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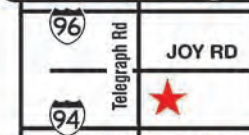
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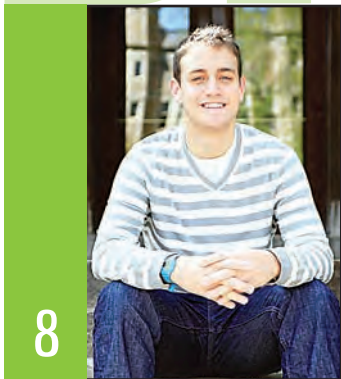
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Roxanne Frith, left, and Tari Muniz. BTL photo supplied by Roxanne Frith



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BTT Speak Out

BY ERIC RADER

LGBTs an important part of Democratic vote

President Obama announced last week that he is officially a candidate for reelection, a move that now allows him to raise money for the expensive race ahead. While no Republican has yet announced his or her candidacy, several people on that side of the aisle are exploring a run for the White House. Regardless of who decides to enter the Republican race for president, the current chief executive will likely face a tougher opponent in 2012 than he did in 2008.

As President Obama starts raising money for his 2012 effort, many people wonder whether he can win a second term. Unlike four years ago, the president is no longer a fresh face, and as the incumbent, cannot claim the mantle of change. Republicans are coming off a historic midterm election in which they won control of the U.S. House, made significant inroads in the Senate, and secured a majority of the nation's governorships. Conservatives are dominant in many states, including Michigan, and they will certainly use that power to help elect a Republican president next year. However, while the 2010 election was a major victory for Republicans, the voters did not necessarily endorse their policies. An important factor in the GOP victories last year was the decision by many Democratic voters to stay home, either because President Obama was not on the ballot, or because they were disillusioned with presidential concessions to Republicans on some issues.

One major component of the Democratic coalition is LGBT voters. One recent example helps to explain why LGBT voters tend to vote for Democrats. In late 2010, the vast majority of Republicans in the House and Senate voted against a repeal of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, while Democrats largely supported ending this regressive policy. In their floor remarks on this issue, some GOP members of Congress made strongly homophobic comments in opposing the repeal. Now that repeal has been signed into law by President Obama, many Republicans are seeking to undermine its implementation.

Some LGBT voters may wonder why we should support President Obama for a second term, especially because he has not always been 100 percent in agreement with our community on some of our most salient issues. It is important to consider several factors when evaluating the record of the president as he campaigns for reelection. First, he has done more for LGBT equality than any president in American history. President Obama signed the repeal of DADT in December, the most significant legal advance for gay civil rights ever achieved at the federal level. Additionally, among a number of other pro-equality actions, he signed an order to allow same-sex partners to visit their loved ones in hospitals, ended the ban on HIV-positive foreigners entering the United States, included gender identity in federal equal employment language, extended some domestic partner

Obama has done more for LGBT equality than any president in U.S. history.

Check out these online:

"New Beginning" Initiative, with information on LGBT progress under President Obama: <http://tinyurl.com/3zv2i5>

President Obama's 2009 speech at the Human Rights Campaign fundraising dinner: <http://tinyurl.com/3hz4uj7>

President Obama's 2010 LGBT Pride Month proclamation: <http://tinyurl.com/3yqlu6y>

benefits to LGBT federal employees, and signed a gay-inclusive hate crimes law. Recently, the president announced that his administration would no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act in federal court. During his first two years in office, he has also appointed gays and lesbians to significant positions within his administration, appeared in an ad on behalf of the "It Gets Better" campaign against bullying, and warmly welcomed our community to the White House for LGBT pride events.

Unfortunately, President Obama has not yet changed his official opposition to legalizing gay marriage, though he does support civil unions for same-sex couples. In interviews, the president has suggested that his view on this issue is "evolving." During the course of the upcoming campaign, LGBT voters who support the president have a responsibility to work with him to continue this evolution in his thinking.

While President Obama has not been perfect on issues of LGBT equality, we should consider the alternatives. All of the Republicans seeking to replace the president would take the country a large step backward on gay rights. The potential Republican candidates have all spoken out against various efforts to guarantee LGBT equality, and are actively seeking the political support of the religious right. The difference between the president and his opponents on social issues could not be clearer. Just last week, President Obama again showed his dedication to progressive values when he stopped the Republicans from shutting down the government over their archaic opposition to federal funding for family planning programs.

Though progress has been slower than many of us would like, LGBT equality has moved forward in the last two years. While some LGBT voters stayed home from the polls in 2010, none of us can afford to stay away next year – the stakes are just too high.

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Elder summit for black LGBTs

DETROIT— KICK, the agency for black LGBTs in Detroit, is sponsoring an elder summit to address problems in the community and to highlight activists and resources. “We feel that they are the forgotten community. Everything is so youth-oriented,” said Walter Houston, co-chair for the event. “We want to talk about the issues and concerns, and also pay homage to some of the achievements of mature men and women in the black gay community.”

Speakers and panelists will also discuss laws, crimes and health care.

The summit is free to attend and takes place at the Liberal Arts Gallery, 3361 Gratiot, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and from 2-6 p.m. on Sunday.

Learn about LGBT harassment in schools

HUNTINGTON WOODS— Equality Michigan, the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the Department of Justice will discuss what forms of harassment are prohibited by law and what steps schools should take to protect students on Thursday, April 14 at 6 p.m. The free event takes place at the Huntington Woods Public Library, 26415 Scotia.

Anti-discrimination town hall meeting in Port Huron

PORT HURON— On Wednesday, April 20, you can join former State Senator Buzz Thomas, Executive Director of Equality Michigan Denise Brogan-Kator and Legislative Director of the Michigan ACLU Shelli Weisberg for a free event that will focus on the social, economic and legal impact of discrimination faced by gay and transgender people and their families.

The meeting takes place at 7 p.m. at Quay Street Brewing Company, 330 Quay St.

Girls Rock Our World Conference

LANSING— Equality Michigan’s Department of Victim services will lead a workshop on meeting the needs of female-identified sexual minority youth with the juvenile justice system. A panel of experts and activists will illustrate the special struggles and circumstances that surround queer youth and problems that contribute to their incarceration.

The conference takes place at 1:15 p.m. at Lansing Community College West, 5708 Cornerstone Dr.



Andrew Shirvell at a May 8, 2010 rally in Ann Arbor, heckling openly gay U-M student body president Chris Armstrong. BTL photo: Jessica Carreras

Chris Armstrong sues Shirvell

The openly gay U-M student body president seeks damages from the former assistant attorney general

BY TARA CAVANAUGH

ANN ARBOR— A gay University of Michigan student has filed a lawsuit against the state’s former Assistant Attorney General in the Washtenaw County Circuit Court.

Chris Armstrong, the student body president at U-M, is seeking more than \$25,000 in damages for defamation of character and emotional distress. He was the subject of a blog created by then-Assistant Attorney General Andrew Shirvell called “Chris Armstrong Watch.” Shirvell, who accused Armstrong of pushing a “radical homosexual agenda” and being a racist on his blog, was fired from his position as assistant attorney general, but not before his blog received national media attention. Shirvell appeared on “Anderson Cooper 360” and stood by his claims against Armstrong. He also created a Facebook group, “U of M Alumni and Others Against Chris Armstrong and his Radical (Michigan Student Assembly) Agenda,” which Facebook later deactivated.

Last September, BTL reported Armstrong’s application for a restraining order called Shirvell “a threat to my personal safety” and listed instances when Shirvell followed him to different locations and took photo and video of his home.

The complaint received by the Washtenaw Circuit Court on April 1 alleges that last year, Shirvell staged a protest outside of Armstrong’s home, took photo and video of a party at Armstrong’s home by peeking in windows, wrote on his blog claims that Armstrong hosted

a “gay rush party” to “recruit (freshmen) to the homosexual lifestyle” and told Armstrong’s employer that he was a racist and a “viciously militant homosexual activist.”

Armstrong’s attorney, Deborah Gordon, told the Detroit Free Press on April 6 that the suit isn’t about money: “Mr. Shirvell has refused to retract any of his bizarre and untruthful points. We want to set the record straight.”

The complaint also alleges that Shirvell

physically pulled off of other students... when those students challenged his leadership of a student group.

“(Shirvell) was arrested for assault and battery of a fellow University of Michigan student,” the document continues. “He later pled no contest, and was placed on probation and fined.”

The complaint claims that Shirvell’s law school, the Ave Maria School of Law, along with

“Mr. Shirvell has refused to retract any of his bizarre and untruthful points. We want to set the record straight.”

— Deborah Gordon,
Armstrong’s attorney



Chris Armstrong, spring 2010. BTL file photo: Emily Locklear

“has a documented history employing intimidation, threats and abusive language against others on whom he has become focused. (Shirvell) has consistently exhibited poor judgment and even violence against others. He has had several police encounters, including multiple arrests.”

The complaint alleges that once during his time as a U-M student, Shirvell “had to be

the State Bar of Michigan, determined that “Mr. Shirvell was unfit for the practice of law in the State of Michigan, in that he lacked the character and fitness necessary to practice.”

Shirvell has not publicly responded to the suit.

Anti-bullying rally in Howell kicks off 2011 push for Safe School Law

Law has not successfully moved through state legislature since 2005

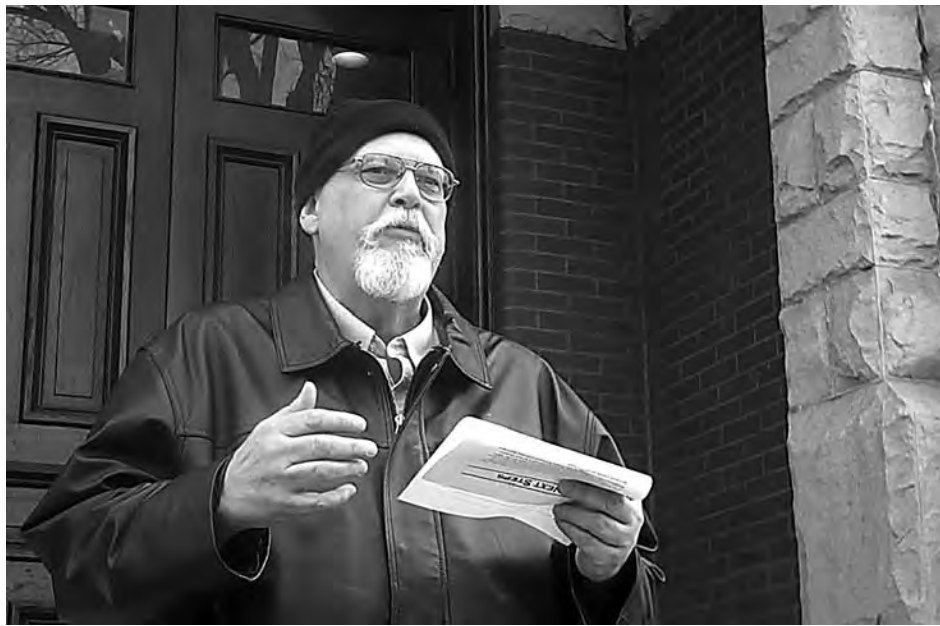
BY JAMES DAVID DICKSON

HOWELL – Schoolyard bullying is a different animal these days, and an anti-bullying law could help keep students in K-12 schools safe.

This was the cause that moved some four-dozen protestors to rally and march in downtown Howell on Saturday morning.

Michigan is one of only five states without an anti-bullying law, but that's not for trying. State Sen. Glenn Anderson, a Democrat who represents Michigan's sixth district, which includes Westland and Livonia, first introduced an anti-bullying law in 2005, when he was a state representative. Since then the state house has passed anti-bullying legislation twice, and twice it has failed to pass the Republican-controlled Senate. Anderson is leading the push for Senate Bill 45.

The rally was organized by the Michigan Democratic LGBT Caucus and the Michigan School Tolerance Campaign. The strategy of the Howell rally, and the others like it that will take place around the state this spring and summer, including in Grand Rapids and Lansing, is to present bullying as an issue that affects all schoolchildren and concerns all parents.



Phil Volk, chair of the Michigan Democratic LGBT Caucus, addresses the crowd at the anti-bullying rally in Howell on April 9. BTL photo: James David Dickson

Since 2001 there have been at least 10 known incidents of Michigan teens committing suicide after being bullied. Senate Bill 45 is

nicknamed "Matt's Safe School Law" in honor of one of those teens, Matt Epling of East Lansing, who killed himself in 2002 several weeks after

a traumatic hazing incident on his last day of eighth grade.

Matt's Safe School Law would require every school district in Michigan to adopt an anti-bullying policy, including specific plans on how bullying issues are to be resolved. Schools would need to complete an investigation of any bullying complaint within three days, and school employees who witness incidents of bullying would be required to report them to superiors. Districts would be required to give employees annual training on their respective bullying policies.

To combat the idea that bullying only affects a tiny sliver of students, and as such doesn't need to be addressed by lawmakers, Jocelyn Benson, an associate professor at Wayne State University Law School and the 2010 Democratic nominee for Michigan Secretary of State, said that she will head up a data collection effort to expose the extent and the impact of bullying in Michigan.

She did not stay for the march but said in a speech beforehand that Michigan needs to take a zero tolerance approach to bullying.

The data-collection effort has two facets: First, she will seek out "county allies," who will

See Anti-Bullying, page 10

Aging anything but a gay old time

Affirmations Aging Summit addresses legal, health difficulties faced by elders

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

FERNDALE— A summit addressing issues faced by older LGBT adults was held at Affirmations Community Center on April 6. A panel of seniors shared their experiences and fears about growing old, and Jay Kaplan of the ACLU give a speech about the rights LGBT individuals should be aware of as they face later-life situations.

The fear of being treated unfairly at a hospital or nursing home was common among participants. Nancy Unwin, a 77-year-old retired school psychologist, has been living in a retirement home for four years. "I got active there, but I withdrew from the gay community... I am back in the closet living there," she said. "I only come out to people I am comfortable with, but it's just easier not to talk about it."

Jim Toy, longtime activist and cofounder of the University of Michigan's Spectrum Center, expressed worries about what life in a retirement facility might mean. "We all know that a man's

house is his castle. If I enter an assisted living facility, it is my home, but it is not my castle... My power, my autonomy is reduced. How can I be sure a particular facility has a policy that will protect me from discrimination? And if there is a policy, how do I know it will be enforced?"

Toy said that he has never seen evidence of gay pride in a retirement home. "Never in any facility have I seen any magazines, books, pictures on the wall indicating diversity."

There are fears of abuse or neglect because staff or fellow patients may not respect an individual because of their gender expression or sexual orientation. Some people worry that they won't be able to live with their partner if they have to go into a home. Legal issues are also a concern. "A lot of us were raised in a different era," said a woman in the audience. "A lot of us still feel like if we speak up we will be punished." These fears, combined with the ongoing struggle for equal rights, make this a tough time for the elderly to feel safe going into care homes.

Another big problem is isolation. There

are no LGBT groups in nursing homes, and being away from family or loved ones can be

community got together and decided to create a safe place for LGBT youth that wasn't sexually-

Fears, combined with the ongoing struggle for equal rights, make this a tough time for the elderly to feel safe going into care homes.

a challenge. "I am a caregiver to my mother who is 78 years old and is gay," said one of the participants. "Every time I call her she is sleeping. 'You can only play so much bingo,' she says. It was a hard decision to make, putting her in an assisted living facility. It makes me sad that she is always napping."

Another audience member suggested that older LGBT individuals should organize and let potential investors know that there is a market here for openly accepting care facilities.

"Affirmations is here because we in the

focused. Now we need to get together again to create safe places for LGBT adults as we age," said another.

The summit was organized by a coalition of groups and individuals, including: ACLU of Michigan, Adult Well Being Services, Affirmations, Citizens for Better Care, Equality Michigan, Jewish Gay Network, the Jim Toy Community Center and S.P.I.C.E. Information collected at the summit will be used to guide the

See Aging summit, page 11

BTL Letters: Opinions on Ferndale Pride

The times, they are a-changin'

BY KEN WARNOCK

After reading "Pride divided?" in the March 24 edition, I was disturbed by the reactions of some in our own community. In particular, people who have been around long enough to know that Pride celebrations in Michigan have evolved over the past 25 years. There are many folks who have only attended these gatherings since they were held in Ferndale because of their age and I can understand some of their concerns.

Folks like me and Craig Covey have been around a bit longer than this and I wonder why Mr. Covey is planning on staging not one, but two, marches on the same weekend of Pride in the city of Ferndale? This is in addition to the Dyke March, which has already been planned and organized. Now, I know that Craig takes great pride in the city of Ferndale and LGBT folks have long felt comfortable on the streets and in the businesses of the city. Craig is responsible for making much of that happen by being an outspoken advocate for LGBT people. But times change and water turns stagnant if it is not stirred up occasionally.

Think about this: Every year, since the very beginning of Pride celebrations in southeast Michigan, attendance has increased. Public parking within the city of Ferndale lots provides for less than 1,000 parking spaces. This means that patrons to any large-scale event (Pride, Dream Cruise, Art Festival, etc.) will take up street parking on residential streets, which negatively impacts the community. While I

definitely appreciate the convenience of having Pride right next door to me, there are many who are not as thrilled (and, yes, they complain about the Dream Cruise and the Art Festival parking, too).

Moving to a larger scale, open-air venue is a great opportunity for Motor City Pride to continue to grow and develop more options to draw people in. A larger venue may provide the ability to solicit larger corporate sponsorships to help defray the costs associated with organizing the event. I can only wish them the very best of luck for a successful event. Instead of bashing these efforts or trying to undercut attendance, folks need to give the folks at Motor City Pride a chance and, even better, step up and give them a hand!

Ferndale Pride not 'divisive'

BY CRAIG COVEY

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the critical BTL editorial regarding Ferndale's plans to celebrate GLBT pride this June. Our events are designed to add additional choices for our community to celebrate, and advocate for the very goals BTL mentioned in its editorial. We have had multiple discussions with Motor City Pride leaders, who encouraged us to look at Friday June 3rd – before the main pride in Hart Plaza – for Ferndale-based events. Indeed, over the past two months, we have talked with dozens of community groups, GLBT leaders, and businesses about potential plans. Rather than being "insular," this

demonstrates collaboration and communication.

Nothing that Ferndale Pride 2011 is organizing competes in any way with the Hart Plaza festival. We are encouraging all GLBT people and allies to attend the Motor City event.

"Nothing that Ferndale Pride 2011 is organizing competes in any way with the Hart Plaza festival. We are encouraging all GLBT people and allies to attend the Motor City event. We wish that event total success."

– Craig Covey

We wish that event total success.

BTL suggested that we plan pride events in Ferndale a different weekend, but June 3-5 is the weekend that folks travel from all over Michigan and Ohio to come to our region for pride. The previous weekend (in May) is Memorial Day, a time when we honor our soldiers, veterans and those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. JUNE is the month we celebrate pride because of the history of our modern movement, and the original Stonewall Rebellion in New York City in June of 1969. The following weekend is our GLBT state parade in Lansing. Other weekends in June are when many local gay people travel to the big parades in neighboring cities, including Toronto, Chicago, and Columbus. By holding our Ferndale events on Friday, June 3, we can promote Motor City Pride the following day. We are also helping plan shuttles from Ferndale to Hart Plaza during this weekend. That could hardly be described as "divisive."

Many of us have spent the better part of two

decades creating a welcoming, safe, and affirming space for the GLBT community in Ferndale, and we have been recognized nationally for what we have done for diversity, acceptance, and progress. With more than 3,000 GLBT people living in this

small city, as well as groups like Affirmations, Michigan AIDS Coalition, MCC Church, GLBT choruses, and dozens of gay-owned or supportive businesses, we have become a center for the GLBT community in Metro Detroit. How could we NOT have pride in this town?

Each year on St. Patrick's Day, there are big Irish parades in Detroit, AND in Royal Oak, and in many other cities and towns in the region. The Irish don't freak out about multiple parades; rather, they celebrate them all. The Arabic community each year holds its giant festival in Dearborn. The Mexican-American community holds its parades and festival in Southwest Detroit. The GLBT community is maturing and is growing stronger and more stable. The parades and marches and rallies that will occur in Ferndale will add to the pride in our region, and help empower the entire community.

Craig Covey is the chair of Ferndale Pride, Oakland County Commissioner, and former mayor of Ferndale.

Affirmations hosts planning meeting for women

FERNDALE— Affirmations, Metro Detroit's community center for LGBTs and allies, is hosting a planning meeting for women who support the center on Tuesday, April 19 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The center encourages women to attend the meeting and help create plans for events coordinated by and expressly for women. The meeting is a project of Affirmations' Campaign for the Future.

For more information, contact Alice McKeage at seniorsb@yahoo.com or Michelle Walters and Suzanne Wait at 248-549-4509 and mmw48073@gmail.com.

