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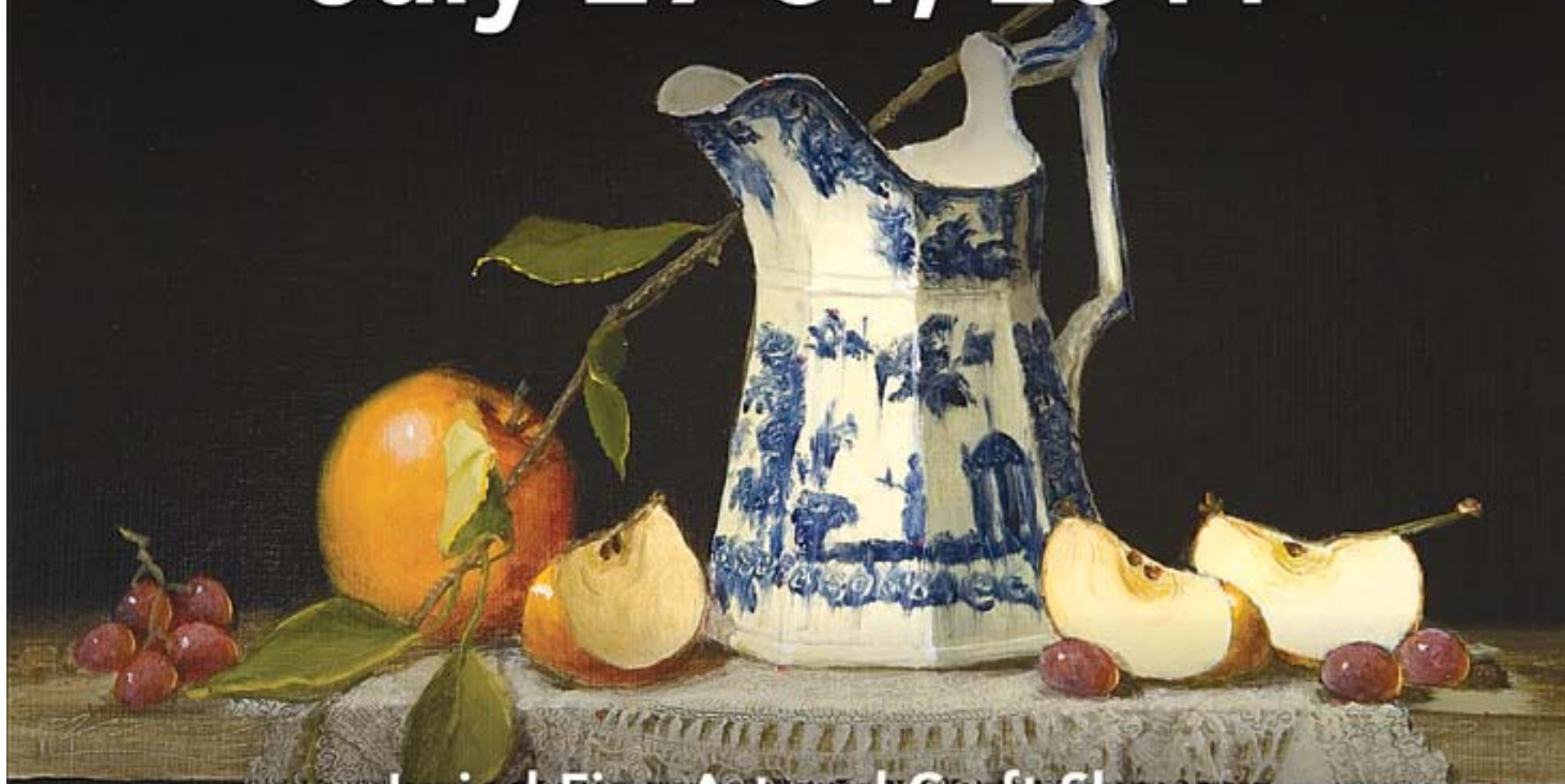
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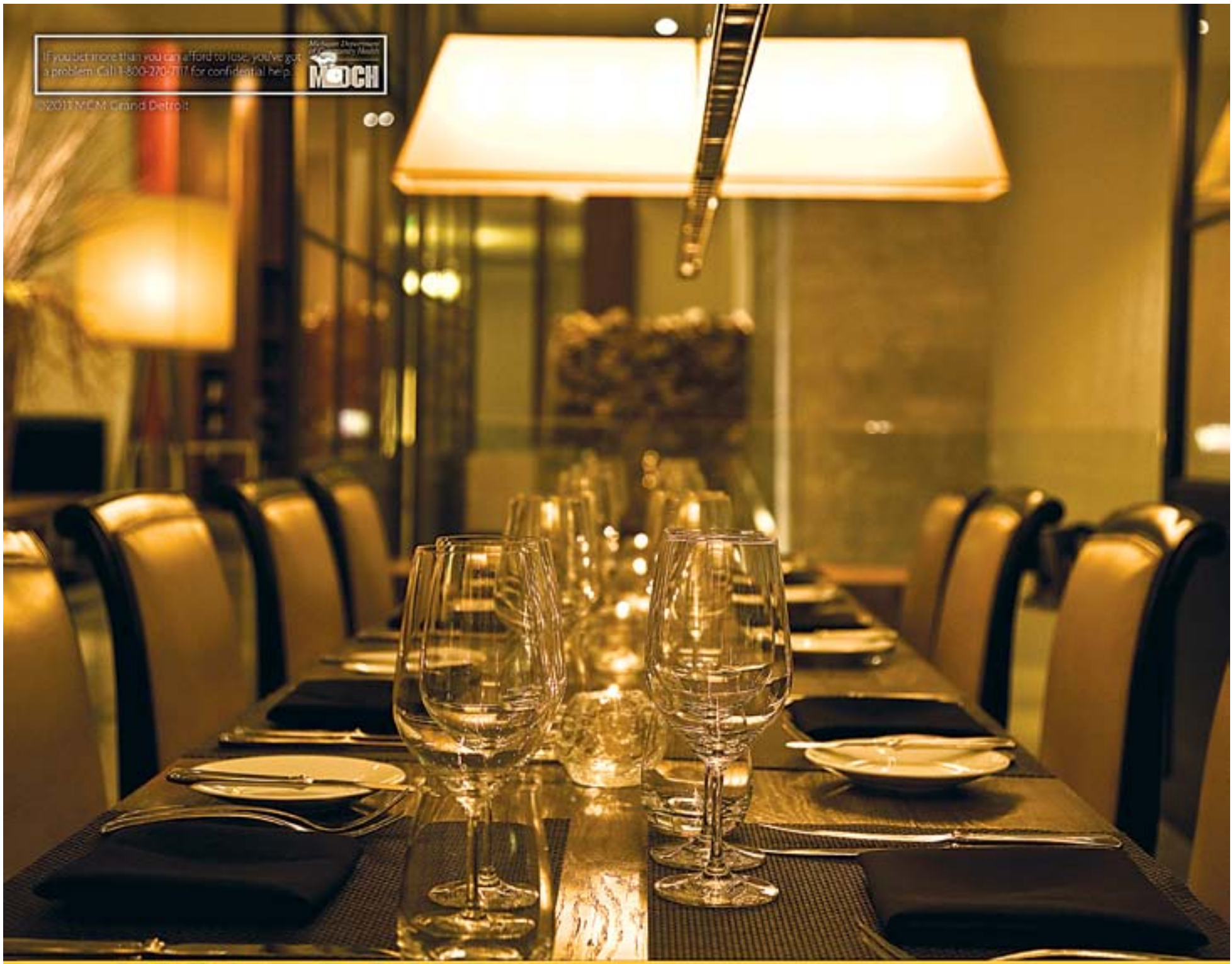
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From Stork to Finish

BTL ^{THE} Lines™ 7.21.2011



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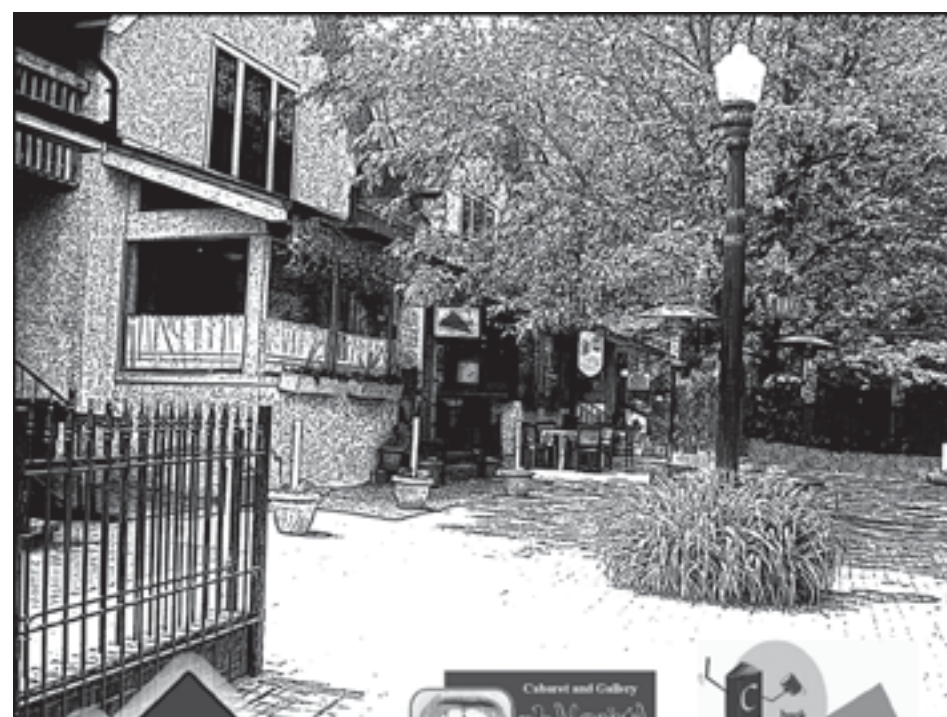
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The OutField: Gay softball: It's not just for gays anymore

National and International news

WEB WINS

"Friends with Benefits" prize packs – mini-poster, silicone bracelet and soundtrack – on Facebook

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plus DAILY BREAKING NEWS

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BTL Speak Out

BY ERIC RADER

Why Republican redistricting means trouble for us

Across the country this year, state legislatures are engaged in the process of congressional redistricting. Every ten years, following the constitution-mandated federal census, most states have to create new district boundaries for U.S. House members to account for the population changes that occurred during the previous decade. The Constitution established the House of Representatives as the institution of government closest to the people, with representation in the chamber based on the population of the state. At one time, many southern states used the redistricting process as a way to disenfranchise African-American voters. In the early 1960s, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that malapportionment was unconstitutional, and established the principle that one person should equal one vote.

While voting equality is supposed to guide states as they create new districts, the reality is that the redistricting process is often very politically biased. Though some states have created nonpartisan commissions to redraw their boundaries, most states, including Michigan, assign this task to committees in the state legislature. After the plan is approved the legislature, the governor decides whether to approve or reject the redistricting plan for the state. Thus, whichever political party controls the levers of power in a state also has a big say in what the partisan makeup of the districts will be for the next ten years. In Michigan, this means that the Republican Party, which controls both houses of the legislature and the governor's office, has free rein to decide what our districts will look like through 2022. Michigan's overall population declined from 2000-2010, meaning that we are losing one of our 15 districts. This means that at least one of Michigan's current U.S. representatives will lose his or her seat in Congress next year.

Unfortunately, the Republican majorities in the Michigan Legislature have approved a redistricting plan that divides Democrats in the metro Detroit region, and

In Michigan, the Republican Party has free rein to decide what our districts will look like through 2022.

strengthens Republicans around the state. Because districts must be contiguous, the GOP majority had to find creative ways to reduce the political power of Democrats in various places. Perhaps the most egregious example of political gerrymandering in the plan approved by the legislature is Michigan District 14, currently represented by veteran legislator John Conyers, D-Detroit, where the new lines snake their way from Detroit over to Farmington, then up to Pontiac. This district makes no geographic sense, and completely violates the principle that a member of Congress should be as close as possible to the people he or she represents. Elsewhere in our region, the GOP plan puts LGBT-equality representatives Sander Levin, D-Royal Oak, and Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Hills, in the same district, effectively ending the congressional career of one of these dedicated public servants.

In recent years, the U.S. House has seen a lot of legislative activity around LGBT issues. When the Democrats held the majority in the House from 2007-2011, they passed hate crimes legislation and repealed the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Democrats in the House also attempted to pass the Employment Nondiscrimination Act and repeal the "Defense of Marriage Act," though GOP obstructionism prevented further action on these bills. Once the Republicans gained control of the House in 2011, they committed themselves to legally defending DOMA, after the Obama administration

declared that it would no longer defend discrimination in court. Republicans have no desire to pass any legislation that would extend equal rights to the LGBT community.

There may not be much that can be done to prevent the Republican redistricting plan in Michigan from becoming law, because Gov. Snyder supports the legislature's decision. Assuming the plan is approved, some groups may go to court to ask the judiciary to overturn these unfair and unrepresentative districts. It appears likely, however, that Michigan's Republican-dominated Supreme Court would sustain these districts. Therefore, LGBT political participation in next year's elections for Congress is critical. While right-wing interests may win the redistricting battle, the ultimate deciders of actual elections are the voters.

No matter what the districts look like next year, we all have an interest in supporting people who will advance equal rights in the years ahead. Though Republicans controlled the last redistricting process in Michigan in 2001, Democrats were still able to make substantial gains in the 2006 elections, with much of their support coming from the LGBT community. Progressives can win in gerrymandered districts, but only if our community stays active in the upcoming campaign. We need to remind people how radical the Republican leadership of the U.S. House is today, and how important it is to vote. When we stay home, we lose, and there's simply too much at stake in the 2012 elections to let that happen.

