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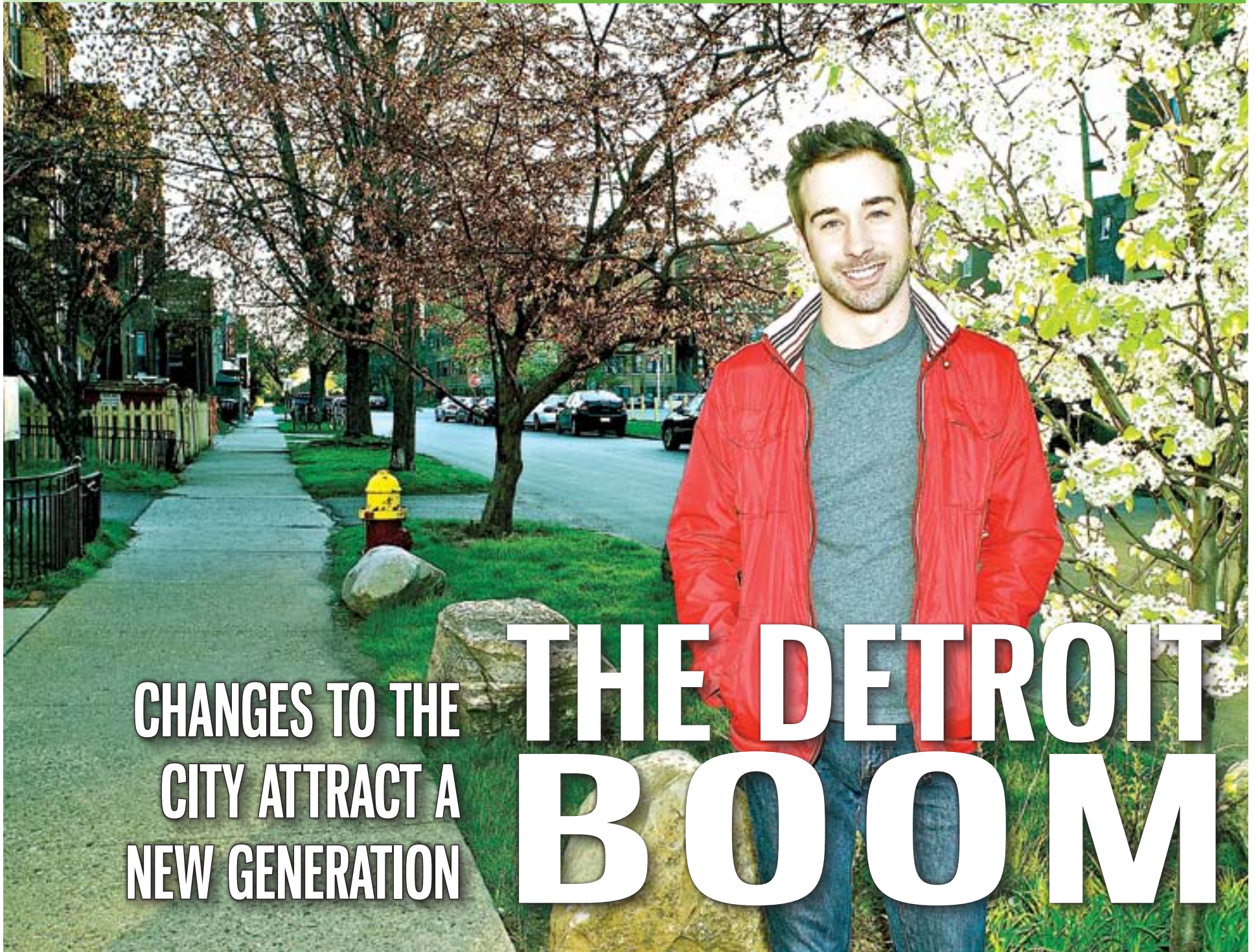
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CELEB-PHOTOG MIKE RUIZ OPENS UP

WEST MICHIGAN BILLBOARD WELCOMES GAY CHRISTIANS

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Pavel Haas Quartet

Joseph Gramley percussion
Wednesday \ April 18 \ 7:30 pm
Rackham Auditorium \ Ann Arbor

PROGRAM

Tchaikovsky Quartet No. 1 in D Major, Op. 11 (1871)
Smetana Quartet No. 1 in e minor
("From My Life") (1876)
Pavel Haas Quartet No. 2, Op. 7 ("From the
Monkey Mountains") (1925)

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Snow White
Ballet Preljocaj

Angelin Preljocaj artistic director
Jean Paul Gaultier costume designer
Thursday \ April 19 \ 7:30 pm
Friday & Saturday \ April 20 & 21 \ 8 pm
Power Center \ Ann Arbor

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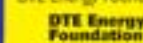
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Joshua Bell leader and violin
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Sunday \ April 22 \ 4 pm
Hill Auditorium \ Ann Arbor

PROGRAM

Beethoven Coriolan Overture, Op. 62 (1807)
Beethoven Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 61 (1806)
Beethoven Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92 (1811-12)

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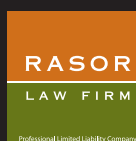
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GIFT offers a welcoming sign

West Michigan billboard embraces gay Christians

BY CRYSTAL PROXMIRE

"Gay Christian? Yes!" That's the messaging drivers on U.S. 131 near Burton Street in Grand Rapids will get now through the end of April thanks to a new campaign dedicated to bridging the gap between religion and sexuality.

Gays in Faith Together (GIFT) held a press conference April 3 at Westminster Presbyterian Church to announce the sign's unveiling. GIFT's website <http://gaysinfaithtogether.org>, lists churches that are LGBT welcoming and affirming, and it has resources like blogs and videos to help Christians facilitate discussions about the idea that God's love and acceptance applies to all.

Theresa D. McClellan, faith advocacy coordinator for the Gay Christian? Yes! campaign is excited about the sign. "The billboard is located on northbound U.S. 131 just south of the Burton Street exit. As you are entering the city there is a slight curve on the highway and then you see the question 'Gay Christian?' in white letters on a black background. The answer is right next to it, a big beautiful rainbow 'Yes' angel with outstretched arms," she said. "This unveiling has been a great success because we are opening minds, starting conversations and providing resources for people who thought they were out there on their own."

McClellan said that prior to the billboard going up there were 30 local churches that were gay-affirming and welcoming, but now the group is receiving calls from more congregations that want to be added. The group verifies additions with the church's priest, pastor or minister before putting them on the list.

"There is a misconception that churches that are welcoming are somehow 'gay churches'," said Davin Risk, who serves on GIFT's marketing committee. "The important thing is affirming churches aren't seeking members, it's about embracing all God's children regardless of who they are. Services aren't gay-centered or anything like that. They're just normal Christian services, in a church where everyone feels loved."

Risk has been attending Genesis United Methodist for over two years. "I felt loved as soon as I walked in," he said. "So many other churches and religious organizations are missing out on gifts from the LGBT community. I was given the opportunity to use my spiritual gifts in my congregation. I can serve on worship ministries and I get to sing in the choir. They're opportunities that I wasn't exactly denied access to, but let's say that I didn't



The billboard was unveiled April 3 along with a companion website. Photos courtesy of GIFT.

feel I could participate in. But again, it's not about the negative or placing blame. It's about letting people know where they can go without having to wonder if they will feel loved. ...My whole thing with this campaign is this: come as you are, God can use even you."

Psychologist Matthew Clark, who owns The Clark Institute in Grand Rapids, is also part of the campaign. "I work with a lot of adults and teenagers who feel ostracized, rejected, and all alone because of their sexuality and Christianity," Clark said. "They believe that their family and church will reject them if they come out as being LGBT or many of them have been told by their families or church leaders that their 'lifestyle' or 'urges' are wrong and sinful. Many of my patients have internalized homophobia and shame for being gay and Christian."

"I believe that Christians have been misinformed. The Seven Passages that appear to speak against homosexuality really have nothing to do with being homosexual or LGBT. Both the verses in the Old Testament and in the New Testament refer to in-hospitality, men on men rape, pedophilia, and temple orgies. Not about gay and lesbian relationships as we have today."

"Also we should keep in mind that both the Old and New Testament have edicts and laws that most Christians no longer follow today. In the New Testament Paul wrote that women should not tie their hair, wear jewelry or speak in church. Most Christians do not follow that today."

"I believe that the true message of the scripture is key to erasing homophobia and

self-shame in the Christian community. I love the Gay Christian? Yes! Coalition and its message of Grace, Love, and Acceptance for the LGBT and Straight Community."

Cara Oosterhouse, who serves on GIFT's personnel committee, took part in the press conference and was featured on the local news. The effects of her work became clear the next day when someone at a store recognized her. "One of the cashiers ...saw me there this morning and pulled me aside. He very quietly says to me 'did I see you on the news last night?' I smiled at him and said, 'Yes that was me,' and I told him a little about the work I have done to work on this campaign."

"He then told me the story of how he and his partner of 16 years simply quit going to the church they were members at after a Sunday sermon condemning the LGBT community. He said to me, 'I had no idea that there were places we could go around here to worship.' You could see from the look in his eye and the tone of his voice that he was really touched by this."

"Honestly, this man's story and his willingness to share it with me make this campaign a success in my book."

GIFT's Vision is "To be a beacon of hope that reveals God's love for all people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity."

Find out more at <http://gaysinfaithtogether.org>.

Voters left out in county politics power-grab

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

Oakland County residents are losing representation as a coordinated Republican effort to gain control of the redistricting process has succeeded. The Commission will be cut from 25 commissioners to 21, and control over drawing the districts has been taken from the apportionment committee and handed to the representatives themselves.

The Republicans are also increasing their power as a seat left vacant by a Democrat from Auburn Hills and Pontiac was filled by appointing a Republican, violating the Board's own rule set in 1975. Not only was Commissioner Tim Greimel's seat given to a Republican, the seat (and the \$32,000 salary that goes along with it) was given to Angela River, the owner of a hair salon in Auburn Hills with little in the way of electoral success, a history of drunk driving, and an application with spelling and grammatical errors. According to The Detroit Free Press, "River ran for the seat in 2010, finishing third in the Republican primary. She also ran for the Auburn Hills City Council in 2009, finishing 12 out of 14 candidates. She won a seat on the Auburn Hills Public Library Board of Trustees in November." She was also the Vice-Chair of the Oakland County Republican Party.

The Detroit Free Press article also stated, "Commissioner David Potts, R-Birmingham, said he voted for River even though he didn't agree with fellow Republicans about the appointment." In the article Potts goes on to explain that if the Republicans wouldn't have appointed someone, there would have had to have been a special election. Had a special election been considered, the voters in Pontiac and Auburn Hills would have been the ones deciding who should represent them for the remainder of 2011.

"There seems to be no limits the Republican majority will go to take power away from voters," said County Commissioner Marcia Gershenson, co-chair of the Democratic Caucus. "To appoint someone who does not share the values of voters they will represent in this traditionally Democratic district is wrong and unfair to voters."

"This is not Republicans versus Democrats; this is Republicans versus democracy, justice, and the rule of law. Oakland County voters deserve better."

**- County Commissioner
Dave Woodward, co-chair of
the Democratic Caucus**

Commissioner Craig Covey, who represents Ferndale, Hazel Park and part of Royal Oak said, "I voted against Angela River to replace Tim Greimel in the Democratic seat that includes Auburn Hills and Pontiac. Her resume cover letter was filled with grammatical and spelling errors, and now it comes out that she has a restricted driver's license with three drunk driving convictions, one being a felony. She is a Republican, and I spoke out during the vote that we should replace a Democrat with another Democrat to be fair."