► Anti-bullying

Continued from p. 9

act as watchdogs in their local communities and report on bullying incidents when they hear of them. Then, Benson will put all of the collected data on a website, with a map, updated monthly, that reflects where incidents of bullying are taking place.

"We'll record not only what happened, but what the response was as well," Benson explained. "Where there are good responses, we'll talk about those, we'll discuss best practices. Where there are bad responses, or no response, we can be a watchdog."

Lauren Jasenak, 17, a senior at Brighton High School and the head of the school's Gay-Straight Alliance, was among the crowd on Saturday morning. Jasenak said she's been a victim of bullying at the school, but that the alliance and her teachers often provide safe space on campus. She plans to attend Eastern Michigan University and wants to be an English teacher and to help young students through their teenage years.

"I want to be able to teach tolerance in the classroom," Jasenak said. "I want to teach about all times of tolerance – not just women's rights or minority rights, but respect for everyone."

The anti-bullying march was more about

mobilizing for the fall than for creating a spectacle. It started at 10 a.m. and was done by 11. It traveled a short route in downtown Howell on a cold and sleepy Saturday. And its impact will only reach beyond the 50 or so who showed up, Volk said, if attendees, who hailed

Safe School Law. The legislative effort will likely come this fall, Volk said.

"(Bullying) used to be different," said Edward Withers, who came to Howell from Inkster for the march. "It used to be not that serious, like upperclassmen picking on the

"Now (bullying) is a lot more vicious. You got kids committing suicide because they're being bullied. You've got kids being killed by their bullies. It's a different animal now. It's a serious issue."

– Edward Withers

from all over Southeast Michigan, each invite five friends to their homes for so-called "kitchen forums," or small group chats on the effects of bullying and the importance of stopping it.

The campaign is mobilizing supporters for Lobbying Day in Lansing on Wednesday, May 4. Supporters are being encouraged to reach out to their legislators and schedule appointments with them to advocate for the passage of Matt's

freshmen on Freshman Friday, but now it's a lot more vicious. You got kids committing suicide because they're being bullied. You've got kids being killed by their bullies. It's a different animal now. It's a serious issue."

To learn more about Matt's Law, visit <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2011-SB-0045>

Motor City Pride: Sponsors, vendor fees, parking

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT— Motor City Pride’s move to Hart Plaza has generated a great buzz for new groups and companies planning to exhibit at the 40th annual festival. “Hardly a day goes by that we do not receive new inquiries from companies that have never exhibited before as being interested in the festival,” said Dave Wait, the chair of Motor City Pride.

New vendors include 7-11, Nationwide Insurance, Barefoot Wine and Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion.

They will join longtime supporters such as Comerica Bank, Whole Foods, Fifth Third Bank and Renewal by Anderson.

In addition to the corporate support, many area associations have also signed up early to participate. The festival has already received 48 applications; last year it had received only 14 by the end of March. A list of companies and organizations already signed up is online at motorcitypride.org.

Applications for those who want booths at the festival are also online. Motor City Pride has kept most of the fees the same as last year. “Many people have been confused about some of the fees the city charges those who conduct sales at their booth,” Wait said. The fee for people selling items has raised the most questions. Motor City Pride staff will complete the paperwork with the city for these vendors and obtain their permits for them. “Basically for the same fee, vendors will be able to be open for twice as long,” Wait said. Vendors will be located in high-traffic areas near the entrances of the festival. Vendor applications will be accepted until May 15 or until space is no longer available.



First signs of June Pride in the D were spotted last week.

Frequently asked questions by Motor City Pride vendors:

Is there a fee to unload my vehicle?

No. Two areas have been arranged so vendors can unload their vehicles 100 yards from where the booths will be located. There is

no charge to unload in these areas. If a vendor does need to drive to their booth to unload, there is a \$100 fee. This is because a staff parson has to show them where they can and cannot drive. Hart Plaza is a two level facility and not all areas of the upper level can support the weight of multiple vehicles.

Where can I park?

The Ford Auditorium parking structure has hundreds of parking spaces that provide easy access to the vendor area.

Is there a charge for parking?

There is some free street parking in the area. There are more than 7,000 parking spaces within four blocks that range from \$6 to \$10 for the day.

Am I going to have to move my materials out Saturday night?

Vendors can leave their tents and display items overnight. Security will be watching the grounds at night. Any valuables or items for sale should not be left overnight. We are recommending that any literature left overnight be placed in a clear storage bin.

Do we have to exhibit both days?

While we prefer vendors to be there both days, vendors have the option to participate just on Sunday.

What are the exhibit hours?

Saturday, June 4: Booths must open by 3 p.m. and remain open until 8 p.m. Vendors may remain open until 10 p.m.

Sunday, June 5: Booths must open by noon and remain open until 6 p.m. All materials need to be removed by 8 p.m.

Volunteers needed

Visit motorcitypride.org for ongoing updates and to volunteer.



“I am back in the closet . . . it’s just easier not to talk about it.”

— Nancy Unwin

The first aging summit of its kind took place on April 6 at Affirmations Community Center in Ferndale. BTL photo: Crystal Proxmire.

► Aging summit

Continued from p. 9

coalition in working to solve the problems faced by the aging LGBT population.

Those who attended the summit enjoyed a free dinner provided by MediLodge of Southfield. They were also given a 20-page resource guide

put together by a group of volunteers led by Judy Lewis, director of the Jewish Gay Network of Michigan. “Modern Family Guide: You and Your Loved Ones’ GLBT-Friendly Resources for Older Adults” is available at Affirmations.

More older adult conferences are expected; check www.goaffirmations.org for more information.

Ties Like Me tweets away April 20

#TiesLikeMe, #LGBTNetwork, and #DetroitLGBT

FERNDALE—Marx Layne & Company, a full-service marketing and public relations firm, will showcase the real-time application of Twitter and be available to discuss social media services at the next Ties Like Me networking event on April 20. The event, which will spotlight a “Twitter Wall,” will take place from 5:30-8 p.m. at Via Nove, located at 344 W. Nine Mile.

Twitter users will be able to update a Twitter wall at the event in real-time as

they mix and mingle. Hashtags for the event include: #TiesLikeMe, #LGBTNetwork, and #DetroitLGBT.

Ties Like Me provides networking opportunities for the professional LGBT communities in southeast Michigan. Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of every month and help create an environment for meeting new friends, engaging in casual conversation and strengthening the LGBT community with strong business ties.

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Parting Glances Then and Now

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Rethinking creativity

A recent issue of Scientific American carries an article on creativity. One main point is that it takes approximately ten years for whatever you're doing – art, music, cooking, golf, bowling – for it to become second nature. Perhaps automatic.

That is: if your creativity is done on a daily basis, with a solid foundation centered on underlying principles (say, in art: line, color, perspective, techniques of application, knowledge of materials).

A concert pianist, for example, might start out practicing three, four, five hours daily – ten years worth – before the creation of music becomes interpretive and technically “fluid.” Unique. Seemingly effortless. Special. A total atunement with the creative process; nexus to source: the composer who composed the music to begin with.

In my own creative life I've found this ten year “rule” to be quite possible. (Actually it's a time flexible rule of thumb.) My art training began at Cass Technical High School. I was a commercial art major and received an exemplary art grounding in the basics.

At CT the commercial art program included three courses in design, freehand drawing – one each in charcoal and pencil – a course in wash, water color, jewelry making, a course in the history of art and of architecture. Oh, yes: hand lettering. (There was no Letraset. We used compass, ruler, and ink pens. It was, to quote Mrs. Dorothy Skewess, our instructor, “Exact. Meticulous.” And often frustrating.)

I was a lackluster student. I got by. But somehow through the process of sitting-in-class osmosis I learned the fundamentals. Whether I realized it or not these basics at some subliminal level became operative in my life, affecting how I viewed – and continue to view – my esthetic and visual world around me.

Upon graduation I got sidetracked. I worked as an OR Tech, a New York Central RR claims clerk, quit to become a full time Wayne State University English major, and then a writer for nearly 40 years of various publications. I did no art to speak of during this time. None. A turning point happened in 1981, during my alcohol rehab at Cottage Hospital.

As part of hospital program therapy, new rehabs were told to go through magazines, clipping and pasting pictures reflecting our mood. I misunderstood, cut and pasted several collages. A nurse even offered to buy one. A year or two later I had three of these collages matted and framed.

I showed them to an artist friend who suggested I submit them for jurying at the Detroit Artists Market. All were accepted. I was elated. It's been nonstop since 1985. I've done close to a thousand art pieces, and gained a personally rewarding amount of recognition for my creativity. I've also gained some insights on that creativity.

First: Unless you're a genius there are no shortcuts to creativity. Master the basics. Take courses. Dripping paint on a canvas does not make you an artist. Random strumming a guitar doesn't make you a rock star. Pay your creative dues. Get good instruction. Ask questions. Practice. Practice. Practice.

Second: Share your gift gratis now and then. While it's certainly great to get payment, it's also rewarding to enrich the lives of friends and others by freely giving of time and talent as a gesture of sharing. Importantly! Use your special gifts to benefit our LGBT community. Fundraisers. Auctions. Active participation. God knows there's talent abundant in our community. Build bridges by sharing.

Thirdly: Each time you participate in your personal act of creativity tell your brain thanks. If you compose a song, mentally say thanks. If you write a sonnet, say thanks. Cook up an intuitive recipe and say thanks. Get in flamboyant drag. (Well, use your own judgment here.) This may sound silly. It's not.

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A cemetery in Atlanta is planning a special section for LGBT couples, reports The Advocate. Should every state have gay cemeteries?

Will people have to change the wording of their eulogies from “ashes to ashes, dust to dust” to “mascara to mascara, glitter to glitter”?

–Joseph Waldman

Well, segregation led to peace between blacks and whites, right?

–Scott Francis Longpre

Stupid. Everyone knows sodomites and sinners are buried outside the cemetery.

–Todd Te Adoro Erickson

Don't the left-handed deserve a section too?

–Steve Duerksen

Well, those lefthanders, they're just depraved weirdoes and should be burned at a crossroads at midnight.

–Joseph Waldman

How stupid. Maybe everyone should have to fill out a questionnaire (before they die) stating exactly who and what their “neighbors” can be. And then get relocated if/when late-breaking facts come “out.”

–Steve Duerksen

Comments may be edited for grammar and length.

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LGBT History, population



Gary Gates

“An estimated 3.5 percent of adults in the U.S. identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual and an estimated 0.3 percent of adults are transgender. This implies that there are approximately 9 million LGBT Americans, a figure roughly equivalent to the population of New Jersey.”

– Gary Gates, demographer-in-residence, Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy, citing key findings in his new study titled “How Many Americans Are Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender?”, law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute, April 1. Gates derived his estimates from five studies that asked subjects about their sexual orientation.



Ravi Perry

“This is the new NAACP. This is a human rights organization, and we have an obligation to fight discrimination at all levels. I think for the NAACP to be alive and effective, it has to retool. This is a human rights organization and we need to address the needs of all marginalized groups.”

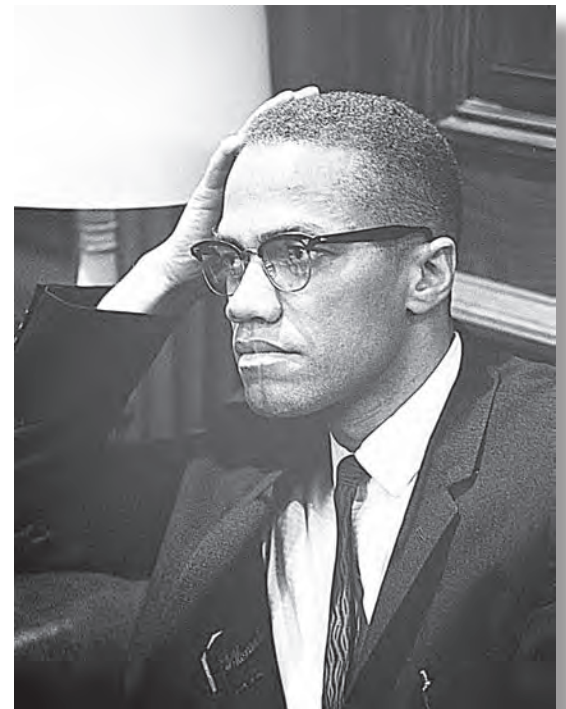
– Ravi Perry, openly gay Clark University political science professor and the new NAACP chapter president in Worcester, Mass., in an article titled “New NAACP seeing more gay, diverse chapter leaders,” bostonherald.com, March 23.



Satan

“What’s the major factor that allows homosexuals – a tiny fraction of the whole population – to dictate major changes in cultural morality?”

– In a poll on OneNewsNow.com, the “news” site run by the American Family Association, April 7. Of 8412 people, 15.5 percent voted for money, 8 percent for half-truths, 32 percent for intimidation, and 44.5 percent for “Satan is on their side.”



Malcolm X

“Why is there always this push to keep history as white, male and straight as possible? And why is it that so many of us who are not white or male or straight so complicit in that paradigm? Has white supremacy and its awful Puritanism been so successful that we want to pretend like a person’s sex life is irrelevant or, worse, doesn’t exist – particularly if they are queer?”

– Son of Baldwin, in his blog titled “X-Factor,” about revelations concerning Malcolm X’s sexuality in the new biography “Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention,” sonofbaldwin.blogspot.com, April 6.

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Demographer: U.S. has 4 million adults who identify as gay

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)— How many gay men and lesbians are there in the United States? Gary Gates has an idea but acknowledges pinpointing a solid figure remains an elusive task.

Gates is demographer-in-residence at the Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy, a think tank based at the University of California, Los Angeles. For the institute's 10th anniversary this week, he took a scholarly stab at answering the question that has been debated, avoided, parsed and proven both insoluble and political since pioneering sex researcher Alfred Kinsey said in the 1940s that 10 percent of the men he surveyed were "predominantly homosexual."

Gates' best estimate, derived from five studies that have asked subjects about their sexual orientation, is that the nation has about 4 million adults who identify as being gay or lesbian, representing 1.7 percent of the 18-and-over population.

That's a much lower figure than the 3 to 5 percent that has been the conventional wisdom in the last two decades, based on other isolated studies and attempts to discredit Kinsey.

One reason, according to Gates, is that until recently, few surveys tried to differentiate respondents who identified as gay or lesbian from those who sometimes engaged in homosexual acts or were attracted to people of the same sex. All were lumped into the gay category.

"One of the major questions, when you think about how many (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people are there, is what do you mean by LGBT?" he said. "This shows there are pretty big differences between people who use the terms to label themselves versus sexual behavior or attraction."

Gates found, for example, that another 1.8 percent of the adult population, or a little more than 4 million Americans, identifies as bisexual, according to his research brief published Thursday by the Williams Institute.

He also estimated that 19 million people, or 8.2 percent of the population, have engaged in sex with a partner of the same sex. That includes all groups, such as gays, bisexuals

and heterosexuals who have experimented with same-sex behavior.

Another two studies, conducted by state agencies in California and Massachusetts, yielded what Gates thinks is the first credible estimate of the nation's transgender population. He puts it at about 700,000 adults, or 0.3 percent of the population.

Gates is the first to admit his figures are imprecise.

But because so few national population surveys have asked about sexual orientation and the ones that have were not conducted consistently over time, the data on which to base a firm conclusion does not exist, he said.

"Yes, this is a credible estimate, but I'm fine to have a debate with someone about whether I'm right or wrong," he said. "The academic side of me says everything comes with caveats. But there is a level of power associated with having a number that can move dialogues along and hopefully move things forward."

Government agencies and private researchers have been reluctant in the past to include questions about sexual orientation and gender identity in their surveys, deciding the issue was not worthy of inquiry or assuming participants would be reluctant to answer honestly.

Until recently, gay rights activists who feared that it would be used to discriminate against or to identify individuals, during the AIDS crisis, for example, also opposed divulging such information.

Brad Sears, the Williams Institute's executive director, recalled Gates' 2006 estimate, which was drawn from Census data on same-sex households and put the nation's lesbian, gay and bisexual population at about 8.8 million. That news upset some gay people who found comfort in Kinsey's 1-in-10 number, Sears said.

"There are a lot of great folks for whom that number may have personally been important in their coming-out process," Sears said. "It may be hard to let go. But with other populations of a similar size of 2 to 4 percent, we don't question whether there are too many

"There is a level of power associated with having a number that can move dialogues along and hopefully move things forward."

— Gary Gates

or too few."

Peter Sprigg, senior fellow for policy studies with the conservative Family Research Center, welcomed Gates' findings as further repudiation of the Kinsey 1-in-10 estimate.

Sprigg also was intrigued by the relatively high portion of bisexual people tallied by Gates.

"I see this as somewhat of a problem for the gay political movement," Sprigg said. "It undermines the idea that being born homosexual is an immutable characteristic that can't be changed."

Increasingly, both activists and the federal government during the Obama administration have concluded that the advantages of having reliable information about sexual minorities far outweighed any risks.

Last year, Gates advised the Census bureau in its campaign to persuade same-sex couples to identify themselves as such in the once-a-decade national population count. The bureau is now considering whether to ask individuals about their sexual orientations in the ongoing American Community Survey produced in between each Census.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services last week announced it was working to increase the number of federally funded health and demographic surveys that collect and report sexual orientation and

HUD's fair housing campaign focuses on equal access for LGBTs

BY BTL STAFF

WASHINGTON— The Department of Housing and Urban Development has launched a new media campaign, "Live Free," that strives to ensure that people have equal access to housing regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or families with children. While sexual orientation and gender identity are not prohibited bases of discrimination under the federal Fair Housing Act, housing discrimination against someone who is LGBT may, in certain circumstances, violate the act's existing provisions, including its prohibition against gender discrimination.

"While 20 states and more than 200 local governments have led the way to make LGBT-related housing discrimination illegal, HUD is firmly committed to supporting the right of LGBT individuals and families to lead productive and dignified lives, free from housing discrimination and fear of retaliation, said John Trasvina, HUD assistant secretary for fair housing and equal opportunity. "HUD is finalizing a federal rule to ensure that HUD housing and programs are open to all, irrespective of marital status, gender identify, and sexual orientation."

The "Live Free" campaign will run throughout the year and include Facebook ads, targeted print ads, digital videos and podcasts.

In 2010, HUD provided guidance to its staff on how to more effectively address inquiries from LGBT individuals regarding housing discrimination issues and also launched a webpage for the public on LGBT housing discrimination. Since then, HUD's housing discrimination complaint level from LGBT individuals has increased significantly. From July 1, 2010 to Feb. 28, 2011, LGBT individuals filed 47 complaints of housing discrimination alleging gender discrimination with HUD. During the same period straddling 2009 and 2010, HUD only received 3 such complaints.

For more information or to file a complaint of housing discrimination, call 1-800-669-9777 or go to www.hud.gov/fairhousing.

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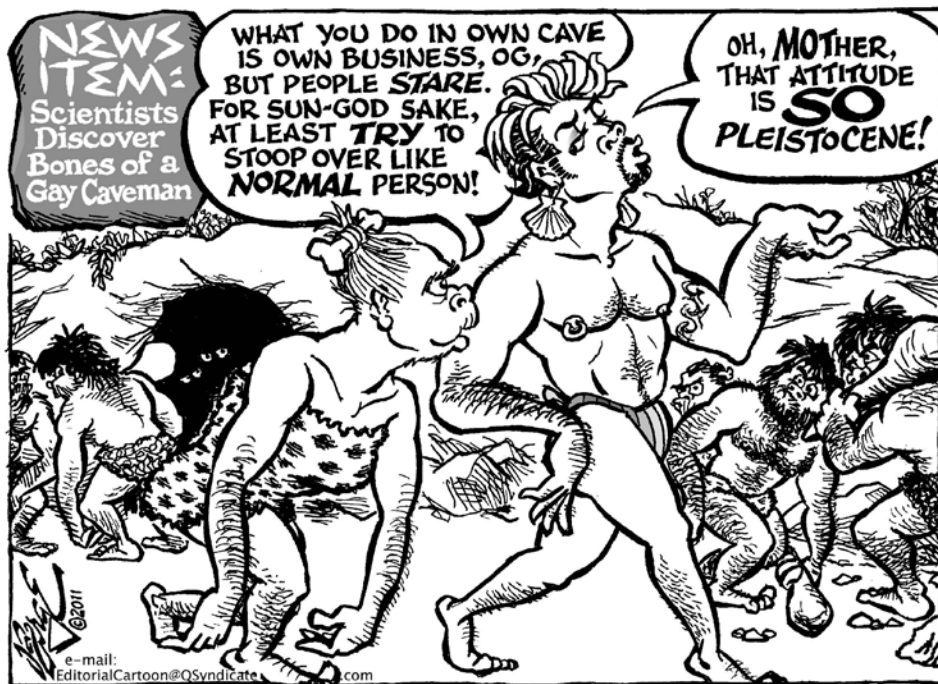
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BTL Editorial

For Pete's sake, come out!