Contact Gov. Snyder — ask him to re-consider his support for the Republican redistricting plan:

rick.snyder@michigan.gov
517-373-3400

Proposed Michigan legislative districts (U.S. House and Michigan House and Senate):

<http://download.gannett.edgesuite.net/detnews/2011/pdf/redistrictmap.pdf>

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Youth protest homelessness

Thousands in Detroit homeless due to sexuality, HIV/AIDS

BY ZACH CHILDREE

DETROIT— Last Friday, members of the Campaign to End AIDS gathered outside Detroit City Hall to draw attention to the plight of homeless youth.

Alfredo Smith, a spokesman for the group, said dealing with homelessness among LGBT youth plays a big role in HIV prevention. “Youth are the future of the city,” he said. “Without housing, youth are more likely to drop out of school and more likely to be involved in risky behavior that can lead to new HIV infections.”

Smith said too often, young people are kicked out of home after they come out. “A lot of homeless youth go into prostitution and drug trafficking,” Smith said. “And if they need some place to live, they aren’t going to care if their ‘john’ tells them they don’t have to wear a condom.”

In Detroit, Smith said, there are more than 18,000 homeless people. More than half of the youth who are homeless are also LGBT.

One of the demonstrators, Autumn Mays, is familiar with the struggles LGBT youth face. Mays is a transgender woman and she’s facing eviction. She worried that she may end up back at a homeless shelter soon. She held up a sign Friday and chanted “No Housing? No Future!”

Mays said she hoped the community would come together to fight for more shelters for homeless youth. “I would like increased funding and more stability in how it’s spent,” Mays said. “We also would like to see rehabilitation of city buildings for homeless shelters.”

As the demonstrators chanted and passed out flyers and t-shirts, people hurried past on their way to and from work. Some drivers honked their horns as a show of support.

George Montgomery, the chairperson for the Campaign to End AIDS LGBTQQI Youth Group, said not all of the responses were supportive.

“One lady told me that homeless youth are the scum of the earth and deserve to die,” Montgomery said. “She said because they aren’t



Youth from the Campaign to End AIDS protest in front of the Spirit of Detroit to bring attention to homelessness in the city and to encourage HIV prevention and housing programs. BTL, photo: Zach Childree.

working to get where she was.”

Montgomery said these kinds of attitudes are reflective of the policies surrounding funding for homeless programs.

Smith said these kinds of attitudes come from ignorance, but the demonstration could help educate people about the plight of homeless youth in the city.

“What I’m hoping is that the people that walk by actually become part of the movement,” Smith said. “We need more people to realize that these homeless youth are part of the future of our city.”

“We need more people to realize that these homeless youth are part of the future of our city.”

—Alfredo Smith, spokesman for Campaign to End AIDS

Multicultural Advisory report results coming later this year

FERNDALE— In its final year of work, Affirmations’ Multicultural Advisory Committee announced it expects to release a full report by the end of 2011. Throughout June and July, three teams are meeting independently to create a set of best practices for racial diversity and inclusion related to board, personnel and programs at the Ferndale nonprofit organization. Their work is based on data collected throughout 2010 that included a series of surveys targeting staff, board, volunteers and community members and was supplemented by focus groups

targeting key LGBT audiences, including youth, African Americans, the Latino/a community, middle eastern Americans and the transgender community. All in all, 462 people participated in surveys and 60 participated in the focus groups.

“We couldn’t do our job without the incredible community participation on this project,” said Michelle Walters, longtime LGBT community activist and founding member of the MAC. “We expect the results of our work to not only benefit Affirmations and Metro Detroit’s LGBT community, but also LGBT community

centers across the country.”

The Multicultural Advisory Committee is funded by the Arcus Foundation. Affirmations is Metro Detroit’s community center for LGBT people and their allies. Open since 1989 and located in the Detroit suburb of Ferndale, Affirmations provides a welcoming space where people of all cultures, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions can find support and unconditional acceptance. For more information, visit www.GoAffirmations.org.

CARES appoints new executive director

KALAMAZOO— Community AIDS Resource and Education Services, a southwest Michigan organization that seeks to minimize the effects of HIV/AIDS on the community, appointed a longtime staffer as its new executive director.

David Feaster most recently served as CARES’ director of client services, and was a one-time member of the board of directors before joining the organization as a medical case manager in 2001.

“We are thrilled to have someone of David’s caliber poised to lead CARES,” Board President Richard Piet said. “Budgets, stigma and disease spread being what they are, our work is cut out for us – and David is a leader ready to help CARES advance.”

CARES serves clients in 11 southwest Michigan counties with guidance on maintaining healthy lives while living HIV-positive. The organization also employs various targeted education programs to help minimize its spread.

CARES was established 26 years ago in Kalamazoo. More information is available at www.caresswm.org.

Equality Michigan announces annual dinner

DEARBORN— Equality Michigan will hold its State Equality Dinner, its biggest annual event, Oct. 22 at 6 p.m. at The Henry. The dinner highlights advocacy work happening around the state, connects leaders in the movement for equality and celebrate achievements in Michigan’s LGBT community. Ticket prices range from \$50-\$250. To learn more, check out the event’s Facebook page by searching for “State Equality Dinner.”

Queer for Books picks summer reads

FERNDALE— The quickly growing Queer for Books Book Club has announced their book selections for July and August. On Saturday, July 23, the group will discuss “Band Fags!” by Frank Anthony Polito. The book follows Jack, a boy discovering the complicated nature of sexuality, as he grows up in 1980s Hazel Park, Mich. There will also be a special door prize for those who attend the discussion. On Aug. 27, Queer for Books will discuss “Go Tell It On The Mountain” by James Baldwin. The semi-autobiographical novel examines the role of the Christian Church in the lives of African-Americans as well as racism in pre-civil rights era America.

Those interested in attending the book club can request copies of the book at the Ferndale Public Library’s reference desk or from the library’s online catalog at <http://www.ferndale.lib.mi.us/>.

Detroit is Hotter Than 2011 JULY

27th thru 31st
27th thru 31st

WEDNESDAY | JULY 27TH

2011 VIP AWARDS DINNER & RECEPTION
Join us and many special guests for an evening of art, music, networking and fun. Everyone is welcomed, no dress code required. Music and art provided by Detroit artist. Includes light refreshments. Featured Artist: PooqMan's Art Collective. Sponsored by Barefoot Wines & The Detroit Liberal Art Gallery, 3361 Gratiot Ave., Detroit, MI 48207 (Just North Of Mack Ave.)
7:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.

HONK Presents KICK IT ON THE RIVER
An Official Hotter Than July Pride Event. A 3 Hour Cruise on the Detroit River. Boarding Begins at 6:20 pm at Rivard Plaza. Music by DJ Cent | Strolling Buffet | Cash Bar. Tickets are \$55 and available at www.e-kick.org or call (313) 285-9733 for more details

The R.E.C. Boys Presents THE SHOW IN THE DARK PARTY 2011
Be a part of the effort! Wear white and neon colors. Club Insendo, 744 E. Savannah, Highland Park. The first 50 people to get tested with the R.E.C. Boys before this event will win FREE entry! Takes place from 9pm-2am. Call (313) 285-1166 for more info.

THURSDAY | JULY 28TH

INTERSTATE CARNIVAL @ FARMER PARK
7:30 P.M. - 9:00 P.M. Blue Spruce Memorial Tree, Palmer Park, Detroit, MI

HARBOUR HOUSE PRESENTS Poetry & Comedy Open Mic Night
Hosted by Award Winning Writer, Producer & Educator Halade Ta'Shia Asanti of LA. 9 pm until 11 pm. Detroit CARES Multi-Center Complex, 8100 W. Davison in Detroit 48234. Admission is \$10 before 10pm and \$15 after 10pm. Light beverages will be served. All spoken word artists & comedians are encouraged to participate. For directions, sign up and details call (313) 865-2170 ext. 3 or email Kofi.Adoma@karibuhouse.org

HOTTER THAN JULY KICK OFF PARTY
Presented by Aw Entertainment & DJ Reggie Reg at Club Waterfalls, 673 Franklin St. With Live Performances and Special Guest Performer \$3500. Advance Tickets \$15; Advance VIP Platinum Pass w/Artist Meet & Greet \$50 9 PM til 2 AM Contact Leshore For Tickets (313) 574-1960

FRIDAY | JULY 29TH

GENES CONFERENCE WORKSHOP XV
Friday July 29, 2011, 4 PM til 10 P.M.

Writing & Publishing 101
4 P.M. until 6 P.M. Join Hosted & Producer of Sipping On Ink; Anondra 'Kat' Williams and a panel of distinguished authors. Panelist Include Authors Stanley Bennet Clay, Halade Ta'Shia Asanti, Doug Cooper Spencer, Maxx Ms. ScorpioN, and Queen Sheba in a discussion on Writing & Publishing

SATURDAY | JULY 30TH

16TH ANNUAL WOODWARD PRIDE MARCH
10:00 A.M. Pride March Registration
Lineup is on Woodward in front of the tennis courts
10:45 A.M. Pride March Procession Begins

16TH ANNUAL PALMER PARK PRIDE FESTIVAL
The pinnacle event of Detroit's 16th annual pride celebration is like a family reunion and you're invited. Each year the Palmer Park Festival is host to over 20k guest taking a moment to celebrate culture, self-empowerment and identity. The day features music, entertainment, and everyone is encouraged to bring your own picnic basket, maybe even pitch a tent. NOON - 8:00 P.M.

4TH HOTTER THAN JULY MINI FASHION
The Sins of the Paedemic. Music by DJ Tone (Detroit). MC will be Vogue Evolution's legendary Father Dashaun Evisu.

HARBOUR HOUSE Hosts the Annual GAY's Fair
During Detroit's Hotter Than July Pride Picnic Children, teens, and adults are welcome to engage in arts and crafts, music, drumming, and other fun activities. This is a FREE Event. For more information or to volunteer to help call (313) 865-2170 ext. 3 1pm to 4pm

ALL I WANT TO SAY PRODUCTIONS Presents
Daugh Language Detroit Poetry Slam The 101 Edition
Produced by T. Miller & Queen Sheba. Saturday July 30, 2011, 8:30 pm until 11:30 pm at AJ's Café, 240 West Nine Mile Road Ferndale, MI. Ticket Are \$15 In Advance
Contact T. Miller For Details (313) 282-1196

SUNDAY | JULY 31ST

THE GENERAL PRIDE GLAMOR PARTY
Our Sweet 16/Let There Be House!! Mars Bar - 10001 Jos Campau, Hamtramck 10 P.M. - 2 A.M., Admission \$10 All Night.

All events are subject to change or cancellation without notice; be sure to check the site and/or event promoters of additional information.

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What do you think of Lady Gaga and her activism in the gay community?

I don't.
—Kerri Covey

I think it's great when someone uses their spotlight to spotlight causes other than themselves.
—Lisa Ross

She is bisexual and has every right (even if she weren't one of us) to be a force in our fight. I don't get why people have such a problem with her.
—Karen Hale

I love the fact that she calls out cowardly politicians who are supposedly on "our" side.
—Jason Vorva

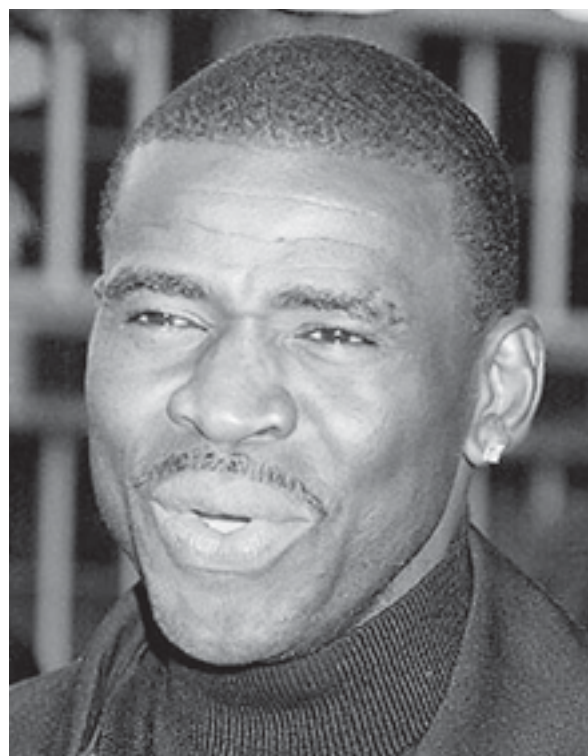
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S/he Said

COMPILED BY HOWARD ISRAEL

History and pop culture



Michael Irvin

"I'm not gay, but I was afraid to even let anyone have the thought. I can only imagine the agony – being a prisoner in your own mind – for someone who wants to come out. If I'm not gay and I am afraid to mention it, I can only imagine what an athlete must be going through if he is gay."

—Michael Irvin, former Dallas Cowboys wide receiver and NFL Hall of Famer, in an article titled "Michael Irvin: The Playmaker Preaches," about his gay brother and explains why he's on a pro-gay mission from God, out.com, July 6.



Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

"The dynamic between the muggle (non-magical) world and the wizarding world is strikingly similar to that of the straight and closeted gay worlds. They exist side by side, but the wizards must keep their identities and powers secret for fear of frightening the muggles. The only real-life muggles who've been frightened are the groups of Evangelical Christians who've been calling for boycotts and bans on the Harry Potter books and films for years, claiming that they promote magic, evil and devil worship. This may be the most spectacularly unsuccessful boycott in history; the Potter books have sold more than 400 million copies worldwide; the films have grossed more than \$6 billion."

—Adam Sandel, playwright and screenwriter, in his blog posting titled "We'll Miss You Harry!" about the special resonance LGBT fans have for Harry Potter, http://dot429.com, July 15.