Democrats are looking into potential avenues to reclaim the seat in Auburn Hills and Pontiac. In the meantime, Covey is planning a fundraiser on May 1 at One Eyed Bettys in Ferndale to raise money to fight the redistricting decision.

Patterson power grab

"The Republican Power grab continues, and we will need to raise funds if the Democrats want to continue to fight this in court and politically," Covey said. "Taken together, my prediction has come true, which is that the partisan politics that people hate coming out of Lansing and Washington has now come home to roost in Oakland County, and that the kinds of corruption that Brooks likes to make fun of in Wayne County, is now rearing its ugly head in our own."

"Republicans are rigging the system and changing the rules to undermine the decision of Oakland County voters," said County Commissioner Dave Woodward, co-chair of the Democratic Caucus. "This is not Republicans versus Democrats; this is Republicans versus democracy, justice, and the rule of law. Oakland County voters deserve better."

Kevin Howley, who most recently served as interim executive director of Affirmations, is currently running against L. Brooks Patterson for position of Oakland County Executive. In a recent press release, Howley said "The decision demonstrated to voters that partisan politics trumps the rule of law. More importantly, it demonstrated that with Republicans holding substantial majorities in both houses of the legislature and on the county commission, coupled with a partisan Supreme Court and a Republican governor, citizens are left without checks and balances in the system."

The redistricting issue has gone through the court system. Courts determined that the



Democrats are looking into potential avenues to reclaim the seat in Auburn Hills and Pontiac. Commissioner Craig Covey, who represents Ferndale, Hazel Park and part of Royal Oak is planning a fundraiser on May 1 at One Eyed Bettys in Ferndale to raise money to fight the redistricting decision.

maps drawn by the Apportionment Committee were legal and fair. Instead of accepting the determination, the Republicans, led by Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, coordinated a political effort to change the laws regarding districts. Although it only affects Oakland County, PA 280 caps representation at 21 and gives the power to the draw the lines to the Commissioners themselves. The Appeals Court sided with the Democrats, ruling that this was a local law and required 2/3 of the state legislature to pass. The Republicans appealed and the Supreme Court ruled in their favor. The four Republican-appointed Justices supported the new law, and the three Democratically-appointed ones dissented.

Later this week, the lines will be drawn in special meetings. A vote is expected by April 13. Not only does the move cut representation, it leaves Democratic candidates at a disadvantage because even though election season is well underway, they have no idea what districts they may or may not be in. Those that have already filed petitions, like Covey, will have to start over once the new districts are drawn.

Patterson's office had denied having anything to do with the decisions made at the state level. However it was later determined that Patterson had exchanged many emails and spent over \$130,000 of taxpayer money to fund the coordinated political effort.

Emails obtained under a Freedom of Information Act request reveal the planning process. Patterson and other Republicans exchanged emails about how to best get the legislation passed quickly and under the radar of

the public, and even concocted the reduction of the number of representatives as their reasoning for wanting a change.

"I guess it would also help to have a legitimate explanation as to why we waited until now, after redistricting plans have been submitted, to take these bills up. I'm thinking that we claim we were having trouble agreeing on how many seats the BOC would ultimately have," wrote Rep. Eileen Kowall (R-White Lake), on Sept. 6, 2011. This and other emails indicate the extent of the politicking that occurred.

Patterson issued a statement about the ruling, stating "Michigan Supreme Court ruling is a victory for the taxpayers and residents of Oakland County. Not only will they save \$2.5 million over 10 years by reducing the number of county commissioners, but they will benefit from their accountable, elected officials drawing county commission district lines, not unaccountable political party bosses."

Covey remains hopeful and vigilant. "We still don't know where Ferndale will land in this new redistricting, we may know within days how the new Republican map looks. I plan to run for re-election to the County Commission regardless of how they mess around with our cities. I just want to try and make sure that Ferndale, Royal Oak, and Hazel Park get to be well represented, whether that be by myself, or another person elected," he said. "I hope that people will start to pay attention to these underhanded political acts and will get more involved. Come to the fundraiser. Come to meetings. Protest. Have your voice heard. That's what politics is all about."

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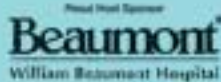


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Gay and Lesbian Alliance of Chrysler. The company received a 100 percent rating from HRC this year signaling benefits now being offered to transgender individuals.

Rainbow flag leads Chrysler employee down path of empowerment

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

Sometimes a rainbow sticker can make all the difference in the world. For Bernadette Bennett, a staff advisor working for Chrysler, it gave her the opportunity to ask questions of a fellow employee and opened up the path to her coming out on the job and being part of an equality revolution in corporate America.

It was 1997 and Bennett had been living in Huntsville, Alabama. Though she was in a long term relationship, Bennett was unable to talk about her sweetheart while she was at work, and she had to be careful that no one found out she was a lesbian.

She was working on a project with Chrysler, and when they offered her a chance to move to Michigan she thought it was a great opportunity. "I didn't really think about it in terms of being gay, I didn't think I would ever come out at work. I knew it would be different in Michigan because it was where the corporate headquarters was, but mainly I moved because I wanted to stay with Chrysler and work on that project.

"When I finally felt it was okay, it came by chance. I was working on a special project and a guy working with me had a rainbow flag on his binder. He was on the board of People of Diversity and he told me all about it.

"I didn't have a big connection so I joined right away ... I felt absolutely better. It was at

the beginning of when we were getting domestic partnership benefits and I felt like I should be involved with that."

The POD groups grew into GALA, Gay and Lesbian Alliance of Chrysler. Bennett and the corporation's 57,000 employees worldwide now enjoy protections and equality that only a few major corporations can compete with.

Michael Palese, who works in corporate communications for Chrysler, has also seen the company through its evolution to equality. "I remember when we first adopted the domestic partner benefits we got some letters from groups and that, but we believed it was the right thing to do. It wasn't an out pouring or anything, but there were negative comments. For the most part people were very happy about it. We were one of the first companies to take that step and they were happy and proud to see an automaker, which is typically a very corporate, conservative industry, being very progressive," Palese said. "There were good reasons to do that. Business reasons and human reasons."

For Chrysler it's about attracting a world-class workforce. For Bennett, being out at work and safe has made her life "so much better." Bennett now sits on the board of GALA, and works to keep the issue of acceptance alive in company dialogue so that employees know they are in a safe and affirming place to come

► Chrysler

Continued from p. 6

out if they choose. “We try to have programs for the LGBT employees,” Bennett said. “For instance we brought in a guest speaker for a Stop The Bullying campaign to help in the schools for people’s kids and in the workplace. We coordinate different events. Like we brought in Ruth Ellis, KICK, and Affirmations just last month to discuss ways we can be more involved in the community. We had one hour meetings over one week and a lot of information was gathered. We did Motor City Pride as sponsor, brought vehicles and tried to talk to a lot of people about what Chrysler is doing.”

“Last year we attended Out and Equal where we were an advocate sponsor where we had a big booth. We brought a vehicle, and did networking with other organizations to see what they’re doing, and to help them, and to bring back what we learn.”

Internally Chrysler and GALA are always working to let people know they are welcome and affirmed. “A lot of people may be allies. They may mean well but they may not know what to say or what not to say,” Bennett said. “We’re trying to roll out ‘Lunch-and-Learns’ and working with the Diversity Office to narrow the gap of what we say, so people know how to be respectful.”

Palese further explained the company’s motivations. “We promote diversity wherever we do business. The way we hire and promote is reflective of the culture we value. What we value here is talent. We don’t care about ethnicity or sexual orientation.” He said Chrysler also participated in a large Out For Work event, trying to recruit talent from within the LGBT community.

It is this commitment to diversity and equality that had landed Chrysler back on the Human Rights Campaign Foundations top companies to work for in 2012.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation identified 190 companies worldwide and only six in Michigan that received 100 percent on the Corporate Equality Index. The Index rates major employers based on LGBT workplace policies and benefits defining the best-in-class practices for LGBT inclusion in the workplace. Chrysler has earned the perfect score six times since the Index was established in 2002.

A perfect score indicates a company provides full parity for domestic partner benefits, not only in basic medical coverage, but in dependent care, retirement and other benefits that affect families’ financial and medical well-being. Chrysler Group’s 100 percent rating also signifies coverage for transgender individuals for medically necessary care — a community the HRC notes has historically been overlooked.

Other Michigan companies to receive the distinction are Ford Motor Company, Herman Miller, Dow Chemical, Whirlpool and Kellogg. Find out more about HRC and the best employers at www.hrc.org/resources/entry/best-places-to-work-2012.

Learn more about diversity at Chrysler at <http://www.chryslercareers.com/diversity.html>.

What the Affordable Health Care Act offers LGBT Americans

Closing the disparities and discrimination gap

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

To mark the second anniversary of the federal health care reform law, The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Center for American Progress held a webinar at the end of March, “Learn Your Power: How the Affordable Care Act Helps LGBT Americans.” These organizations were joined by the Department of Health and Human Services and One Colorado, Colorado’s statewide LGBT equality organization, to address the health care issues faced by LGBT people and their families.

The goal of the online gathering was to outline changes brought about by the Affordable Care Act and educate LGBT people on how they can maximize the benefits of the law, which protects all Americans from the worst insurance company abuses.

“The LGBT community faces specific challenges in both the workplace and in the hospital. Providers are not equipped with the cultural competency they should have to adequately serve the needs of the LGBT community,” said Mayra Alvarez, director of Public Health Policy, Office of Health Reform, Department of Health and Human Services. “Studies show health disparities related to sexual orientation and gender identity are due, in part, to lower rates of health care coverage and this lack of cultural competency.”

The new law, according to Alvarez, pays specific attention to the unique health care needs of LGBT people. “It builds on what works and fixes what’s broken. We have a lot of work to do and encourage feedback from the community,” said Alvarez, who noted the changes to their website where the health coverage finder now includes a same-sex partner filter. “For the first time in our countries history, regardless of your sexual orientation or gender identity, you’ll be able to get affordable health care coverage.”

Health disparities, discrimination

“LGBT people and their families are among those affected by our broken and imbalanced health care system,” said Darlene Nipper, deputy executive director of the

Transgender Discrimination Survey (http://transequality.org/PDFs/Executive_Summary.pdf), show that 50 percent of transgender respondents indicated they have to teach their medical providers about transgender care. Nineteen percent of transgender people reported being refused medical care outright due to their transgender or gender non-conforming status.

“Unfortunately, we found even higher numbers among people of color in the survey,” said Nipper, adding that factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographic location and age further exacerbate these disparities. The health care reform law, according to Nipper, has a greater impact on LGBT people because of disproportionate unemployment, uninsurance and because LGBT people have more pre-existing conditions than many other Americans, a critical public health issue in this country.

“These observations remind us that LGBT people aren’t just defined by sexual orientation and gender identity, but have multiple identities that shape who they are,” said Nipper. “This law ensures that LGBT people have access to the health care they need and literally (the law) has the potential to save the lives of LGBT people. But not enough people know about the benefits.”

Prior to March 2010 when President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act into law, fifty million Americans were uninsured. Tens of millions more were underinsured, and those that had coverage were often afraid of losing it.

