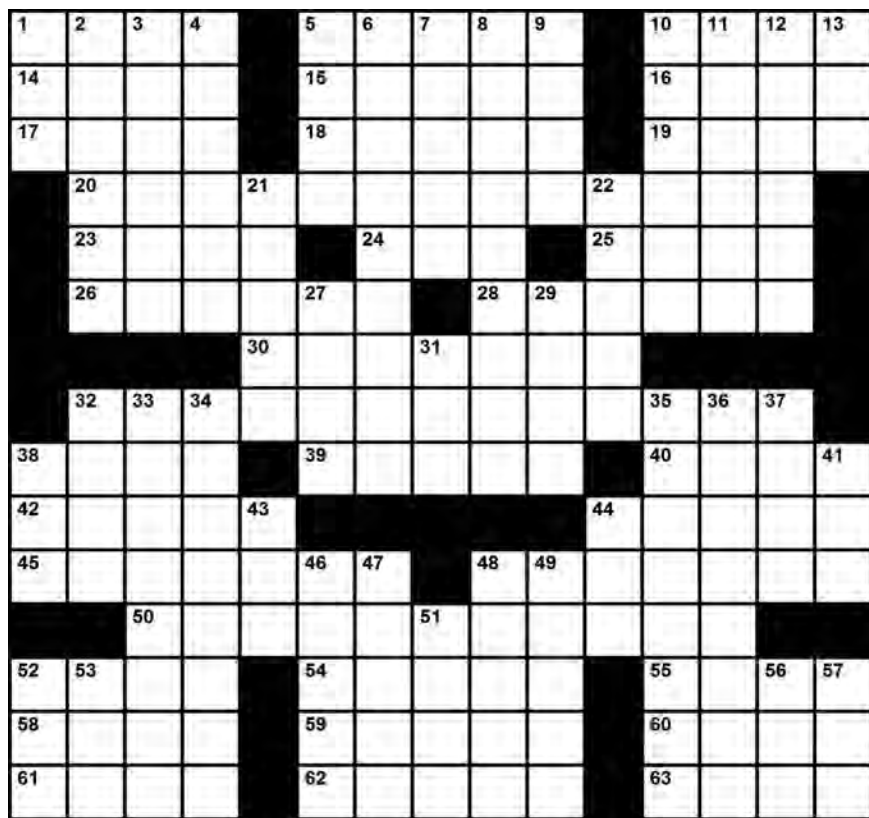
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Q U I Z The Kids Are All Right

Across

- 1 Ellen and Vance, e.g.
- 5 Cut, as wool
- 10 On ___ with
- 14 Cross inscription
- 15 Utensil for giving Oliver "more"
- 16 Tubbies' prefix
- 17 Plod through the mire
- 18 Phantom of the Opera's instrument
- 19 Chi paper
- 20 She played Nic in "The Kids Are All Right"
- 23 "___ do anything better than you"
- 24 Country of Ft. Sumter
- 25 Middle name of "Viva Las Vegas" singer
- 26 Susan B. Anthony coin
- 28 Reduces to confetti
- 30 Looked for
- 32 She played Jules in "The Kids Are All Right"

Down

- 38 Cape Cod catch
- 39 Sentence units
- 40 Path on top of a dike
- 42 Where Dick Button performs
- 44 "Of Thee ___"
- 45 Box again
- 48 Water under the bridge
- 50 Why Nic and Jules' son said they should stay together
- 52 Parts of a min.
- 54 Wry twist
- 55 Phallic fishes
- 58 Start of a Shakespearean title
- 59 Reproduction without sex
- 60 Dark greenish blue
- 61 Where to see Chris Colfer as Kurt
- 62 Open positions?
- 63 And so

Down

- 1 Liza, to Lorna
- 2 Like mosaic stone
- 3 One well-hung and making big bucks
- 4 Traffic light
- 5 One-armed bandit's opening
- 6 "The Bridge" poet
- 7 Rims
- 8 Like some white people's skin?
- 9 Director Norman of "Longtime Companion"
- 10 Stuff in the closet
- 11 Licorice liqueur
- 12 Sets straight
- 13 Soldier under Stonewall Jackson
- 21 Big name in the land of Wan Yan Hai
- 22 Elaine ___ ("Taxi" role)
- 27 Out
- 29 They rise to show thighs

- 31 One-million link
- 32 Month of the Stonewall riots
- 33 One that isn't bi
- 34 Game in which Canadians wave their sticks
- 35 Dated, without a partner
- 36 Santa's horny team
- 37 Seabird
- 38 Mountain top
- 41 British sports cars
- 43 Bonheur bathed in it
- 44 Parting words, old style
- 46 Quick cuts
- 47 Causing goosebumps
- 48 Had sex with
- 49 Things with strings
- 51 Weighty volume
- 52 Org. for Jodie Foster
- 53 Flightless wing
- 56 Get behind
- 57 ___ - mo sexual (decelerated porn)?