Ahem. We mean outside. The sun's finally out, the world is warming up, and our home and garden issue shows a bazillion ways to enjoy the great outdoors and to beautify the great indoors. OK, so maybe it's not a bazillion, but it's close. We swear.

How might you be inspired? Let us count the ways.

After reading about the Neighbor Wives – two best friends who merged their gardens into a community hotspot in East Lansing – you might be tempted to till up your backyard and plant something green or two, or maybe even to rekindle some old friendships.

Or perhaps after reading all of the thrifty tips for thrift-store shopping in our article “Gem or junk?” you might be inspired to peruse your local vintage store. You can use our expert tips to find a cool piece that makes a stuffy old room feel a bit more spring-y.

Maybe you'll look at a glamorous Detroit hotel we featured and feel like venturing to the Inn on Ferry Street yourself. The inn features breathtaking restorations of beautiful Victorian homes – that were nearly left vacant. If those buildings from the 1800s can be restored, well, anything can.

Of course, if you're not feeling up to exploring the great outdoors or to beautifying the great indoors, you can enjoy a more

figurative “coming out” story by reading about a local pastor who decided to come out after 20 years of working in faith. The Rev. Louise R. Ott talks to BTL about faith and sexuality, and how they don't have to be mutually exclusive concepts.

But if all this – and the (finally!) less oppressive weather – isn't enough to get your keister up and moving, take a glimpse at your pasty, fleshy limbs. They need some sun. Sorry, but we had to say it.

So that probably isn't a bazillion reasons, exactly, to get outside. But there are some good ones. So go! You're not getting any younger. Or any less pale.

The sun's finally out, the world is warming up, and our home and garden issue shows a bazillion ways to enjoy the great outdoors and to beautify the great indoors.



BTL General Gayety

BY LESLIE ROBINSON

Chests out, slogans on

In my last column I discussed the role T-shirts with slogans play in the battle over gay rights. It occurred to me, aside from the T-shirts I've read about that have caused ruckuses in schools and elsewhere, I don't know what kinds of pro-gay and anti-gay T-shirts are available these days.

Like a size XS T-shirt, ignorance doesn't look good on me.

So I'm on the hunt. For snappy and snippy slogans.

I googled “gay T-shirts” and landed on Zazzle.com, whose shirts for women include “I used to be a tomboy, but now I'm a full-grown lesbian.”

I want it. I want it now.

I'm less inclined to wear the shirt that reads “Vagitarian: One whose sexual diet consists exclusively of vagina.” I'd have a hard time looking anyone in the eye while wearing that. Even at Pride.

Were I bisexual, I couldn't handle the shirt featuring a rooster and a cat, and below them the words “I'll take both.” Yup, a cock and a pussy. My face would display shades of red heretofore unknown.

By contrast, I'd be happy to sport “God hates shellfish.” Then I could call out religious hypocrisy and wear it, too.

The motto of the gay-owned company Queer Republic Tees is “Not your typical, lame-ass rainbow crap.” Hence the shirt for guys reading “Trick-o-matic. Just add booze.”

One of the offerings for women says “Save a tree ... eat a beaver.” Hmm, maybe I could pull that one off. I am environmentally minded.

After the last column ran, I heard from BMP T-Shirts, also gay-owned, whose options include a shirt featuring a rental truck labeled “She-Haul.” The punch line is “The second-date vehicle of choice.”

I have no idea what that refers to.

At Cafepress.com, a T-shirt sports a small guy in a sailor outfit and the words “Who's ready for a little seaman?” For lesbians who also like, um, maritime themes, there's a shirt with a female scuba diver and the slogan “Dykesville Divers: We don't come up for air.”

I'm drawn to “Pink sheep of the family” and “Gay marriage killed the dinosaurs.” If I had a toddler, he or she would be clad in “My mom is a Dykosaurus rex.”

Now for the other side of the culture war. I typed in “anti-gay T-shirts” at Cafepress, and sure enough, they sell those too, just not as many and the slogans are less than inspired. “Diversity sucks” opines one shirt; “Be happy, not gay” suggests another.

One of the more clever offerings says

“Celebrate diversity: Marry someone of the opposite gender.” The male and female symbols and the cross are included. A person so inclined can buy this design on a T-shirt, tank top, hoodie, mug and Christmas stocking. Ho ho ho.

I googled “anti-gay T-shirts” and wound up where I started, at Zazzle. There – among options like “Obama makes me puke” and “Global Warming: Bullcrap” – was a shirt reading “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable. Leviticus

18:22.”

A bit wordy for a slogan. Someone should chat with the author about that.

At the same time, Zazzle sells a T-shirt that points out “Leviticus also said no hair cuts, but I guess we are skipping that.”

Zazzle is covering its rear by covering everyone's chest. Pro-gay, anti-gay, the money's the same.

Why are the anti-gay slogans flat? Is it accurate what we like to say about ourselves, that we're more creative? Or does truth offer better material with which to work?

I could help the other side get snappier. But Leviticus clearly says, “Thou shalt not be an idiot.”

Leslie Robinson was shocked by the vitriol in the anti-illegal immigrant T-shirts she saw when researching this column. Email her at lesarobinson@gmail.com, and visit her blog at www.generalgayety.com.

Another gay rights battle for California

BY REX WOCKNER

Activists who oppose gay rights are more riled up than usual about a bill working its way through the California Legislature, says Equality California, which has shepherded 76 pro-LGBT measures through the legislature and seen 42 of them signed into law. (Twenty other measures were resolutions that didn't need the governor's signature. Fourteen of the group's bills were vetoed.)

SB 48, "The Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful Education Act," would amend the Education Code to require that schools provide "a study of the role and contributions of both men and women, Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, European Americans, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, persons with disabilities, and members of other ethnic and cultural groups, to the economic, political, and social development of California and the United States of America, with particular emphasis on portraying the role of these groups in contemporary society."

It also would prohibit classroom instruction and school-sponsored activities that "promote ... a discriminatory bias on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, nationality (or) sexual orientation."

The bill requires that social-sciences

textbooks and other social-sciences instructional material used in California adhere to the proposed law's requirements.

Sponsored by Sen. Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, the measure passed the Senate Education Committee 6-3 in late March and passed the Senate Judiciary Committee 3-2 on April 5.

"It is one of our priority bills and I believe it will pass (the full Legislature)," said EQCA Interim Executive Director Jim Carroll. "The EQCA-PAC's policy of only endorsing candidates who are 100 percent on our issues, including education, has resulted in enough legislators who will support this bill to get it to Gov. (Jerry) Brown's desk. And the governor's preference for local control is met in the bill's language, so I think he'll sign it."

Carroll said that should the bill pass, he wouldn't be surprised to see opponents attempt to repeal it at the ballot box. In 2008, such activists repealed same-sex marriage in California by convincing voters to amend the state constitution.

"I assume that some leaders of the more fundamentalist segments of our society will try to use SB 48 and any bill that tries to protect youth to raise money and drum up support for their sad position," he said. "They tried in 2008 to gather signatures to overturn another Equality California-sponsored education bill ... and failed miserably. I assume they might try to qualify

for the ballot again around SB 48 or even try to reverse all our safe-schools protections."

"(Activists speaking against the bill) said that if we teach about LGBT people in schools, then we will be able to win any campaign. In other words, if people learn the truth, then the gays win and the haters lose."

— Retired EQCA Executive Director

Geoff Kors was present at the Senate Education Committee session on March 23 as SB 48 passed

Recently retired EQCA Executive Director Geoff Kors was present at the Senate Education Committee session on March 23 as SB 48 passed.

"There were two things that were particularly disturbing," Kors said in an interview. "Years ago the rhetoric was pretty offensive, and then it toned down, but this time the rhetoric really ratcheted up. (Activists speaking against the bill) said that if we teach about LGBT people in schools, then we will be able to win any campaign. In other words, if people learn the truth, then the gays win and the haters lose. They said we wanted to teach kids how to cut off their body parts, and they talked about how this is sexual indoctrination, that we want to sexualize young people into this terrible life."

Kors also was disturbed, he said, that pro-gay legislators on the committee seemed tolerant of the activists' statements.

"Even among those who voted for us, they said they appreciated how respectful all the people who testified were, meaning no one was yelling or booing," he said. "It's time for elected officials who support us to stop saying that this is respectful debate. There's nothing respectful about saying that LGBT people are immoral, about saying that homosexuality can be changed, that it goes against God's plan. ... Homophobic and transphobic people who testify this way are not respectful."

Ark. court strikes down law barring gay adoptions

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — The Arkansas Supreme Court on Thursday rejected a voter-approved initiative that barred gay couples and other unmarried people living together from serving as adoptive or foster parents.

Associate Justice Robert L. Brown wrote for the court that the law would encroach on adults' right to privacy in the bedroom.

"Act 1 directly and substantially burdens the privacy rights of 'opposite-sex and same-sex individuals' who engage in private, consensual sexual conduct in the bedroom by foreclosing their eligibility to foster or adopt children," Brown wrote.

The law effectively banned gay and lesbian couples from adopting or fostering children because they can't legally marry in Arkansas. It also would have been extended to unmarried heterosexual couples who live together. A similar ban exists in Michigan.

Voters approved the measure in 2008 after the state Supreme Court overturned a Human Services Department policy preventing gay men and lesbians from serving as foster parents in 2006.

The American Civil Liberties Union sued on behalf of a group of families, arguing that the law arbitrarily bans qualified families from consideration when the state has too few foster and adoptive families. It said it knew of 29 people from a dozen families who claimed the law would have an impact on them.

Some of the law's opponents were worried that they would not be able to let a gay relative adopt their children if they should die.

A state judge had struck down the law last April because he said it forced unmarried couples to choose between their relationships and becoming adoptive parents. The attorney general later asked the Supreme Court to reverse that decision, arguing that fostering

or adopting a child is not a constitutionally protected right.

Similar bans are rare elsewhere in the country. Utah bans unmarried straight or gay couples from adopting or fostering children, while Mississippi bans gay couples, but not single gays, from adopting. Florida was the only state to completely bar gay adoption until a judge ruled the ban unconstitutional.

The Arkansas law banned same-sex couples from adopting because they can't marry. A similar ban exists, unofficially but widely practiced, in Michigan

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From Stork to Finish

Bob Vander Plaats

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

A common talking point of anti-gay activists is that being gay is a public health risk. Whether trying to derail anti-discrimination legislation, protesting against letting gays marry each other, or trying to shut down a GSA at a local high school, the argument that gays are a bunch of sickos in the most literal sense is not far behind. Because if gays can be portrayed as a bunch of perverts spreading their homo germs everywhere, that's just one more way to dehumanize them.

Enter Bob Vander Plaats of the Iowa Family Leader, a longtime foe of LGBT people, who is wrapping up a four month long Capturing Momentum Tour, a 99 county trek across Iowa to raise hackles of conservative voters. The "momentum" stems from the anti-gay right's "successful" 2010 ousting of Iowa Supreme Court justices who voted in favor of marriage equality. Vander Plaats and his ilk are hoping to ride that momentum all the way to dismantling marriage equality in the state.

In his eyes all gay people are the same: sick, depraved sex-havers with no regard for their health or the health of their partners.

And part of how Vander Plaats plans to do that is by playing the "public health risk" card. This isn't a surprise coming from a man who has likened homosexuality to polygamy and incest, suggesting that if we let gay people marry we'll have to open up marriage to a "dad that wants to marry his son" and a "bisexual [that] wants to marry a man and a woman." But that doesn't mean he should get a pass to paint all gay people with a wide, diseased brush stroke.

At a March 24 tour stop, ThinkProgress asked Vander Plaats to clarify the Iowa Family Leader's position on the health risks of homosexuality. His answer was unambiguous: "It is a public health risk."

But hey, he says, it's not the Family Leader that is making that claim, it's the New York Health Department. "They've put out an ad basically highlighting all the dangers of the homosexual lifestyle, that you're this many times more (likely) to get this particular disease or this many times more (likely) to get this other type of disease. Now, they conclude with 'practice safe sex.' But they're almost taking our talking points. Because anybody, the Journal of Medicine will back us up on this, that this is a risky lifestyle, a health risk lifestyle. If we're teaching the kids, 'don't smoke, because that's a risky health style,' the same can be true of the homosexual lifestyle. That's why I think we need to speak the truth once in a while."

Okay. First of all, I don't know what the New York Health Department ad he's referring to, but I have no doubt that the NYHD and all reputable health departments nationwide base their health warnings on information gleaned from anti-gay fringe groups like the Family Leader. That just makes sense. Secondly, I don't know what Vander Plaats means by "the Journal of Medicine," because there are several.

Here's something I do know: homosexuality is not a public health threat. The "homosexual lifestyle" that Vander Plaats refers to is not really a thing. See, in his eyes all gay people are the same: sick, depraved sex-havers with no regard for their health or the health of their partners. Vander Plaats takes the behavior of the most promiscuous, most reckless gay people and deems that the "homosexual lifestyle." It's as if I were to point at Charlie Sheen and claim that he was the epitome of the "heterosexual lifestyle" (which, of course, he is).

But looking at individual people, which is what gay people are, is a lot of work. Much easier to lump them all together and write them off as a bunch of sex lepers.

As far as I can tell, the real health concern for Vander Plaats is that gays make him sick.

Judge acknowledges he's gay

Some now protesting the judge's ability to preside fairly over California's Prop 8

BY LISA KEEN

U.S. District Court Judge Vaughn Walker, who last August declared California's same-sex marriage ban to be unconstitutional, acknowledged to a small group of reporters Wednesday, April 6, that he is gay.

The acknowledgement was first reported by Reuters News Service on Wednesday afternoon, though the article carried very few details. The report said only that Walker gave a talk to a "handful of reporters" but didn't say where or why or who the reporters were. It did not indicate whether anyone asked Walker whether he was gay or whether the former judge initiated the discussion. It said Walker acknowledged having been in a relationship with a male physician for 10 years. And it reported that Walker said he did not believe it would be appropriate for any judge to recuse himself from a case because of his sexual orientation, ethnicity,



U.S. District Court Judge Walker. AP photo.

national origin or gender.

Prop 8: Back to the ballot in 2012?

BY REX WOCKNER

Equality California on April 4 launched a campaign to gauge community support for heading back to the ballot in 2012 to try to undo Proposition 8.

Approved by voters in November 2008, Prop 8 amended the state constitution to re-ban same-sex marriage, which had been legal for 4 1/2 months.

EQCA said the ongoing federal lawsuit against Prop 8 "could take years to resolve" and so it wants to know what the "community" wants to do.

In a case brought by the American Foundation for Equal Rights, represented by famous attorneys Ted Olson and David Boies, a federal district court struck down Prop 8 last summer and issued an injunction barring its further enforcement.

However, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals suspended the injunction, and the people who had put Prop 8 on the ballot appealed District Judge Vaughn Walker's decision.

Then a new question emerged: whether ballot-measure sponsors have legal "standing" to appeal a federal court's strikedown of a state ballot measure. None of the people who were sued in the case – including California's previous and current governors and attorneys general – had or has any interest in defending Prop 8. They consider it to be unconstitutional.

The 9th Circuit eventually decided it was unwilling to answer the "standing" question on its own and, in February, officially queried the California Supreme Court on whether ballot-measure proponents have any right under state

law to defend their measures when they are struck down.

That's where the case stands now. The California Supreme Court has said it will not hear oral arguments on the question sent to it by the 9th Circuit until September at the soonest.

"Because legal experts are advising that the Proposition 8 federal challenge could take years to resolve, Equality California is launching a community engagement initiative to start a discussion on whether to return to the ballot in 2012 to repeal the marriage ban or whether to wait for a final decision by the courts," the group said. "Before making any recommendation, Equality California will survey its membership, hold 10 town halls across the state and an online town hall, conduct a poll of likely 2012 voters, consult with political experts, coalition partners and engage with its members and the LGBT community. Equality California will announce results of polling and analysis by Labor Day."

EQCA Interim Executive Director Jim Carroll said: "We were truly optimistic that the court case to overturn Prop 8 would restore marriage equality by the end of 2010 or early this year, making a ballot measure unnecessary. Despite the amazing work of the dedicated lawyers leading this effort, there is no guarantee how or when the courts will ultimately rule. As a community, we will figure out together whether we wait until the courts rule or whether we repeal Prop 8 at the ballot box."

"The courts ... are passing the case back and forth to different courts and

Walker was Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for Northern California, in San Francisco, until February of this year, when he retired.

One of Walker's last cases was *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* (now known as *Perry v. Brown*), a three-week-long trial challenging the constitutionality of Proposition 8, an initiative that amended the state constitution to ban same-sex marriage.

A column in the *San Francisco Chronicle* was the first to report that Walker was gay, but that report, which ran shortly after the trial was concluded in January 2010, identified no sources to substantiate its report and acknowledged that Walker refused to confirm or deny what his sexual orientation was.

A number of media outlets reported the news, and one citizen filed a letter with the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, saying he thought Walker should have recused himself.

refusing to allow same-sex couples to marry as they delay acting on our rights," he said.

Equality California was harshly criticized over its leadership role in the costly 2008 campaign that failed to stop Prop 8 at the ballot box. The new effort to consult with the community about a possible 2012 campaign was launched just four days after then-EQCA Executive Director Geoff Kors stepped down from the job he had held since 2002.

Although numerous organizations and activists were involved in running the failed No on 8 campaign, EQCA and Kors, in particular, bore the brunt of LGBT community anger over the loss. In an interview April 4, Kors said the timing of his departure from EQCA was a matter of his partner's decision to retire from his job at the time. He also said he wanted the new EQCA executive director, who has yet to be selected, "to have enough time in the position prior to the 2012 election cycle, as redistricting and potential ballot measures will impact LGBT rights."

Critics of the 2008 campaign said it failed to engage key voting blocs, including people of color, didn't have enough door-to-door contact with voters, turned over too much power to outside consultants and big donors, and produced TV ads that were disastrously awful.

Notably, however, a year later when Maine activists mounted a major campaign to prevent voter revocation of same-sex marriage rights there, the Maine activists corrected for many of the California activists' perceived errors – and lost nonetheless, by a slightly larger margin.

Police raid Shanghai gay bar

Police raided the gay club Q Bar in Shanghai, China, April 3 and detained more than 70 people.

They were taken to the Xiaodongmen police station, held for more than 10 hours, and questioned one by one, in particular about the club's go-go dancer.

Police wanted to know if the go-go boy's genitals were visible and if people inserted bills into his thong.

There was speculation that a rival gay club may have complained to police.

Same-sex marriage bill introduced in Uruguay

Buoyed by the legalization of same-sex marriage in next-door Argentina, activists in Uruguay have arranged the introduction in Parliament of a bill to legalize same-sex marriage.

The measure was introduced by a member of the ruling Frente Amplio (Broad Front) coalition, Deputy Sebastián Sabini of the People's Participation Movement party.

"We are optimistic about the bill being voted into law, since the Frente Amplio has the majority needed to do so," said Álvaro Queiruga of the activist group Black Sheep Collective. "Also, a few opposition MPs have stated they are in favor of the bill."

Korean military sodomy law upheld

South Korea's Constitutional Court on March 31 upheld the army's ban on gay sex, saying it is not "unnecessarily discriminatory" and helps maintain order.

Violators of the ban can be imprisoned for up to two years.

"This is a great disappointment to everyone who has fought against the clause for years and a terrible disgrace to the nation's legal system and society at large," said the Chingusai Korean Gay Men's Human Rights Group. "Furthermore, it renders the situation even more dangerous for gay soldiers because, due to the continuing tension between North Korea and South Korea, military service is mandatory for all able-bodied men."

Gay sex is not illegal in civilian life in South Korea.



Ireland's Justice Minister Dermot Ahern at a recent U.N. appearance. AP file photo.

Irish partnerships begin

Gay and lesbian couples began entering into civil partnerships in Ireland April 5.

The law took effect Jan. 1, but requires couples to give three months' notice prior to tying the knot before a registrar.

Civil partners receive marriage rights and obligations in matters such as taxes, pensions, property, tenancy, inheritance, alimony, immigration and social benefits.

To end a partnership, a couple must go before a court and prove they've not lived together for two of the last three years.

The law also recognizes foreign same-sex unions and provides some rights for unregistered couples who have lived together for at least five years.

Justice Minister Dermot Ahern called the law "one of the most important pieces of civil rights legislation to be enacted since independence."

Liechtenstein OKs registered partnerships

Liechtenstein's Parliament has passed a registered-partnership law that will take effect in September.

The tiny European nation is between Switzerland and Austria.