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said in a fall 2011 speech to the National Coalition of LGBT Health that the Affordable Care Act may represent the strongest foundation our nation has ever created to begin closing LGBT health disparities. Sebelius said “We’ve come along way, but we still have a long way to go.”

The report, Changing the Game: What Health Care Reform Means for Gay, Lesbian,



Download the full report at www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/03/pdf/aca_lgbt.pdf

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. “Studies show that LGBT people often face higher incidences of health disparities and greater discrimination in health care settings than the public at large.”

Findings from reports such as Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National

See Health Care, page 7

In two years, discriminating against anyone because of a pre-existing condition will be illegal. Insurance companies won't be able to charge women more than men. Tax credits will make buying insurance more affordable. There will be new state-based marketplaces – called Affordable Insurance Exchanges – where private insurers will compete for consumers business and members of Congress will have to buy insurance there, too.

Heard on Facebook

“Bully” victory...? The controversial film is NOW rated PG-13, but at the price of censorship. What do you think?

Hate censorship of any kind but think the message of this movie and the public buzz created by the issue is worth the sacrifice. The original, intended cut will be available at some point too I assume.

-Kevin Stapish

This is great news!

-Mark Sartor

The movie's producers decided to alter the content to match the rating they wanted. This has nothing to do with censorship. Any adult is allowed to see any movie he/she wants to in this country. The rating system is in place to help people make choices for their kids. I don't agree with the rating system all the time but it's usually pretty on the mark and I appreciate that it exists.

-Paul McIntyre

What the director did with this movie makes him an absolute hero. That he made it possible for young people to see this movie will definitely save someone's life. I hope schools end up taking field trips to see it. Hopefully it will make a difference to many people who need to know that their actions hurt and to others that they can overcome.

-Lauren

Why they (the Weinstains) even resisted doing this is beyond me. The more kids that see this movie the better. There's a time for standing on principle and a time for doing the greater good.

-Rose Tyler

Comments may be edited for grammar and length.



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S/he Said

Marriage, Coming Out

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Gavin Newsom

"I know there will be some who argue that this is not the time, that there's already too much at stake in this year's election. To them, I would answer with this quote from Martin Luther King, Jr., 'There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right.' I believe that time has come for Democrats. We can't afford to ignore our conscience on the issue of true equality for our families, our friends, and our neighbors. Dr. King taught us that the arc of history is long - now, it's up to us to decide if we will help bend it towards justice. I certainly hope we do."

-Gavin Newsom, Lieutenant Governor of California, in his column titled "It's About Time: Democratic Party Should Adopt Marriage Equality in Platform," www.huffingtonpost.com, Apr. 05. In 2004, as mayor of San Francisco, Newsom granted marriage licenses to about 4000 same-sex couples, an act of civil disobedience that made him a national celebrity.



Valerie Tarico

"Many who call themselves Bible believers are simply, congenitally conservative - meaning change-resistant. It is not the Bible they worship so much as the status quo, which they justify by invoking ancient texts. Gay marriage will come, as will reproductive rights, and these Bible believers will adapt to the change as they have others: reluctantly, slowly and with angry protests, but in the end accepting it, and perhaps even insisting that it was God's will all along."

-Valerie Tarico, in her column titled "Captive Virgins, Polygamy, Sex Slaves: What Marriage Would Look Like if We Actually Followed the Bible," about what "Bible believers" say they know about the Bible and what the Bible really has to say about marriage, www.alternet.org, Mar. 27



Carolyn Sherer

"I was inspired to do something to encourage greater understanding and acceptance of lesbians after a friend died. The woman's female partner met resistance from the family when she tried to get clothes and other items from the home the couple had shared. That galvanized my resolve to go ahead and address my own identity as a lesbian. This is really my coming out story."

-Carolyn Sherer, professional photographer, about the exhibition of her photographs titled "Living in Limbo: Lesbian Families in the Deep South," at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, featuring 40 photographs of lesbian couples and families living in the Deep South, www.washingtonpost.com, Mar. 29.



Netta Weinstein

"Individuals who identify as straight but in psychological tests show a strong attraction to the same sex may be threatened by gays and lesbians because homosexuals remind them of similar tendencies within themselves. In many cases these are people who are at war with themselves and they are turning this internal conflict outward. In a predominately heterosexual society, 'know thyself' can be a challenge for many gay individuals. In controlling and homophobic homes, embracing a minority sexual orientation can be terrifying. These individuals risk losing the love and approval of their parents if they admit to same sex attractions, so many people deny or repress that part of themselves"

-Netta Weinstein, University of Essex, U.K. and Richard Ryan, University of Rochester co-authors, in a press release titled "Is Some Homophobia Self-phobia?" about a research study documenting the role that both parenting and sexual orientation play in the formation of intense and visceral fear of homosexuals, www.rochester.edu, Apr. 05.



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Social networking site fills need for lesbians of color

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

When Nicole Breedlove was looking to connect online with other lesbian women of color, she asked herself, "Where are they?" Out of frustration with websites like MySpace, Facebook, BlackPlanet and DowneLink, she launched OurSistaCircle (www.oursistacircle.com) in Oct. 2009. It's the first social networking site which caters to all lesbians of color – African American, Latina, Asian, Native American and Biracial – worldwide.

"A recurring theme was lesbians were complaining about being sexually harassed and verbally abused and/or threatened by men," said Breedlove, 41. "I also found that lesbians of color that live in different countries do not feel connected with lesbians of color here in the states. I needed to create a safe space for us to meet and discuss issues unique to our community."

Breedlove resides in Brooklyn, New York, but her website has attracted members from Indonesia, South Africa, Jamaica, Suriname, Trinidad, Germany, and France, among many of the U.S. states.

"Here, we have different ideas of what it means to be a lesbian. Some women don't have access to centers or clubs. They have no connection to the LGBT community in general and live vicariously through us. My goal is to bridge the gap," said Breedlove, adding that she is helping women as young as 17 reach common ground with women as mature as 67. "OurSistaCircle is chock full of many interesting, beautiful, intelligent, respectful and supportive women."

With 6,500 members, Breedlove said the site is growing steadily as lesbian women of

color from a variety of backgrounds join at an average rate of two members per day. Site users can post pictures, video chat, post an event or announcement, join or establish a group or forum, blog, instant message, read news as it relates to gays and lesbians around the world, and post status updates.

"It's free, easy to navigate and there is a non-nudity policy, which encourages users to build relationships based on common interests and chemistry instead," said Breedlove, who plays the role of Dr. Bionic and gives out friendly relationship advice, then invites members to respond and perhaps help her answer questions.

Breedlove acts as the site administrator, customer service department, troubleshooting department and help desk, all while maintaining a full-time position with the Foundation Center, a non-profit organization in New York. "I am so passionate about the need for OurSistaCircle that I am paying for it entirely out of pocket and I monitor it constantly, investigating anything that seems off."

As far as limiting the site to specifically lesbian women of color, Breedlove explains that lesbian women of color have legitimate needs separate from and in addition to those of white lesbians.

"In our community, it's assumed that just because we are all lesbian that we have everything in common. But there are so many things that make us so different. We discuss issues beyond just good or bad dates we've been on. Issues of race, class and gender are not off-limits and are discussed candidly and with support," she said.

Daineacia Payne of Redford, Michigan

See Social networking, page 11

"I think it's therapeutic for women to go to a site like this. It's not just about lesbian women of color. It's about our ethnic backgrounds, too, and coming together in a non-discriminating environment. We do get lost and we need a voice."

- Daineacia Payne, 34,
Redford, Michigan, a
member since 2009

See Social networking, page 11

understands this point of view. "I think it's therapeutic for women to go to a site like this. It's not just about lesbian women of color. It's about our ethnic backgrounds, too, and coming together in a non-discriminating environment. We do get lost and we need a voice," said Payne, 34, a member since 2009.

"It's very unique because I don't have to worry about half-naked women on the site. There tends to be a lack of substance in our community and when browsing profiles before, I might get a big booty in my face and I don't want to see that," said Payne. Nor does she want to be solicited for sex as she has been on other social networking sites. "But on OurSistaCircle, I'm not scared to open up a message. Nic keeps the site in check and maintains its integrity."

Marcy Huff-Taylor of Shirlington Village in Arlington, Virginia, also joined in 2009 in search of something deeper than a site or forum for women in their teens or 20's. "It's a refreshing change. It's a lot of mature like-minded, well-educated women all looking to network with each other, pen pal and chat or meet their significant other. It's a really smart site," said Huff-Taylor, 41, a mother and corporate professional. "The site is positive, progressive and a fabulous outlet. Nic's vision is phenomenal and she is doing a great thing for our community."



Volunteers helping at Forgotten Harvest March 30

Transgender Day of Visibility pairs volunteering with community

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

SOUTHFIELD - As transgender individuals measured out servings of caramel for Forgotten Harvest, they talked about their experiences and showed the other volunteers at the large food pantry that they are just like most people - helpful, friendly, approachable, and normal.

"There are people who might not ever have reason to think about what it is really like to be a transgender person. They may never meet one or get to talk with one. We want to give those people a good impression," said Emma Krasicky, Project Coordinator with Transgender Michigan. She and six others participated in Transgender Day of Visibility Day of Service on March 30.

"To me, I think it's important that if it's safe for you to put yourself out there, to do volunteer work. You might meet new people, and you get to do something as part of the transgender community, and as part of the greater community as a whole." Krasicky came out as transgender in 2009 and began

her physical transition in 2010, she credits being active in the community with her comfort in being able to be herself.

In the morning Krasicky represented the transgender community at Gleaners Food Bank in Detroit, and in the afternoon members from Transgender Michigan, Transgender Detroit and Wayne State University's GSA met up at Forgotten Harvest in Oak Park. Both organizations work to provide food for the needy in the Detroit Area.

Transgender individuals and allies that missed Day of Visibility may still want to consider checking out the Transgender Day of Empowerment taking place at Affirmations, 290 W. 9 Mile, Ferndale, on Saturday, April 14.

Below is the schedule for the event. There will also be booths from multiple organizations in the lobby of Affirmations, and a potluck following the event, with a suggested \$5 donation to Crossroads and an ask that people bring a dish to share.

Transgender Day of Empowerment Saturday, April 14.

Please note that two to three workshops will be run simultaneously during each session:

Session #1: 10 am-11 a.m.

Electrolysis with Tracy Hoover
Safe Sex with Aimee Coldren

Session #2: 11 am-12 p.m.

Self-Defense Workshop at the Center for the Physical Arts, across the street from Affirmations
11:15 am-12:15 pm: Interfaith Panel on Gender Non-Conforming Issues

12:15 pm-1 pm: Lunch on your own

Session #3: 1 pm-2 p.m.

Hormones and medication with a representative from CVS Pharmacy

Michigan Transgender Empowerment Task Force with Steph Turner, Seth Carwyn, and Ryan Oliver
Kids of Trans People with Dr. Caretto

Session #4: 2:15 pm-3:15 p.m.

Gender Therapy with Shari Slebodnik, MSW
Activism and Politics with Equality Michigan

Session #5: 3:30 pm to 4:30 p.m.

Trans Youth and Parents Panel with Dr. Caretto
Addressing Racism with Charles Ford, Jr. and guest

Session #6: 4:45 pm to 5:45 p.m.