David Mixner

"There are many ways to kill people and one of the ways is to pretend that they never existed at all. Remove all traces of their journey and hope no one discovers their story. Often the issue of self-esteem among young LGBT citizens stems from the fact that they think our common denominator is just sexually based. They have no idea of their noble, proud and heroic traditions and actions of their pioneers. LGBT history is filled with dramatic courage, dignity and determination and innovative and extraordinary leaders. If you feel like you have come out of nothing then you might feel you are nothing. If you think only sex is the basis of our journey then you will miss the remarkable stories that define this community as one of heroes, heroines and a very proud people."

—David Mixner, political strategist, and LGBT rights activist, in his blog titled "Why LGBT History Is Important," davidmixner.com, July 15.



Rik Isensee

"Older gays have been the object of negative stereotyping both from society at large and within the gay community. The image of the lonely older man lusting after younger men is perpetuated by the right wing in an attempt to frighten and shame us into abandoning our sexual orientation. Within the gay community the stereotype of the 'bitter old queen' divides generations – older men are afraid of being seen as 'chicken hawks,' and younger men are wary of being sexually objectified. This negative stereotype also reinforces the belief that gay relationships are based solely on sexual attraction and that once our youth begins to fade, we are unlikely to have any real or lasting relationships."

—Rik Isensee, in his book "Are You Ready? The Gay Man's Guide to Thriving at Midlife," about the first generation of openly gay men to hit middle age, worldcat.org.



Parting Glances

Then and Now

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Swami, swami, how I love ya!

It's always a transcendental pleasure to report about uplifting talks, lectures, sermons, 90-minute Power Point presentations I'm frequently asked to cover because, somewhat curiously, no one else wants to at BTL.

As a writer for an alternative weekly of such spiritual high standing – consider uplifting examples "Dear Jody" and "Creep of the Week" – I feel it's almost a patriotic duty to keep my dedicated PG readers informed.

I twenty-one gun salute all six of you!

I recently had – to use an expression in currency among zealous segments of our world's beleaguered populace – a truly blessed day. (Please don't misunderstand: a sexual encounter is not herewith implied. Although I frequently do pray for same. Daily, I might add.)

I was in Ann Arbor. (I often go there on pilgrimage because the climate of youthful, carefree beauty and symmetry – the passing show of freshmen, sophs, seniors parading in breathtaking summer attire – is spiritually invigorating, so thought-provoking for one my age. And frustrating, I'll also readily admit.)

I had a New Age – satori, nirvana, Zen, sound-of-one-hand-clapping – encounter with a MtFB (male to female to bisexual). A self-styled "gururuss" by the name of Mary Martin Muktananda. She was sitting feeding a dozen multi-plumed pigeons in an off the main-drag park, no pun intended. Our spiritual gaydar instantly clicked.

"Welcome, Spiritual Traveler on Life's Rainbow journey," she greets me, as pigeons take flight, circle her head in halo effect, and vanish in the twinkling of a mascara'd eye. "Being gay's not a choice," she beams a devastating Shinto, ancestor-worship smile my way. "Tolerating pigeons is. I hope you know the difference."

Acrobatic pigeons annoy me; but I know if I stick around for simulated pearls of wisdom I may be enlightened or entertained. "Do you come here often?" I ask, using a conversational ploy that's worked thousands of times in sequestered city parks not unlike the one I happened to find myself in.

"I make a practice of being here noon to five, Mondays through TGIFs. (Thank-Guru-It's-Fridays!) And Saturdays and Sundays at the crowded, clamoring market I sell patchouli incense and semi-chaste devotional pictures of bilocating saints saving photogenic rock stars and holy-named divas.

"I also provide stimulating hugs, acupuncture tune-up tummy rubs, and memorable, OM-laced mantras for materialistic dollar donations. I sense you're into the Arts. Do you frequent dance establishments for one-on-one retinal clarification? Are your chakras attuned with your aesthetic libido? Lap dancing does wonders for living fully in the present, if sometimes it comes at the expense of living in the past."

"Actually I dabble. I draw intricate, convoluted designs and write intricate, convoluted sentences for intricately convoluted readers. I'm probably an Old Soul. By default, not by choice. If you know what I mean?"

"Oh, yes! A senior citizen. Here's my advice for everyone over 35, that traditional Dark Night of the Soul. 'Life gives us religions. Thank heaven we can choose our sins.' 'Society gives us restrictions. It's up to us to enjoy our reservations.' (Knowing a good gay head waiter helps.)

"Yes! I suspect you've had many interesting past lifetimes. Been between a rock and a hard place often. Been at sixes or sevens in your cosmic countdown. Had a time of it making both ends meet. Truth is – speaking reincarnation wise – that sometimes we're at top, sometimes we're at bottom. The difference between the two is often not hard to measure."

"Here's a dollar for advice. Make it succinct," I request. "Quite so," ooms Swami Mary Martin Muktananda, as cooing pigeons suddenly reappear out of nowhere. "Save brain energy. Don't think. Turn the other cheek before you reluctantly go amiss or just plain peter out. Change underwear daily from here on in."

Charles@pridesource.com Have a rainbow day!

Hotter Than July kicks off with art exhibit

Liberal Arts Gallery hosts, makes exhibit 'a little more upscale'

BY ZACH CHILDREE

DETROIT—On July 27, the Detroit Black Pride Society will kick off its annual Hotter Than July celebration with the opening of an art exhibit. The exhibit, produced in collaboration with the Poor Man's Art Collective, is called "Unity in Diversity, Many Backgrounds, Different Mediums, One Vision" and is hosted by the Liberal Arts Gallery in Detroit.

The art exhibit opening has been part of the Hotter Than July celebration for 6 years, according to Black Pride Society President Kimberly Jones. Jones said she is excited about the event and how much it has grown, including garnering sponsorship from Barefoot Wines. "In the past, Hotter Than July has never really had a liquor sponsor," Jones said. "But Barefoot Wines has stepped up and was really open to participating in a lot of the Hotter Than July events."

This year, the exhibit moves from the host hotel, where it is usually presented, to the Liberal Arts Gallery. "We wanted to open Hotter Than July with an art show, to give people the opportunity to be a little more upscale," Jones said. "This year because we've moved it, it gives us the opportunity to show the community the art for the entire week of Hotter Than July."

The exhibit will feature work from local artists who use various media for their art, including found wood, acrylic paints, wood carvings, ink and photography. Poor Man's Art Collective co-founder Geno Harris said the exhibit is a great way to showcase the work of local artists, both gay and straight.

"It came from a need to represent our community," Harris said. "And to showcase the ability of both communities (gay and straight) coming together to show what Detroit has to offer by way of creative talent."

Both Harris and Jones agree that the exhibit is a great way to show off the work of new artists that might not get shown otherwise. "It fosters the talents of new and emerging artists who might not know how to get their works shown or who have otherwise been denied the opportunity because of a lack of education, awards or



"Self Aware," a 30-inch by 30-inch work of Japanese paper on wood by Geno Harris, will be featured at the art exhibit that kicks off Hotter Than July Wednesday, July 27. Harris glued colored tissue paper onto the wood and covered it with varnish. Photo supplied by Geno Harris.

"It came from a need to represent our community. And to showcase the ability of both communities (gay and straight) coming together to show what Detroit has to offer."

—Geno Harris, co-founder of Poor Man's Art Collective

LETTER: Donations don't make gay rodeo OK

I thank Ms. Brindle for her July 14 letter ("Gay rodeo promotes animal abuse, not community") about animal cruelty at RodeoFest 2011, put on by the Michigan International Gay Rodeo Association. This association claims to have humane rules in place so that makes everything OK. So, if I am being gay bashed sometime, I'll keep in mind it is acceptable as long as the bashers have humane rules in place.

Photos of MIGRA's rodeos on their website show a bull being grabbed by his horns and his head pushed to the ground, a bull being roped by the head as two men pull on the rope yanking the poor bull's head back, and bulls bucking

wildly to rid themselves the pain of the bucking strap that is tightened around the sensitive part of their abdomens. I highly doubt this is enjoyable to the animals.

MIGRA says they donate money to charity as if that somehow overrides the suffering they caused to get the money.

As the famous quote goes, "None are free until all are free." We do not want our community to be oppressed. Yet, many in our community still oppress others. We cannot expect to be treated equally until we treat others – regardless of species – equally too. William McMullin Lansing, Mich.

experience," Harris said. The artists who are featured in this year's exhibit are Harris and Mychal Noir, who are co-founders of the Poor Man's Art Collective, as well as Reggie Singleton, Bianca Henderson, Natalie Bandle and Bilal.

"I don't think we've ever turned anyone's art down," Jones said. "It's community oriented and community based, so when we put a call out, we are delighted to have new artists as part of the exhibit."

Jones said she is looking forward to the event and hopes it will be a great start to the Hotter Than July festivities. "I want there to be excitement and enthusiasm about Hotter Than July," Jones said. "A lot is happening and I'm really excited about that."

The reception is from 7 p.m. until 11 p.m. at The Liberal Arts Gallery at 3361 Gratiot Avenue in Detroit.

MIGRA says they donate money to charity as if that somehow overrides the suffering they caused to get the money.



Editorial

We must take back ‘family’

The word family has suffered a lot of abuse. Republicans have dubbed themselves the “family values party.” Many conservative organizations have hid their bigotry behind the word, such as the American Family Association. In our current collective consciousness, the word family means something traditional, parochial and conservative.

But we all have families. No matter who you are or how you label yourself, you have parents and siblings and grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins. You also probably have people you care about but are related to by something other than blood, such as marriage or adoption.

Conservatives, Republicans and evangelicals like to pretend that only one kind of family is valid: the so-called “traditional” family structure of a man, a woman and 2.5 children. But all of our families should be respected and protected.

In our first-ever family issue, we show how gay and lesbian parents and their families are completely unprotected in the state of Michigan. People in our community want to start families, but there are many dangerous pitfalls that await them.

There are thousands of children in the state who would benefit by being adopted. But the ones in our community who want to adopt are relegated to a life of single parenthood: even though there is no law explicitly stating that gay and lesbian parents cannot adopt, it’s banned in practice – thanks to people in power who value only one kind of family. Even the children of same-sex couples who conceive will have only one legal parent in our state.

For at least six years, the state legislature has all but ignored bills that would make same-sex parent adoption explicitly legal. Different attorneys general and state Supreme Court justices have snubbed out the practice (because such adoptions used to happen). And our community centers and supporting foundations have even ignored the plight of parents who are fighting for the right to visit their children – this

we find especially shameful.

In cases of breakups, only the biological parent or the legal adoptive parent has right to full custody of the child. This means many of the other non-biological or non-legal parents get left

Conservatives like to pretend that only one kind of family is valid: the so-called “traditional” family structure of a man, a woman and 2.5 children. But all of our families should be respected and protected.

behind, and many children lose the love and care of a parent who raised them.

And if these children lose a parent by death, they can be put into foster care or they can be left financially destitute. Why? Children can’t receive Social Security benefits for a parent they were never legally attached to. And if their legally recognized parent passes away, they can easily become a ward of the state.

For being a community that doesn’t make much noise about our families, we sure do have a lot of pressing family issues. It’s time that we stick up for ourselves. It’s time that our community centers and foundations rally behind this issue. It’s time that we tell our legislators that our families are our lives, and our families must be protected. It’s time that we stop suffering in silence. It’s time that we demand the right to care for our families.



The Gay Moralists

BY JOHN CORVINO

Gay man in the jury box

“Are you married?” It seems like a simple question. But on closer glance, much depends on context.

In this case, the context was jury duty. I was Candidate 13, sitting in the box during “voir dire,” the process wherein the judge and attorneys ask questions in order to weed out potential juror bias.

“You know, you can get out of jury duty by telling them you’re gay,” a friend had told me the day before. “Just say that because you’re not allowed to marry, you have no faith in the legal system and can’t promise an impartial verdict.”

But I don’t want to be excused from jury duty. I consider it my civic duty. And it doesn’t interfere much with my job (philosophy professor), because I defer my summons until summer, when I don’t teach. Besides, as much as I resent my exclusion from marriage, that resentment scarcely affects my desire to see criminals jailed and innocent people freed.

And so there I sat, eager to serve, as the judge asked each juror a standard list of questions. “Where do you live? Do you recognize any of the people involved in this case? What do you do for a living? Are you married?”

“Oh, shit,” I thought to myself.

“Are you married?” should be a simple question, and at one level,

my simple answer is No. I live in a state (Michigan) that constitutionally prohibits me from marrying my partner, and we have not married in any other state.

So, technically, no.

But legal marriage isn’t the only relevant sense of marriage. My partner, Mark, and I have been together for almost a decade. Six years ago we had a commitment ceremony, publicly promising to love, honor and cherish each other for the rest of our lives. We merged our assets and melded our lives, and as far as we and our friends and most family are concerned, we’re married, and the state of Michigan can go screw itself.

How’s that for a response that will get me out of jury duty?

Getting out of jury duty wasn’t my concern, however. “Voi dire” means “to tell the truth;” its purpose is to reveal potentially relevant biases. And the judge’s follow-up question to “Are you married?” was always “What does your spouse do?” He was particularly concerned about spouses who were somehow connected to law enforcement.

Mark is an attorney.

Granted, he’s not a litigator, and we never discuss criminal law. But that’s the sort of thing the judge wanted to reveal when he asked about spouses, and so I felt a moral obligation to

mention it.

Actually, to be precise, the judge didn’t ask about “spouses.” He asked men “What does your wife do?” and women “What does your husband do?” As I fidgeted in my chair, I noticed that its placement at the platform’s edge made it impossible for me to plant my feet squarely on the floor – a fact that only compounded my discomfort.

“Are you married?”

The judge had finally reached me. “I have a domestic partner,” I responded firmly.

He asked another, unrelated question, and for a moment I thought the spousal issue had passed. Then, “Oh – and what does your partner do?”