All political parties supported the law, which could be, but probably will not be, subjected to a voter referendum, activist groups said.

Same-sex couples registered under the law will have the same rights as married people except in areas such as second-parent adoption, artificial insemination and surrogacy, according

to the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association.

Euro Court hears another Russian gay case

The European Court of Human Rights is hearing a case brought by the LGBT group Rainbow House in Tyumen, Russia, over local officials' refusal to register the group as a legal entity.

At present, the court has sent a series of questions to the Russian government that must be answered within three months.

In blocking the group's official registration, local Justice Ministry officials reportedly said its goals – protecting human dignity, rights and freedoms, and providing social and psychological support to LGBT people – contradict fundamental morality.

Last October, the Euro Court ruled against Russia in the matter of Moscow's ongoing bans of gay pride events. The court found that the nation violated the European Convention on Human Rights in the areas of freedom of assembly and association, right to an effective remedy, and prohibition of discrimination.

Tyumen, population 609,000, is about 1,300 miles east of Moscow.

Euro Parliament updates asylum system

The European Parliament on April 6 updated the European Union's system for examining asylum claims and now plans to categorize people fleeing persecution based on

sexual orientation or gender identity as a "special needs" group.

The move will help protect unsuccessful LGBT asylum-seekers from being fast-tracked for deportation and create a process for training national asylum officials on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, among other changes.

"Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people fleeing countries such as Iraq, Uganda, Honduras or Indonesia must receive particular protection," said MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen, vice president of the Parliament's LGBT Intergroup. "This is a major step towards fully complying with our engagements under international asylum law."

Intergroup Vice President Rui Tavares added, "The European Parliament is showing that asylum rules need updating to reflect reality: 76 countries criminalize homosexual acts, and seven foresee the death penalty."

The rules will be officially amended once EU national governments examine them and agree to them.

Council of Europe to protect LBT women

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on April 6 adopted a convention to protect women from violence, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The convention, which will come into force when ratified by 10 member states, will be the first legally binding international agreement to directly cover sexual orientation and gender identity.

"...a major step forward in the fight against gender-based violence..."

The European Region of ILGA – the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association – called the development "a major step forward in the fight against gender-based violence and towards full protection of women across Europe from both domestic violence and in other circumstances such as violence in public places, forced marriage, rape, 'honor' crimes and genital mutilation."

"ILGA-Europe warmly welcomes the adoption of the convention and the recognition that lesbian, bisexual and trans women are particularly vulnerable to violence and require a specific measure of protection," said board co-chair Linda Freimane.

She added: "While celebrating this important advance, we are shocked that at all stages the Russian Federation and Holy See opposed specific inclusion of protection from violence for LBT women in the convention, raising disturbing questions regarding the extent of their commitment to such fundamental rights as the right to life and the right to protection from violence."

The Council of Europe is the continent's main intergovernmental organization with a human-rights focus and is the seat of the European Court of Human Rights. The Committee of Ministers represents the national governments of the council's 47 member countries.

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Photos supplied by Roxanne Frith

Two friends, one garden

There's something magical about the Neighbor Wives' garden

BY TARA CAVANAUGH

Tucked away in the city of East Lansing is a lush, bountiful garden. Heirloom flowers crowd the front yard, and nearly any vegetable or herb you could imagine – from squash to lettuce to catnip to dill – competes for space in the back. Somewhere in all that growth, the garden has allowed space for a small strip of grass and two small homes.

Welcome to the Neighbor Wives' garden.

The Neighbor Wives are Roxanne Frith and Tari Muniz. They moved into their separate homes with separate yards in late 2001. Ten years later, their friendship has bloomed and their side-by-side yards have merged into one big, sprawling garden that now serves as a gathering space for the local lesbian community.

A community's roots

The Neighbor Wives' garden has become a center for birthday celebrations, pre-and-post Michigan Pride gatherings, erotic poetry readings and – of course – for sharing fresh food.

Every year, in late summer and fall, the women enjoy what they call the "thrusting season." They split their flowers and give them away, so that people can plant them in their own yards. They also encourage people to come and pick the plethora of produce, making the garden a community hotspot.

"It is not uncommon, truly, to come home and find someone sitting in the garden because they needed to just have a place to come sit for a minute," Frith says.

What makes the garden admired by so many?

"It's not grown in an extremely planned out fashion," says Laurie Hollinger, who has known

the wives for two years. "There aren't borders. Things are allowed to grow as they do."

"We don't test the soil for pH balance and shit like that," Muniz says. "Put it in the ground, you either make it or you don't. It is something that feels very natural and comfortable. It's always been trial and error throughout the years."

Kat Petersen is a former Lansing Community College photography student of Frith's, and she often visits Frith for coffee. Petersen loves that "there's always something growing, there's always color. Even in the winter there's purple cabbage sticking out of the snow."

Petersen especially loves the angel the Neighbor Wives have formed out of morning glories. "They plant them all along Tari's garage, and they put a huge network of string and twine to the roof," she says. "It looks like this huge angel when they're in bloom. The angel also has a vagina with a lavender clit."

The blossoming of the 'Neighbor Wives'

It started simply enough. In the spring of 2002, both Muniz and Frith were working on planting flowers in their front yards, and they found themselves sharing a valuable resource: the pent-up energy of a teenage boy under parent-imposed house arrest. "His job was to dig up the yard," Muniz says about her son Kevin, "and while he was at it, dig up Roxanne's."

"As soon as we started chatting, it was amazing – We realized our paths had been crisscrossing for over 30 years. We had people in common and places in common and we just always kind of missed each other until we ended up living side by side," Muniz says.

See Neighbor wives, page 22

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► Neighbor wives

Continued from p. 21

Muniz, a longtime activist for the LGBT community who now works for the state's Office of Services to the Aging, was the next tenant immediately after Frith in an East Lansing apartment 30 years ago. The women discovered they both spoke Spanish: Muniz grew up speaking it; Frith taught Spanish and had also studied in Chile.

And they knew dozens of the same friends and acquaintances: "We had an extensive community in common, we just never knew each other," Frith says.

While they were getting to know one another that spring, the front yards, separated not by fence or asphalt but an imaginary property line, decided to merge together. "It wasn't our decision, it just morphed," Frith says. "It just evolved and grew."

The joining of the backyards was a more deliberate decision.

"We had a vision," Muniz says. "My backyard was really just crap anyway. Full of weeds. It wasn't a comfortable place to hang out, it wasn't being used. And we wanted to grow some food." So they got rid of the chain link fence between the yards, and hired someone to till up Muniz's neglected grass.

"It wasn't hard at all," Muniz says. "It made perfect sense."

Muniz likes to "do the big shovel-y, turn-the-dirt-over kind of things," and Frith likes to weed. They don't get territorial, and they don't fight about who's done more work. "We spend whole days out there not even necessarily talking," Muniz says, "just doing the things that we both do to contribute to it."

"We always make sure we have really good music blasting out of the windows and it just... works," she added, sounding a tad bewildered.

The first time that they realized they were neighbor wives was during a monthly potluck for the lesbian community in Lansing called First Friday, which has taken place for more than 30 years. "Since both of our houses were so small, we decided to do it together," Muniz says.



"People just went back and forth between the two houses and it worked really well."

A friend started calling them "Neighbor Wives," and it just stuck, Frith says.

A perennial friendship

Friends of the Neighbor Wives say there's more to the garden than just plants – there's a sense of peace emanating from all that green, and it's as harmonious and as natural as Frith's and Muniz's friendship.

"They share that space with such love and respect, it just really gives such a good vibe to the garden, to the space itself," Hollinger says. "It's really quite magical, and I'd say quite blessed."

Frith likens her friendship with Muniz to the connection shared by sisters. But their friends sense more.

"There's a connectedness that's beyond words," Petersen says about the Neighbor Wives. "For as platonic as a relationship could possibly be, they are

lovers in the emotional and intellectual sense of the word."

Both Muniz and Frith are quick to point out that they're not actual lovers, nor have they ever been. Frith even crafted a tagline that says it all: "We share kitties but not pussy."

When asked if there are ever any arguments in the decade-long friendship, Muniz falls silent, searching her mind for a long minute: "No," she says, thoughtfully. "We don't argue. There are things about us individually that drive the other one crazy, which is why we would not be lovers, ever. But no – we've never had a fight, we've never really disagreed on things, it's just been very natural."

"It's probably the first friendship that I've had where I've felt completely loved and accepted for who I am."

"Them being there and being neighbors wasn't coincidence, you know," Peterson says. "I absolutely believe that they've known each other in many lives."

Master gardener lectures

KALAMAZOO – The Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center presents Jill Ongley, a master gardener, on April 16 from 1-3 p.m. at Wenke's Greenhouse at 5071 Market St.

Ongley, who has been a master gardener for 12 years, specializes in butterfly, shade, urban and wildflower gardening.

The cost to attend is \$10. Space is limited, so leave a message with Kelly Miller at 269-207-0194 or Teresa Stankewicz at 269-506-8362 to reserve a spot.

Every participant will be placed in a drawing for three prizes – a \$200 tabletop water fountain, a \$40 Hypertufa planter and a \$30 Potman clay pot. Every participant will also receive a pack of fertilizer.

Attendees will have the opportunity to create a pot container after the lecture for an additional fee.

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'Million Dollar' Man

Josh Flagg talks Bravo series, new book and being a gay real estate agent

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

These are hard times for real estate agents, so starring in a reality show doesn't hurt. Josh Flagg was one of three sellers on season four of Bravo's "Million Dollar Listing," which wrapped at the end of March – just as he came out and released a memoir. The book, "Million Dollar Agent: Brokering the Dream," doesn't only chronicle his life, though. It's a resource for homebuyers based on the 25-year-old's experiences of selling swanky real estate in California hotspots.

Flagg spoke recently about the decision to publicly come out and offered his tips to homebuyers.

So the whole world knows you're gay now.

I think you'd have to be Helen Keller not to know that already.

Because you're on a Bravo show?

Real estate agent, Bravo show – it's kind of obvious.

Oh. Are a lot of real estate agents gay?

Yeah. You've never heard that?

I haven't. Did you watch your coming out episode?

Of course. I liked the way it was done. It wasn't a big to-do, just very casual.

And it's on record now. Most of us don't have proof of our coming out.

Yeah, there's not much I can do about it now. (Laughs)

Why did you put it off for so long?

Because I didn't want to mix my personal life with my business life. I like to keep that stuff private. I mean, it's not like I walk around with a sign on my forehead. It's probably my own comfort level, but

I'm happy and now is the right time, so I did it.

Has there been talk of a fifth season of "Million Dollar Listing"?

That's up to Bravo. They look at the numbers after the season. We're not even at that stage yet.

Would you do another season?

Sure.

Why did you decide to write your memoir now?

I'd already written my grandmother's biography ("Stories My Grandmother Told Me") and then my grandmother inspired me to write my own autobiography. I just started penning my memoirs, and by the time I was done we had so much that we had to take some out.

It's my autobiography but it's also a how-to guide. It breaks it up into many different chapters and it explains what to do and what not to do regarding selling property. It tells the reader how to get where I did but not so much in a lecture way. It's not a step-by-step; it's really casual. It's an easy read, fun and entertaining. And it's very blunt.

How did you get into real estate?

I was 18 and still in high school, and I really liked architecture and I wanted to be involved with high-end listings in Beverly Hills.

One of the first things that comes up when you Google your name are those theft allegations from 2008, when you were arrested for stealing art from your clients. The case was dismissed due to insufficient evidence, but do you feel like that affects your reputation professionally?

No, because if you Google it you know it wasn't true. Within a few days it was thrown out. It is what it says – it did not happen. I don't really want to comment on that because it's just so long ago. That was an unfortunate thing.

What tips can you give someone who's in the market for a new home?

Don't settle for something just because it's the best thing out there. Unless you're in desperate need to move this second don't just jump right into it. It's not like a slice of pizza that you can return if it doesn't taste good.

Your boyfriend also works with homes – he's an interior designer. Does this have anything to do with why you're a couple?

No – but it's an added benefit.

Is there a plus to using a gay real estate agent?

If you're a professional and you know what you're doing, that's all that counts. It makes no difference if you're gay, straight, black, white, Jewish, Christian. Whatever you are, it makes no difference. If you're gay and you're more comfortable going with somebody who's gay I guess it can be beneficial, but I know personally I go with whoever is the smartest or who knows what they're talking about.

When do you think real estate will start to climb again?

No one who can answer that question because nobody has a crystal ball. Anybody who says they can isn't telling you the truth. People can speculate, but people's speculations are usually wrong. People say that it's turning around, but it hasn't turned around yet. Prices are still really low. Brace for impact.

Josh Flagg, who starred in the fourth season of Bravo's "Million Dollar Listing," recently released his second book.

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Gems or junk?

How to sift through vintage stores

BY HANNAH SCHWAB

Whether you are a broke college graduate trying to furnish a first apartment or just trying to change the look of a generic room, vintage shopping offers one-of-a-kind pieces at reasonable prices.

But how do you know if the piece that caught your eye is a hidden gem or a worthless piece of junk?

“Condition, condition, condition,” said Steve Humphreys, owner of Vogue Vintage in Ferndale. “Use your common sense. If a table looks unstable, chances are it is. I hand select all of my pieces so I know they meet a minimum standard of quality. I do dabble

a little bit in refurbishing wooden pieces, but I don’t tackle fabrics. For me, it isn’t cost effective.”

Humphreys stocks his store with a few items customers bring in, but he said he finds most of his pieces at estate and movie prop sales. He said these sales feature a lot of merchandise that sellers are trying to move quickly, so he can usually find good deals.

Although vintage stores specialize in unique pieces, Humphreys recommends new vintage shoppers research pieces online.



Second Chance Design in Holland, Michigan. BTL photo: Hannah Schwab

“If I’m carrying a couch from the 1960s, chances are someone else is selling one like it on eBay or Craigslist. Those are easy places to check prices so you know if you need to counter offer,” Humphreys said. “Also, search brands. If there is a name on a table or lamp, look it up to check its quality or worth.”

When it comes to haggling, Humphreys will only go so far.

“I know how much I need to sell an item at to make my money back,” Humphreys said. “So I know how much I can come down. I fully expect customers will counter offer, but I hate it when someone really low-balls me.

Don’t insult an owner’s intelligence, otherwise they will never work with you on the price.”

While owners are looking to make money, they also want you to be satisfied with your purchase. Vintage storeowners will often let customers try out a piece to make sure it is what they want in their home.

“I have no problem letting someone take a pillow from the couch home to make sure the colors work in the room,” Humphreys said. “We let people borrow tables and wall art to make sure they fit in the space they have picked out.”

Randilynn Talsma, owner of Second Chance Design in Holland, said finding vintage pieces is easier than people think. She looks locally for people who want to downsize their living

“Start with a clean slate in the room and slowly build the furniture around something that you love.”

– Jason Talsma

arrangements and people who are moving and don’t want to store massive amounts of furniture.

“When grandma moves into a retirement community, she has to unload her furniture somewhere,” Talsma said. “I had a woman call me the other day because she was going on a mission trip out of the country and she needed to get rid of rooms worth of furniture.”

Unlike Humphreys’ shop, Talsma and her husband Jason will refurbish almost any piece that comes through the door.

“As long as the piece has good bones, anything can be refinished,” Jason Talsma said. “Most pieces made in the 1950s and ’60s are a better quality than we find today, so those pieces can be saved. Vintage that is still around is usually still good.”

The Talsmas agree that if someone is new to vintage shopping, start off acquiring pieces slowly. If someone tries to refurbish an entire room or apartment at once, they can end up frustrated.

“Pieces take time to find,” Randilynn said. “If someone comes in looking for something specific, they may never find it. I’ve seen people come in and say they have been hunting for a specific piece for years. Chances are if they haven’t found it, it isn’t out there to be found.”

Jason recommends finding a store or two that a shopper likes and stopping in a few times a month to see what new products come in. Vintage stores have a high turn over rate and customers often can be inspired by a new piece.

“Start off slow, with a pillow or pattern that you like, and try to gradually build off of that,” Jason said. “Carpets and wall colors can be changed easier than upholstery can.

“Start with a clean slate in the room and slowly build the furniture around something that you love. If you take your time and let the inspiration come to you, you can end up with a room you really like that can last.”

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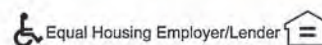
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RTI Home Guide



Photos of the Inn on Ferry Street provided by Stephanie Chapman.

Detroit hotel delights visitors with history

The Inn on Ferry Street revitalizes Victorian beauty of the past

BY ANDREA POTEET

The Inn on Ferry Street, which opened in 2001, sits among iconic landmarks like Wayne State University in a Detroit neighborhood rich with history. But behind its brick facade is a history visitors don't expect.

The inn's four mansions and two carriage houses are some of the last remaining remnants of the area's charming Victorian past. The buildings began life in the 1880s as farm homes in the then-ritzy neighborhood in Midtown.

In the decades that followed, they changed hands and sometimes sat unoccupied as the neighborhood evolved. They stood as the neighborhood turned from part of the Ferry Seed Company to a predominantly Jewish neighborhood to the home of a black population who established local businesses and health institutions. Eventually, the buildings were turned into women's dorms for the nearby Merrill-Palmer Institute before they were bought by the Detroit Institute of Arts in the 1970s. In the early 90s, the DIA, which rarely used the properties, was faced with the prospect of breaking them up to sell to several buyers.

At that point, the University Center Cultural Association stepped in. Organized by leaders from Wayne State, the DIA and other area organizations back in 1976, its purpose was to guide development in the Midtown area. The UCCA purchased the entire block of buildings, beginning a decade-long process of turning the lost pieces of history into a thriving inn.

The \$8.5 million project was funded by no less than 254 sources, including charitable foundations, federal and county loans and tax

credits. Funding took nearly ten years and was the hardest part of the project, UCCA President Sue Mosey said, but the renovations finally began in February 2000 and the inn opened after 18 months of construction.

"I think we felt that we could step in early in this part of the neighborhood and make a

"We get people who come in and stay with us who don't particularly have the best perception of Detroit... but a lot of times we change people's opinions around."

— Stephanie Chapman

major investment that others would follow ... which did happen," Mosey said. "There's been a lot of other developments that happened in that neighborhood since we built this development."

In the decade between the original plan and the inn's opening, 1,500 housing units and 44 residential projects have sprung up in Midtown.

Now, the inn is a successful aspect of

See Detroit hotel, page 30

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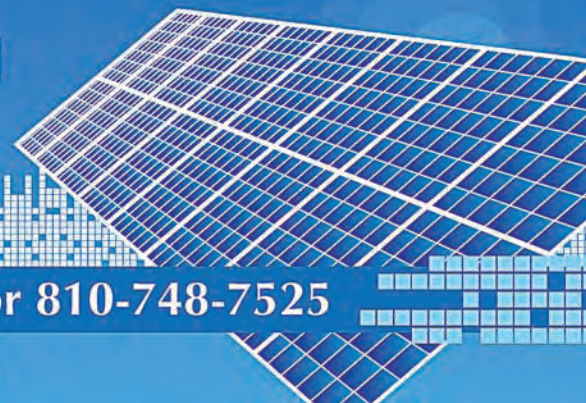
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RTM Home Guide



► Detroit hotel

Continued from p. 28

neighborhood's makeup, bringing in guests headed to job interviews at the Detroit Medical Center or Wayne State as well as local history nuts and architecture aficionados.

The inn's sales manager, Stephanie Chapman, said the inn helps change visitors' minds about Detroit's reputation for being dangerous.

"We get people who come in and stay with us who don't particularly have the best perception of Detroit," Chapman said. "A lot of people are really wary and frankly scared ... but a lot of times we change people's opinions around."

Chapman said many of the guests are stunned to realize the charming mansions had sat empty and abandoned for years.

"They're very impressed," she said. "They're really surprised and they're always really interested to find out the back story and how things happened. A lot of people are just kind of amazed that something like this exists in Detroit."

For one group who visited the inn last summer, the shock at seeing the inn's makeover was tinged with hints of nostalgia. The group was made up of women who had lived in the buildings when they were dormitories for the Merrill-Palmer Institute, now part of Wayne State,



and came back to stay in their revamped former rooms.

"They recognized things," Chapman said. "Some of the women were like 'My room has been split into two rooms!', but they were mostly really impressed, and excited that they could stay here again."

Mosey said the inn, which usually runs at 70 to 75 percent occupancy, has done well since it opened.

"We have a very nice mix of people who use it, especially people who are brought here by the cultural institutions in the area," she said. "People are very interested in the history of the block and the individual buildings. There's a lot of people who value history, value historic architecture, so there's a lot of people who come for that reason. It's also just a very unique place."

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Get your deck ready for spring and summer

As the days get longer, there's nothing like barbecuing and entertaining friends on your deck. But before you pass out those invitations, make sure your deck has weathered the winter and is ready for its seasonal duty.