SRS Surgery with Dr. Neal Wilson
Transgender Michigan: Then and Now, with Steph Turner and Rachel Crandall
Law Enforcement and the Trans Community with Ferndale P.D.

Held at Affirmations Community Center in Ferndale

Parting Glances



Pages Past Tense #6

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

I was 19 the summer I graduated from Cass Tech. I flunked courses, staying an extra two-class semester. Once free from studies, living at home, taking time off before job hunting, I was keen to explore Detroit's gay scene.

I weighed 175 lbs., buff in my penny loafers, was 6'2", had a 30-inch, bona fide Levi's waist. I was told I looked like actors Carleton Carpenter and Troy Donahue. (See photo above.)

I heard from queer friends about the infamous Hub Grill, located on Farmer at Bates, inconveniently within a short trek of the 1st Police Precinct Headquarters, Wayne County Circuit Court, Old City Hall.

The Hub Grill was a greasy spoon (knife and fork) with large windows, angled on the corner. To enter was to be self-identified as a fairy. To stool sit in sight was thumb-your-nose-at-straight-tourists brazen. Nearby was a flea bag hotel. For ten bucks you could have a squeaky-bed quickie.

"Let's go to the Hub for a bowl of chili and a trick," was our weekend quip. Two sisters, Fran and Flo, a scruffy cook, Uncle Jimmy, held bicarbonate-of-soda court. Fran rarely smiled, smoked nonstop. Flo, her hair worn in 1940s upsweep, was all winks, confidential tease: "Miss Thing, don't you look all Hollywood. You gonna snag husband number five tonight, or is it six?"

I hadn't sat down five minutes (far from outside viewing), when a talkative number - he called himself Marshmallow - asked, "Are you a Browning King or Queen?" Not knowing what he meant, and wanting to be polite, I answered, "Is there such a thing as a Browning Prince?" "How about Princess?" he clucked, daintily sipping a cherry Coke.

A jukebox took up a far corner. Six plays for a quarter. Whenever someone chose my favorite Doris Day song, "Secret Love," from the movie Calamity Jane, I let myself go hormonally romantic. Soft in the head and heart for an as-yet-unidentified shining knight in tight-fitting armor (codpiece optional).

After several weekend trysts I got to know the regulars by face and nickname. (Nicknames were protection against "known homosexual" exposure or, as sometimes labeled in Confidential magazine, "avowed homosexual" status.)

Many regulars gave themselves the honorific title of Miss. As high campy, swishy gays, a few merited it. They took the brunt of ostracism, both straight and gay.

I mooned over Rich, a blond stud - nicknamed PK, Polish Kielbasa - who wore high-collar, pastel Mr. B shirts (B for black singer Billy Eckstine), 13-inch peg pants. He combed his hair in a pomaded ducktail. He was usually with a stylish brunette, Sharon, her thirties-something sister, who called herself Big Mamoo.

It was the custom summer nights to cruise onto the crowded streets to watch who paraded in and out of the gay bars: The 1011 (formerly the Rio Grande), Silver Dollar, LaRosa's.

I had heard about LaRosa's when I was 15. "It's a fairy bar," snickered a buddy one Halloween when we spotted skag drags getting into a Checker Cab. Curiously, I never once set foot in the place. A half-century later, the building's still there. Without an Historic Marker.

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Thinking Out Loud



NOM's marriage strategy

The cynical art of being wholesome

BY ABBY DEES

Is anyone really shocked about the revelations from the recently released internal memorandum from the National Organization for Marriage (“NOM”)? If you haven’t heard yet, this formerly confidential memo from 2009 lays out NOM’s national strategy for fighting same-sex marriage. There’s nothing in it that we didn’t already suspect, really. Mostly it serves as confirmation that NOM and its clones are not the grassroots, Church bake-sale folks they’d like us to think they are. Instead, they’re a cynical, mean-spirited bunch of cultural manipulators who don’t give a toss about perpetuating wholesomeness and community-mindedness. If there is anything that stands out about the memo, beyond what we already knew, it’s that they say this stuff out loud to one another and then put a price tag on it. Bigotry looks especially weird all written in a peppy memo.

The part of the document that’s gotten the most media attention is entitled “Not a Civil Rights Project,” which is NOM’s strategy for “fanning the hostility” between the LGBT and African-American communities. The idea is that LGBT leaders will then be compelled to react negatively to anti-gay rhetoric by African-American leaders, and will thus be viewed universally as bigots. In other words, they want a good old-fashioned race war. Even African-American leaders who oppose same-sex marriage are, not surprisingly, declining the invitation.

Another portion of the memo that’s gotten a lot of play, one that also plays the race card from a stacked deck, describes NOM’s plan to present opposition to gay marriage as a badge of Latino pride and to encourage youth rebellion against “conformist assimilation” into the dominant culture. I’m picturing NOM founder, Maggie Gallagher, in her collarless suits and pearls, fomenting youth rebellion in L.A. and it’s making me giggle.

What you may not have heard is that a year’s worth of race-bating by NOM in 2010 was projected to cost \$2,000,000. And here are some more choice strategies from the memo: The “Behind Enemy Lines” project documents how gays have tyrannized those who have spoken out against gay marriage, with a special focus on states where courts have “imposed gay marriage” on the citizens. This is a favorite trope of the

Mostly it serves as confirmation that NOM and its clones are not the grassroots, Church bake-sale folks they’d like us to think they are.

religious right nowadays, so stay tuned for a lot more. You saw it first during the federal Prop 8 trial when the Yes on 8 folks claimed that they couldn’t get any witnesses to testify against gay marriage because they were all trembling with fear of the great gay mob. I know – you’re wondering how you missed that gang dues notice.

Continuing the big-bad-gays theme, is the “Face of the Victims” project. Now, this one had me scratching my head because as much as I like to try to see things from another side’s perspective, I was absolutely stumped to figure who the victims of same-sex marriage might be. A straight couple that lost the neighborhood Xmas decoration contest to the new gays next door? I’ll give you a few moments to see if you can figure out who the tragic victims are...

Did you guess Homophobes? I had no idea, but apparently it takes an enormous emotional toll to maintain your opposition to same-sex marriage when it becomes legal in

your area. NOM planned to videotape these stories via a rapid response team, and they were all heartbreaking, I’m sure. The “rapid response” part is also intriguing, and makes me wonder what a NOM gay crisis might look like. Do you spontaneously fall to a crying heap on the golf links because you can’t get the picture of Ellen DeGeneres out of your head?

NOM also planned to hire a coordinator, at \$60,000, whose sole job description was to find and document the stories of all those miserable children of LGBT parents. First, I’d like to know what the hiring criteria are for such a job, and, second, how’s that’s going. I suspect that by month six, the coordinator spent most of his or her time updating Facebook at Starbucks while ostensibly out in the field.

Remember, this is a 2009 document and presumably these projects actually got started. I dearly hope we get to see the 2010 version and learn how it all went.



Notorious anti-gay group headed to Lansing

BY TODD HEYWOOD

LANSING—The Westboro Baptist Church will protest a Lansing public high school and both Michigan State University and Central Michigan University on April 23, a spokesman confirmed in a phone interview.

“We have our plane tickets,” says Fred Phelps, Jr., though he noted that nothing in life is absolutely a sure thing.

The church members will travel to Michigan to speak on the campus of Central Michigan University, where they have been regular visitors in the past two years. The members discuss their First Amendment case which was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court, which ultimately ruled the church had the right to protest at the funerals of fallen soldiers.

In addition to attending a class and speaking about the First Amendment, the church members will protest at the campus in Mt. Pleasant. They will also have early morning protests at Lansing’s Eastern High School and Michigan State University’s Union Building.

“When we go to high schools it is because we got emails or letters asking us to a particular high school,” says Phelps of the church’s decision to target Eastern. “Or we go to the high schools that are notorious for supporting the homosexual lifestyle ... so it was one of those two reasons.”

As for universities, Phelps said the reasoning is similar.

“They are doing the same kinds of things. Universities are the places where the anti-Bible, pro-gay marriage is being mentioned and cultivated,” he said.

Michigan State University spokesman Tom Oswald said he could not comment because the university had no confirmation of the protests.

Officials from the office of Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero did not return calls seeking comment. Officials from the Lansing Police Department also did not respond to calls.

Myra Ford, president of the Lansing School Board, declined to comment, saying the TAI call was the first she had heard of the planned protests.

This is not the first time members of the East Lansing community will have faced down the group. The group protested at East Lansing High School in November 2010. Community

members responded with a program they called “Unity in the Community,” which created an alternative location for people to protest the church’s divisive message.

“The WBC’s hateful message could not be more out of step with the values of the East Lansing community,” says Nathan Triplett, Mayor Pro Tem of the City of East Lansing. “The WBC thrives on provocation and confrontation. The best way to respond is to deny them the attention that they crave and focus on positive community responses, as we did so successfully the last time they rolled into town in November 2010.”

Triplett noted that the city had just celebrated the 40th anniversary of the first-in-the-nation local law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Emily Dievendorf, policy director of Equality Michigan, an LGBT advocacy organization, participated in the 2010 response to the church’s appearance. She issued the following statement to the American Independent about the planned protests:

“The Greater Lansing area will respond to the Westboro Baptist Church’s plans to visit and harass our Eastern Michigan,

Michigan State and Central Michigan youth the same way the community responded the last time. Our community will show compassion, restraint, and tolerance for Westboro, all while maintaining a strong voice of dissent and embracing the diversity of the community we live in. We, together, are greater than the blind hate the Westboro Baptist Church revels in.”

Kit Carlson, of the All Saints Episcopal Church in East Lansing, was also involved in the November 2010 response to the church protest.

“Well this community has seen Westboro come and go before,” Carlson said. “No one in our area buys into their message of hate. It just creates another opportunity for our community to gather together again and proclaim love and tolerance for all of God’s children.”

Phelps says his group has no issue with the counter-protests.

“Whatever works,” he said. “It’s a free country.”

This story was originally reported on The American Independent News Network.



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Creep of the Week

Rep. Steve King (R-IA)

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Oh, Steve King. You are a royal creep, indeed. A longstanding foe of LGBT people and anyone who sees LGBT people as, oh I don't know, human, King has once again opened his joker of a mouth to say something incredibly dumb.

Readers of this column are certainly aware that anti-LGBT discrimination exists in the workplace. Making this issue even more exciting, in many states, and Michigan is one of them, firing someone or refusing to hire them based solely on sexual orientation is totally legal. There is no state law against it, therefore if you are a victim of such discrimination, you have no legal standing. You cannot sue. Bummer for you.

Some people have suggested that a sensible way to approach this issue is to include sexual orientation and gender identity in state anti-discrimination laws. Oh, those crazy dreamers.

King has a better idea: stay in the closet homos.

On April 4, he told Think Progress, that you can't tell private business who they can't discriminate against. "You have private sector businesses here and they need to have freedom to operate," he said. In

In other words, firing someone because they're gay would strictly be a business decision. Stop being so sensitive, gays.

other words, firing someone because they're gay would strictly be a business decision. Stop being so sensitive, gays.

"In the first place, I would think that unless someone makes their sexuality public, it's not anybody's business, so neither is it our business to tell an employer who to hire," King continued. "He won't know who to discriminate against in the first place."

See, if people don't know you're gay, they won't discriminate against you. Duh. So for all of those homos out and proud, if you face discrimination, it's all your fault. Quit yer cryin'.