Solution on 25

Pet of the Week



Meet Top Gun! This 6-year-old Jack Russell Terrier mix has energy to spare and is always on the go. He may not be a maverick, but he is very friendly and sweet and would love to find his forever home today. Come meet him at the Michigan Humane Society's Rochester Hills Center for Animal Care. The adoption fee includes sterilization, age-appropriate vaccinations and much more. Visit or call (248) 852-7420 and provide the pet ID number, 12092687.

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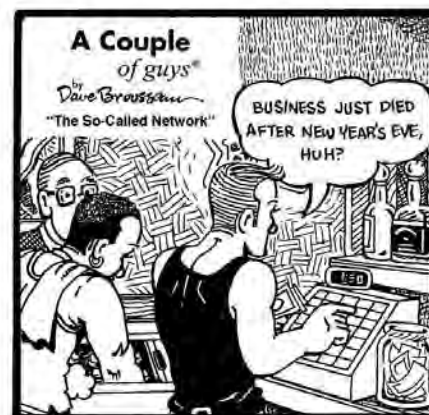
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The Virtue of Pricy Liquor

“You drink too much.” This was Dan’s opener at dinner the night after I passed out from too many Old Fashioneds. I reacted with instant hostility, since I’d spent the afternoon making his favorites: braised pork shoulder with parsnips and white wine; brussels sprouts slaw; and a *tarte tatin*.

But before I sniped back something harsh – like “piss off” – I considered his point of view. It’s painful to admit it: he was right.

“It’s an occupational hazard,” I attempted. “I have a column to write.”

“That’s a lame excuse, and you know it. It was terrifying to find you like that – unconscious on the floor!” “People are said to be ‘asleep’ at night – not ‘unconscious,’” I replied with futile indignation, since I had been, in fact, unconscious.

“All right,” I sighed as I placed the platter of aromatic pork in front of him like an offering to an angry deity – Athena, say, the goddess of both warfare and reason. “I’ll cut back,” I promised.

“Way back,” he ordered from Olympus as he skewered a large chunk of moist pork, a slab of cooked meat to which I humiliatingly related.

And so I offer this column on single-malt scotch. Since they’re what my great aunt called “dear,” meaning costly, you’re a fool to gulp it. Even I, a professional drinker, can only have one shot a night. So I drink less. Bank-breaking liquor: a solution to Dan’s concern.

For many of us, scotch is an acquired taste. I nearly spat out my first sip. Then again I was 10 at the time. Rum tasted good then, and so did bourbon. But scotch tasted like somebody set fire to my mother’s burlap sack of peat moss



and somehow made rotten moonshine out of the smoke.

I grew up. Now I love the intensely smoky, peaty kind of scotch that you can only get in single malts. Given the choice, most poor suckers go for the bland over the exceptional or unusual, so blended scotches dominate,

though they all taste basically the same. But single malts vary greatly. I’m the kind of guy who goes for ultra-spicy food, high-cocoa dark chocolate, and certain out-there sexual practices which shall go unelaborated, so I prefer single malts that are heavily smoky, or peaty, or both.

Oban and Talisker are great single malts, but this time I opted for Tormore. I chose it because the liquor store guy boasted that *his* Tormore was a single-cask, special reserve made solely for his emporium. That brought out the essential snob in me, so I bought it. At home, alone with (as Gollum would say) “my precious” (Dan had flown off to Toronto for meeting of his medical geek society) I sipped my single shot – neat, of course – for about an hour and a half. Tormore’s first taste is a sharp alcohol tang, which turns into a rich smoke in the mouth before softening. It finishes as though you had just smoked a rare cigar. Perfection.

Tormore Single Malt scotch

Face facts: Unless you live in New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles or Boston, you’ll have to order most small-distillery single malts online. If your state forbids such imports, move. You never liked it there anyway, did you? The Puritanical bastards!