The abuse a deck surface takes from the weather, foot traffic, barbecues, and food and drink spills can create both surface and structural problems.

"To make your deck last, clean it thoroughly every one to two years and re-stain every two to four years," says Mark Clement, host of the radio program "MyFixitUpLife." "It also helps if your deck is made from a natural, durable wood, such as Western Red Cedar, which holds oil based finishes for an extended period of time."

Here's how to get your deck ready:

• **Clear Out:** Clear all furniture and potted plants off the deck. Then inspect the deck for dirt and pollen buildup. Sweep it clean of debris that may have fallen during winter. For safety's sake, make sure there are no nails sticking up from the deck or from any posts.

• **Floss Between Planks:** Clean between the planks and boards of any horizontal surfaces so rain can drain and air can flow between them. Reducing standing water and increasing airflow will limit the amount of moisture that can collect and stay on the surface of the plank, thereby making your deck last longer.

• **Keep the Finish Sharp:** Application of a quality wood stain or finish and periodic retreatment over time will prevent discoloration and degradation of your deck and extend the wood's lifespan. Keep in mind that natural woods that are sustainable and durable, such as real cedar, can take and retain a variety of



stains and finishes for more extended periods. Such woods are natural looking, as opposed to the faux finishes used on man-made composite products.

• **Elevate Planters:** Direct contact between planter boxes and wooden surfaces can trap moisture and leave stains. Elevating them or placing them on rollers will release the moisture and make them easier to rearrange.

• **Beware of Welcome Mats:** Mats can collect moisture and dry out too slowly, which can lead to water damage and/or wood rot. After precipitation, be sure to dry out the mat and allow the deck to dry.

• **Watch Out for Your Grill:** Grease from your grill is hazardous to your deck, so place it in an inconspicuous spot with a hard rubber door mat underneath it to keep your deck free of stains. If grease drips onto your deck, use a household cleaner to wipe it clean.

"It's easy to forget that decks need maintenance and care just like your lawn or roof," says Clement. "By performing routine checks and taking care of the warning signs, homeowners can extend the life of their decks so they can be enjoyed for years to come."

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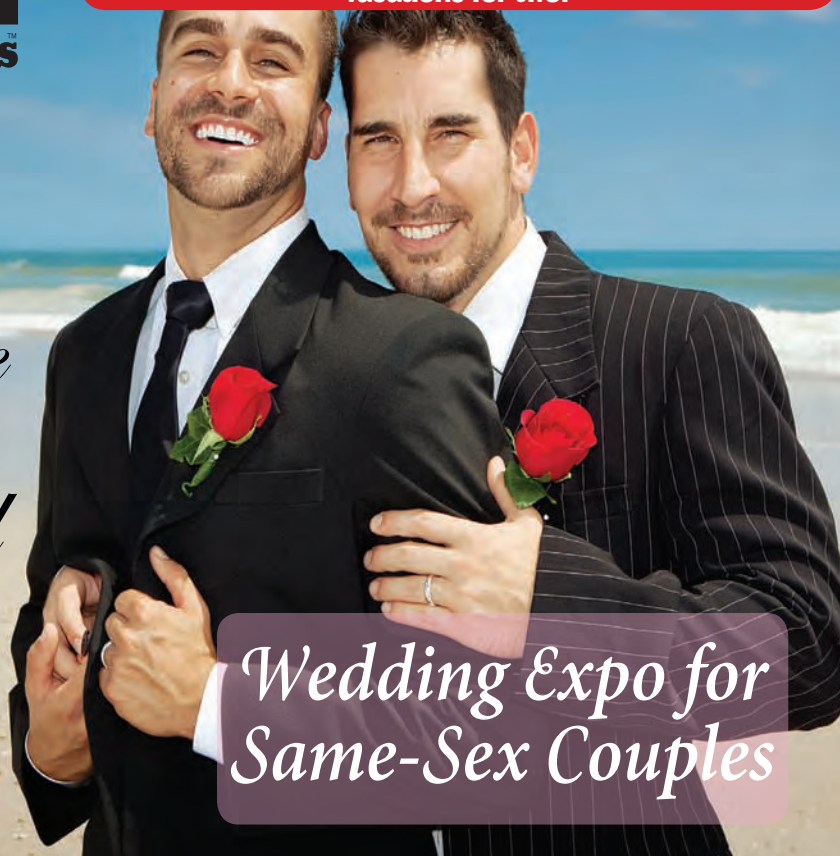
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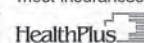
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Chris Bathgate's fourth album cost him lots of money and sleep, but the Michigan musician's 'Salt Year' is finally ready for release

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Chris Bathgate took just over two years—and lots of coffee-fueled nights—to create “Salt Year,” the Michigan singer-songwriter’s fourth full-length album. It was one of the most intense, and expensive, periods of his life, which didn’t seem like much of one at the time. No social life. No money. No time to just sit back and reflect.

Bathgate’s job then, working as the music coordinator at Ann Arbor’s safe house for LGBT teens, Neutral Zone, coincided with the recording of “Salt Year.” The juggling left him dead tired and so stressed he took out his frustration on his music.

“Sitting on the floor, banging on the drums, is definitely therapy,” says Bathgate, who, on a recent afternoon, is seated in the backend nook of downtown Ann Arbor’s Sweetwaters café—drinking coffee. “When there’s not any time by myself for that solitude, I get really crooked. You need a moment to take a breath. I didn’t have that.”

The songs on “Salt Year” draw profoundly from that intense time of depletion and self-criticism—and love. Love in all its complexities. Love in all its confusion. And the partner who

Chris Bathgate

Doors 9:30 p.m. April 21, Blind Pig
208 S. First St., Ann Arbor
9 p.m. April 28, Mac’s Bar
2700 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing
www.chrisbathgate.org

probably doesn’t exist but the one that lives in our head anyway. Bathgate has one. Her name is Eliza, the namesake of two songs on the album.

“I’m getting old, right?” says Bathgate, though he’s only 28. “I have this idea of things that I’m looking for in a person that I want. Things that I want to do when I’m older. I’m imagining those qualities in Eliza, who’s that weird sketch in my mind.

“In some cases, her identity is attached to real people, but”—he says, teasing out his statement—“I will never, ever tell you who those people are.”

Before moving to Ann Arbor 10 years ago, and then to his current hometown of Pinckney, Bathgate spent most of his

life in the rural communities of Iowa, Kentucky and, as a kid, Illinois. No matter where he went, there was always music—especially at his uncle’s farmhouse. Fiddle tunes were usually all they played. The one Bathgate remembers most is “Nail That Catfish to a Tree,” a Volo Bogtrotters song.

“The fiddle sound is totally magic,” he says. “It gives me goose bumps. I don’t know what it is about it, but they say it’s in the same frequency band as the human voice. I’ve been thinking about my music and how it’s related.”

Some of that traditional sound seeps into “Salt Year,” but the album isn’t as linear as a straight-up fiddle tune.

Compared to his much-complimented “A Cork Tale Wake,” released in 2007 to praise from NPR and the BBC, this album, says Bathgate, is “more balance, not so off-on and plays more like a balloon ride than a rocket ride.”

He goes on, “I had an intense minute, and a lot of the songs come from that.”

Bathgate’s influences for “Salt Year,” he says, derived from Motown music and John Lennon songs. People tell him all the time that when they hear him they hear Neil Young, even though he

didn’t even own a Young record until recently.

But Bathgate, who was once in a metal band, listens to just about everything—even Lady Gaga. “Trust me,” he says, “I’ve heard her, I’ve turned it up. It’s all research.”

The “research” started as a child, when his uncles, who’d constantly gig around town, would throw a bunch of albums his way. Bathgate got attached to the words and, he says, “I suddenly started copying down lyrics from radio and became obsessive with it. Songwriting became holy to me at an early age.”

When Bathgate wasn’t scribbling down song lyrics, he had farm chores to finish. That’s the kind of community he grew up in—small (he graduated high school with 45 people), secluded and narrow-minded. Then his brother came out.

“He had a lot of problems,” Bathgate remembers of living in the Illinois countryside. “It wasn’t really an environment where that was accepted, and he was kind of persecuted. Looking

See Chris Bathgate, page 34



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Chris Bathgate's fourth album, "Salt Year," was recorded while he worked at Neutral Zone, the Ann Arbor-based safe zone for teens.

► Chris Bathgate

Continued from p. 33

back, I was pretty inhumane."

But then something snapped in Bathgate, who was in his own bubble at the time. And he thought, "Wait a minute – why does that even matter? Why is he being treated this way?"

So Bathgate became an ally. Two years ago, he played We Are Michigan, a three-day music series promoting the awareness of LGBT issues. Before that, there was the Build-a-Boy benefit, in the backyard of somebody's Ann Arbor house, to raise money for a transgender person's surgery. And, of course, there's Neutral Zone, where he was hired to not only manage a staff and youth programming, but also to remodel their recording studio. After painting and laying carpet, he headed off to Backseat Productions on Jackson Road in Ann Arbor to record "Salt Year."

"When you have to work eight-plus hours to bring the bread home," he says, "you're left with scraps. And that's what you're using to fuel all your creative energies."

Most of his paychecks went toward the album, and the late night/early morning routine was catching up with him. So in September, after two years with the non-profit, he left to focus on "Salt Year." "I was like, 'My record is done and this is a good place for me to break,'" he says. "(Neutral Zone) is a great place and a number-one asset."

When talking about his passion for LGBT rights as an ally, Bathgate does it the best way he knows how – by bringing it back to music. "If people in bands tell you, 'Hey, you should check out this act,' you're probably going to be like, 'Oh, well, you guys are in a band.' But if a fan says, 'Oh my god, they're so good, you should check this band out,' you'd feel more compelled because there isn't a conflict of interest."

"That's the only way I could communicate it in my mind. Everyone stands something to gain, but that separation is important just to get that message across. Maybe it makes the message stronger – and louder."

Bathgate's career has gained major momentum since "A Cork Tale Wake," on which he also worked with local producer Jim Roll, who owns Backseat Productions. The LP's first single was a gorgeous sing-songy piano ballad called "Serpentine."

Before "Glee" even existed, creator Ryan Murphy took notice. He used Bathgate's song in the FX pilot for his 2008 series "Pretty/Handsome," about a transgender dad, that was never picked up. "I was still honored," Bathgate says. "I'm glad I'm on his radar."

This is how it is a lot of the time for Bathgate – he's always teased. "Music industry emails come in with large sums of money and the possibility of that happening," he says. "And that would totally help me out and solve a lot of my problems."

But he could be worse off – Pinckney isn't nearly as pricey as New York City or Los Angeles, where dreams of being a musician are often pursued. Bathgate's home on the Huron River chain of lakes is modest, but he has a piano and privacy.

"I like the isolation, to be honest," says Bathgate, who previously had short-lived places in Ypsilanti and Pittsfield. "I engage with people on my own terms, but it really does take me a lot of alone time to demo stuff and not be afraid that the neighbors are hearing."

While working on "Salt Year" he was tinkering a ton, burning through money but also envisioning the project's end-result – he, of course, just wanted to like it. No matter what the price.

"I'm either really bad at managing my finances or I'm kind of obsessive," he says. "That's probably what it was: I was like, 'I can either be really broke and get a little closer to the record I want or go out to eat twice.' It was definitely a trade-off."

Broke. Tired. Overworked. The ingredients for a good album?

Bathgate laughs. "I hope not," he says, "because I don't really want to go through that again."

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A gay high school blog

For a high school athlete who was so terrified of being gay he contemplated suicide, coming out was huge. But Robert Scott did it – and, within a couple of months, he was blogging nationally about his life.

Welcome to the gay youth world, 2011-style.

At 14, Robert felt cursed by his feelings for guys. He identified as a jock; he played football, basketball and soccer, and ran track and cross country. There was no way, he told himself, an athlete could be gay. For three years he wrestled with his demons.

At 17, he met Ben Newcomer and Brad Usselman through TheGYC.com, a gay teen site. They too were athletes – soccer and track – and though all three lived in different parts of the country, they soon became good friends. Robert, who lives in Memphis, even met Ben at a soccer tournament in North Carolina.

Brad had an idea: starting a blog. There was nothing online specifically for young athletes struggling with their sexuality. He contacted Jim Buzinski, co-founder of the OutSports.com website. Jim understood the importance of the teens' idea and provided important help, from organization to grammar.

One goal, Brad said, was to “change people’s perceptions that openly gay athletes would be ostracized from their sports team.” Another was to “build a grass-roots movement with my generation” aimed at gaining equality.

Referring to gay athletes, Ben added, “Gay people who fit in shouldn’t feel like they have to

just because they can.”

The blog – called “Walk the Road,” referring to young people exploring their sexuality together (<http://bradrobertben.wordpress.com>) – drew nearly instant feedback. A closeted Mississippi State fraternity member told his own agonizing tale, and concluded: “Many Southerners see the typical gay guy as one who runs around in high heels dressed in makeup. However, I can see from you and also myself, we are further from that image than one can be.”

A college swimmer emailed the three, and they posted his story. He explained that he is still in the closet because he believes others will define him solely by his sexuality, even though that’s only one part of who he is.

That’s exactly the message Robert, Ben and Brad impart. They blog about music, school and their sports teams. They write poetry and upload videos. Sometimes – not always – they post stories about their own experiences as gay teens, or pass along emails that other gay jocks have sent.

Publicity on OutSports led to a surge of interest. Olympians, college athletes and people of all ages – sports fanatics, and those who only wished they could play – contacted the trio.

Gareth Bale – a 22-year-old Welshman who plays for Tottenham Hotspur in the English Premier League, and a rising international soccer star – sent an encouraging word. “His shout-out really boosted our spirits,” says Robert.

Still, when the blog began Robert was not

out to his parents. “I was afraid the people around me would judge me if they ever found out,” he recalls. His parents did soon find out – and Robert’s fears subsided. He put his last name on “Walk the Road,” and began a steady coming-out process with friends. The blog and coming out became intertwined.

“Hearing so many enlightening stories inspired me to continue telling people close to me,” Robert says.

“I had known so little of all the gay athletes there really were in history,” he continues. “Since creating the blog, my eyes have been opened to successful gay athletes of today and the past.”

“I also realize how much our society is progressing. It’s almost scary how much the youth of today really don’t care for discrimination against anyone who is gay. Even one of my teammates knows now, and we’ve become best of friends since he learned.”

Meanwhile, the boys blog on. Last month Brad wrote about the upcoming track season: his first since coming out to his teammates.

Noting that all successful programs are built around supportive athletes, Brad wrote: “Some LGBT athletes feel that their coming out will take away from the team dynamic that has been built. I have heard from some people that

this happened to them on their own sports team, even so far as to the team being divided over the issue. I am lucky to say, though, that my team sees past my sexuality.

“They see all of the hard work I am putting in every practice in order to achieve the best that I can. I am happy to say that even though my mind went through the worst possible scenario that could take place hundreds of times before I came out as well as after I came out, it all turned out well.... There is no time limit on when you have to tell people, just do

Dan Woog is a journalist, educator, soccer coach, gay activist, and author of the “Jocks” series of books on gay male athletes. Visit his website at www.danwoog.com. He can be reached care of this publication or at OutField@qsyndicate.com.



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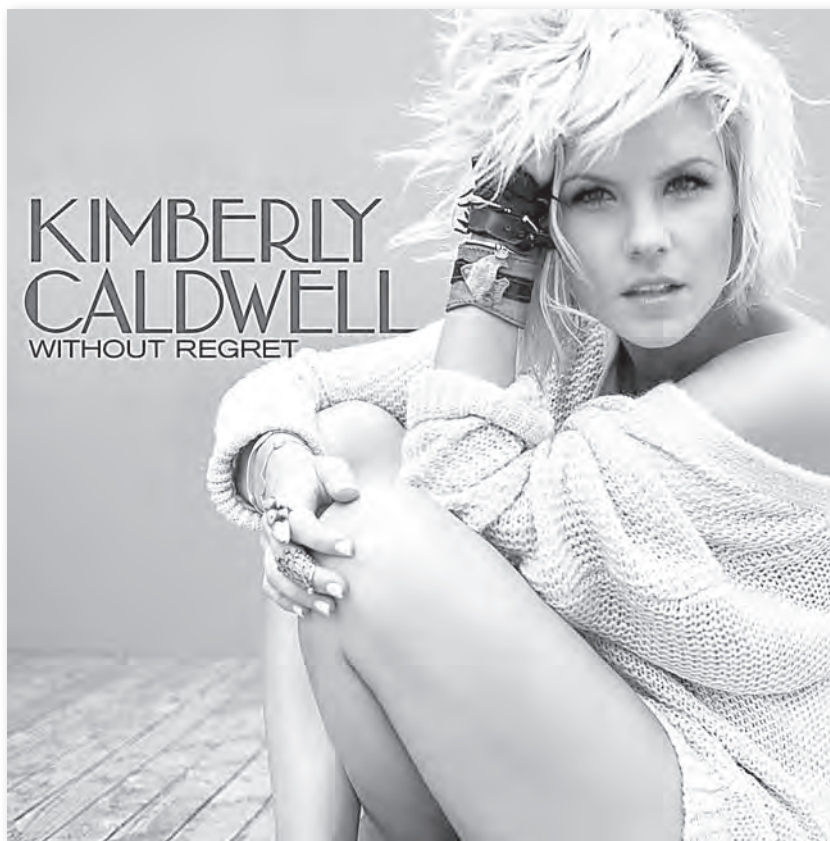


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Season two 'Idol' releases typical debut. Plus: Panic!



Kimberly Caldwell, 'Without Regret'

Kimberly Caldwell was never crowned "American Idol," but her debut sounds like she was – meaning, it's as going-through-the-motions mediocre as those who walked away with the title. The season two contestant can sing – and she does so like she's Kelly Clarkson living in Melissa Etheridge's body. (Remember Caldwell's version of "Come to My Window"? Awesome.) But that throaty wail and inviting tone only gets her so far with these 11 forgettable songs. "Desperate Girls & Stupid Boys," the only sign that her producers know a good hook, is high-powered pop with a zooming chorus that's from the Clarkson cookie-cutter. It's impossible not to compare the two, since both sing so well they could sell just about anything – but cuts "Heart Like Mine," "Naked" and "Hotter Without You" are so grade-school shallow that Caldwell comes across as a really good singer singing really bad songs. She can kill a ballad, as she does on the generic commit-already cut "Say Love," and get down with her funky-rock self on "Going Going Gone," but Caldwell's more one-dimensional than a stick figure – and she co-wrote the songs! Typical of "Without Regret": "I'm better off, I'm moving on/What you did to me was wrong." If Caldwell's voice wasn't so good, we'd suggest doing the same. *Grade: C*



Panic! at the Disco, 'Vices & Virtues'

Start panicking (at the disco, or wherever) – Ryan Ross isn't writing for the band anymore, and it's just not the same without him. Now only a twosome (singer Brendon Urie and drummer Spencer Smith), the hipsters reclaim the exclamation point and replace the quirky retro-pop of "Pretty. Odd." for pretty ordinary. Almost immediately, and definitely by the time "Hurricane" comes three songs in, "Vices & Virtues" echoes their debut, 2005's "A Fever You Can't Sweat Out." What's missing, though, is the mall-rat snap of Ross' lyrics, now replaced by emo clichés and second-rate sayings. "Memories" and lead single "The Ballad of Mona Lisa" are proof they haven't lost their touch when it comes to seizing heads with a bombastic hook that reels and rocks and sounds big enough to take over the

world. "Let's Kill Tonight," which leans on '80s electronica, is daft trippiness that would probably sound better if you were stoned. Drugs won't help the dud "Trade Mistakes," however. It's simply awful filler. And the ballad "Always" is a high – a cute love song that, even with clacks and horns, breaks up the in-your-face flamboyancy. It pulls back just in time, before the album goes sound crazy on "Nearly Witches," which mixes kitsch, orchestral madness and a children's choir. It's the oddest moment among too many ordinary ones. *Grade: B-*

Also Out



Lisa Lampanelli, 'Tough Love'

Nothing or no one walks away unscathed from Lisa Lampanelli's lacerating bite. Not Michael Jackson. Not Haiti. Not gays. In the "Queen of Mean" comedian's latest stand-up show, released as a CD and DVD (with five bonus clips that were "too hot for Comedy Central"), she dishes out more stereotypes and, before going into a one-woman celebrity roast, concludes that "once you go fruit, your place will look cute." Whether she's yakking about leaving the dark side for a white man (with big nuts) or self-insulting – referring to last year's memoir as her "non-best-selling autobiography" – it's not tough to love Lisa.