This is hardly a new position for King. In 2010 he said about gays in the workplace, "If people wear their sexuality on their sleeve and then they want to bring litigation against someone that they would point their finger at and say, 'You discriminate.'" Because protecting companies from being accused of discrimination is far more important than protecting gays from being discriminated against.

King also told Think Progress, "How do you know someone's sexual orientation? I don't know how you discriminate against someone because of their sexual orientation."

A good question, just how does one discriminate against someone based on their sexual orientation? Why, it's a complete and total mystery! Let's see if I can come up with some off the top of my brain. You could refuse to grant them promotions. You could fire them. You could kick them out of your rental property. You could bully them until they drop out of school and/or kill themselves. You could rape them. You could kill them. The list goes on and on, with plenty of documented evidence should you want to get totally depressed. But as King pointed out, they all brought it upon their gay selves.

Things were better before all this "out and proud" crap. All you have to do is look at history. Travel back to the time before Stonewall when gays were largely living in the shadows and nobody ever bothered them and life was great. And it could have been happily ever after forever if it hadn't been for those meddling kids.

Wait, did I say meddling kids? My apologies, I was thinking of Scooby Doo. I meant meddling cops. The cops, who routinely harassed, beat, jailed and otherwise took advantage of so many sad, closeted queers.

Or, as King would call it, the good old days.

Drama unfolds as DOMA challenge begins arguments

BY LISA KEEN AND CHUCK COLBERT

The seventh-floor courtroom of the U. S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit in Boston was packed to capacity. An overflow room equipped with closed circuit TV was provided for those not arriving early enough — shortly after 8 a.m. — for seating in the En Banc Hearing Room at the John Joseph Moakley U.S. Courthouse on the Boston waterfront.

The audience, most dressed in the dark business suits one normally associates with attorneys, was there to witness an historic event: The first argument against the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in a federal appeals court. It was the case everybody knows is heading to the U.S. Supreme Court and, perhaps, for the history books, along with the 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* which struck down laws against same-sex sexual relations.

Three of the four attorneys to argue that day were openly gay; and all three were arguing that DOMA should be struck down. The lone straight attorney before the bench was Paul Clement, a Republican legal celebrity, fresh off his high-profile challenge of President Obama's Affordable Care Act before the U.S. Supreme Court the week before.

The gathering had to sit, first, through a one-hour argument in an unrelated case, and when it was done, at 10 a.m., Chief Judge Sandra Lynch announced a brief recess to allow attorneys for the next case to move into place.

Clement, bespectacled and dressed in a gray suit, sat on the far left side of the attorneys' table, with one or two other associates.

To Clement's right was openly gay attorney Stuart Delery, recently promoted at the U.S. Department of Justice to Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Division — a step up after two years as senior counselor to Attorney General Eric Holder.

Legal gay icon Mary Bonauto of Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, the group which championed the historic case that led to same-sex marriages in the United States being legally recognized for the first-time ever, in Massachusetts, sat near the center, in a dark navy business pantsuit. Bonauto sported fashionable reading glasses.

Bonauto sat next to Paul Smith, the tall, red-headed openly gay attorney who

argued and won the landmark 2003 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Lawrence v. Texas*. Smith had served as cooperating counsel with GLAD for the plaintiffs in the case. Smith is also working on a similar lawsuit with GLAD in the federal district court of Connecticut.

To Smith's right sat Maura Healey, an assistant attorney general for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Healey, like Bonauto, had argued against DOMA at the district court level, in the same courthouse on different days just 11 months earlier. And Healey had just been promoted, from chief of the Massachusetts Attorney General's Civil Rights Division to chief of the AG's Bureau of Public Protection and Advocacy, which oversees Civil Rights, Health Care, Antitrust, Environmental Protection, Consumer Protection, and Insurance and Financial Services.

To Healey's right was her successor as chief of the state civil rights division, Jonathan Miller, whose wife gave birth to their first child just a few months ago.

On the bench were the First Circuit's three most senior judges: 66-year-old Chief Judge Lynch in the center, 78-year-old Judge Juan Torruella, to the left, and 72-year-old Michael Boudin, to the right.

Reporters were not permitted to bring tape recorders, laptops, cell phones, or any other electronic devices inside the courtroom, and many were keetching with mock horror that they would have to be relying on pen and paper to take notes for the historic event. Courtroom artist Jane F. Collins was employing her pastels and paper in a remarkably accurate rendering of the three justices and the backs of Clement and Healey for the New England Cable News channel.

Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley was in the front row of the public section, behind Clement and in an animated discussion with people nearby. She was much in the news that day and the day before for indicting the former state treasurer on misuse of state resources. She would be back in front of microphones after this argument, explaining the state's opposition to DOMA to the public. Also in the public section was former state Supreme Judicial Court Justice Judith Cowin. Cowin, generally seen as a conservative, voted with the majority in 2003, saying the state constitution guarantee same-sex couples the right to marry.

The one-hour argument was divided

up: Clement and Delery would each get 20 minutes and Bonauto and Healey would each get 10.

A few minutes into Clement's 20 minutes, a court staffer walked from the back of the courtroom up to the bench and spoke quietly with Chief Judge Lynch while Clement continued responding to a question from Torruella. Boudin leaned in and listened, too. It is quite rare for court staff to interrupt a judge hearing oral arguments. Lynch made no comment about the interruption during the rest of the proceeding, but it was apparently news that the court's audio equipment was malfunctioning. The first 18 minutes of the one-hour argument were not recorded, the recording begins a few minutes into Delery's presentation, and what was recorded was somewhat low quality.

Chief Judge Lynch had two questions for Delery and one question for each of the other attorneys; Torruella had about a dozen for Clement and half that for Delery; Boudin asked Clement and Delery a couple of questions each.

Of the three judges, Lynch has had the most experience with gay-related cases. In 2008, she penned a panel decision (*Parker v. Hurley*) that upheld a district court dismissal of a lawsuit by parents who sought to exempt their children from being in classrooms that discussed books that mentioned same-sex couples. Six months later, she became the first female Chief Justice of the circuit.

She asked Clement to expand upon his argument that it was perfectly rational for Congress to pass DOMA in order to wait for the consequences of recognizing same-sex marriages to "play out" first in the various states. She asked Delery whether DOJ's argument that laws disfavoring gays should be held as legally suspect (and thus have to meet a more difficult judicial review) requires showing both that the laws express animus toward gays and that gays are targeted by the laws. And during a discussion of what cases DOJ was relying on to justify heightened scrutiny, Lynch interrupted Delery to ask, "Are you relying on *Romer*? Are you relying on *Lawrence*?"

Lawrence is the 2003 U.S. Supreme Court decision that struck down state laws banning same-sex sexual relations. *Romer v. Evans* is the 1996 U.S. Supreme

Anchorage freezes up on LGBT rights law

BY LISA KEEN

Voters in Anchorage, Alaska, overwhelmingly rejected a ballot measure Tuesday that sought to add “sexual orientation” and “transgender identity” to the city’s human rights law.

With 102 of 121 precincts counted late Monday, the vote on the measure, Proposition 5, was 58 percent to 42 percent, according to the city elections division.

Turnout Tuesday set records, with so many voters showing up that some precincts ran out of ballots. The Anchorage Daily News reported that the head of “Protect Your Rights,” a group organizing opposition to the ballot measure, sent out an email Monday and Tuesday telling “thousands” that they could register to vote at the polls on Tuesday, but he was wrong. The email said nothing about the topic of Proposition 5; it said only “Protect Your Rights. Vote No.”

KTUU Television reported Tuesday night that precincts were allowing voters to go ahead

and fill out “questioned” ballots. And the city’s election clerk told the station that she believed some voters were coming from jurisdictions outside Anchorage to cast votes.

Supporters of Proposition 5 were upset last week by a political ad put on the television airwaves in Anchorage, characterizing the potential beneficiaries of the measure as burly men wearing women’s clothing, trying to get jobs at day care centers and access to women’s locker rooms. One ad claimed that a day care center would be forced to hire a “transvestite who wants to work with toddlers” if the amendment to its human rights law passed. The other ad claimed a local fitness gym would have to “open the women’s locker room to anyone who claims a female identity.”

The ads were produced by “Protect Your Rights.”

Yes on 5-One Anchorage, a coalition supporting the ballot measure, called the ads “highly offensive” and an effort to “dehumanize and demean our transgender friends, family and

neighbors.”

The “Protect Your Rights” group said the ads were intended to point out a “shocking flaw” of the proposed amendment: it didn’t define “transgender.”

Proposition 5 sought to add “sexual orientation” and “transgender identity” to the existing non-discrimination law that applies in matters of the sale or rental of property, finance, employment, public accommodations, education, and “practices of the municipality.” The measure does define “sexual orientation” as “an individual’s heterosexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality.” But did not define “transgender identity.”

Jeffrey Mittman, executive director of the ACLU of Alaska, said the definition for “sexual orientation” was necessary because of opponents’ attempts to claim that it would prohibit discrimination based on pedophilia, necrophilia, and other sexual disorders. But “transgender identity,” he said, is something the courts are “well aware of.”

Supporters of Proposition 5 were upset last week by a political ad put on the television airwaves in Anchorage, characterizing the potential beneficiaries of the measure as burly men wearing women’s clothing, trying to get jobs at day care centers and access to women’s locker rooms.

► DOMA challenge

Continued from p. 14

Court decision that struck down a Colorado initiative that sought to bar laws prohibiting discrimination against gays.

When a very hoarse Bonauto argued that Congress jettisoned its historic neutrality around the definition of marriage when it passed DOMA in 1996, Lynch asked her to address Clement’s claim that the federal government did so because the Hawaii Supreme Court found, in January 1996, that its state constitutions required marriage equality.

And, finally, Lynch asked Healey to respond to Clement’s argument that Section 2 of DOMA “preserves the right of Massachusetts to define marriage as it chooses to do and ensures there will be full faith and credit, and that the question is whether the Massachusetts decision can drive the federal government’s decision about its benefits ... sort of reverse the way you are articulating this.”

Section 2, which is not challenged by the

litigation here, stipulates that no state shall be required to give legal recognition to “a relationship between persons of the same sex that is treated as a marriage under the laws of such other State....”

Outside the courthouse following the argument, reporters pressed Bonauto, Healey, Attorney General Coakley, and plaintiff couples.

Coakley voiced confidence in the “legal arguments” against DOMA and their “common sense emotional appeal” to “fairness.”

“This is about fairness, about what Massachusetts had already decided to good effect about families, keeping kids safe and giving kids opportunities,” she explained. “As the arguments made very clear, all this statute does is discriminate against same-sex couples and their children and everyone else in Massachusetts who decided this should be the law.” The federal government, she added, “has no business creating two sets of citizens, no good reason for it and plenty of illegal and unfair reasons. It’s time for it to go.”

Bonauto told reporters the lawsuit “is about equal treatment under the law and not

singling out this one group of people to make them unequal to everyone else, which is what DOMA does.”

“For more than 200 years the federal government [has] accepted states’ definition of marriage and sometimes that has been controversial,” said Bonauto, reiterating the very point Lynch had zeroed in on. “Nonetheless, every single time a state marries somebody, it has been accepted for federal purposes. The one and only exception ever made from that equal rule was for same-sex couples.”

At a press availability following the argument, three sets of plaintiff couples spelled out details of how DOMA penalizes them in joint tax filing and social security spousal benefits.