“He’s an attorney,” I responded, making sure to articulate clearly the “he.” I kept my eyes on the judge, although I was curious about others’ reactions as I outed myself to the packed courtroom.

I was not chosen for jury duty.

The prosecuting attorney dismissed me with her first “peremptory challenge,” meaning that there was no stated reason. Maybe it was because I identified myself as gay. More likely, it was because I identified myself as a philosophy professor. As litigator friends have often told me, prosecutors never want jurors who might “overthink.”

But the experience highlighted for me once again the hetero-normativity of everyday life, as well as the unintended consequences of excluding same-sex couples from marriage.

When our opponents insist on treating our spouses as mere roommates, is this really what they want?

Do they want me to say “No” when asked by a judge if I’m married, and to leave it at that? What if Mark were a litigator? What if he worked for the prosecutor’s office? Legally, technically, he’s not “family.”

The disparity between legal reality and social reality is stark here. To take just one more example: suppose I worked for my university’s medical school. Then I would be required to disclose any pharmaceutical stock holdings by myself or my spouse. But Mark is not my spouse, legally speaking.

Some may delight in this “gay disclosure loophole.” Personally, I think it’s just a depressing reminder of society’s blindness to the reality of our lives.

John Corvino, Ph.D. is a writer, speaker, and philosophy professor at Wayne State University in Detroit. He recently ended his weekly column for “The Gay Moralists” at 365gay.com. Read more at www.johncorvino.com.

Bachmann clinic questioned over ‘ex-gay’ therapy sessions

Activist publicizes undercover video of Christian clinic

BY PATRICK CONDON AND BRIAN BAKST

LAKE ELMO, Minn. (AP)- A gay activist’s undercover video is drawing unwanted attention to a counseling clinic co-owned by GOP presidential hopeful Michele Bachmann, with footage apparently showing a counselor offering to help the activist overcome his homosexual urges.

Both Bachmann and her husband Marcus, who runs the clinic, refused to answer questions about the video from Truth Wins Out, a gay advocacy group that has worked to discredit so-called “ex-gay therapy.”

In the video, a counselor says that sessions could help build up the patient’s desire for women.

“I believe twice over the course of the first session he made reference to his belief that we are all created heterosexual, and that some of us just have different challenges with that,” the activist, John Becker said in an interview with The Associated Press. “God created us all for heterosexuality – he said that twice.”

The undercover video, first aired Monday, July 11 by ABC News, comes at a time when Bachmann has emerged as a top GOP contender with a message that favors economic issues over the conservative social stances that marked her early rise in Minnesota. Bachmann often touts the family clinic as evidence of her business know-how.

Marcus Bachmann has denied in the past that his practice seeks to “cure” people of being gay. In a 2006 interview with the Minneapolis weekly newspaper City Pages, he called such claims “false” – though added that the Christian-affiliated clinic was open to patients who wanted to talk about their homosexuality.

A receptionist at the clinic, Bachmann and Associates Inc., turned away an Associated Press reporter and said no one there would do interviews. Bachmann’s campaign said neither she nor her husband would be interviewed on the subject.

Bachmann campaign spokeswoman Alice Stewart said such matters are protected by patient-client confidentiality. “The Bachmanns are in no position ethically, legally, or morally to discuss specific courses of treatment concerning

the clinic’s patients. The clinic honors and respects all people for whatever issue they come in for and if there is a conflict, they refer elsewhere,” said a written statement from Stewart.

Marcus Bachmann has a doctorate in clinical psychology, and the clinic’s website advertises a wide range of counseling from

The clinic has collected at least \$137,000 from Medicaid-backed programs.

anger management to eating disorders. The site advertises the clinic’s Christian affiliation, though nowhere are there references to ex-gay or so-called “reparative therapy.” It has locations in two Twin Cities suburbs, and has collected at least \$137,000 from Medicaid-backed programs.

In 2009, the American Psychological Association issued a resolution and report strongly condemning the practice of gay reparative therapy. The resolution said no solid evidence exists that individuals can change their sexual orientation and that efforts to do so could induce depression and suicidal tendencies.

Becker’s group began looking into the therapy at the Bachmann clinic last month after Michele Bachmann, powered by tea party support, burst onto the 2012 scene. Becker said most of the information he told the counselor was false and that he does not struggle with his homosexuality.

Separately, a gay Minneapolis man who said he was a teenage patient at the counseling center in suburban St. Paul also shared details about his treatment there several years ago.

Andrew Ramirez told the AP that he was 17 when his parents insisted he seek help after he disclosed he was gay. Ramirez said he had two counseling sessions in 2004.

The male counselor “said if I pray to God that I no longer be gay, and study the Bible, that through continued therapy God could perform a miracle and I could become straight,” Ramirez, now 24, said. Ramirez said after two sessions, he told his mother the therapy was pointless and she told him he could stop going. He said he never met Marcus Bachmann.

Ramirez said he contacted Truth Wins Out after a friend saw an item the group posted on its blog seeking former patients from the Bachmann clinic.

Politically, the clinic has been useful to Bachmann. She routinely cites it in stump speeches as evidence she understands the challenges face by entrepreneurs and small employers. And during her initial run for Congress, Bachmann’s campaign leased office space from the clinic for a few months, according to federal campaign reports.

Bachmann’s political rise was fueled early by her work on social issues, first through her campaign to undo school standards she regarded as invasive and later by her dogged pursuit of a gay marriage ban in Minnesota.

While Bachmann’s social stances haven’t figure as prominently in her current campaign, they have come up. Bachmann promotes faith as her personal and political foundation, stresses her anti-abortion stances and highlights her role in Minnesota’s marriage debate.

She drew questions last weekend for signing a conservative Iowa group’s “marriage vow” that contained controversial language comparing the home life of black children during the days of slavery and in today’s society. The group, the Family Leader, has since revised its pledge to remove the slavery mention.

The pledge, coupled with unflattering attention to the clinic, isn’t sitting well among Republicans who worry about a party nominee who could struggle to connect with swing voters.

“Those are fringe positions that will turn off currently registered Republicans or voters in that independent, movable middle,” said R. Clarke Cooper, executive director of the pro-gay rights Log Cabin Republicans. “Politics is about numbers. It’s about addition. Having fringe positions, we’re going to lose voters.”

LGBT violence on the rise

Transgender people, minorities vulnerable

BY ZACH CHILDREE

Last year was the second highest year on record for murders of LGBT and HIV-affected communities, according to a report released July 12 by the National Coalition Of Anti-Violence Programs. The study focused on 17 anti violence programs in 15 states, including Michigan.

Hate violence incident data provided to NCAVP in 2010 showed a 13 percent increase in reports of violence since 2009.

“Perhaps more disturbingly, it shows a very clear increase in the reports of the severity of physical violence used during the hate motivated incidents,” said Lisa Gilmore, Director of Education and Victim Advocacy for the Center on Halstead in Chicago at a press conference on Tuesday.

The study reported 27 hate-motivated murders in 2010, which is an increase from 22 hate-motivated murders in 2009.

Many of last year’s 27 murders were against transgender women (70 percent) and gay men of color (44 percent).

“Transgender individuals and people of color face multiple forms of discrimination on the basis of race, gender identity and other factors, which can make them more vulnerable to severe violence,” said Maria Carolina Morales, from Community United Against Violence in San Francisco. “In this report, we continue to grieve the many LGBT lives that are cut painfully short by violence.”

The report also makes recommendations for changes in policy, increasing anti-violence campaigns, collecting data on sexual orientation and gender identity and calls for an increase in funding for studies dealing with violence against the LGBT and HIV-affected communities. The report also encourages politicians and celebrities to denounce anti-LGBT violence.

“The findings of this report are troubling and reveal a need for the serious commitment of organizations, institutions, funders and policymakers towards research and the prevention of violence against LGBTQ and HIV-affected individuals,” said Sandhya Luther from the Colorado Anti-Violence Program in Denver. “Our recommendations represent crucial steps for ending violence against LGBTQ and HIV-affected people in this country.”

The report also featured real stories of victims of anti-LGBT violence, such as a California transgender man who was attacked in a university bathroom. His attackers carved the word “it” into his forehead, but police didn’t recognize the word as an anti-transgender slur.

“In this report, we continue to grieve the many LGBT lives that are cut painfully short by violence.”

—Maria Carolina Morales,

Community United Against Violence

Creep of the Week

Marcus Bachmann

BY DANNE WITKOWSKI

Marcus Bachmann and the Christian counseling clinics he owns are not anti-gay. And if you say they are then you're just an anti-hetero hate crimer. Stop hate criming, gays! So hateful, gays are, about people who are just trying to help them stop being disgusting queers who make Jesus puke.

Thankfully Bachmann, and his presidentially hopeful wife, Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, have Brian Fischer, a foremost expert in anti-gay quackery, on their side. Fischer claims that the Bachmanns have "hatred... directed against them because of their religious beliefs" that borders "on a hate crime. You could also make the point that this bigotry against the Bachmanns is based on their sexual orientation."

Um, yes, I suppose you could argue that. If you must. The logic train stops here, folks. Everybody off.

Now, I know what you're thinking. "How is it unfair to call Bachmann anti-gay? He called gays 'barbarians' and his clinics try to 'cure' gay people?"

Not so fast. That's just the liberal news media messing with your mind.

"We have to understand: barbarians need to be educated. They need to be disciplined. Just because someone feels it or thinks it doesn't mean that we are supposed to go down that road. That's what is called the sinful nature. We have a responsibility as parents and as authority figures not to encourage such thoughts and feelings from moving into the action steps." Bachmann "supposedly" said last summer of homosexuals.

He continued, "And let's face it: what is our culture, what is our public education system doing today? They are giving full, wide-open doors to children, not only giving encouragement to think it but to encourage action steps. That's why when we understand what truly is the percentage of homosexuals in this country, it is small. But by these open doors, I can see and we are experiencing, that it is starting to increase."

Why "supposedly?" Because Bachmann now claims that the audio recording of these comments, made to the Christian "Point of View" radio show, must have been "doctored."



Marcus Bachmann

Lesbian parent loses bid for shared custody

Ohio Supreme Court rules 4-3 in favor of biological mother for full custody rights

BY JULIE CARR SMYTH

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)— An Ohio woman lost her legal bid July 12 for shared custody of a girl whose conception she planned with the child's biological mother while the women were living as a same-sex couple in Cincinnati.

In a 4-3 decision, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled in favor of the child's biological mother, Kelly Mullen, who claimed sole custody of the girl, who is now 5. Mullen's former partner, Michele Hobbs, shared parenting and financial support of the girl, named Lucy, before the women split up in 2007.

Hobbs argued that the jointly planned pregnancy plus documents citing Hobbs as Lucy's "co-parent" — including a ceremonial birth certificate and will — created a contractual agreement between the women. A magistrate who initially reviewed the evidence ruled the pair had a binding agreement.

But the high court on July 12 sided with a later decision to the contrary by the 1st District Court of Appeals.

Justice Robert Cupp, writing for the majority, acknowledged that Hobbs presented significant evidence to support her claim to partial custody, but he said Mullen also produced opposing evidence.

"The court noted that all the documents created by Mullen which purported to give Hobbs some custodial responsibilities not only were revocable, but were, in fact, revoked by Mullen," he wrote. "Testimony supported Mullen's statement that she did not intend to relinquish sole custody of the child to Hobbs."

He said Mullen "consistently refused to enter into or sign any formal shared custody agreement when presented with the opportunity to do so."

Mullen's attorney Douglas Dougherty said the case had nothing to do with the women's sexual orientation.

"My client is a lesbian and proud of it, and she thinks

lesbians should have all the rights that straight people have, and so do I," he said. "The problem here wasn't that it was a lesbian or gay relationship, it was that they didn't love each other anymore, and very sadly didn't respect each other anymore, and my client felt a clean break was in the best interest of the child."

Justices Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, Terrence O'Donnell and Judith Ann Lanzinger joined the majority. Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor, Yvette McGee Brown and Paul Pfeifer dissented.

O'Connor's opinion, joined by McGee Brown, said the court was wrong to accept the case in the first place because it established no new governing principle. One thing it did show, she said: Couples would be prudent to get custody arrangements in writing.

In his dissent, Pfeifer said Hobbs presented more than enough evidence to back up her claim.

"Can an agreement that another person is a co-parent in every way possibly not include a right to custody? It cannot. The trial court seems to agree, and thus turns its emphasis on the fact that the documents were revocable," he wrote. "But the question before the court was whether Mullen agreed to share custody of her child with Hobbs, not whether she eventually came to regret that decision."

He said the ruling didn't produce a workable legal rule for dealing with similar cases in the future, and indicated that the case at its heart was about the women's sexual orientation.

"The law has not caught up to our culture, and this court has failed to craft a rule that addresses reality," he wrote. "Mullen and Hobbs employed a well-versed lawyer who represents people in their situation, and with his advice did all they could do to protect Hobbs. A maternal relationship existed between Hobbs and Lucy. Mullen taught her daughter to call another woman 'Momma' and to love her as a mother. She now wishes she hadn't, and for the majority, that's enough. It shouldn't be."

Active-duty military march in San Diego Pride parade

BY REX WOCKNER

Some 300 active-duty troops (the majority of the contingent) and veterans marched in San Diego's LGBT Pride parade July 16.

As far as can be determined, it was a U.S. first.

It was a symbolic goodbye to "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," which, while not quite dead-dead, is apparently dead enough.

The military gay ban has been struck down by a federal court and the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has refused to reinstate it — at least as far as active-duty troops are concerned — while the federal government plods through implementing Congress' repeal of the policy.

Raucous cheering greeted the military contingent

for the length of the parade route through the gay Hillcrest neighborhood.

Following a July 14 front-page story in the San Diego Union-Tribune, the crowd of 155,000 seemed aware that it was seeing history in the making.

The troops and veterans marched in groups broken down by military branch. The Navy and Marines groupings were much larger than the others, given that San Diego is home to Navy and Marine bases.