Deep Dark Robot, '8 Songs About a Girl'

What's going on? Simply what it says – eight songs about a girl. The debut of super-songwriter Linda Perry, a hit-honer for the likes of Pink and Christina Aguilera, and Fatso Jetson drummer Tony Tornay – as the Deep Dark Robot duo – is musical therapy. There's fury and fear, sadness and regret. And the two non-blondes don't serve it with a spoonful of sugar. This is raw, dirty stuff that hurts. Perry's voice shifts from raucous wail to eerie whisper, singing beautifully on "You Mean Nothing to Me," but the heartbreak never lifts – even when she's bitching out her ex on the last track.

Reach Chris Azzopardi at chris@pridesource.com.

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The real sound of music in MOT's 'Magic Flute'

BY MICHAEL H. MARGOLIN

If you respond to economic pressures and reduce your spring season by a third, then you must choose wisely for the remainder. David DiChiera, Michigan Opera Theatre's mastermind, has brought Detroit a gift of spring with an enchanting production of Mozart's "The Magic Flute," cast it beautifully and let the good times roll on opening night at the Detroit Opera House.

The production came from the Opera Company of Philadelphia: Boyd Ostroff's handsome set, like a cross between "Ariadne auf Naxos" and "Swan Lake," brings the original libretto, set in some ancient past, to the Romantic movement of the 19th century, which bears up very well under the story of a search for love and glory.

Richard St. Clair's period costumes with a hint of the Grecian for members of the Temple devoted to Isis and Osiris are parenthesized by whimsy: The Three Ladies, first seen at the top of the curving staircase flowing into a huge tree trunk bridge, appear to be Valkyries auditioning for "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert." They wear bejeweled headdresses with feathery fronds, short dresses with sassy skirts and fitted bodices. But just as the voices blend, the palette and the styles work together as the melange did in Propeller's "Richard III" in the recent presentation of Ann Arbor's

REVIEW

'The Magic Flute'

Michigan Opera Theatre at Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway, Detroit. April 13, 15-17. \$29-\$121. 313-237-7464.

www.michiganopera.org

University Musical Society.

Among the first voices we hear, the Three are a wonderful blend of soprano voices who move like sylphs on a mission: They are Kimwana Doner, Sarah Nisbett and Kathleen Segar (one of the best mezzos in the Detroit area).

From there on, the vocal qualities of this production are nearly flawless and the degree of physical dexterity in this mostly young cast, ranging from young children to adolescents to adults and some mature singers, is joyful to watch.

Dorothy Danner gets a big thumbs up for keeping the light moments light, the darker moments elegant and spot on, and each singer in character. Near the end, when Papageno sings of married life and being surrounded by children, she brings on a flurry of kids who leap and jump and somersault as if the libretto had come to life; though not credited, could these be some of the kids from the wonderful MOT Children's Chorus?

Still, the music is in the throats and in this production, sung in English (surtitled)



Michigan Opera Theatre's "Magic Flute" continues through April 17 at the Detroit Opera House. Photo: John Grigaitis

with dialogue in English (not) there were some fine vocalizations.

As the quester after love and glory, Tamino, the Prince, is sung by tenor David Miller – of Il Divo fame – and he has a clarion tenor vested in a tall and elegant physique; the voice rose and crested with vigor – though one would have liked some coloring to elicit more feeling. His opposite number, Pamina, was sung by Katherine Whyte in one of the memorable outings of the 2010-11 season so far. Her lithe soprano caressed the notes and her second act aria on her mortality was so beautifully shaded with plangent emotion that it was worth an encore.

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

Happy birthday, Matrix! Many happy returns!

BY JOHN QUINN

While the Matrix Theatre Company missed April Fool's Day by a week when launching its latest offering, opening night was a week early in kicking off its year-long 20th anniversary celebration. Parties can be giddy, and the company has chosen a suitably up-beat production to kick off the festivities. "April Foolery" consists of two one-acts pulled from the long list of plays birthed at the Matrix.

"Para Siempre," my mono-linguistic readers, means "Forever." Matrix School of Theatre alumna Maria Serratos-Martinez created this play for the first presentation of the Young Directors class in 1999. It is an adaptation of the third act of Neil Simon's 1968 Broadway hit, "Plaza Suite," "Visitor from Forest Hills." Our local playwright has moved the action from the posh confines of a New York hotel to a home in Southwest Detroit, near Holy Redeemer Church. In the tradition of butterflies in the stomach, Graciela (Kristen Schultes) has locked herself in the bathroom. It's her "Don't tell Roberto, but I'm not getting married today" moment. The narrative is driven by the futile efforts of her bickering parents, Norma (Christiana Hernandez) and Raul (Rudy Villarreal), to coax her out. Their frustrated and increasing frenetic attempts at persuasion are the grain for this comedy mill.

And – here's where your humble reviewer gets caught flatfooted. I'm not

REVIEW

'April Foolery'

Matrix Theatre Company, 2730 Bagley St., Detroit. Friday-Sunday through May 1. \$10-\$15. 313-967-0599.

www.matrixtheatre.org

familiar enough with "Plaza Suite" (I know – it's blasphemy. I'm ashamed.) to know what's Neil Simon and what's Maria Serratos-Martinez. Let's assume that this is "adaptation" rather than "translation." Taking an established theme and reapplying it to a new social or cultural setting is a well-established means of demonstrating the universality of those themes. Specifically, nervous brides are nervous brides the whole world 'round.

The dialogue flows naturally between Spanish and English, and it was obvious the bilingual audience members were thoroughly enjoying both sides. For those of us who misguidedly took high school French, it wasn't so easy. Context and delivery, though, make up a lot of ground for us, the less gifted. Yet the tendency to confuse intensity of emotion with speed of delivery tended to blur some line readings.

Rounding out the evening is Roger Kerson's "Backstage Passes," a product of Matrix's New Voices program in 2003. This broad farce tells the randy tale of Philip (Dennis Kleinsmith), fading star of stage, screen and extra-marital affairs,



Dennis Kleinsmith and Angela Robitaille practice their role reversal in the madcap murder mystery "Backstage Passes" that makes up one half of Matrix Theatre's "April Foolery." Photo: Danielle Daguio

as he seduces his co-star Naomi (Angela Robitaille). Both Naomi and fellow actress Joan (Kristen Schultes again!) are on to Philip's "love 'em and leave 'em" record, leading hapless stagehand-cum-dresser Robert (Kevin Barron) to wonder why they're not interested in a younger, friskier guy. The answer, of course, is "money." Philip's manipulations eventually draw the interest of two police detectives (Dan Woitulewicz and Eric Niece), investigating what may or not be a homicide. These backstage hijinks are mirrored by the insanity of the "play" supposedly in progress on the other side of the curtain. THAT play involves madcap entrances and exits, bizarre costumes and characters, and a totally unfathomable plot.

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

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No more hiding

After 20 years of working for faith, local pastor Rev. Louise R. Ott comes out

BY RUCHI NARESH

It's been 41 days since the Congregational Church of Birmingham welcomed the Rev. Louise R. Ott as its first openly gay pastor. This is also the first time Ott has been out of the closet – in her previous pastoral jobs, “hiding” was a way of life.

Ott felt this was a big transition, and now she and her partner of six years, Elaine Rachel Winter, can introduce themselves as a couple. Ott says she is a “pastor first” and everything else comes second – but in her continuous service to the church and community, she felt conflicted balancing that “everything else.”

Born in Bay City, Mich., Ott has a degree in psychology from Michigan State University and she received her master's in divinity at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill. After getting her masters, she was ordained in the United Methodist Church and for 20 years she led many congregations in and outside Michigan. In the last six years she has been the superintendent of the UMC's Saginaw Bay District.

You have been with your partner for six years, so did the United Methodist Church know about your relationship?


They did not know and I never told them. I just continued in the closet, you know, don't ask, don't tell – that was the church's version. But that gets old. I decided it was time to find a denomination that would allow me to be their pastor and to have my partner in life with me. So I left the United Methodist Church and I went through the whole process to become a United Church of Christ pastor (which is the same denomination as the Congregational Church of Birmingham).

How was the interview process with the Congregational Church of Birmingham?

First of all, the church became open and affirming in 2006, so not that long ago. When I came for what I call the speed-dating weekend, it was down to two candidates. At that point it was important to be truthful about my relationship. And I wanted to be clear that if you are going to meet me, you are going to meet Elaine. And if you choose me, you get us.

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The Rev. Ott smiles over her new congregation. BTL photo: Ruchi Naresh

How has the church congregation reacted to you?

It's a non-issue. These are highly educated, passionate, good-hearted people and the gay issue is done here. The vote was one abstention, one "No," and the rest all yeses. Think about that. They are ready...they are OK.

How do you like this congregation compared to others?

I feel like I have come home. I don't have to translate or have to be careful about the language I use. I like to use inclusive language for God and people, and that's not a problem here. This congregation wants to make a difference in the world. There are some people in this church with means and that are highly educated, but we also have our average folks. They all want to make the world a better place.

Tell me how you met Elaine and the challenges in your relationship.

We met at a church. Isn't that shocking? (Laughs) She was the choir director at Novi United Methodist Church for a while and then she took a job in Ann Arbor. At that time I got a job in Saginaw, and for a year we did the long distance dating thing. In 2005 her department got downsized (she lost her job) and she moved in with me. It was difficult for us. I was scared to death and I said to her, "If you move in you have to be invisible," that means she couldn't answer the phone or the door and she even had to keep the curtains closed. Now that everyone knows, being a couple openly still seems strange... but we'll figure it out.

Why do sexuality and faith have to be mutually exclusive concepts?

Most faith communities are stuck with morality behavior that is more personal than corporate. We are too worried about individual behavior instead of worrying about what we are doing together in the world. They are afraid that people are not behaving the way they are supposed to behave. Why do some faith communities get freaked out about who loves whom and how

they love them? I think the big picture matters more. It is more important how we treat people, and how we treat our earth. They always bring

"I refuse to allow other people to define what Christian means to me."

– Rev. Louise R. Ott

out the Bible and their interpretation of it. But it has been debated that the Bible can be interpreted in many ways. You don't swallow your holy book whole. It's the guidebook of God and humanity seeking to be in relationship in a way that's edifying for all.

How do you view your role as an openly gay pastor?

It's always hard to be the first one of anything. I am the first openly gay pastor. My role is the same as any pastor; it is to be competent and serving the congregation and being what is required and offer God's hope, love and healing.

Why did you stay close to God and the church when much of the prejudice toward the LGBT community comes from the church itself?

I don't want religion and faith in Christ to be driving people away from God. I want it to be a way of drawing people to God. I refuse to allow other people to define what Christian means to me. Jesus does not reject people or discriminate or doesn't say that you can't get married. Are you afraid we are going to get the same tax-break you get? (Laughs)

For more of the Worship Guide, see page 40

Congregation Hava Nashira

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Please contact us at:

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MAUNDY THURSDAY – There will be a Communion service at 7:00 pm.

GOOD FRIDAY evening at 7:00 pm we'll have our own Service of Darkness.

SATURDAY at 5:00 we'll have a Rejoicing Spirits Service

celebrating the gifts of people of all abilities.

Easter Sunday is the time when we'll celebrate Jesus' resurrection at our 7:00am

Sunrise service, 8:30am Communion service and 10:00am traditional service.

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LENT is the most important Liturgical Season of the year. We observe lent with a number of activities.

PALM SUNDAY is April 17th, come join us as we celebrate the arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem, complete with palms.

SEDER DINNER is Wednesday, APRIL 20th at 6:30pm. This is a traditional dinner which is held during Passover by our Jewish friends. Rev. Mark will officiate at the dinner with parts of the service read in Hebrew by members of the congregation and friends from the community. In addition to being a religious ceremony, this is a meal. We will be collecting a donation to cover the cost of the food.

GOOD FRIDAY is April 22th, and is all about music. Brian Londrow and the choir produce the most amazing music, "The Passion Through Broadway's Eyes". This service details the experiences of Jesus on the day of the crucifixion. It is both beautiful and spiritually touching.

Easter Sunday is April 24th, Almost Sunrise Service is at 8 am at Geary Park on Pinecrest several blocks south of the church. This service is a great way to begin this special day.

9am and 11am services will be held as normal. Come and celebrate the risen Christ with us. Each service is followed by fellowship time in the social hall downstairs.



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Breaking the Silence: LGBTQ Domestic Violence



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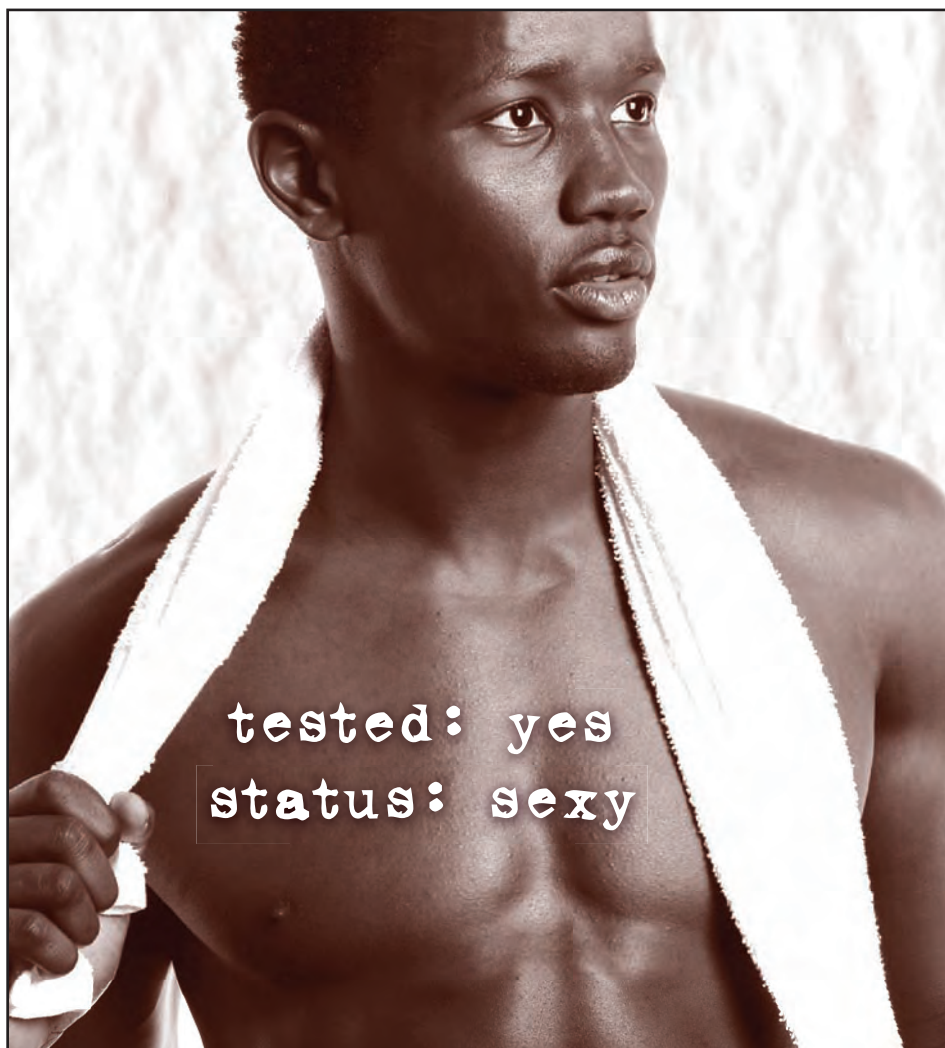
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RTM Happenings

Editor's Picks

Outings



The Gay-Straight Alliance of Southeast Michigan is inviting National Day of Silence participants to attend the "Breaking the Silence Bash." Every year thousands of students across the U.S. participate by taking a vow of silence to bring attention to LGBT harassment.

This event celebrates the success of those involved. Food, music and activities are to follow debriefing, with DJ services provided by Jacob Bolton.

"Breaking the Silence Bash" takes place from 6-9 p.m. April 15 at Affirmations in Ferndale. More information is available at gsaasem.weebly.com.

Music & More

After ratifying their new contract and returning from a 26-week strike, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra returned to work April 4. In celebration, tickets to the



upcoming spring season concerts, such as the DSO's "Disney in Concert," are selling for \$20.

Conductor Richard Kaufman and the DSO will perform classic orchestral compositions of the unforgettable tunes from films such as "The Lion King" and "Beauty and the Beast" on April 29, 30 and May 1.

Performances are at the Max M. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Tickets, which are selling quickly given the DSO's return, are available online at dso.org. Online streaming of performances are available after performances.

Theater

"Once Upon a Mattress," the Tony award-winning musical comedy that tells a familiar story and launched the career of the legendary comedienne Carol Burnett, now appears courtesy of the Spotlight Players at the state-of-the-art Village Theater in Canton through April 17.

First brought to the stage in 1959, "Mattress" turns the classic children's story "The Princess on the Pea" on its head, delightfully skewering all fairy tales in the process. Audiences will delight to the farce, the innuendo, and such notable numbers as "Shy" and "In a Little While."

Performances are at The Village Theater at Cherry Hill, 50400 Cherry Hill Road. Tickets (\$16-\$18) are available by calling 734-394-5300 or 734-394-5460.



OUTINGS

Wednesday, April 13

Discussion About Pride, 5 p.m. LGBT in the Park sponsored discussion and Q&A with Craig Covey about Ferndale Pride. LGBT in the Park, Nine Mile Road and John R Road, **Hazel Park**. 248-460-3251. jffryoliver@yahoo.com

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. kgllrc.org

LGBTIQ Support Group, 7 p.m. An inclusive environment for all gender who are healing from domestic and/or sexual assault. YWCA of KGLRC, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234.

Reteaching Gender & Sexuality, 7 p.m. A project of the Seattle-based group PUT THIS ON THE (MAP), explores the family, school, and social pressures that create educational and health disparities for queer/trans youth, and for those questioning their gender or sexual identity. Refreshments and Q&A with original team to follow. The Alliance of Queer & Ally Students, 137 Akers Hall, **East Lansing**. alliance@msu.edu

Thursday, April 14

Re-envisioning the Revolutionary Body, 1 p.m. This program is about the ways in which ableism and disability impact organizing and organizations. Explores the connections between disability, reproductive justice, race, queerness and social justice movements. Grand Valley State University LGBT Resource Center, 1 Campus Drive, **Allendale**. 616-331-2530. gvsu.edu/lgbtrc

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. kgllrc.org

Friday, April 15

Breaking the Silence Party, 5 p.m. Invitation to local high school students participating in the Day of Silence to come and share experiences, listen to music and eat. No charge, registration available online. GLSEN Southeast Michigan, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-716-0106. gsaasem.weebly.com

Womyn's Film Night, 7 p.m. Film: Mango Kiss. Performance artists Lou and Sassafra relocate to San Francisco, where Lou confesses her love for her roommate. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Saturday, April 16

DTMC Annual Pasta Fest, 5 p.m. Fundraiser for the DTMC. Pasta, salad, garlic bread, and dessert buffet. Tickets: \$15. Chorus performances at 6, 7 & 8 p.m. Detroit Together Men's Chorus, 143 Albany, **Ferndale**. dtmc.org

Detroit Derby Girls, 6:30 p.m. Tickets \$15-20 Detroit Derby Girls, One Washington Blvd., **Detroit**. 313-877-8777. olympiaentertainment.com

LGBT Discussion Group, 7 p.m. Discussion topics vary from session to session, but all revolve around some aspect of being a sexual and/or gender minority or an ally to the LGBT communities. The Ellen Bommarito LGBT Center, 303 South Saginaw St. 365 University Center, **Flint**. 810-766-6606. umflint.edu/lgbt

Metro Detroit LGBT Softball League Party, 8 p.m. MDSL's monthly party. Metro Detroit LGBT Softball League Party, 22828 Woodward Ave., **Ferndale**. 248-546-7678. mdsl.org

Sunday, April 17

PFLAG Tri-Cities Monthly Meeting, 1 p.m. Guest Speaker Rev. Edwin Padre Yates of Flints Redeemer MCC discusses Clobber Passages in the Bible regarding gays followed by Q&A. PFLAG Tri-Cities, 2525 Hemmeter, **Saginaw**. 989-941-1458. pflag-mbs.org

Tuesday, April 19

Lavender Graduation, 4 p.m. Cultural celebration that recognizes LGBT students, at Grand Valley, of all races and ethnicities and acknowledges their achievements and contributions to the university as students who survived the college experience. Grand Valley State University LGBT Resource Center, 1 Campus Dr., **Allendale**. 616-331-2530. gvsu.edu/lgbtrc

Kalamazoo PFLAG Meeting, 6 p.m. Non-profit, all-volunteer, local organization of parents, other relatives and friends of the LGBT. 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-492-2083. info@pflag.org

Friday, April 22

Womyn's Film Night, 7 p.m. Film: Kathy Griffin, She'll Cut a Bitch. Bagging an Emmy hasn't spoiled D-list doyen Kathy Griffin; it just gets her backstage. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