Married for nearly eight years, Melba Abreu and Beatrice Hernandez cannot submit federal tax returns as married filing jointly. Between 2004 and 2008, Hernandez said, “DOMA has resulted in our paying more than \$25,000 in excess federal taxes.”

Marlin Nabors and Jonathan Knight are similarly situated. Married for five years, the couple moved to Boston from the Midwest.

“We had no idea how getting married would impact our financial situation,” said Nabors, referring to the inability to file joint federal tax returns. “Over the last couple of years, we have paid an additional \$1,000, enough to make a difference.”

“In our day to day lives, we go about our business,” said Knight. “We live in a very accepting world here in Massachusetts and Boston, with employers, friends, and families. We don’t feel [the effect of DOMA] day to day, just once a year at tax time.”

For plaintiff couple Bette Jo Green and Jo Ann Whitehead, social security spousal benefits are at issue. Green and Whitehead are retired but DOMA prevents Whitehead from receiving the higher spousal payment under the standard formula that would result in higher payments to the lower earning spouse.

“I was a labor delivery nurse,” explained Green. “She was an educator.”

The couple said DOMA costs them \$3,600 year. “It adds up,” said Whitehead. But, “beyond the financial issue,” said Whitehead, “is the fairness one.”

► Health care

Continued from p. 7

Bisexual and Transgender Americans (www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/03/pdf/aca_lgbt.pdf), released by the Center for American Progress discusses more in-depth how the law will help LGBT people by 2014.

The law is key to efforts such as expanding cultural competency in the health care workforce to include LGBT issues, making preventative care available to everyone who needs it, improving data collection to better identify and address health disparities, and recognizing

the increasing diversity of America’s families. LGBT people in communities around the country will have the opportunity to participate in the Community Transformation Grants program and other wellness and prevention initiatives supported by the \$15 billion Prevention and Public Health Fund.

“Various efforts are being made on the federal side to ensure the implementation of the act includes LGBT people,” said Kellen Baker, senior policy associate at the National Coalition for LGBT

Health and one of the report’s authors. “The law has great potential to help the LGBT community and is already doing so from the

perspective of national advocacy. We all look forward to seeing the programs role out later this spring.”

As the conclusion to the report states: “Before comprehensive health care reform became the law of the land, too many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people were destined to remain uninsured and unable to afford regular checkups and basic medical care. Too many in the LGBT community faced the prospect of continuing to go to bed at night worrying about paying their health care bills, and too many gay and transgender parents envisioned a future where they would continue to be unable to afford to take their children to the doctor. Passage of the

Affordable Care Act changed all of that.

Implementation of the Affordable Care Act is a historic opportunity for transforming our health system, prioritizing prevention and wellness, and making health care affordable and accessible for everyone. In order for the aspirations of the law to be fully realized, however, the federal government and the states must explicitly ensure that gay and transgender Americans and their families are fully covered under the new law. The LGBT community and its allies must take action to move successful implementation forward and to defend the law from efforts to defund or otherwise dismantle it.”

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The Detroit Boom

Changes to the city attract a new generation

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Lots of talk lately has centered on young people moving to the city of Detroit against the odds, bringing creative ideas, fresh energy and investments with them. There's a buzz around town about this revival, about

20-somethings wanting to make a difference in the city of Detroit where opportunity is abundant. But who are these young people? And what is it about the city of Detroit that is so attractive to them?

"Detroit has been really surprising. I absolutely love the architecture and the unique night spots and restaurants spread

throughout downtown and the suburbs," says Patrick Pozezinski, a 25-year-old who moved to the Midtown area last year in August primarily for school at Wayne State University. Originally from Chicago, Pozezinski grew up in Las Vegas and lived in Kansas while obtaining his undergraduate degree. "I've also always wanted to live in a big

city – and I don't consider Las Vegas a big city – and thought that the creative energy, history and location of Detroit would fit really well with my degree.

"Detroit is full of opportunities for young professionals and in the short time I've been here, I've already gotten a chance to spread my wings and grow."

See Detroit boom, page 18



Patrick Pozezinski (left, on cover) and Dara O'Byrne at their Detroit homes. Photos: Andrew Potter

► **Detroit boom**

Continued from p. 17

Through WSU, Pozezinski has been volunteering at the Heidelberg Project downtown and has been introduced to some fascinating things people would never discover just by driving straight down Woodward. Off the beaten path is where Pozezinski can be found enjoying what he calls “beautiful” historic architecture, restaurants, the waterfront and the city’s nightlife. “It can use some improving, but the foundation is there to turn downtown into something really impressive,” he says, adding that the city proper has that “sprawling” city feel, but it’s not overly crowded. “It feels like your own city, not everyone else’s.”

And in his own city, Pozezinski has recently been introduced to a new group of guys. “They are all educated, ambitious, very intelligent and fun,” he says. “I have not experienced any negativity toward me for being gay thus far. From my experience, there is a large LGBT population and I don’t see the area to be any less friendly than other large cities.

“Detroit is raw right now. It’s waiting to be shaped again. There have been a lot of doors opened for the LGBT community in recent years, but Detroit really presents a big opportunity. It’s a city that needs a new stamp, a new identity. The creative community and the LGBT community



are always trying to find themselves, and so is Detroit. We have a chance to push the boundaries and make something of ourselves and of the city again.”

Back to life

Recent census figures show that Detroit's overall population shrank by 25 percent in the last 10 years. During the same time period, downtown Detroit experienced a 59 percent increase in the number of college-educated residents under the age of 25, nearly 30 percent more than two-thirds of the nation's 51 largest cities.

One in particular is 20-year-old Colin Mallory, a theater major at Wayne State University who lives in a Midtown apartment. Mallory is from the Lansing area and relocated to Detroit to live in a dorm for his first two years of college, but decided going forward he preferred living off-campus.

“My apartment is extremely affordable and so much cheaper than living in a bigger city. It's drastically less than my friends who live in Chicago or East Lansing,” he says. That may be due, in part, to local foundations like Midtown Detroit, Inc., which offer financial incentives to young people who want to move into the city. “Yes, you do get what you pay for, but there are places that have landlords versus slumlords.

A lot of these buildings were constructed in the 1900s, but I like that aspect of living in the city.”

Mallory had no problem responding to the Detroit-haters as he doesn't buy into the stigma that comes with living in the Motor City. “I'm a skinny, little, white gay boy. I've never been mugged and I've never had my car jacked. I'm not that concerned about it either,” he says, reminding those people that there is 140-plus square miles on the map of Detroit, and like anywhere else, there are areas that are more dangerous than others.

In fact, Mallory said, a lot of his friends travel to Detroit from the suburbs. “Any major social function in Midtown contains people from the suburb,” he says. “A lot of people think the suburbs are the end all, be all of civilization. Rich people send their kids to school here, but heaven forbid they stay the night. I would never want to live in the suburbs now that I've lived here. It's more expensive and I'd be driving back to the city anyway.”

He and his local friends frequent places like the Thistle Coffee House for an open mic night or the Cass Café to eat. And

they don't have to drive much as college, art galleries, bike paths, theaters, condos, boutiques and an eclectic assortment of bars and restaurants are all within walking distance of each other.

“It's really exciting,” says Mallory. “I've seen this area grow so much. It's not just a ghetto wasteland. This is a great place if people would give Detroit a chance. Our generation has the potential to bring Detroit back through our work and our efforts.”

Out of more than 600 people who applied to the Detroit Revitalization Fellows Program last spring, 29 people were hired. One being Dara O'Byrne, 33, who moved her husband Charlie and almost 2-year-old daughter Ciara across the country to start her fellowship in August last year. O'Byrne started working at the City of Detroit's Planning and Development Department last September.

O'Byrne grew up in metro Detroit, attended the University of Michigan for her undergrad degree, then moved out west to attend grad school at the University

“In mainstream media, rarely do you hear about positive things that are happening in the city. It's more than budget mishaps and shootings. Somehow we need to balance this view. I'm not an advocate for whitewashing anything, but if you are a resident of this city, or you are someone who is trying to make a decision about whether you want to move here, you are owed a more complete picture of what it's like to live here.”

-Adriel Thornton, Detroit resident

of Washington. O'Byrne relocated to be closer to her family and she wanted an opportunity to practice urban planning in the city she considers home. She wanted the opportunity to work on neighborhood plans, community development projects and downtown revitalization strategies in Detroit. The O'Byrnes decided on a place in West Village just three blocks from where her sister's family has lived in Indian Village for about seven years.

“Our neighbors are great and have been really welcoming,” she says. “There are a few houses on the block where people have lived for more than 30 years, so they are close and really look out for each other. People are involved in community organizations and are really committed to the city. We love our Saturday routine of getting pancakes at Russell Street Deli and then getting all of our produce for the week at Eastern Market.”

When the weather is cold, they visit the downtown YMCA; during the warmer months, they ride their bikes to Belle Isle and the Riverfront. “It's great how accessible everything is,” she says.

Too good to leave

Born and raised in the city of Detroit, Adriel Thornton considered moving at one point, but he couldn't bring himself to leave his roots.

“I have family and property here, so it's not easy to move, but aside from that there is a distinct energy and creative vibe here that blows other cities away,” says Thornton, who works for Allied Media Projects, a non-profit based in Detroit, and lives near the Lodge and Seven Mile area, just 10 minutes from Midtown.

There's no denying that young people are more attracted to the city now than ever before, but many people still have reservations. In his early 30s, Thornton believes whole-heartedly that the biggest problem with the city of Detroit is the perception of the people. “In mainstream media, rarely do you hear about positive things that are happening in the city. It's more than budget mishaps and shootings.

Somehow we need to balance this view. I'm not an advocate for whitewashing anything, but if you are a resident of this city, or you are someone who is trying to make a decision about whether you want to move here, you are owed a more complete picture of what it's like to live here.”

Thornton grew up between Detroit and Virginia and settled into the area in the 1990s. “There is life and culture here; people cut their grass, there are jobs and there are grocery stores. You have to get into it and find it. There is no bright neon sign to direct you there,” he says. “Stop making comparisons to what it's like to live in the suburb. It's apples to oranges. If you look at this entire city as a whole and make blanket statements comparing it to downtown Royal Oak, you just can't. It's three blocks versus arguably 20 blocks downtown.”

But it's changing as we speak and, according to Thornton, Detroit is beginning to see some of those big city amenities come back. A movement is happening right now as individuals are collaborating with organizations like Detroit Soup, Detroit Harmonie, Green Garage, and I Am Young Detroit, to name a few.

“Most people I've met recently have been pleasantly surprised with what they experience here,” Thornton says. “I've been lucky enough to be able to stay here. I love the city.”



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The rebirth of Broderick Tower

Once-abandoned Detroit building transforms into remodeled apartments

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

For over 30 years, Broderick Tower, at 10 Witherell in Detroit, stood empty and deteriorating. The 34-story skyscraper, built in 1928 as Eaton Tower, was once full of tiny offices and scores of small business including its own radio station.

Suburban flight in the '70s and early '80s took its toll and it was essentially abandoned in 1985. In 1997 the building received a burst of interest as famed artist Wyland painted a mural on the side called "Whale Tower," which was covered over with advertising in 2010 as a way to help fund the renovation.

But now Broderick Tower is making a comeback, with renovations nearly complete and an expected opening date of September for three floors of commercial office space and 125 residential dwelling units ranging in price from \$650 a month to \$5,000 for a three-story penthouse suite.