The contingent was organized by Sean Sala, who left the Navy in June after six years.

Video footage is available at tinyurl.com/wockner-sd. (The Associated Press estimated the size of the military contingent at 200, while Reuters said 250. The San Diego Union-Tribune said "more than 350.")

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- Charter member of the National Family Law Advisory Committee of the National Center for Lesbian Rights
- Speaker at national law conferences on LGBT family law and LGBT Elder law
- Past member of the board of advisors for the Housing Bureau for Seniors connected with Turner Geriatric Clinic at the University of Michigan
- Founding member of the Coalition for Adoption Rights Equality (C.A.R.E.), Inc.
- Past founding board member of Cambios, Inc., a Lenawee County nonprofit organization focused on eliminating discrimination through multicultural reading programs
- Member of National Academy of Elder Attorneys
- Graduate of the University of Detroit Mercy Law School
- Licensed foster parent and an adoptive parent

Gay parent case goes to US Supreme Court

Couple seeks amended birth certificate from the state of LA for adopted child

BY LISA KEEN

Lambda Legal Defense is taking its fight for same-sex families to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The case, *Adar v. Darlene Smith*, involves a gay male couple, Oren Adar and Mickey Ray Smith, who sought an amended birth certificate for the boy they adopted in the state of New York. Revised birth certificates identifying a child's adoptive parents are often needed to verify family relationships to schools, medical providers, insurers, and even law enforcement officials. The boy was born in 2005 in Louisiana, so the couple had to seek an amended birth certificate from the state of Louisiana.

Although Louisiana has a statute that entitles an adopted child to receive a revised birth certificate with the names of their adoptive parents, the state's registrar and director of vital records, Darlene Smith, refused to issue one for the gay couple's son. Registrar Smith said she could not do so because the state also has a law prohibiting unmarried couples from adopting.

The 5th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals agreed with the state, ruling that the U.S. Constitution's "full faith and credit" clause does not require a state official to accept the legitimacy of an adoption granted in another state.

The legal question is whether a state's "public policy" – in this case, a public policy against allowing unmarried couples to adopt – trumps the U.S. Constitution's "full faith and credit clause." In its petition to the Supreme Court, Lambda also urges that Louisiana's treatment of the Adar-Smith family violates the equal protection clause.

Gay legal activists have long expected the issue of the "full faith and credit" clause to come up in a gay-related case before the U.S. Supreme Court, but most probably expected it would be on a case involving one state's refusal to recognize a marriage license granted by another state.

Instead, notes Lambda, the issue is coming before the court in a case involving the rights of a child.

"Louisiana may not treat adopted children

themselves differently based on the marital status of their legal parents," said Ken Upton, the Lambda attorney representing the couple out of Lambda's South Central Regional office in Dallas. "We have long since abandoned the notion that the government can punish children to express

"We have long since abandoned the notion that the government can punish children to express disapproval of their parents or their families."

–Ken Upton, Lambda attorney

disapproval of their parents or their families."

In its petition to the Supreme Court, filed July 11, Lambda says non-judicial officials of a state should not be able to deny rights to a child by selectively disregarding court judgments issued in other states "based on policy assessments about the merits of those judgments." And it said the 5th Circuit majority was wrong to say that only state courts – not state officials – owe full faith and credit to court rulings in other states.

Lambda also argues that the 5th Circuit majority "plainly analyzed the wrong statute" in rendering its decision. *Adar v. Smith*, it says, was not a challenge to Louisiana's law barring adoption by unmarried couples. It was a challenge to the state's law concerning vital records.

"The two are not the same," Upton writes in the petition. "Louisiana's goals of promoting its view of stable parental relationships in deciding who can adopt in the state is irrelevant because Petitioners are already the adoptive parents and Louisiana cannot change that."



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Fighting for family

Jeffrey McLoughlin and James McDonald pose with their son, Avon, who is seven months old. They adopted him in California, where they were both able to become his legal parents. BTL photo: Andrew Potter.

Michigan law leaves behind gay and lesbian parents – and their children too

BY TARA CAVANAUGH

With practiced patience, James McDonald manages snack time for a two-year-old who is surprisingly chatty for her age. "She's everything for her age," he laughs. "She's incredibly smart. We joke she's two going on 20."

The precocious toddler is lucky to have a stay-at-home dad who will no doubt nurture her natural intelligence. She's also lucky to have fathers who temporarily relocated to California just to be able to adopt her and her half brother. The family now lives in Ypsilanti.

Michigan doesn't allow same-sex couples to adopt together, which means that gay and lesbian couples that want to become parents have to carefully survey their options. But no matter how much they plan, Michigan law doesn't even consider children from same-sex parents, and these families can be fractured in an instant. Everyone knows that parenting can be

an uphill battle. But gay and lesbian couples who dare to parent in Michigan are climbing a mountain.

A first and last day of school

The first day of school is about more than clean backpacks and fresh pencils – it's marker that the child has grown a year older. It's a reminder that kids grow up fast.

On a first day of school in September 2009, Renee Harmon showed up at the home of her three children and former partner Tammy Davis. For ten years, the two raised the family they planned together, but then they broke up. After Harmon moved out, she had an informal custody agreement with Davis and saw the kids regularly.

That morning, Harmon rang the doorbell. She had never missed a first day of school. Her arms were full with coffee and bagels, new kids' clothes and a camera.

"These kids need homes. That should be what the legislators should be looking at. There are people, whether they're same-sex couples or not, who are able, willing and wanting to provide those homes. Shame on them for standing in the way of that."

–James McDonald

But Davis' new partner opened the door told Harmon to go away – that she couldn't see the kids anymore.

Harmon snapped. She had worried about this. No one was going to prevent her from seeing her kids. She broke a window and crawled inside. Davis and her girlfriend tackled Harmon and dragged her out.

Harmon stood in the driveway and waited. Davis brought out the children when the bus pulled up. They broke away from Davis

See **Fighting for family** page 20



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BTL Family Focus



Jeffrey McLoughlin holds his adopted son Avon while playing with his adopted daughter Analá. Analá and Avon are half siblings. McLoughlin's husband, James McDonald, is a stay-at-home dad. BTL photo: Andrew Potter.

► Fighting for family

Continued from p. 19

and ran up to Harmon, crying. "We love you, Nay-Nay!" they yelled.

Harmon hasn't seen her children since. Harmon's lawyer, Dana Nessel, hears a story like this once a week.

What Michigan law doesn't say

Harmon is suing for custody of her children. It's a difficult case to make, Nessel says, because Harmon and Davis "never tried to adopt. They didn't think they could."

Truth is, the two of them couldn't adopt together. In Michigan, a single adult can adopt a child, and so can a married couple. But unmarried couples cannot adopt, and same-sex couples can't marry. Michigan won't even recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states.

And even though Michigan adoption law doesn't explicitly say that an unmarried couple can't adopt, the judges who grant adoptions have come to that conclusion.

These judges are likely influenced by the powerful figures who have attacked same-sex parent adoption. In 2004 Attorney General Mike Cox issued an opinion against same-sex parent adoption. Also, in 2002, a state Supreme Court justice issued an opinion that judges in Washtenaw County shouldn't perform same-sex parent adoptions. The chief judge responded by telling clerks to stop accepting adoption applications from same-sex parents.

What does this mean for Harmon and the children she hasn't seen in two years? It means that she and her two lawyers, Nessel and Nicole Childers, have to try and prove to the courts that Harmon intended to parent the children with Davis, which she did, and that they functioned as a family, which they did.

But before they can do that, they have to fight for the right to bring evidence before the court. That's because Harmon was never a legal parent. Her ability to present her evidence is a question waiting for consideration by the Michigan Supreme Court right now.

If it refuses her case, then Harmon is set on suing in federal court. This, of course, would mean starting the long legal process all over again.

Harmon isn't afraid of climbing the

mountain. Her kids are at the top.

Everyday dangers

Gay and lesbian parents have to worry about much more than a potential breakup, Nessel says. All sorts of problems await them in everyday life.

For example: the problem of health insurance. Nessel knows of one family whose kids lost their health insurance because their legal mother lost hers. The kids now use Medicaid services.

"So now they have terrible insurance," Nessel says, "and the state has to pay for that. And here they have another parent who wants to put them on her insurance, but of course the employer won't allow that because they're not legally her kids."

Some kids with same-sex parents have even ended up in foster care when they lose their only legal parent.

Stories like these can prevent couples from becoming parents, Nessel says. She remembers two women who wanted to adopt a baby from a pregnant teenager. They asked Nessel how they could protect themselves as parents.

"They fought and fought about who would get to adopt the baby," Nessel says. Finally, they decided whoever had the best health insurance should be the legal parent.

"But the other one broke down crying and said 'I know too much, I've heard too much, I've read too many stories, I can't raise a child knowing that at any time my child will be taken away from me. It would break my heart. I'm not a strong enough person. I can't go through this. There's no guarantees.'"

The women broke up, and one adopted the child. "So who won in that scenario?" Nessel asks angrily.

Few state lawmakers have tried to do anything about this problem. A bill to make same-sex parent adoption legal has been introduced at least three times, explains Emily Dievendorf, director of policy for Equality Michigan. But each time, the bill hasn't even made it past committee to the state House or Senate floor for debate.

"Any time there is a committee hearing almost everybody offers testimony – and we're talking about psychologists, social workers – as to why this needs to happen and that having two



Renee Harmon keeps relics of her three children around her house. She hasn't seen them in two years, and she is currently fighting for custody. She raised the children with her former partner for ten years, but because she was never a legal parent, she now has no legal right to care for them. BTL photo: Andrew Potter.

parents is in the best interest of the child," Dievendorf says. "It's overwhelming testimony that delaying this is a terrible idea. And it will look like it should move with logic and scientific evidence in support behind it, and then it doesn't go anywhere."

At home in Ypsilanti, McDonald shakes his head at the legislature. "These kids need homes," he says. "That should be what the legislators should be looking at. There are people, whether they're same-sex couples or not, who are able, willing and wanting to provide those homes. Shame on them for standing in the way of that."

Knowing where to look

Hands Across the Water is an adoption agency in Ann Arbor. In June it won an award from the Human Rights Campaign for helping gay and lesbian parents adopt. The HRC gives out awards like this because many adoption agencies don't welcome gay or lesbian parents.

The agency's founder and director, Kathi Nelson, has noticed something interesting about these aspiring parents: At the monthly information meetings, they're quiet, and they don't ask their questions until everyone else leaves.

In response, Nelson is planning the agency's first information meeting specifically for gay and lesbian parents. She's looking for someone from the LGBT community to be on the agency's board of directors, and she asked a gay parent – McDonald – to lead a support group. He held the first meeting last month.

"I would like that people just to know that it can happen," McDonald says. "That it's a possibility. And it is a struggle, but that's what the group is there for, to help you through the phases of your process."

A mother's warning

What would Harmon say to any gay or lesbian couple that is considering adoption? "I would warn them," she says. "I never thought this would happen to me."

"We were together nineteen years. When you're in love and you're planning a family and you've been together so long, it never enters your mind that something like this could happen. Be careful." Mostly, though, Harmon is angry that her children aren't protected: "They didn't ask to be born in this situation and to have no rights."

Harmon has become a sort of poster child for the cause of same-sex parent adoption, and she's been contacted by other parents in the same situation, looking for help. "My advice to them was just do what you can to be able to see your children," she says.

She'll keep sending her kids birthday cards and letters, even though they are sent back. She'll keep working with her lawyers, even though she has to throw fundraisers to pay the bills.


She's doing everything she can.

See page 22 to learn more about adoption resources and Michigan law

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SAME-SEX ADOPTION IN MICHIGAN

OBSTACLES AND OPTIONS
ILLUSTRATION BY BENJAMIN JENKINS

ADOPTION LAW IN MICHIGAN

Michigan does not permit gay marriage, so same-sex couples may not legally petition to adopt. Only one individual can be the child's legal guardian.

In Michigan:

Any individual may petition to adopt a child.

Any married couple may petition to adopt a child.

Unmarried couples have not been allowed to adopt together.

OPTIONS

Many states offer adoptions to same-sex couples. If a couple claims and proves residency in one of these states and connects with a child placing agency or parent intending to put their child up for adoption, parents can apply for joint custody of the child.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, the following states currently permit same-sex adoption with joint custody: **California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Vermont.** Other states' laws are unclear on same-sex parent adoption.

OBSTACLE

RETURNING TO MICHIGAN

If the adopting couple returns to Michigan before finalizing adoption, a MI judge cannot legalize the adoption, because Michigan law regarding adoption recommences.

OPTIONS

Michigan honors joint adoptions finalized in other states. By complying with residency requirements in a state that permits same-sex adoption, and ensuring that the adoption has been entirely completed before returning to Michigan, the family will enjoy full parental rights.

REMEMBER...

Any couple seeking to adopt a child should consult with an attorney before taking any action. Many of the options presented here can become expensive, so the earlier in the process a plan is developed, the more affordable options an attorney can offer. It is also essential that a parents create a detailed paper trail. A paper trail helps protect parents and their child in case of incapacitation or death. The better prepared parents are, the stronger the argument they can make to protect their families.

These resources can help you in the adoption process:

Attorney:

Jane A. Bassett (Bassett & Associates, P.L.L.C.), Ann Arbor
Phone: 734-930-9200
Email: jbasnett@bassettlaw.com

Adoption Agencies:

Hands Across the Water
Orchard Children's Services
Oakland Family Services

State-by-state LGBT adoption laws:

hrc.org/issues/parenting/adoptions/8464.htm

State-by-state adoption requirements (residency, info, etc.):
laws.adoption.com

Affirmations Community Center hosts adoption workshops and resource fairs. For more information, call Kim Phillips-Knope at 248-398-7105 ext. 226.