MUSIC & MORE

COMEDY

Caesars Windsor "Craig Ferguson" Best known as the host of CBS's The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson. Tickets: \$30+. Caesars Windsor, 377 Riverside Drive East, **Windsor**. 9 p.m. April 23. 800-991-7777. caesarswindsor.com

Royal Oak Music Theatre "Bill Burr" Tickets: \$25. Available online. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., **Royal Oak**. 8 p.m. April 23. 248-399-2980. purchase.tickets.com

CONCERTS

Cabaret Detroit "Caren Kapson and Roy Sexton" Stories told in song, featuring selections from the American songbook, musical theater and contemporary song writers. Cocktails served during the show. Dine at Bastone before or after. For dinner reservations, call 248-544-6250. Bastone, 419 S. Main St., **Royal Oak**. April 7-May 8. 248-383-5460. cabaretdetroit.com

Collingwood Arts Center "George Winston" Grammy Award winning pianist returns to Collingwood to present a solo piano concert. Collingwood Arts Center, 2413 Collingwood Blvd., Toledo. 8 p.m. April 13. 419-244-ARTS. collingwoodartscenter.org

The Detroit Symphony Orchestra "Disney in Concert" One of the DSO's first concerts since returning from strike. Features memorable tunes of Disney classics such as The Lion King, Beauty and the Beast, and the Little Mermaid. Tickets: \$20. The DSO, 3711 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. April 29-May 1. 313-576-5111. detroitssymphony.com

Kerrytown Concert House "Gavin Creel" Vocalist/pianist/songwriter combines pop and theater music. Tickets: \$10-30. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 North Fourth Ave, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. April 13. 734-769-2999. kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Kerrytown Concert House "Marcus Elliot Quarter" Saxophonist and composer performing with such greats as Marcus Belgrave and Robert Hurst in the greater Detroit jazz scene. Tickets: \$10-25. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N. Fourth Ave, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. April 23. 734-769-2999. kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Kerrytown Concert House "Tumbao Bravo" A jazz concert by the five-piece ensemble. Tickets: \$5-25. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. June 5, 8 p.m. April 22. 734-769-2999. kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Lansing Symphony Orchestra "Masterworks 6: Exploring Gershwin and Ravel" Tickets: \$15 adult, \$10 student. Wharton Center for the Performing Arts at Michigan State University, Michigan State University, East Lansing. 8 p.m. April 16. 517-353-1982 ext. 14. lansingsymphony.org

Motor City Casino "Diddy's 'Dirty Money'" Tickets: \$68-\$83. Sound Board Theater, 2901 Grand River Ave, Detroit. 8 p.m. April 15. 866-752-9622. motorcitycasino.com

Olympia Entertainment "The Pixies" On the "Doolittle" tour, the Pixies perform all of the songs from their 1989 classic, Doolittle and its related B-sides. Tickets: \$35-\$59.50 Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. 8 p.m. April 22. 313-471-6611. olympiaentertainment.com

Royal Oak Music Theatre "Iron & Wine" With special guest The Low Anthem. Tickets: \$25. Available online. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W Fourth St, **Royal Oak**. 7 p.m. April 14. 248-399-2980. purchase.tickets.com

Royalty of Hip Hop Salt N Pepa, Naughty by Nature, Whodini, MC Lyte, Doug E. Fresh and Slick Rick. Tickets: \$49-79. Available online. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. 8 p.m. April 23. 313-471-6611. ticketmaster.com

The Ark "Catie Curtis" With special guest Amy Speace. Tickets \$20 The Ark, 316 S. Main, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. April 13. 734-761-1800. theark.org/2653.html

The Listening Ear Crisis Center "Light in the Dark Words of Life, Love, & Loss" Featuring Melissa Dey Hasbrook, spoken-word artist and poet, performing from her upcoming book Circle...Home. The event benefits The Listening Ear with donations earmarked for its future Capital Area Sexual Assault Response Center. In collaboration with Take Back the Night. Mid-Michigan Family Theatre, 440 Frandor Avenue, **Lansing**. 6 p.m. April 21. 517-374-6474. deyofthephoenix.com

The Magic Bag "Question Mark & The Mysterians" Guest opener The Ruiners. Tickets: \$10. The Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Ave., **Ferndale**. 8 p.m. April 16. 248-544-3030. themagicbag.com

The Majestic "The Black Lips" Tickets: \$13 in advance, \$15 day of. Magic Stick, 4120 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. 8 p.m. March 13, 7 p.m. April 17. 313-833-9700. majesticdetroit.com

The Michigan Theater "Jackson Browne" Singer-songwriter's second leg of his 2011 Solo Acoustic Tour. Tickets: \$50-\$76. The Michigan Theater, 603 East Liberty St, Ann Arbor. 7 p.m. April 20. 800-745-3000. michtheater.org

University Music Society "Tony Allen's Afrobeat Tour" Nigerian-born drummer, composer, and songwriter who pioneered Afrobeat music: a synthesis of jazz, funk, and traditional African highlife. Tickets: \$10. Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. April 16. 734-764-2538. ums.org

Wharton Center "Celtic Woman: Songs from the Heart" Tickets: \$36-56. Cobb Great Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing. 7:30 p.m. April 14. 517-353-1982 ext. 14. whartoncenter.com

CLASSICAL

Kerrytown Concert House "Mad About Chamber Music" A free series of informal chamber music performances to benefit a designated charity. Donations accepted at the door. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. 48104. April 6-April 20. 734-769-2999. kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Michigan Opera Theater "The Magic Flute" Performing Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's final masterpiece, The Magic Flute. Tickets: \$25-78. Wharton Center for the Performing Arts at Michigan State University, Michigan State University, East Lansing. 7:30 a.m. April 21. 517-353-1982 ext. 14. whartoncenter.com/boxoffice

University Music Society "Songs and Waltzes of Love" Return to the vocal genre with the Spanische Liebeslieder song collection. Tickets: \$10+. Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. April 23. 734-764-2538. ums.org

FESTIVALS

MSU College of Music "31st Annual Jazz Spectacular" Series of performances on MSU campus celebrating the art of Jazz. Specific venues and times available online. Michigan State University, Various venues throughout campus, East Lansing. April 14-April 16. 517-353-9958. music.msu.edu/events/JazzSpec2011.php

FILM & VIDEO

Detroit Institute of Arts "Kuroneko (Black Cat)" In war-torn medieval Japan, a vicious demon haunts the Rajomon Gate, ripping out the throats of samurai in the grove beyond. Tickets: \$5-7.50. Detroit Film Theater, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. April 8-April 17. 313-833-7900. dia.org

Detroit Institute of Arts "DFT 101: Wings of Desire" Bruno Ganz as Daniel, an angel perched atop buildings high over Berlin who can hear the thoughts of all the people living below. Tickets: \$5, free for DIA members. Detroit Film Theater, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 4 p.m. April 16. 313-833-7900. dia.org

Detroit Institute of Arts "Queen to Play" Dramatic comedy of new found passions and mid-life triumphs, set on the shores of Corsica. Tickets: \$7.50. Detroit Film Theater, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. April 22-May 1. 313-833-7900. dia.org

Penn Theatre "Soylent Green" Sci-fi Month. Tickets: \$3. Penn Theatre, 760 Penniman Ave., Plymouth. 7 p.m. April 14. 734-453-0870. penntheatre.org

Penn Theatre "The Time Machine" Sci-fi Month. Tickets: \$3. Penn Theatre, 760 Penniman Ave., Plymouth. 7 p.m. April 21. 734-453-0870. penntheatre.org

OTHER

Collingwood Arts Center "Buddy Wakefield" Two-time Individual World Poetry Slam Champion bring "Gentleman Practice" tour. Collingwood Arts Center, 2413 Collingwood Blvd., Toledo. 6:30 p.m. April 23. 419-244-ARTS. cactoleado.org

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

Windover Resort "Opening Day-Clean Up" Help clean up the outdoor resort and get ready for the season. Free camping for those that help. Windover Resort, 3596 Blakely Road, Owendale, MI. 7 a.m. April 22. 989-375-2586. windoverresort.com

SHOWS

Planned Parenthood "Joan Rivers" Tickets: \$85, includes lunch. Troy Marriott, 200 W. Big Beaver Road, Troy. 11 p.m. April 26. 734-926-4813. plannedparenthoodDetroit.org

Copper Colored Mountain Arts "One Pause Poetry: National Poetry Month" Reading and Conversation with Jerome Rothenberg: "The Practice of Othering as Translation and Composition: A set of Readings and Performance with Commentaries on the Process." Reception and book signing to follow. Copper Colored Mountain Arts, 7101 W Liberty Road, Ann Arbor. 7 p.m. April 15. 734-904-7487. ccmarts.org

THEATER

BENEFITS AND FUNDRAISERS

Luncheon on the Aisle This fun-filled day includes boutique shopping, a raffle, bake sale, gourmet lunch in the theater and scenes from "SHOUT! The Mod Musical." \$27-\$30. Meadow Brook Theatre Guild at Meadow Brook Theatre, 207 Wilson Hall, Auburn Hills. 10 a.m. April 21. 248-377-3300. meadowbrooktheatreguild.com/LuncheonAisle.html

Special Skills Talent Show We've all got that section on our resumes: SPECIAL SKILLS. Impersonations, martial arts, singing, playing musical instruments, dancing, juggling, gymnastics, ventriloquism, dialects. We can do all kinds of things, but how often do we get to show them off? Well, now's your chance! By donation. Magenta Giraffe Theatre Company, 1515 Broadway, 1515 Broadway, Detroit. 7:30 p.m. April 21. magentagiraffe.org

CIVIC/COMMUNITY THEATER

Distracted \$10-\$22. Kalamazoo Civic Theatre at Parish Theatre, 426 S. Park St., Kalamazoo. April 15-May 1. 269-343-1313. kazooicivic.com

Miscast 3-The Final Episode:Center Stage Jackson at The Bon Ton Room, 3017 Wildwood Avenue, Jackson. Through April 16. centerstagejackson.org

Once Upon A Mattress \$16-\$18. Spotlight Players at The Village Theatre at Cherry Hill, 50400 Cherry Hill Road, Canton. Through April 17. 734-394-5300. spotlightplayersmi.org

Our Town \$18-\$22. Kalamazoo Civic Theatre at Civic Auditorium, 329 S. Park St., Kalamazoo. Through April 16. 269-343-1313. kazooicivic.com

Pancakes! The Musical \$10. Fancy Pants Theater at Theater 246, 246 N. Kalamazoo Mall, Kalamazoo. April 15-23.

The Comedy of Errors and Titus Andronicus \$10-\$15. Korda Artistic Productions at Kordazone Theatre, 2520 Seminole St., Windsor. Through April 16. 519-562-3394. kordazone.com

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY THEATER

Brigadoon \$10-\$24. University of Michigan Department of Musical Theatre at Power Center for the Performing Arts, 121 N. Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. April 14-17. 734-764-2538. music.umich.edu

Dramafest Free. Marygrove College, Marygrove College Theatre, 8425 W. McNichols Road, Detroit. 7:30 p.m. April 21. 313-927-1522. marygrove.edu

Pageant Play General admission tickets for the Saturday full-cycle performances and a medieval buffet are \$32 adults; for the weekday evening excerpt productions are \$13. Music, Theatre and Dance Department of Oakland University at Varner Hall, 2200 N. Squirrel Road, Rochester. Through April 16. 248-370-3013. starticketsplus.com

The Real Inspector Hound and Black Comedy \$5-\$20. Western Michigan University Department of Theatre at Williams Theatre, 1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo. April 14-23. 269-387-6222. wmuthatre.com

PROFESSIONAL

A Catered Affair \$29-\$33. Farmers Alley Theatre, 221 Farmers Alley, Kalamazoo. Through April 17. 269-343-2727. farmersalleytheatre.com

A Musical Salute to Vaudeville and Burlesque \$14 opening night; \$16 all other performances. Broadway Onstage Live Theatre, 21517 Kelly Road, Eastpointe. April 15-May 14. 586-771-6333. broadwayonstage.com

April Foolery \$10-\$15. Matrix Theatre Company, 2730 Bagley St., Detroit. Through May 1. 313-967-0599. matrixtheatre.org

Cabaret Detroit \$15. Cabaret Detroit at Bastone, 419 S. Main Street, Royal Oak. Through May 8. cabaretdetroit.com

Circle Mirror Transformation Previews April 21-24 & 28 (\$10-\$32). \$22-\$41. Performance Network Theatre, 120 E. Huron St., Ann Arbor. April 22-May 22. 734-663-0681. performancenetwork.org

Edges \$10. The AKT Theatre Project at The Wyandotte Arts Center, 81 Chestnut St., Wyandotte. Through April 16. 734-258-8370. akttheatre.com

Fish Dinner \$10. Planet Ant Theatre, 2357 Caniff Ave., Hamtramck. Through April 16. 313-365-4948. planetant.com

Forever Plaid Previews April 21. \$25-\$28. Encore Musical Theater Company, 3126 Broad St., Dexter. April 21-May 15. 734-268-6200. theencoretheatre.org

Forgiving John Lennon \$17 in advance; \$20 at the door. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. Through May 22. 313-868-1347. detroitreptheatre.com

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

Godspell \$20. What's That Smell? Productions at The Box Theatre, 51 N. Walnut, Mount Clemens. Through April 23. 586-954-2311.

Irena's Vow \$5. Flint Youth Theatre, 1220 E. Kearsley St., Flint. 6 p.m. April 17. 810-237-1530. flintyouththeatre.org

Love and Cheap Wine Includes a dinner performance April 23 (\$36, which includes buffet beginning at 6:30 p.m.). \$17. Reservations required. Van Buren Street Theatre, 701 N. Van Buren St., Bay City. Through April 23. 989-893-9399. vanburenstreettheatre.com

Mamma Mia! \$29-\$85. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. April 13-17. 1-800-982-2787. broadwayindetroit.com

Mercury Fur \$10-\$20. Who Wants Cake? at The Ringwald, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Through April 25. 248-545-5545. whowantscaketheatre.com

'night, Mother \$20. Breathe Art Theatre Project at The Furniture Factory, 4126 3rd St., Detroit. April 15-May 1. 248-982-4121. breathearttheatre.com

Salvage Previews April 21. \$20. Planet Ant Theatre, 2357 Caniff, Hamtramck. April 21-May 14. 313-365-4948. planetant.com

Sister's Easter Catechism: Will My Bunny Go To Heaven? \$19.50-\$34.50. The Gem Theatre, 333 Madison St., Detroit. Through April 17. 313-963-9800. gemtheatre.com

Some Couples May... \$25-\$40. The Purple Rose Theatre Company, 137 Park St., Chelsea. Through May 28. 734-433-7673. purplerosetheatre.org

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

The Cider House Rules, Part I: Here in St. Cloud's \$25-\$30. Hilberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. Through May 12. 313-577-2972. hilberry.com

The Cider House Rules, Part II: In Other Parts of the World \$25-\$30. Hilberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. Through May 14. 313-577-2972. hilberry.com

The Cocktail Hour \$26-\$30. Tipping Point Theatre, 361 E. Cady St., Northville. Through April 30. 248-347-0003. tippingpointtheatre.com

The Full Monty \$15-20. Bonstelle Theatre, 3434 Woodward Ave., Detroit. April 15-23. 313-577-2960. bonstelle.com

The Living Stations of the Cross \$15. Living Faith-Fine Arts Apostolate at Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament, 9844 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Through April 17. livingstations.org

The Magic Flute \$29-\$121. Michigan Opera Theatre at Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway, Detroit. April 9-17. 313-237-7464. michiganopera.org

The Magic Flute \$15-\$78. Presented by the Michigan Opera Theatre at Wharton Center's Cobb Great Hall, Bogue St. & Wilson, East Lansing. 7:30 p.m. April 21. 517-432-2000. whartoncenter.com

The Male Intellect: An Oxymoron? \$30-\$35; Dinner and Show Packages \$79.95-\$89.95 per couple. Andiamo Novi Theatre, 42705 Grand River Avenue, Novi. April 13-24. 248-348-4448. andiamonovitheatre.com

The Merchant of Venice \$12. Pigeon Creek Shakespeare Company at Dog Story Theater, 7 Jefferson SE, Grand Rapids. April 14-24. pcshakespeare.com

The TeaseTown Correctional Facility for Women Telethon \$15. The TeaseTown Correctional Facility for Women at Park Bar, 2040 Park Ave., Detroit. April 22-23.

Thomas & Friends Live! On Stage in "Thomas Saves the Day." \$34.50 Superfan, \$24.50 reserved and \$15 general admission. The Palace of Auburn Hills, 6 Championship Drive, Auburn Hills. April 15-16. 1-800-745-3000. thomasandfriends.com

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

To Kill a Mockingbird \$16-\$18 adult, \$14-\$16 teen and senior; \$12-\$14 children. Flint Youth Theatre, 1220 E. Kearsley St., Flint. April 8-April 23. 810-237-1530. flintyouththeatre.org

Waiting for Godot Admission by donation. The Abreact Performance Space, 1301 W. Lafayette Ave. #113, Detroit. April 15-May 7. 313-485-0217. theabreact.com

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

While We Were Bowling \$18-\$24. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam St., Williamston. Through April 17. 517-655-7469. williamstontheatre.org

THEATER FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

Dora the Explorer Live! Dora's Pirate Adventure \$6-\$12. The Crowell, 129 E. Maumee St., Adrian. April 8-April 17. 517-264-7469. crowell.org/

Michael Lee and Opus Mime \$10 adult, \$7 ages 15 and under. Children's Theatre Network at Performance Network Theatre, 120 E. Huron St., Ann Arbor. 1 p.m. April 23. 734-663-0681. performancenetwork.com

The Crane Maiden \$10 adult, \$5 children. PuppetART, 25 E. Grand River, Detroit. Saturdays through April 30. 313-961-7777. puppetart.org

ART 'N' AROUND

Cass Cafe "5w-30" Three-artist exhibit within the Cass Cafe thought of as a synonym for a sort of psychological endurance typified by living in Detroit and Michigan. Cass Cafe, 4620 Cass Ave., Detroit. April 16-June 11. 313-831-1400. casscafe.com

College for Creative Studies "Eight Continents in Collaboration" A workspace for dialogue and interaction. Using material from the first eight weeks of the 2011 Economist magazines, collaborators Mira Burack and Narine Kchikian engage the community in conversation about contemporary global/political issues, gestures and iconography. Center Galleries, Alumni & Faculty Hall, 301 Frederick Douglass St., Detroit. April 1-April 30. 313-664-7800. theeconomistseries.com

Costick Center "Art After Dark" Wine tasting, live Jazz and art. Tickets: \$20 advance, \$25 at door. Available online. Costick Center, 28600 11 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. 7 p.m. April 15. 248-473-1848. recreg.fhgov.com

Downriver Council for the Arts "Cheryl Phillips and Betty Prudden" Exhibitions are free and open to the public. Downriver Council for the Arts, 81 Chestnut, Wyandotte. April 15-May 27. 734-720-0671. downriverarts.org

Flint Institute of Arts "The Life & Art of Mary Cassatt" Bray Lecture with Guest Lecturer Michael Farrell. Free admission. FIA Theater, 1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint. 6 p.m. April 15. 810-237-7314. flintarts.org

Flint Institute of Arts "Promises of Freedom" A comprehensive collection of African American art featuring more than 60 works by artists including Charles White, Jacob Lawrence, and Romare Bearden. Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint. Feb. 25-April 17. 810-234-1695. flintarts.org

Gallery Project "Unhooked From Time" Multimedia exhibit in which 28 local, regional and national artists examine how society has lost its sense of the cycles of nature, and how it has artificially hooked ourselves to linear digital time. Gallery Project, 215 S. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. April 3-May 5. 734-997-7012. thegalleryproject.com

Kalamazoo Institute of Arts "Ukiyo-e Redux: Contemporary Japanese Prints" Inspired by the strong tradition of Ukiyo-e prints of the 18th and 19th centuries, but infused with a modern sensibility, contemporary Japanese prints have flourished as a vibrant art form throughout the 20th century. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, 314 S. Park St., Kalamazoo. March 1-April 23. 269-349-7775. kiarts.org

Kerrytown Concert House "Denise Rohde Exhibit" Uses traditional training in photographic processes, while embracing digital editing to create unique style. By deconstructing and reconstructing familiar subjects, Rohde's photographs have a dream-like quality that can appeal to a broad range of viewers. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. April 5-May 1. 734-769-2999. kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Kresge Art Museum "American Roads" Assembled as a group in 1981, explores American's mythological love affair with "the road." Twenty photographs featuring images of American highways, streets and roadside attractions continuing a tradition pioneered by Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange of documenting the American landscape and countryside with empathy and insight. Kresge Art Center, Corner of Auditorium & Physics Roads, Michigan State University, East Lansing. March 1-April 17. 517-353-9834. artmuseum.msu.edu

Lawrence Street Gallery "Exposures: Photography 2011" Fifteenth annual photography exhibit, a juried show expected to draw submissions from

approximately 100 area photographers. Dunes Resort, 22620 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. April 1-April 29. 248-544-0394. lawrencestreetgallery.com

Mardigan Library at UM-Dearborn "Toledo Studio Art Glass: New Generations" Participating in the 2011 Michigan Glass Month with an exhibition celebrating new generations of contemporary studio glass artists from Toledo. Alfred Berkowitz Gallery, 4901 Evergreen Road, Dearborn. April 1-May 12. 313-593-3592. umd.umich.edu

River's Edge Gallery "From Paris to Detroit" Etienne Yver captures mundane moments in the visual language of his art. River's Edge Gallery, 3024 Biddle Ave., Wyandotte. April 15-May 20. 734-246-9880. artattheedge.com

Riverside Arts Center Gallery "Docent Exhibition" Featuring the work of local artists, including drawings, woodwork, prints, glass work and more. Artist reception will be held 5-7 p.m. April 2. Riverside Arts Center Gallery, 76 N. Huron, Ypsilanti. March 1-April 30. riversideartscenter.org

Scarab Club Gallery "Working Class Heroes" An all-media juried exhibition honoring the working class, inspired by ML Liebler's book Working Words: Punching the Timeclock and Kicking Out the Jams, a compilation of writing from local, national and international poets and writers. Scarab Club Gallery, 217 Farnsworth St., Detroit. April 1-May 15. 313-831-1250. scarabclub.org

Scarab Club Lounge "Scarab Club Studio Collective" The Scarab Club houses six artist studios on its third floor. Running concurrently with the Working Class Heroes exhibition, the SC will host an exhibition of its studio artists. Scarab Club Lounge, 217 Farnsworth St., Detroit. April 1-May 15. 313-831-1250. scarabclub.org

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Life in Ceramics: Five Contemporary Korean Artists" This exhibition focuses on five artists with well established reputations in Korea, whose visually stunning ceramic objects acknowledge and engage with Korean clay traditions yet embody innovative, unexpected art making and conceptual approaches. University of Michigan Museum of Art, 525 S. State St, Ann Arbor. April 1-June 26. 734-647-0524. umma.umich.edu

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Photoformance: An Empathic Environment" This new multimedia installation brings together the work of Ernestine Ruben, experimental photographer of the human form; Monica Ponce de Leon, architect of highly sensual, muscular, and poetic structures; and Peter Sparling, choreographer/video artist of new movement forms; with music by Erik Santos, composer of scores for a wide range of musical ensembles and Butoh performances. University of Michigan Museum of Art, 525 S. State St, Ann Arbor. March 1-May 15. 734-647-0524. umma.umich.edu

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BTL Dear Jody

BY JODY VALLEY

Web addiction ruining relationship

Q. My partner "George" and I have been together for 25 years. I love him dearly and want you to know right off that leaving him is not an option that I'm willing to consider.