The most prestigious apartments have already been leased. In fact, 75 of the 125 units are already spoken for as tenants clamor for the best views and the most unique layouts.

"We did our best to work with the features of the building that were already here. That was in part to save money, and in part because that's what people want. We've found that when people move into historical renovations they like the character that's left," says Project Coordinator Fred Beal of Beal Construction, as he points out places where plaster was left with its imperfectly wavy plane. In the areas around the elevators, marble and other features were left in place when possible, removed where it was too far gone. Though the building was remarkably in tact, it was just full of junk.

Tenants from the '80s left things behind, including

rooms full of old medical and dental equipment, moldy furniture and desks covered in bird droppings. Over the years, Broderick Tower was a favorite place for urban spelunkers and kids looking for a place to graffiti, though it was notoriously well-sealed and hard to access, meaning it wasn't a good target for squatters or scavengers. Old pictures show the unique character of both the former tenants and the intruders who have visited since.

"We've found that when people move into historical renovations they like the character that's left."

Now with bright new windows, black marble countertops, custom cabinets, eco-friendly washers and dryers, and 9-foot ceilings, the rooms in Broderick Tower are nearly as appealing as the view.

"The view is obviously the biggest selling point," says Beal, noting that the building is in the heart of Detroit, with many residents being able to view Tigers games at Comerica Park, or just watch the buzz of the city from their oversized windows.

For those that don't want to stay in their rooms, the ground level and basement will have restaurants and bars. There will be a fitness center, a coin-operated laundry room and access to the underground parking garage right across the street.

The redevelopment project is being undertaken by Motown Construction Partners, with the Higgins Family remaining the dominant interest. For more information on rental living in Broderick Tower, visit <http://brodericktower.com>.



Broderick Tower transforms into commercial living spaces. Photo: Crystal A. Proxmire

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Restoring the Park

A look back, and forward, at one of Detroit's iconic gay meccas

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Renaissance. Resurgence. Revitalization. These are words bursting with hope and ambition and, in the past decade or two, have been bandied about in reference to just about every part of the city of Detroit you can imagine. Rarely, though, is their use justified and does the realization live up to the prediction.

But what's going on in Palmer Park just might be worthy of such a word. It's undeniable that something is happening there. A buzz is in the air. It might just be the early call of mosquitos emboldened by an astonishingly warm winter. More likely, though, it's the whispered prayers of residents past and present hoping to see their section of the city returned to the splendor for which it was once known.

Beginnings

Though most are at least vaguely aware that Palmer Park has long had a large gay population, few are aware of the area's beginnings and how the park became, well, the park. Sen. Thomas W. Palmer, a significant figure in Detroit history, inherited 80 acres from his grandfather and, in his lifetime, expanded his holdings to 640 acres. Basically, he owned the land between what is now Six Mile and Eight Mile Roads,

between Woodward Avenue and Fairway Drive. It was Palmer's farm, his country home, where he raised prize Percheron and Arabian horses.

In 1894, Palmer donated 120 acres for a public park. The log cabin, which still sits in the park, was Palmer's. The pond, as we call it today, was actually built at Palmer's behest and named for his mother-in-law, Lake Frances. And one of the most stunning landmarks in the area, the Merrill Fountain, was donated to the city by Palmer's wife, in memory of her father. It was built in 1904 at a cost of \$1 million and originally sat downtown in front of the Detroit Opera House before being moved to the park in 1923.

Palmer continued to donate land throughout his life, and following his death, and that of his wife, his benefactors subdivided what became known as the Palmer Park apartment district, which is actually now a part of the National Register of Historic Places.

"What's interesting is when you study the development of the park, from 1924, with the building of Palmer Lodge, to 1964, with the building of the Blair House, you had 40 years of a planned community," says Gregory Piazza, a Palmer Park historian and former resident of the area. "These architects were very aware of the light, the ventilation, how the buildings



The elegant El Dorado is one of the properties owned and being redeveloped by Shelborne Development. Photo: Jason A. Michael

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One of the six buildings that comprise the Palmer Park Square project currently under redevelopment by Shelborne Development. Photo: Jason A. Michael

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► Palmer Park

Continued from p. 21

related to one another. So, architecturally, there's a rhythm to it."

There's a chicness and undeniable style to it as well. The buildings all have swanky names – LaVogue, the El Dorado, the Coronado, the Warwick, the Trocadero and the Madrid Court, just to name a few – and architectural flourishes – Art Deco brickwork, elaborate trims and articulated roof lines – in abundance. In short, it just screams gay. So when did happy homosexuals begin their pilgrimage to the area?

"It's a question people often ask me: When did it become gay?" says Piazza. "I think it's always been gay. When you look at old phonebooks, you see a lot of single men. I'm not saying they're all gay, but Palmer Park seemed to have more single men than the average per capita."

Piazza lived in Palmer Park from 1974 until 1991.

"That was really the height of its gayness," he says. "It's when it was really the mecca for gay people."

"For us as gay people, it's a major part of our history."

The area was chock-full of gay nightclubs and venues.

"You had the Glass House, Menjo's, Bookies, Tiffany's and the Back Stage near Six Mile," recalls Piazza. "Ted's Diner was not gay, but it was a great spot. Then closer to Seven Mile you had the Outlaw, Heaven, the Gas Station and the E Ramp. Chosen Books was between

Menjo's and the Glass House. When I'm talking to younger gay men, the 45s and under, I try to (remind) them of what this neighborhood was."

Back to the future

The question, today, is what can this neighborhood become? Or, more specifically, can it be restored to its former glory? Piazza thinks it can. Though many of the buildings are boarded up, Piazza said they're not beyond hope.

"Normally, when you have a row of vacant buildings, in short order they're a mess," he says. "But that hasn't happened here."

Signs posted everywhere notify would-be vandals that the buildings are under armed guard. And there's another type of sign popping up all over the neighborhood. The signs read "coming soon" and "now renting."

The name behind a lot of these signs is Shelborne Development. The company just redeveloped LaVogue on Merton Road, a project that took 14 months.

"I lived in that building, so I know what it looked like," Piazza says. "They've done a fine, fine job. That's the other thing about redevelopment. Normally, when someone redoes a building, they just kind of do enough to get it rented. But that's not the case here."

No, Shelborne has a vision for Palmer Park, and, it seems, a great appreciation for its history.

"I think it has so much potential," says Shelborne's Kathy Makino. "The buildings themselves are just irreplaceable. They are just awesome buildings and we want to do

whatever we can to bring those buildings and that area back."

In addition to LaVogue, Shelborne owns the Palmer Park Square complex, which includes 202 units in six separate buildings, and has control of six additional buildings.

"All together we have 13 buildings in the area," says Makino. "And if we do 13 buildings in that area, what an impact we can make."

But Shelborne Development isn't the only company expressing interest in Palmer Park.

"It's becoming kind of nationally recognized as a very unique area," Makino says. "Across the country, you just don't see this type of (apartment) neighborhood, so it has that potential to be redeveloped. I had a guy known for redeveloping historic neighborhoods call me from Vancouver. He called me specifically to come down and look at the area. He was just so impressed by it."

Impressed, also, is Piazza with Palmer Park's prospects. Thanks, in large part, to Makino and Shelborne Development.

"I'm so glad to see someone who has the sensitivity and the taste, who will bring a certain amount of that flair that this area used to have back to it," he says of the company. "It certainly had it when I lived here."

"My expectation is that it's going to find its rhythm again," he continues. "To me, a community has a certain pulse. It won't be the rhythm and pulse that I knew, but it will be indicative of the community that's here now."

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Fooding Around

Former radio host attracts international audience to his kitchen via cooking blog

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Using food to bring people together is natural for Kevin Piotrowski. His fondest memories since childhood happened over eating with family and friends. Once a week, he invites guests into his kitchen through his online blog, *Cavalcade of Food* (<http://cavalcadeoffood.blogspot.com/>), where he provides recipes and cooking demonstrations.

"I enjoy cooking for the people I love and people I don't even know. Food, like music and art, is one of the greatest expressions of humanity," says Piotrowski, a Dearborn resident who started his blog in 2010 to share his experiences and different

types of cultural cuisine when he traveled.

The blog evolved after Piotrowski received a video camera as a gift last year. No idea what to do with it, his partner Ralph Valdez of Grosse Pointe Woods made a suggestion: "You bake and cook all the time and we should videotape you in the kitchen doing your thing." So I decided to try it," says Piotrowski. "The concept was to have something that was interactive with the person on the camera, not the viewers, but rather the back and forth between the person holding the camera and me. I thought that would be more interesting, listening to these two people have a conversation about what's going on."

While preparing a variety of dishes and

desserts like Parmesan tilapia, pork roast, gnocchi with tomato sauce, popovers, prune cake and cherry rhubarb pie, the pair is also having fun doing it. "Ralph had a radio show on WDET for 25 years and has a rich musical history. We synch up music with what we are cooking. We have so much fun," he says.

Piotrowski puts a twist on nostalgic favorites like tuna noodle casserole, chicken a la king, meatloaf and what he calls pineapple "princess" upside down cake. He even pays tribute to his Polish heritage with family traditions including golabkis (stuffed cabbage), Kapusta (Sauerkraut) and kielbasa, and bread and butter pickles.

"Ralph loves to eat and that's why



Ralph Valdez and Kevin Piotrowski whip up dishes for the web.
Photos: Andrew Potter



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► Fooding around

Continued from p. 24

it's always a good combination," he says. "He's really adventurous and he does a little cooking himself. We try out a lot of things. If I haven't made something before, we do a trial run to make sure it turns out or to see if we need to tweak it a little bit."

Outside of the kitchen, Piotrowski works as the senior communications officer at Wayne State University's Irvin D. Reid Honors College. Although he has no formal culinary training, he has years of cooking and baking experience. "I just kind of came to it," he says. "I grew up in a house with a mother who was an incredible cook and baker. I spent a lot of time in the kitchen with her. I watched her very carefully and she would show me things. Some people are passive about food. I am engaged with food. When my mother made food for you, you knew that she loved you. The more you ate, the more she loved making it."

Piotrowski appreciates more than the fine art of cooking: he is fascinated by the process of cooking the food he eats and has been collecting kitchen-related things for a long time. Enthralled with percolators, Piotrowski owns about 500 total, the oldest dating back to 1919. "I have a considerable amount of small kitchen appliances and I have amassed quite a few cookbooks over the years. I read them like a novel. The older cookbooks are really a snapshot of the time in which they were published, a trend of what food was like then," says Piotrowski, remembering the 1950s Jell-O salad, which he brings to life in a new fashion on his blog.

"The fun is in finding these items," he says. "Not a week goes by that I don't buy something from garage and estate sales or thrift shops. Friends of mine who know I



collect this stuff will often call me and tell me they've picked something up or just cleaned out a family member's house. All of these things were made in U.S. factories and were really built to last. I think they are beautiful. If you own these things, they function and are meant to be used, not to sit in a museum."

For that reason, Piotrowski actually cooks on his vintage stoves, which he has 12 of.


"I have heard from so many people about the blog," he says. "People from other parts of the world like Argentina and Canada and Poland. People run across the videos on YouTube. When you're cooking together with people, it's magical. Food really brings people together."



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Mary Liz Curtin (middle) hangs out with her dog and a customer at Clawson store Leon and Lulu. Photos: Andrew Potter

“There’s a lot of laughter in this store. In the first year we were open we had two women who had recently been widowed who would come to just walk through the store when they needed a lift. We have a sense of humor in a lot of the things we do.”