OBSTACLE

PROOF

Because Michigan does not recognize same-sex marriage, proving a relationship between a nonlegal parent and a child is difficult. Nonlegal parents cannot claim their child as a dependent. They also can't claim custody of their child in the event of a break up or divorce or their partner's death or incapacitation.

OBSTACLE

DEATH OF LEGAL PARENT

Even with a parenting agreement, the nonlegal parent can lose his or her child if the legal parent dies. If the legal parent dies, an appointed judge determines the minor's new guardian.

OPTIONS

Legal parents can meet with an attorney to write up a "Nomination of Guardianship." This document states that the legal parent of the child wishes to have his/her partner raise his/her child in case of death or incapacitation. A legal parent can also request this in a will. A judge does not have to honor this nomination, but it does clarify the legal parent's wishes.

OBSTACLE

RIGHTS

The nonlegal guardian has no rights to his or her child. He or she is unable to view educational records, claim the child for tax purposes, make medical decisions, travel, put through driver's education, etc.

TAKE ACTION

Two bills that would legalize same-sex adoption in Michigan have been introduced: House Bill 4249 and Senate Bill 167. Currently these bills are sitting in committee. Contact these lawmakers and tell them what you think of Michigan's current adoption policies.

House of Representatives Committee of Family, Children and Seniors:

Kenneth Kurtz, R-58, Committee Chair
Phone: 517-373-1794
Email: KennethKurtz@house.mi.gov

Dian Slavens, D-21, Minority Vice-Chair
Phone: 517-373-2575
Email: dianoslavens@house.mi.gov

Senate Committee of Family, Seniors and Human Services:

Judy K. Emmons, R-33, Committee Chair
Phone: 517-373-3760
Email: senjemmons@senate.michigan.gov

Vincent Gregory, D-14, Minority Vice-Chair
Phone: 517-373-7888
Email: senvgregory@senate.michigan.gov

OPTIONS

Many couples write up parenting agreements. These contracts designate the responsibilities and arrangements a couple has made outlining their roles in a child's life. While these agreements do not guarantee the non-legal parent custody or visitation of a child, they do provide written proof that the non-legal parent intended to play a parental role in the child's life. They can prove the non-legal parent's role as a "de facto parent," regardless of legal guardianship or biology.

OBSTACLE

DEATH OF NONLEGAL PARENT

In the event of a nonlegal parent's death, his or her child will have to depend entirely on the legally recognized parent. The child would not be eligible for any financial benefit (i.e. Social Security) from the deceased nonlegal parent.

OPTIONS

Nonlegal parents can protect their children by leaving both their estates and financial inheritance to them in a will. Often parents will leave this inheritance to the child's other parent to oversee until the child is old.

OPTIONS

Provided the child's nonlegal parent is relatively young and healthy, life insurance policies are a viable safety net during the child's youth, because beneficiaries can be family or friends. The sooner this avenue is explored, the lower a person's premium will likely be.

OPTIONS

Legal parents can work with an attorney to write up a "Delegation of Parental Rights." This document allows legal parents to extend their parental rights to another person for their child for six months. This allows nonlegal parents the right to decisions regarding medical treatment, education, travel, etc. Initially this practice was used for parents who were undergoing extensive medical treatment or traveling for long periods of time. Nothing states that the current parent must be unable to fulfill his or her duties to enact a "Delegation of Parental Rights." The document must be completed every six months.

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Justin & Mila
Our Friends...With Benefits

Photos: Screen Gems

Timberlake and Kunis talk being allies, getting naked and breaking gay stereotypes

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

When Justin Timberlake and Mila Kunis stroll into a hotel suite in Santa Monica, it's clear why they're in a movie about having emotionless, just-for-fun sex — they're both ridiculously hot. He's all dapper in a blue button-up; she's model-esque in hugging blue jeans.

As the stars of "Friends With Benefits," director Will Gluck's funny follow up to the gay-famous "Easy A," the dreamboat duo plays an emotionally impaired twosome living in New York who realize they have something in common: They both love getting frisky, but neither want the strings. The rom-com's not just an excuse to see

both of their butts; it's a modern take on the notorious hook-up scene — with lots of gayness going for it, including Woody Harrelson as Timberlake's gay manly-man sidekick.

Just before lunch one recent morning, Timberlake and Kunis sat down to talk about the gay people in their own lives, breaking stereotypes and the awkwardness of shooting sex scenes.

Are you as comfortable with your bodies as you seem to be in the movie?

Mila Kunis: I like to run around naked on the streets all the time! (Laughs) No, I'm pretty self-conscious in general. It doesn't help that I'm a female.

Justin Timberlake: (Deadpan) I'm extremely comfortable with Mila's body.

Mila, how does fake sex with Justin Timberlake compare to fake sex with Natalie Portman, your co-star in "Black Swan"?

MK: Well, the only thing I can say is that one was funny and one was scary.

Justin was the scary one?

JT: I was more intrusive. You do the math.

Justin, are those intimate scenes almost like choreographing a dance number?

JT: It's physical humor, so it has a level of theatrics to it.

MK: Thank you, thank you. No, no — I agree. That's the honest answer. It's very choreographed and very specific.

JT: It's definitely less awkward when you're required to make them awkward. You know, when you're required —

MK: (Gets up from the table for a drink)

JT: (To Mila, sarcastically) That's cool. I'll take care of it.

MK: I'm right here, I'm right here! I just went to grab water.

JT: Wow, I really have abandonment issues

See Justin & Mila, page 32

Shocantelle be-weaves in you

Cooter County hairdresser comes to Detroit with combs, style tips

BY SAMANTHA WHITE

Gay hair, fades, braids and weaves – Shocantelle Brown has everything you need to be gay chic.

“I do the frontal-hair that gay men like. If they want to use it to check men out, they can – because they can hide behind it and be discreet,” she says.

And for the lesbians? “With lesbians, the hair is a lot simpler. They like to do all black hair with a patch of white in the front, kind of like Cruella de Vil.”

The hairstylist extraordinaire and entrepreneur is taking the Cooter County hair industry by storm with her two salons, I Be-Weave and Fades and Braids. She’s also the only salon in town, so that helps. But she is definitely making her mark by styling most of the residents; Brown assists the queens and queers in her town as long as they come with their fabulousness already intact.

She says, “I don’t like to help anybody be fabulous and fierce if they’re not ready. So, they sit in my chair and we pray together for a look.”

“Like, I had this one girl come in who wanted a birdcage on top of her head. So we took a titanium cage and wrapped hair extensions around it and stuff. And we put a bird in it and put it on top of her head; it looked like a nest.”

The “artist,” as she refers to herself, says she is a religious person and was ordained by God to start doing hair.

“I was seeing some disasters on some fades and weaves, and I’m a religious person and I got a calling to help them,” Brown says.

The Cooter County native is one of many crazy and quirky citizens of the Kentucky town: Trudy and Tina James, Tikka Marsalla Greenwood, Paul Mean Dilly, Nancy Higgins and Kitty Litre are just a few of her quirky neighbors.

Lakeesha and Boneeva are two of the town’s ghetto fabulous hairdressers who work for Shocantelle at Fades and Braids. And when you’re done getting your hair did, you can stop by and see Tatianna who “will stuff and buff your beaver” and get a “vagazzle.”

Brown will bring her hair expertise to Ice Nightclub in Hamtramck on July 23, when she’ll also debut her new single, “I Be-Weave.” It’s a rare treat for her Detroit fans that only get to watch her on the Internet; Shocantelle rarely leaves her small Kentucky town.

“I have not been out of Cooter County, and I never been to Detroit, but I’m excited. I’m looking for Aretha Franklin,” she says.

“We’re going to have fun at Ice,” Brown says. “Imma do some hot dance moves, and I will be passing out free combs and talking to people about the possibilities for their hair. And we gon’ get our drink on.”

The Cooters aren’t the only ones who love Shocantelle; her gay fans everywhere have embraced the stylist for her sass and knowledge as a weave connoisseur.

“I guess they love me because I love them,” she responds when asked why she believes she gets so much love from the gays who go to her to maintain their fabulousness and watch her on her YouTube channel or at cootercounty.com.

“They’re fierce and fabulous and we need more of that in the world. We don’t need anymore of these uptight mother fuckers.”

The God-fearing hairdresser also has some words of inspiration for her gay fans that aspire to be like her one day: “Gays are so creative. I mean, I’m creative. But I be-weave everybody has the ability to do what they want. If you can be-weave it, you can do it.”

And we, of course, do – Detroit is sometimes referred as “the hair capital of the world” for its many salons and weave shops, and when Shocantelle is clued into that fact she enthusiastically asks, “Really?!” taking a pause to absorb it. Cooter County may have to fight to get her back from us.

Shocantelle Brown

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Cool Cities Ferndale



The parody "Thank You For Being A Friend" continues at The Ringwald through Aug. 8. Photo: Colleen Scribner

Girls: Thank you for being so funny! 'Golden Girls' parody closes the summer at The Ringwald

BY DONALD V. CALAMIA

I suspect if Susan Harris was able to break the shackles of 1980s television and write an episode of "The Golden Girls" totally free of the NBC censors, it might look something like "Thank You For Being A Friend," the unofficial musical parody that had its opening night audience at Ferndale's Ringwald Theatre screaming with laughter.

And with good cause: Director Joe Bailey knows his audience, and as a result, he delivers a raucously delicious production that both pokes fun at and celebrates the long-running comedy that's still loved by gays and straights alike thanks to endless reruns on cable TV.

Set in Miami, roommates Blanchet, Dortha, Roz and Sophie are having trouble sleeping thanks to the nightly gay sex parties thrown by their new neighbor, Lance Bass of the boy band 'N Sync. When confronted by the girls with their demand to stop his orgies, Lance issues them a challenge: If they win the Shady Oaks Retirement Home's upcoming talent contest, he'll do as they ask. But if he wins, the girls must become his personal cleanup crew for a month.

So as you can imagine, writer Nick Brennan and director Bailey toss every cheap joke, sight gag and double entendre

REVIEW

Thank You For Being A Friend

Who Wants Cake? at The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Saturday-Monday through Aug. 8. \$10-\$20. 248-545-5545. whowantscaketheatre.com

they can think of into the 90-minute parody to bring the story to its inevitable conclusion. Sure, the plot meanders a bit and the music by Luke Jones and Jeff Thomson sounds rather familiar. That matters little, since the careful attention to "Golden Girls" lore – slightly altered, of course, to avoid nasty cease-and-desist letters from NBC lawyers – and the sheer lunacy of the plot quickly endear themselves to fans of the original series.

Unless you're easily offended, that is. (Trust me on this: "Thank You" contains adult situations and language. And plenty of penis and vagina jokes.)

Remember, though, we're talking about The Ringwald here – so there's a twist: The women are all played by men. And I bet first-timers at the popular theater might not realize that right away, since all four performers have done their homework and are quite good with their

impersonations. Jamie Richards channels Bea Arthur's Dorothy – from her sweeping gestures to her statuesque stance. And Richard Payton is quite impressive perfectly capturing (and having great fun with) the vocal intonations of Rue McClanahan's Blanche. Joe Plambeck is given an opportunity to explore a heretofore hidden side to Betty White's usually sweet Rose, and he runs with it. And although Jeff Weiner starts out sounding Jewish rather than Italian, he quickly settles in and wonderfully recreates Estelle Getty's Sophia – purse and all.

Assisting the characterizations are the excellent costumes by Vince Kelly. All other roles are played by Ringwald newcomers Billy Dixon (Lance Bass) and Rich Wilson (Cubby and Stan). Both work hard, but neither approach the level of skills exhibited by the rest of the cast. And while Dixon certainly looks like the character he is playing, he doesn't come close to sharing Lance's vocal skills. (He's not alone in that department, however.)

A surprise guest appearance during Roz's flashback sequence rounds out the show, and as expected, it brought the house down on opening night. That alone – plus watching Payton and Richards struggle to stifle their laughs, neither of whom are in the scene, by the way – is worth the price of admission!

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Dolly goes jolly on 'Better Day.' Plus: Vanessa Carlton's musical transformation



Dolly Parton, 'Better Day'

Times are hard, but Dolly's here with a new album — and her trademark look-on-the-bright-side attitude — to tell you it's not all that bad. "Grindstones and rhinestones, that made up my life" — you know it, drag queens — "but I've shined like a diamond through sacrifice." And she does, making her cheery 12-track disc of original material a satisfying hit of happiness. This is pure Dolly, and the country legend is as charismatic and charming as ever on her 41st LP, which opens with her words-of-wisdom paean "In the Meantime." That song — and the couple that follow, like the beautifully harmonized ballad "Somebody's Missing You" — keep it traditional until the Disney-made cuteness called "Together You and I." She follows it with "Country is as Country Does," a reminder that she hasn't forgotten her down-home roots — and good thing; this one's a splendidly sassy hoedown ditty. "Holding Everything" is a soaring sequel to her "I Will Always Love You" classic; "Better Day" is a bluesy talk-sing song that few could pull off. Both leave you fuzzy. Even at her most woebegone with "I Just Might," she's a fierce survivor. On "Better Day," Dolly's persona lets her get away with more than most artists could; she's sometimes shamelessly corny, delivering one-liners like "I'm quite content with who I am, and if you ain't, well kiss my ham." Always true to herself, it's hard not to always love her. *Grade: A-*



Vanessa Carlton, 'Rabbits on the Run'

On Vanessa Carlton's fourth album, it's like she's walked a thousand miles — from that image of the pop balladeer she once was. The ballads are there on "Rabbits on the Run," but they take on a Tori-lite sound, with that same etherealness. Having come out as bisexual last year and signing to an indie label could be catalysts for the sense of freedom she thankfully employs on this project, made of 10 songs that are as intimate as she's ever been. "Carousel" begins familiarly, and then drifts into a dreamy soundscape that sucks you in with its enchanting use of handclaps, orchestral airiness and Carlton's underrated voice. That's especially true on "Hear the Bells," where she hauntingly sings in her lower register — and sounds brilliantly moody doing so. "Fairweather Friend" builds like a Coldplay triumph; "Get Good" relies on guitar instead of piano to drive a hearty melody; and she takes a chance with "In the End," the closing piano ballad à la Sarah McLachlan's "Last Dance." Sonically, some of "Rabbits on the Run" is monotonous, and absolutely none of it sounds radio-made — though

the jaunty "Tall Tales for Spring" or the almost-Taylor Swift "I Don't Want to Be a Bride" would probably have the broadest appeal. But this album's not meant for mainstream. And with music this good, so what? *Grade: B*

Also Out



Weird Al Yankovic, 'Alpocalypse'

A lot has happened in the five years since Weird Al's last album — like Lady Gaga, the muse for two songs on the music satirist's new installment of pop-song parodies. Besides the ridiculous and appropriately over-the-top "Perform This Way," he does his own version of "Poker Face" — called "Polka Face" — as a melody of mainstream hits. Elsewhere, he takes on celebrity-obsessed culture, forwarded junk emails and Craigslist — all are on point, and often very funny. But who knew he was romantic? On "If That Isn't Love," he charms with this lovely bit: "You're so beautiful you make a glorious sunset look like a big fat turd." Aww, thank you?