George and I used to be very active in life. We were involved in many outdoor activities in both winter and summer. Just to give you some idea of how active we were: In the summer, we used to belong to a biking club, a canoeing group, went hiking and camping, had people over for barbecues. In wintertime, we went snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, to movies and parties, and took mini vacations to warm places.

We have many friends and have the ability of being as social as we could ever want to be; and in the past, we have been very social.

In the last three years, we have, little by little, eliminated one thing after another, until now we pretty much sit on our deck – sometimes eating dinner and/or having cocktails out there – in the summer. (This is considered by George as an activity.) Needless to say, we've both gained weight.

I decided that I wanted to reverse what was happening in our lives, at least go back to some of our old activities. (It's not like we are over-the-hill; we're in our mid-50s.) The problem is, George isn't that interested in going back with me. I didn't ask him to go back to doing everything, just try to return to a few things this summer – his choice. He just groaned, and went back to what he was doing.

What he was doing was surfing the web. Or specifically, going to his Facebook and Twitter pages, and numerous other sites he visits, or should I say, lives at when he's not working. (I don't know how much he surfs at work; he sure has the opportunity to.) Beside his social networks, he reads his newspaper online (over breakfast), does his banking, shopping and Googles just about everything he's curious about. He also plays all kinds of games, and even has this thing where he "farms" on the computer, collecting animals or something. Very weird. (I don't get it, but if he brought home some

real veggies, it wouldn't be so bad.) He also gambles on the Internet; I don't think he's in any trouble with his gambling, but I couldn't really say. I think that if he could, he'd go to the doctor online – not that he doesn't visit medical websites when he or I have a pain or a stomach ache. For all I know, he's having sex online as well. He sure is not having it with me.

As I said, I love George and I want him back from his life in cyberspace. Do you have any ideas as to how to retrieve him?

Cyberspace Widower

A. From your description, it sounds like pretty addictive behavior – or, at least, avoidant behavior. I assume that George does have a physician here on earth; if so, I think he needs a visit to check

out any physical problems that may be keeping him from feeling like moving out from under his computer. You didn't mention if you thought that he was depressed. Have you asked him about that? Have

you asked him why he's not willing to engage in life outside of his computer? In other words, what does he think about it?

You need to also look at how you have played into this three-year decline. What's been going on in your life and relationship with George? What precipitated – three years ago – the letting go of your active lifestyle?

These are some of the places to start looking. If you don't get clues or come to some answers and changes in your lives, it's time to look into couples counseling for help. Good luck.

Are you, or someone you love, addicted to the Internet? To learn more about Internet addiction, go to Dear Jody Valley on Facebook.

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. Reach Jody at DearJodyValley@hotmail.com. The "Dear Jody" column appears weekly.

BTL

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Between THE Lines

BTL Horoscopes

Think of yourself, Pisces!

BY JACK FERTIG

The Sun is aligning with Eris stoking competition and identity issues. Venus in Pisces is in semi-sextile with both helping to show keys to cooperation and conciliation. Consider how your own achievements can raise not just your stature, but others' also.

ARIES (March 20 – April 19): Take care of No. 1 first, but part of that is so you can be in service to those around you who need help. When you're clear on who you are, you can be the most generous star in the sky.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20): Think about your last will and testament, just as an exercise in considering who and what is important in your life. When you're gone, what will be left for whom? The real question: What do you want to achieve before then?

GEMINI (May 21- June 20): Your social goals are now clearer than your personal ambitions. Feeling vague about your career may just signal a transition that can lead to greater clarity. Talking about it with your friends can prove very helpful.

CANCER (June 21- July 22): Work and accomplishment are keys to fulfillment. Striving for a personal best is more meaningful than competing against others. Share work and credit to get more accomplished and to learn from others how to do a better job.

LEO (July 23 – August 22): Be as loud and outspoken as you like. If that gets you into arguments treat them as a game. If you don't enjoy arguing, why bother? Playfulness is sexier than conquest, although you don't need help in that department either!

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22): An erotic competition with your lover can help you to come together in more ways than one. Get creative! Sharing ideas, even if you don't act on them, can build intimacy, laying the foundation of a happy home.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22): Be very clear about whom you're competing with and whom you're competing against. Empathizing with colleagues helps, but clear verbal communication is more reliable than warm, fuzzy feelings.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21): Take appropriate responsibility for boosting morale at work. Small competitive games can help bring people together. Reevaluate your health and fitness regimen. Remember, you're out for a personal best, not to outdo others.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 20): Even in a contest pushing for your own best performance is always the most important part. Trying to best others is secondary, and if that becomes your goal you can cause rancor among people in your family or community.

CAPRICORN (December 21 – January 19): Whether you're defending your family from others or yourself from your family, empathetic communication will diffuse a lot of the trouble. Practical techniques, sensible logic and the "tried and true" aren't really helping. Trust more in your intuition.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18): Open your heart before opening your mouth. If being cleverer than your friends is easy or important, you need new friends – or maybe they do. Who really does count in your life and why? Tell them – not for their sake, but for your own.

PISCES (February 19 – March 19): Sweetness and empathy can be your best traits when they're not a cover for codependency. Be a bit ruthless and think of yourself now. Cultivate the traits that will drive you to success. If you want to help others you'll do it better from a position of strength.

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 46

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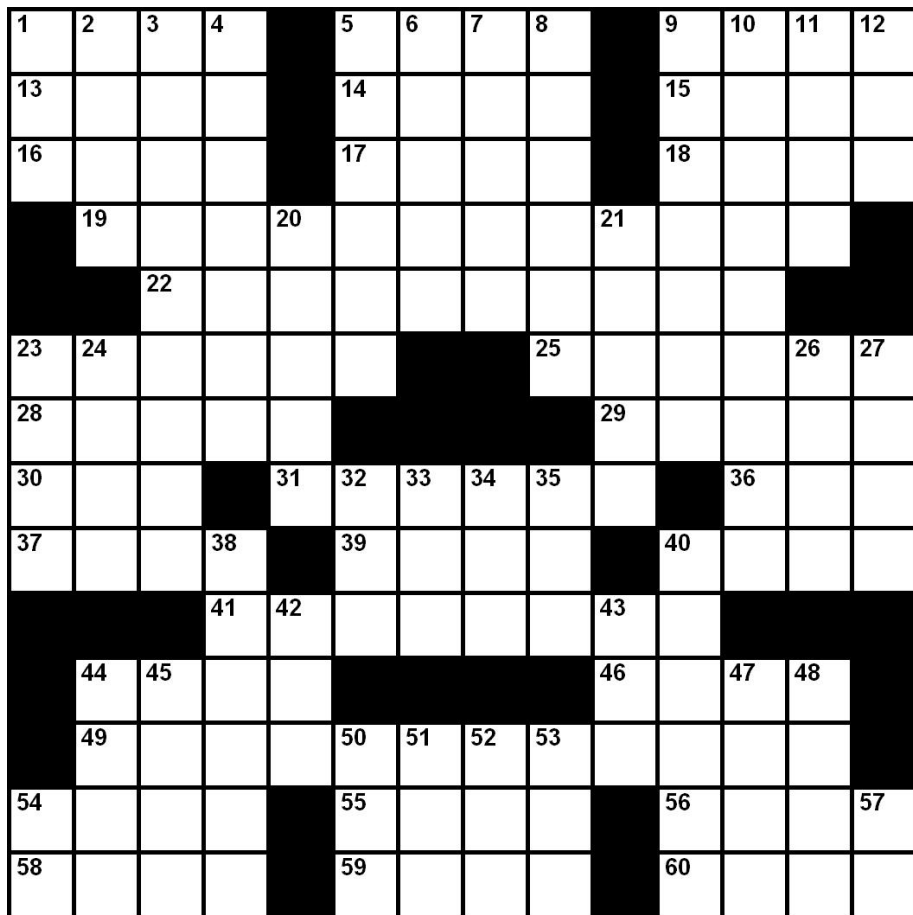
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Taxing Problems

Across

- 1 Rainbow, to some
- 5 Oats for a stallion, e.g.
- 9 Sculptor Stebbins
- 13 City near Tahoe
- 14 Composer Edouard
- 15 Songwriter Holly
- 16 Chip off the old flock?
- 17 Ice house (var.)
- 18 Pastry with fruit, perhaps
- 19 With 22-Across, TV show with 49-Across
- 22 See 19-Across
- 23 Where suits are pressed
- 25 Gets to second base, perhaps
- 28 Bombay believer
- 29 Cosmetics name
- 30 Shoshonean tongue
- 31 Puts a head on cappuccino
- 36 Old Spanish queen
- 37 Marcel Duchamp's

style

- 39 Poet Seward
- 40 Historic spans
- 41 TV show with 49-Across
- 44 Hype incessantly
- 46 Bad bottom-line news
- 49 Guy in the news with taxing problems
- 54 Skimpy skirt
- 55 Steady guy
- 56 Some savings
- 58 It comes out of your head
- 59 Undoing
- 60 Kind of package
- 61 Bear hunter Boone, briefly
- 62 "Uh-oh!" to Shelley
- 63 Financial page heading

perhaps

- 4 Place for a shorthand job
- 5 Amelia Earhart, and others
- 6 Two under for Sheehan
- 7 First name in talk
- 8 Watches Philip Seymour Hoffman play a priest?
- 9 Holds out a carrot to
- 10 Lion, tiger, or bear
- 11 Nickname for a gay man
- 12 Gallery objects
- 20 So-so grade
- 21 Circumcision and more
- 23 Sound of getting banged?
- 24 Musical meter maid
- 26 Musical Horne
- 27 Sailors cruise on them
- 32 Billy Budd, for one
- 33 It may get licked (abbr.)
- 34 First name among bi

singers

- 35 Dallas cager, for short
- 38 Withdrawn
- 40 Hot stuff
- 42 "I'm not eating that!"
- 43 Plug attachment
- 44 2002 Salma Hayek film
- 45 Stuff in a closet
- 47 Haul ass
- 48 Homonym for Chaz's mom
- 50 "Mamma Mia!" band
- 51 Honest-to-goodness
- 52 Comical Carvey
- 53 Pink and more
- 54 Start of a life crisis?
- 57 Sarah Jessica Parker's "city" activity

Down

- 1 Places for MDs
- 2 Event for George Frenn
- 3 Passive in S&M,

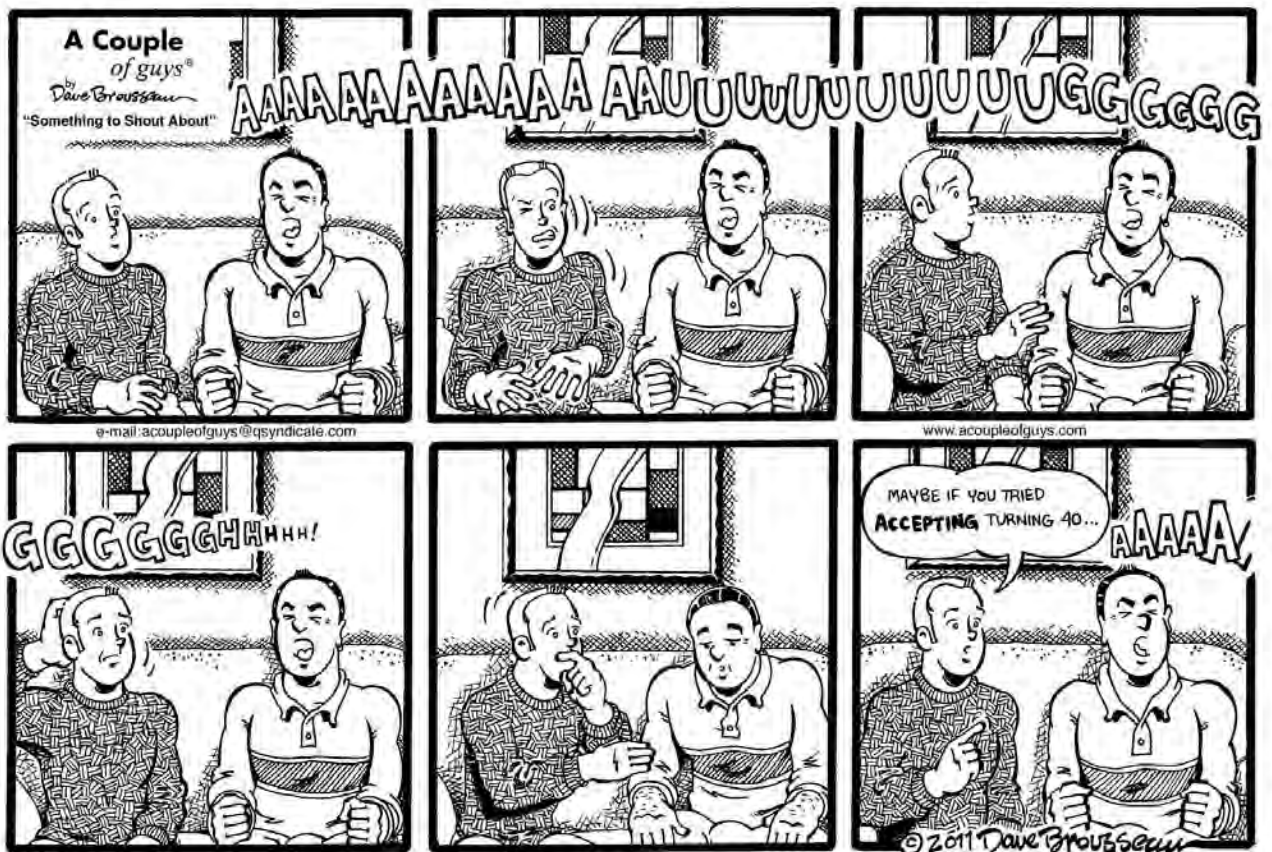
Solution on 45

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BTL Deep Inside Hollywood



Charlize Theron. Photo: Magnolia Pictures

Ellen is going to 'Sing You Home'

Jodi Picoult's new novel, "Sing You Home," has a new (future) home: multiplexes. That's because Ellen DeGeneres has obtained the rights to make it into a movie, which she'll do as producer alongside gay Hollywood power players Craig Zadan and Neil Meron. The book, which debuted earlier this month in the No. 1 slot on the "New York Times" Bestseller List, is about a lesbian couple struggling to have a baby. It's all still in the getting-to-know-you phase, so there's no cast and no director and no script. But this isn't Picoult's first time having her work adapted for the screen. "My Sister's Keeper," starring Cameron Diaz and Abigail Breslin, also began life as a novel by Picoult. One sticking point that Ellen might keep in mind: she's still complaining about how that one turned out, accusing director Nick Cassavetes of, in her words, "lying to my face." So tread lightly on that original material, Ms. DeG.

When Evil Queens collide

No, the story of Snow White isn't specifically gay. But it does prominently feature an Evil Queen, which – as any gay man will tell you – are plentiful in the queer forest. So what's better than one Evil Queen? How about two, clawing each other's eyes out for box-office take? How about three? That's what's going to happen when dueling live-action adaptations hit the big screen starting in 2012. There's "Snow White" from director Tarsem Singh, which features Julia Roberts as the Evil Queen, "The Social Network" s Arnie Hammer as the Prince, and possibly Saoirse Ronan in the title role; and then there's Universal's "Snow White and The Huntsman," set to star Kristen Stewart as Snow and Charlize Theron as the apple-bearing-witch/queen. Meanwhile, Disney has already been planning a live-action reboot of its classic titled "The Seven," to be set in 19th century China and its dwarves reconceived as martial arts warriors/protectors of the cursed princess. One question: Who says creativity is dead in Hollywood? One more question: Is anyone in charge learning lessons from the failure of "Red Riding Hood"? Hope so.

'Angels Crest' turns Kate Walsh lesbian. Again.

"Grey's Anatomy"/"Private Practice" star Kate Walsh has already portrayed lesbian characters in "Under the Tuscan Sun" and as a guest star on shows like the short-lived "Karen Sisco." So she knows that, while plaid flannel isn't as commonplace as the old-fashioned stereotypes would suggest, sometimes it has its place. And that place is "Angels Crest," an indie drama about a small, working-class town whose residents are struggling to cope with the death of a 3-year-old child. (Think "Rabbit Hole" and "Mystic River.") In the film Walsh plays an artist who, in the actors words, is "kind of gruff and no-nonsense." (Hence, that plaid flannel shirt she's wearing in a publicity still for the movie.) The film premieres at New York's Tribeca Film Festival in late April with an arthouse release slated for later. It also stars Thomas Dekker, Mira Sorvino, Elizabeth McGovern and Jeremy Piven, who knows his way around working with lesbians from his days on "Ellen."

Carey Mulligan and Michael Fassbender feel 'Shame'

If "Inception" co-star Tom Hardy has any competition in the Hot Brit Gay Crush Olympics right now, it's Michael Fassbender ("Jane Eyre," "Inglourious Basterds"). And Fassbender, along with "An Education" Oscar nominee Carey Mulligan, is about to appear in the next film from up-and-coming director Steve McQueen (note to readers: that would be the U.K. art star, not the late American action film star – same name, different guys). Titled "Shame," it's about a man facing his own sex addiction – details on the gender object(s) of his habit are currently unavailable – and how his sister reacts to that struggle. The film follows McQueen's acclaimed feature debut, "Hunger," and a decidedly gay-ish short called "Bear" that consisted of two men wrestling. And no, in spite of that subject matter, McQueen himself isn't gay. Confused yet? Maybe its 2012 release will clear things up.

Romeo San Vicente is all for watching bears wrestle. He can be reached care of this publication or at DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.



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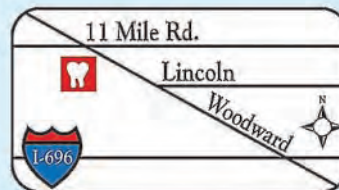
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