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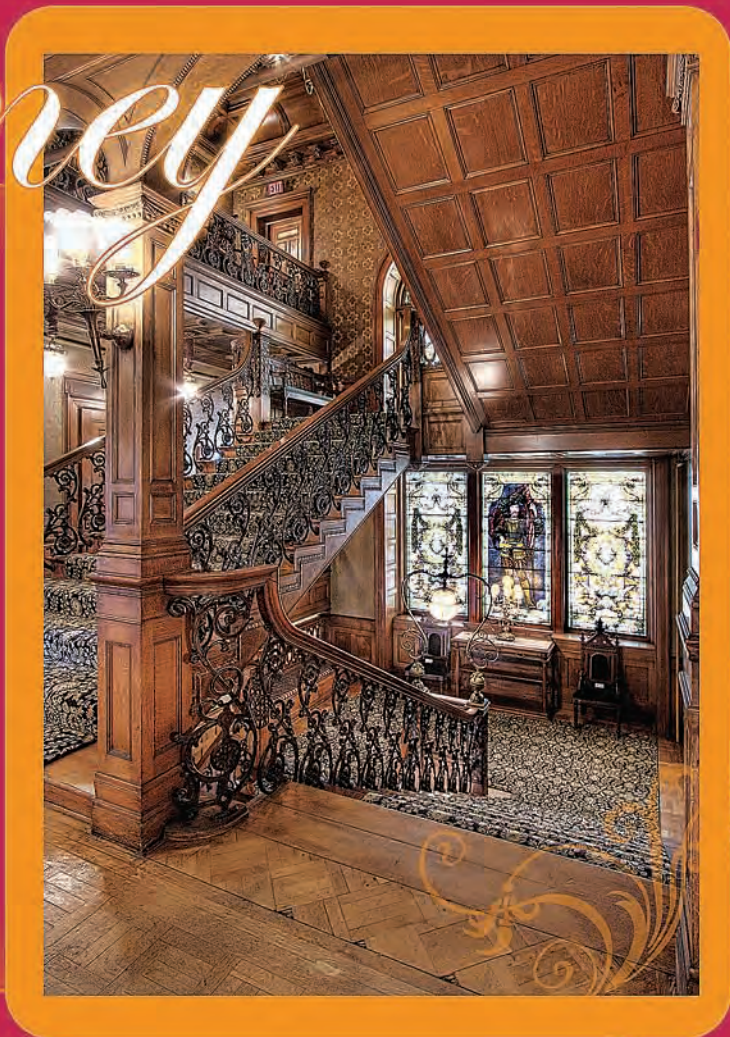
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Dominic Cooper. Photo: Sony Pictures Classics

Dominic Cooper is 'The Devil's Double'

Acclaimed New Zealand director Lee Tamahori ("Once Were Warriors," "Die Another Day") has been laying low for a while. Understandable given his prostitution arrest in 2006, which happened after he solicited an undercover officer for sex while dressed as a woman. And while, in a perfect world, that

incident would have merely cemented his status as coolest filmmaker of the decade, it probably didn't help his career on a day-to-day basis. So it's nice to report that Tamahori is back, this time with a new movie called "The Devil's Double," starring Dominic Cooper ("History Boys," "Mamma Mia!") and French actress Ludivine Sagnier. Cooper plays an Iraqi army lieutenant who was forced to act as the body double for Uday Hussein – the reprobate son of Saddam – or face the execution of his entire family. Due

to premiere at the Sundance Film Festival this month (no red carpet ball gown jokes here, sorry), look for it in theaters later this year.

Jodie Foster, Matt Damon join Blomkamp's 'Elysium'

The sleeper hit alien invasion allegory "District 9" was South African filmmaker Neill Blomkamp's calling card and Hollywood has been eager to return his calls ever since. For his next film, "Elysium," he's nabbed both Matt Damon and Jodie Foster to star alongside "District 9" star Sharlto Copley. What's it about? That's a mystery. Blomkamp's not telling, but it's reportedly another journey into science fiction. And what studio is handling it? Well, that's another mystery, but one of them will pick it up soon enough. And maybe it will erase the weirdness of her upcoming Mel Gibson-and-a-puppet movie, "The Beaver." For her sake, at least, that would be nice. Now, let's talk outer space fashion options for Jodie...

Pee-Wee's return to HBO

Did you make it to New York's Stephen Sondheim Theatre to see "The Pee-Wee Herman Show on Broadway" during its brief yet successful run? Well, you're too late for the live version now; it just closed. But don't despair. The master of witty comebacks like "I know you are, but what am I?" is taking his stage show back to television when HBO airs a performance later this year. What that means for Pee-Wee himself, of course, is that he's now come full circle. After all, before the hit film "Pee-Wee's

Big Adventure" and Saturday morning's "Pee-Wee's Playhouse," the man-child's very first exposure to a mass audience was on HBO's special "The Pee-Wee Herman Show" back in the early '80s. So think of it as a homecoming, one where there's always plenty of Mr. T Cereal waiting in the kitchen.

Natalie Portman's ever-changing movie

It can be hard to keep up with the status of a forthcoming movie when you're never sure what the title is. In its earliest stages, the new film from director Don Roos ("The Opposite of Sex") was titled "Love and Other Impossible Pursuits" (it's based on the 2006 Ayelet Waldman novel of the same name) and it was to star Jennifer Lopez. And then the name changed to "17 Photos of Isabel" for a little while, Natalie Portman replaced Lopez and the cast grew to include Lisa Kudrow, Lauren Ambrose and "Rent"'s Anthony Rapp. Now, with its February release coming very soon, the comedy-drama about a newlywed woman dealing with a precocious stepson, the death of her infant daughter and the meddling of her husband's ex-wife is now called, simply, "The Other Woman." And don't confuse it with Portman's other new movie opening in the next couple weeks, "No Strings Attached." Or the 1988 Woody Allen film "Another Woman." Is everybody clear on that now? Good.

Romeo San Vicente has never been in love with the other woman. He can be reached care of this publication or at DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.

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