Gillian Welch, 'The Harrow & the Harvest'

The Americana legend's first album in eight years isn't an easy one. Its deep South-sounding ruminations on poverty, addiction and death (why of course) are nitty-gritty songs. Not even a Xanax could lift these up, and that's just fine — because, for the most part, Welch strangely soothes, even though none of the songs rise above a simmering tempo. Her bare-bones approach on traditionalism works especially well on "Hard Times," an encouraging nudge. The rest hits you hard, even if you don't actually know what hit you. It's one of the best kinds of albums, revealing itself slowly over time and making you feel something — even if all you feel is human.

Reach Chris Azzopardi at chris@pridesource.com.



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► **Justin & Mila**

Continued from p. 25

with you. That's a stupid joke. Don't make that serious. But we wanted to use these scenes to break a little ground. There's a lot in it that just feels more like how we see our generation.

Did you feel like you had a kindred quality between you two?

MK: We have the same sense of humor, is what we realized early on. The chemistry had a lot to do with the writing and the quick banter, and when we got comfortable with the characters it was easy to put that across onscreen. We became friends because we had two, three months of rehearsal and writing and rewriting, and you don't always get that — so you hope that somehow that translates onscreen. If you have a great time doing a film, you hope the audience has a great time watching it. But as far as feeling like kindred spirits, I think we had a lot of things in common.

JT: We actually do have a lot in common. We bonded over a lowbrow sense of humor that we share, but also, we kind of grew up in the business, so we kind of share that. And we're both pretty normal people when we're not

working. I just think, like she said, we had an unusual amount of time to rehearse, so we were able to discuss the scenes when we workshopped them and find what we thought was like-minded from a male perspective and a female perspective.

You're a fan of Harry Potter in the movie — which, in the film, is said to be a gay thing. Are you a fan?

JT: I'm sorry, that's like a thing about wizards? Harry... Potter? I'm aware of it. Harry Potter's pretty amazing. We're all fans.

Do you both think that a lot of young people are reluctant to get into relationships because they don't want to repeat their parents' mistakes?

JT: I think that happens with every person, and not just with relationships. You go through a certain point in your life where you feel like you've taken all the cards you've been dealt and made a great situation out of them, and then things that are in your DNA that you have no control over, you have to kind of accept. But I think that you go through life — not just in relationships, but all facets of life — feeling like you want to gain your independence, so sometimes there's a misunderstanding of feeling like you have to break away from your parents to do that. The more I realized how much

I was like my parents, the more I was able to gain my own independence.

You have a very funny dynamic with Woody Harrelson's character in the movie. Do either of you have gay friends like him in your own lives?

JT: I'm glad that you brought that up. That was very important to Will (Gluck) and myself when we were diagramming that relationship, because I do have a lot of male friends — straight and gay — and nobody gets treated differently. Your friends are your friends. We had a lot of discussions about that and said, "What a great opportunity to break ridiculous stereotypes about a gay male and show a great, honest relationship between a straight man and a gay man that's just a friendship between two men." I really hope that it feels empowering to the males in the gay community, because it's real life for me.

And to have somebody like Woody, who's such an affable, goofily charming person in real life, play that type of character is a real huge benefit for the movie. I was very excited to know that he was going to play that character because we really wanted to, like I said before, break stereotypes and comment on modern life. You take some chances when you do that, but I really hope that it feels empowering in a way, because I was very proud to have that in the movie.

(Looking at Mila) She agrees.

You have lots of gay friends, too?

MK: Yes, yes. I do! (Laughs) I've had an assortment of young gay gentlemen in my life since I was, like, 10 years old.

JT: I think it's an important time to say that people are people, and this was a good opportunity to do that. Again, Woody's character is self-effacing about his own sexual preference and he finds humor in it and I find humor in it, and we actually use our differences to become related to each other — and that's important. So again, I'm just really proud of that aspect of the movie.

When you first meet Woody in his first scene his dialogue is jaw-dropping, but as you get to know his character in the movie you realize that that's his actual character's sense of humor in general. It doesn't have anything to do with his sexual preference; it has to do with his sense of humor. So I hope that really comes across.

You hear a lot about how younger generations are more interested in the hook-up culture than dating and relationships. What kinds of stories were you told from people before you shot the movie?

MK: I was interviewed by a reporter when I was doing press for "Black Swan" and she told me that her current husband started as friends with benefits, so it wasn't up until then that I actually started paying attention to the idea of it. But I feel like this concept's been around forever. It's just that people are more willing to talk about it now. It's not as taboo as it was. I think that our generation is a little more forthcoming, a little more honest, and I think females are embracing their sexuality more so now than they were 30, 40, 50 years ago.

What about men?

MK: Men have always embraced their sexuality! (Laughs) I don't think men have ever had a problem embracing their sexuality.

JT: I disagree with that. Seriously. I think that men have always been uncomfortably external about their sexuality.

What are your favorite romantic comedies?

MK: Other than "When Harry Met Sally," it's a bit of a cheesy answer but it's honest: "Pretty Woman." One of my favorite movies in general.

JT: I think it's great, because it's the movie that your character loves in this movie. (Laughs) I don't think you should feel bad about that. It's a great movie; it makes you laugh.

MK: I can put that movie on mute and tell you word-for-word each piece of that. I love that movie. It truly makes me happy.

JT: I got in trouble for saying "Terms of Endearment." (Pointing to Mila) She was like, "That's not a romantic comedy!" But it made me laugh!

I will say "When Harry Met Sally" is a great one, and what I love about that movie is what I love about what we aspired to do with this movie, which was stop and look around at our generation and say what's funny and ridiculous about it. And for me, that empowers people who will go see this movie that want to be spoken to in a smart way about love and sex and relationships and connections between people.

"I really hope that it feels empowering to the males in the gay community, because it's real life for me."

—Justin Timberlake



More ado needed for gender-bending play

BY BRIDGETTE M. REDMAN

Would that our language possessed a gender-neutral pronoun that did not render the objectification of “it” or the stiltedness of “one.” Such a pronoun would have greatly aided the actors in Shakespeare West’s “Much Ado About Nothing” in the adaptation that pairs a female Benedick with a female Beatrice and a male Claudio with a male Hero.

Without it, the opening night production had actors mixing their pronouns between the original ones Shakespeare chose and the ones that fit with the adaptation. Overall, the concept is one with great potential. For the story to truly work within the concept, Director Brian Carbine needed to take the adaptation a few steps further. For example, when Beatrice demands that Benedick perform her revenge in proof of Benedick’s love, it makes no sense that she describes the revenge as a man’s task. Benedick is no more a man than she is. Yes, the speech is a great one and the scene is necessary. So why not focus on what IS different about them, such as the fact that Benedick is a soldier. Let Beatrice bemoan the fact that a challenge of honor is the work of a soldier and that she is no soldier. Other speeches that point out gender differences need equal modifications if we are to believe that the genders are what the production is presenting them as. There are times when speeches are modified and times when they aren’t, which leaves a

REVIEW

Much Ado About Nothing

Blackbird Theatre/Shakespeare West at West Park, 300 N. Seventh Ave., Ann Arbor. 7 p.m. Friday-Saturday through July 30. \$25. 734-332-3848. www.blackbirdtheatre.org



Shakespeare West’s “Much Ado About Nothing” continues through July 30 at Ann Arbor’s West Park. Photo: Barton Bund

confusing mishmash.

The world of Shakespeare West’s “Much Ado” serves as a model fantasia for what our world could be if we didn’t let gender politics and prejudices get in the way of people loving each other. The characters celebrate each other’s love and put the pursuit of marriage and lifelong devotion as a topmost priority. No one finds it unusual that a man should love a man or a woman a woman. Love itself is celebrated as natural and normal.

The actors in the Shakespeare West production handle the language adroitly and have mastered the comedic physicality of the play. They speak clearly and deliver the language in an accessible manner that could be heard even over the typical outdoor distractions of birds, planes and chain saws.

Forrest Hejkal embodies the traditional Hero archetype as a simpering, shy ingenue who blushes in the presence of his love and wears virtue and virginity as badges of honor.

He plays the young innocent who is easily swayed and given very little to independent thought – very much the thankless role that Shakespeare created.

Likewise, Emily Patton-Levickas creates a swaggering Benedick, convinced that she shall escape the chains of love that turn a person to a mooning fool. She has all the bombast and wit of Shakespeare’s famous protagonist and is equally matched by Diviin Huff’s energetic and sunny Beatrice. Both are devoted to their companions and easily gulled when love starts to snare them. They have the strong stage presence necessary for the roles and are convincing sparring partners.

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

Williamston ends season with sure-fire hit!

BY DONALD V. CALAMIA

On paper, Williamston Theatre’s current production of “And The Creek Don’t Rise” sounds like a delightful summertime comedy. For starters, it’s the world premiere of a script by local playwright Joseph Zettelmaier, whose previous efforts earned him local and national accolades. Then there’s the cast – each of whom is among the best Michigan’s industry has to offer. Then to top it off, the behind-the-scenes folks are fine artisans excellent at their crafts.

So with a pedigree this good, how could it miss, I asked myself on the drive to Williamston.

By 9:45 p.m. or so on opening night I had my answer – and based on the comments I overheard while standing in the theater’s lobby after the performance, I suspect most people agreed with me: “And The Creek Don’t Rise” is a sure-fire, don’t-miss hit!

Zettelmaier’s warm and charming story opens in Carson, Georgia where Rob (John Leopard) and Maddie (Kate Peckham) Graff have relocated from Michigan. Maddie, a veterinarian, arrived weeks before her unemployed and slightly older husband, and he’s having a tough time adjusting to their new life. When their closest neighbor, retired doctor and Civil War re-enactor Dr. Benjamin Boggs (Thomas D. Mahard), comes a ‘calling with a housewarming gift to welcome them to town, friction immediately develops between the men. And the “friendly” rivalry that ensues takes North-South aggression to hilarious, but potentially life-threatening extremes.

Zettelmaier, whose recent work includes

REVIEW

And The Creek Don’t Rise

Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Rd., Williamston. Thursday-Sunday through Aug. 14. \$18-\$24. 517-655-7469 www.williamstontheatre.org



Doc (Thomas D. Mahard) pays a visit to his new neighbors, Rob (John Leopard) and Maddie (Kate Peckham) in Williamston Theatre’s “And The Creek Don’t Rise”. Photo: Chris Purchis

“It Came From Mars” and “Salvage,” once again tackles fresh territory – this time, a fish-out-of-water story. And he does so by creating fully fleshed-out and believable characters that everyone can identify with and relate to. After all, who among us hasn’t felt out of place at one time or another – at a new job, after moving into a different neighborhood or even at a party? But as usual, it’s Zettelmaier’s crisp dialogue that especially sparkles – enhanced by the superb delivery by the show’s three actors.

Leopard is a master at delivering asides and quips, and one has to wonder if Zettelmaier wrote the role of Rob with Leopard in mind. (It’s a perfect fit for the lanky actor.)

Peckham earns plenty of laughs with her “there’s no doubt what I’m trying to tell you” facial expressions. And her intense focus never wavers.

And Mahard is thoroughly delightful as their proud and gentlemanly Southern neighbor. But keep a close watch on his face, because even the slightest change reveals much about his character’s motives.

The production is well-served by director Joseph Albright, last seen in Williamston’s “While We Were Bowling.”

Zettelmaier’s script is ultimately a story about human connections, and Albright expertly delivers both its warmth and its humor with great care and affection. His pacing is excellent, as well.

Daniel C. Walker’s set – mostly the exterior of the Graff’s house, plus various moveable set pieces – and Reid G. Johnson’s lighting design effectively work together to tell the story. (What impressed and surprised me was the hospital bed: It was the quietest I’d ever seen; you never hear it come rolling onto the stage during a scene change.)

As the play opens, Rob calls his new home town a place “where culture goes to die.” That’s certainly not the case with Williamston. Rather, with such fine programming courtesy of the Williamston Theatre, it’s a destination where people can visit for a fine cultural experience!

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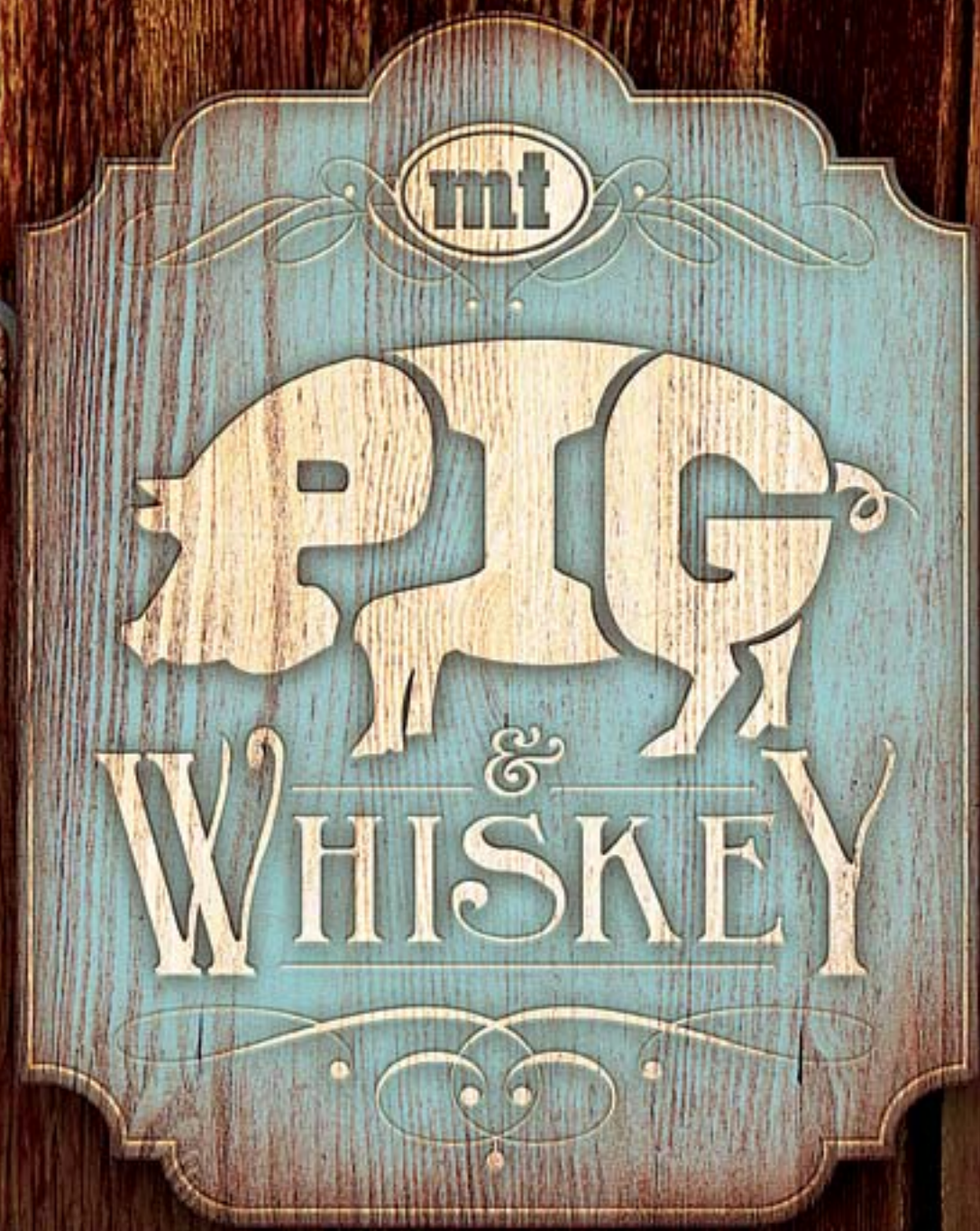
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BTM Cocktail Chatter



The Vodka Tonic

BY ED SIKOV

Kyle, Robbie, Phil Levine and some little wisp of a Thai twink on Phil Levine's lap were hot in conversation when I arrived on Friday evening. As I walked in I thought I heard Phil Levine say, "...Barry Esai a lot lately. Gets my juices flowin' know what I mean?" "(Something) Barry Esai?" Kyle asked, and Robbie swatted him playfully on the shoulder. "(Something something) at Top of the Harbor... that cute bartender with the nipple ring... Barry Esai!"

"Who's Barry Esai?" I asked. There was a split second of silence, and then they all burst into humiliating laughter. "Barry Esai!" Phil Levine sang out. "Oh that's hysterical I've got to tell Martin!" He was already speed dialing his cell phone. "It's me get this Mr. Ed just walked in remember that hunky bartender at Top of the Harbor yeah the one with the pees and that drink he made me yeah well Ed just asked

"Who's Barry Esai?!" He laughed himself into a coughing jag. "Call me later," he gasped. "I want to try out my new gel dong on you heh heh heh in fact come over now but this time use the Fleet before you leave" and hung up. "Barry Esai!" he boomed and had another coughing fit. The poor Thai kid pouted as he shook violently on Phil Levine's muscled thighs.

I felt my face get hot. I know I'm hard of hearing and sometimes get things wrong, but this was out of control. "The bartender's name is Barry Esai? What's so funny about that?" This produced a whole new round of hilarity.

Kyle came to my rescue. "It's not the bartender's name, Ed. It's an Absolut flavor - Berri Acai." I must have looked as confused

as I felt, because Robbie chimed in, "Berri - like in blueberry - and Acai, that rain forest whatever. That whippin' hot bartender at Top of the Harbor was making something real good out of it a couple weeks ago. I don't remember what was in it but it was great." Just as I stopped feeling like the world's stupidest primate, he exclaimed, "Barry Esai! Oh man."

I stomped off to my room. I don't handle these situations well. Yes, I need hearing aids - yet another step in the demoralizing deterioration of the human body that makes helpless fools of us for most of our lives and ends in the grave. I looked at myself in the mirror and deliberately pulled my T-shirt up so I could wallow in my shame. I stared for at least half a minute and felt my mood sinking further into the quicksand.

"Snap out of it, Belly Boy," I finally said out loud and let my shirt fall back down. "Go back to the harbor and buy some Barry Esai." Halfway there I even started singing: "I feel fatty and ratty and tatty - but I'm going to buy me a big peppermint patty - I'm alive! I'm alive! I'm alive!"

The Vodka Tonic

2 oz Absolut Berri Acai or any flavor you'd like, or plain but premium vodka
 Tonic water

Fill a tumbler with ice, add the vodka and pour in tonic to taste. Canada Dry and Schweppes each make good tonics, but there's a new guy on the block - an upscale brand called Q. Perfectly named, it's also extraordinarily good. Agave, no sugar; authentic quinine, no artificial flavors. *We're here, drink Queer - get juiced with it.*

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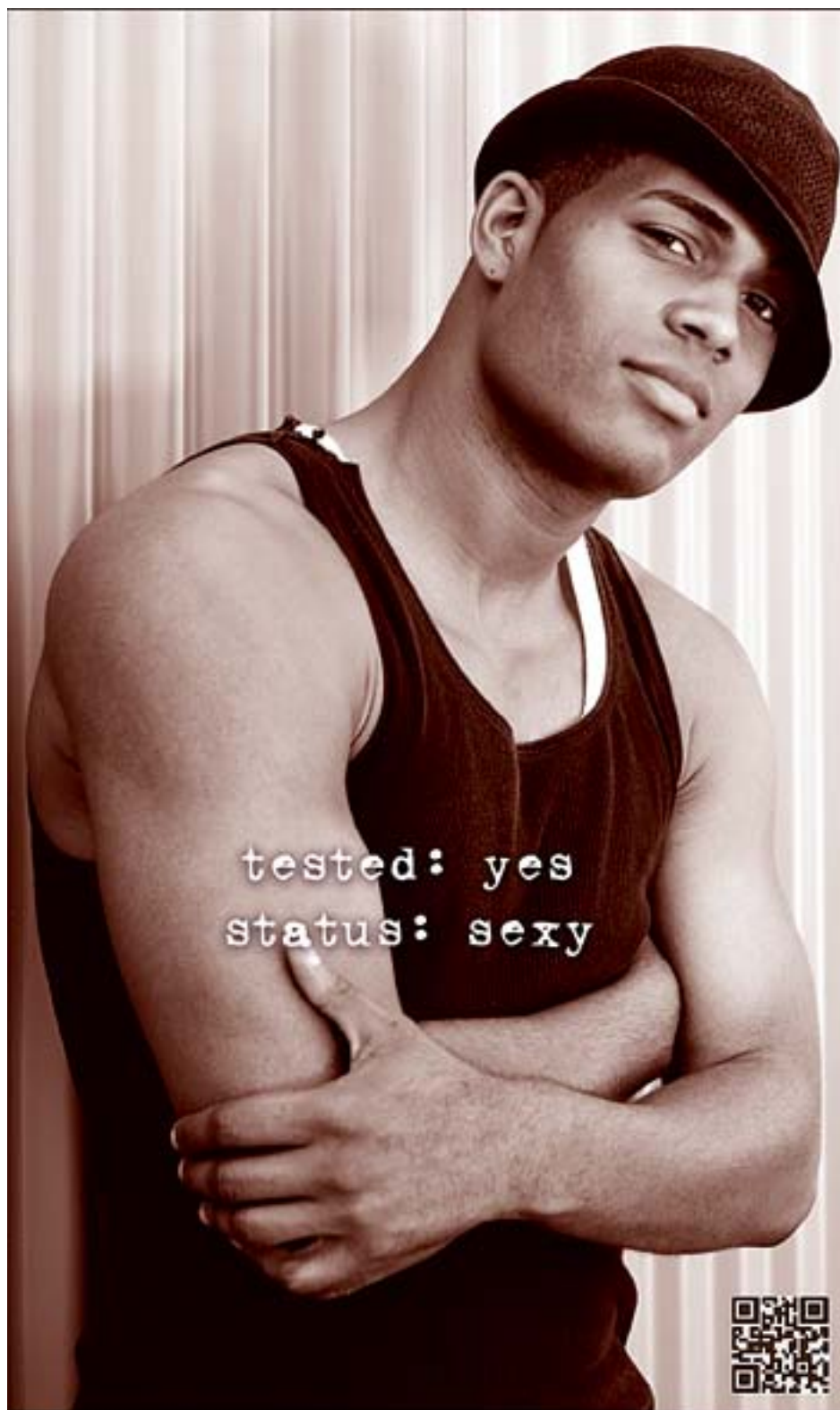
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 Thurs., July 28, 7:30-9 pm, Interfaith Candelight Vigil, Palmer Park
 Sat., July 30, Noon-8 pm, Palmer Park Festival, Palmer Park
 Sun., July 31, 10 pm-2 am, Closing Party, Mars Bar, Hamtramck

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Deep Inside Hollywood



Cheyenne Jackson. Photo: Karl Simone

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

It's abs ahoy for '300: The Battle of Artemisia'

Remember when Sarah Silverman hosted the MTV Movie Awards and noted that the title "300" was the answer to the question, "How gay is this movie on a scale from one to ten?" Well, get ready for more sweaty Spartans and their digitally enhanced abs to grace the screen now that a sequel, "300: The Battle of Artemisia," has been set up at Warner Bros. Like its predecessor, this one's based on a graphic novel by Frank Miller, although the name was changed from "Xerxes" since that title was no doubt judged too difficult to spell on Fandango. Xerxes was played by Rodrigo Santoro in "300" — although there's no word yet as to whether or not he'll reprise the role — and this sequel will chronicle that character's rise to near god-like power. The studio was still nailing down a director at press time, so don't expect "The Battle of Artemisia" to break out until 2013 at the earliest.

Everything's gone 'Green' for Cheyenne Jackson

Lest you think Cheyenne Jackson was going to spend his entire summer hiatus from "30 Rock" waiting for the next crazy statement to come out of Tracy Morgan's mouth, the Broadway star and "Glee" villain has a new indie drama making the gay film festival rounds during these hot months. "The Green" tells the story of a New York gay couple — schoolteacher Michael (Jason Butler Harner) and chef Daniel (Jackson) — who relocate to suburban Connecticut, only to discover how deeply the friendship and "tolerance" of their neighbors run when Michael is accused of inappropriate conduct with one of his students. With a strong supporting cast that include Julia Ormond (as Michael's lesbian lawyer), Illeana Douglas, Karen Young, and Bill Sage, "The Green" seems poised to pick up a distribution deal following its run on the festival circuit, but you can take comfort in knowing that you're cooler than other people if you see it at one of them first.

Patiently waiting for Anna Paquin

Anna Paquin's career began with a bang when, for her first film role in the powerfully moving drama, "The Piano," she became the second youngest person to receive an Academy Award. Now all grown up, the married, bisexual co-star of the steamy HBO series "True Blood" hasn't lost her affinity for heavy-duty drama, it's just that what might be her next great role has been sitting in the editing bay for over five years. It's called "Margaret" and it's a serious film from director Kenneth Lonergan ("You Can Count On Me") about a teenager who believes she has been the cause of a fatal car accident and how her determination to find the truth causes damaging repercussions all around her. The film also stars Matt Damon and Mark Ruffalo and was due to be in theaters years ago, when Paquin was young enough to still play a teenager. Hopefully the final edits are coming soon and the currently tentative 2011 release date won't roll into 2012.

Have no fear, Vanity Smurf is still here

Right around the corner lies "The Smurfs," the 3D extravaganza that will finally transplant the little blue (and beloved-for-decades) cartoon creatures into the real human world, where they'll find adventure as well as new friends in "Neil Patrick Harris" and "Glee"'s Jayma Mays. And gay adults with fond memories of the self-absorbed character of "Vanity Smurf" might be wondering what will become of that now-very-politically-incorrect little guy. See, Vanity was a male Smurf with a flower in his hat, narcissism in his soul and a distinctly gay aura. And while he's listed in the cast — to be voiced by "The Daily Show" regular Jon Oliver — there's no advance word on how the character's old-fashioned, stereotypical personality traits will be dealt with in this latest Smurf tale. Safe bets are on the studio toning down the coded negatives, but to really find out how much you'll just have to lay down your money put on those 3D glasses when August rolls around. Practice saying, "One for 'The Smurfs,' please," with a straight face if you need to.

Romeo San Vicente is a fan of vanity in any form it takes. He can be reached care of this publication or at DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.

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