‘Happiness’ for the home

Clawson store offers novelty toys, unique experience

BY ANDREA POTEET

Shopping centers and strip malls are crammed with stores offering an array of furniture, decorations and other items for your home.

But for Mary Liz Curtin, co-owner of Clawson-based Leon and Lulu, stepping inside them shouldn’t feel like shopping for your home, it should feel like being at home.

“We’re selling happiness and a lifestyle,” says Curtin, who owns the store with her husband, Stephen Scannell. “We want customers to come in here and have a great time.”

To that end, Curtin and Scannell try to crank up the homey atmosphere with snacks and coffee always on hand. Loyal customers often swing

by just to spend the day snuggled into a favorite armchair, and some even celebrate birthdays at the store.

A retail space that doubled as a party site was the dream of Curtin and Scannell when they opened the store in April of 2006.

“We put in our business plan we were hoping to do an event once a quarter,” Curtin says. “My husband is kind of a hermit, and I was actually lying because I planned to do an event once a month, but I thought that might terrify him.”

The couple has averaged 65 events a year, from artist’s markets and author’s nights to events for charities including AIDS Walk, Gilda’s House and others. More than 50 of the events held each year benefit charities.

“It’s wonderful to be able to be in a position to do nice things for different segments of the community,” Curtin says.

The couple, who met at a trade show and have been married for more than 22 years, share a common bond in their love of retail. Curtin grew up at The Merchandise Mart in Chicago on the heels of her mother, a shopkeeper and interior designer, before graduating to consulting and wholesale as well as writing and speaking professionally. Scannell owned The Cargo Hold in Birmingham for 26 years until it closed in 2001.

“We thought we were done with retail,” Curtin says. “But then in 2002, we didn’t have a store at Christmastime. We weren’t used to

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► **Leon & Lulu**

Continued from p. 30

making cookies, going to parties and bugging the kids; we were used to working.”

The downtime urged Curtin back into the shops – this time working at a Crate and Barrel.

“I had a great time, I learned a tremendous amount,” she says. “So he said, ‘I’ll do it too.’ He got a job at another store in the mall and while I was having fun and learning so much, he was saying, ‘I can do this better.’”

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“There’s a lot of laughter in this store,” Curtin says. “In the first year we were open we had two women who had recently been widowed who would come to just walk through the store when they needed a lift. We have a sense of humor in a lot of the things we do.”

That easygoing atmosphere also extends to the four-legged staff. After the loss of the store’s namesake pets, Spot, a shepherd, labrador and pointer mix, took the reins as the store’s official greeter, welcoming new and returning customers at the door.

Curtin said, for her, it all comes down to making people happy.

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Leon & Lulu sells quirky home goods. Photo: Andrew Potter

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THE REAL Mike Ruiz

Photographer to the stars opens up about turning his fantasy childhood into a career catalyst

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

A child imagines life outside reality by creating a wild, monster-inhabited world of escapism in “Pan’s Labrynth,” a stylistic fantasy-art film released in 2006 from Guillermo del Toro. That world, or at least a version of it, is very familiar to Mike Ruiz.

As a kid, growing up as one of few ethnic people in Quebec, he envisioned an alternate reality that transcended his drab real-life. Little did he know that years later he’d be implementing it *into* real-life: he’s famous for his celebrity photographs, capturing the who’s-who of Hollywood in another light.

He’s also part of another reality – reality TV. Aside from Logo’s “The A-List: New York,” which he left last year after two seasons of the tawdry show, he’s also been seen on “RuPaul’s Drag Race” and “America’s Next Top Model.” With “Pretty Masculine,” the first in a series of books released late last year, he’s focusing on photography, which includes an upcoming shoot with Martha Wash – and a storm of beefcakes – to celebrate the 30th anniversary of “It’s Raining Men.” Also coming up: his first-ever Detroit appearance on April 14 at Backstreet.

Ruiz phoned us recently to talk about his break from reality TV (and to defend “A-List”), his new series of books, and how childhood transcendence inspired his photography career.

What can we expect when you appear in Detroit?

I usually just wing it. I’m going to take tons of pictures with people and just hang out and talk and hopefully sign a few books. Just kind of go with the flow. I don’t have a real structure to these things. They always vary so wildly.

How are you able to balance a partner, photography, TV and charity work – all the while maintaining the muscles?

I think it’s just my perception. I chose to perceive things differently, so my life just seems so much more manageable and calmer so far this year than it was in 2011.

Not doing reality TV probably helps?

That’s probably the main reason. (Laughs) It’s not so much that it occupied a lot of time; it occupied a lot of my mental energy.

Wait. Reality TV?

(Laughs) Imagine that!

What about it?

I don’t know. Honestly, I can’t put my finger on it. It’s just a lot of effort and a lot of work. You have all these hopes and expectations for the outcome, and you’re kind of white knuckling it because you have no control over anything, so you just do your best and hope for the best. It’s just too taxing for too little pay off.

Why did you do “The A-List: New York” in the first place?

I did “A-List” for very specific reasons, and it was not to hang my dirty laundry out. I did it because I wanted to be more visible in the community so I could do positive things in the community. You never know – those guys on “Jersey Shore” probably never thought they’d be making \$7, \$8 million a year; there’s always the hope that it’s going to become this pop culture phenomenon and you’re going to ride the wave and it’ll be great, but fundamentally, I just wanted to do something responsible.

If my goal was to become a “Jersey Shore” kind of character, I would’ve been way more reckless on TV. I feel like I conducted myself in a very responsible way. That was my goal, and I do it in life, as well. It’s important for me to put my best foot forward to set a good example, so I’m certainly not going to go on TV and get wasted and puke all over my other cast members. (Laughs)

In general, do you think the show gives gay people a bad name?

It shouldn’t give anybody a bad name. It’s not meant to be a representation of anybody. It’s five or six people that they cast very specifically to make it an entertaining show, and for all intents and purposes it was very entertaining to a pretty big audience. It wasn’t meant to be responsible; it wasn’t meant to portray anybody in any kind of light. Most things on TV aren’t meant to be responsible. It was never fair to hold a few random people accountable for a whole community.

If you were to take a poll, a negligible percentage even gave a crap. But sadly, the 10 people who did were vocal enough about it to make it seem like there was this blanket of negativity over this show.

See Mike Ruiz, page 43

Opera singer finds 'fame'

Noah Stewart talks Detroit performance, being a role model for gay men of color

BY MICHAEL H. MARGOLIN

When he was 16, Noah Stewart, an American tenor, met legendary soprano Leontyne Price when she was autographing records in a New York store. He said he wanted to go to Juilliard to pursue his music career. She encouraged him. After graduating high school he auditioned and Juilliard gave him a four-year full scholarship.

Today at 33, he has a Decca album of operatic, spiritual and pop songs that came out March 26 in the U.K. (available from Amazon UK; U.S. release date not set yet) and just a few weeks later, on April 14, he will take the stage at the Michigan Opera Theatre's opening night of "The Pearl Fishers."

Stewart went to the "Fame" (La Guardia High School) school in Manhattan, commuting "downtown" from Harlem. One of his first teachers, Josephine Morris, told him, "You could go someplace" when he took choir in the early years of high school, he explained by phone from London where he is promoting his album.

When he had a solo in a tribute to Katherine Hepburn – she was there – "I felt the energy, I felt OK in the spotlight; no nerves or stage fright." Still, he did not select opera as his first choice. His family is from New Orleans and he grew up listening to jazz.

Other friends wanted to be pop stars, but "I just didn't enjoy pop. I wanted to be solo, be out of the ordinary, strange." Until he went to the "Fame" school, he didn't know what that would be. But there he made two significant discoveries.

He went to the school library and watched videos. In the film of Verdi's "Requiem" he saw Leontyne Price for the first time.

"She was the first person of color that I heard and saw performing in classical, operatic technique. I wanted to do for men (of color) what she had done."

Then, "I went to an opera workshop in school, and when I walked in I saw odd people, like the Muppets" – later he changed that to the Goonies, after the motion picture – and said to himself, "this is where I belong."

The die, it seems, was cast.

Other opportunities presented themselves to him – tickets, for example, to opera. He went to the Met and heard great voices, such as one of Pavarotti's final performances of Cavaradossi in Puccini's "Tosca," one of the great tenor roles and one which Stewart sang, in the second cast, at MOT two years ago. (In the final act, I wrote that his voice sounded like it would be right for Rodolfo in "La

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Boheme," which he subsequently performed last year with MOT, also in the second cast.)

"The neat thing was hearing the voice travel over the orchestra. It sounded superhuman."

When he got to Juilliard, though, one of the nation's most esteemed schools of music, the other shoe dropped. "Juilliard was competitive, not nurturing like high school... When I finished, I was happy that I got through. The summers were better. (Among other things) I went to Italy to study the language."

Offered a scholarship at another prestigious school, he felt he needed a break. "I had been studying eight years, so I took off a year which became three, took lessons and tried to get singing jobs." To no avail: He worked as a receptionist, carpenter and host in a restaurant to pay for lessons. He lived at home.

"It was depressing, I felt angry" as the big break did not occur. "No one had answers for me. I felt I would quit but took one last audition" for the Merola program at San Francisco Opera. Named for the first director, Gaetona Merola, each year hundreds of young singers audition, but only 23 are taken.

"Where have you been?" Stewart was asked at the end of the audition. He studied, then, under the aegis of the SFO which was the site of the U.S. debut of, yes, Leontyne Price.

From there the Stewart train was on the career track: A few years later, he appeared in the small tenor role of Ismaele in MOT's production of Verdi's "Nabucco." (When I saw him, I was impressed by his strong presence, the handsome, big voice and the tone of that voice.) Each time he returns, he takes a higher rung on the ladder: This time he opens in the lead tenor role of Nadir, last performed here in 2004 by William Burden, also a Merola graduate.

"I have sung in Detroit more than any other place in the world. It is like coming home. I know the people, feel comfortable... I am really lucky that David (DiChiera, MOT's general director) is a big supporter of mine and has been loyal to me."

DiChiera says, "I think he has star material."

"The voice has a beautiful timbre to it – a real sound that fills the note," continues DiChiera.



"There's that certain quality that some singers have, they own the stage."

There is another dimension to Stewart's career: As a gay, black man there were barriers in opera in the past, but that may be changing. Stewart feels he has not faced prejudice. (Though a restaurant co-worker said to him, when he sang Don Jose's aria from "Carmen" for her, he couldn't portray the character because he was black.)

"Having a black President, a man of color in power" does change thinking, he believes. His baritone co-star in this production, Nmon Ford, is also black. One of DiChiera's goals at MOT has been to "nurture and advance African-American singers." Many, such as Leona Mitchell, have appeared for MOT over the years and, famously,

the debut of Detroit-born soprano Maria Ewing in one of the first MOT productions. She later went on to become a foremost "Salome," an infamous "Carmen" and the mother of film and stage actress Rebecca Hall ("Vicky Cristina Barcelona").

"Being gay has not affected me (in opera). I just approach each role as a unique character... I don't hide my gayness, but I don't go around shouting it from the rooftops."

Are gay men in opera more closeted than, say, the theater? "I'm sure. Probably."

"I would love to be a role model for other gay men, gay men of color. I would hope for younger persons to follow in my footsteps."

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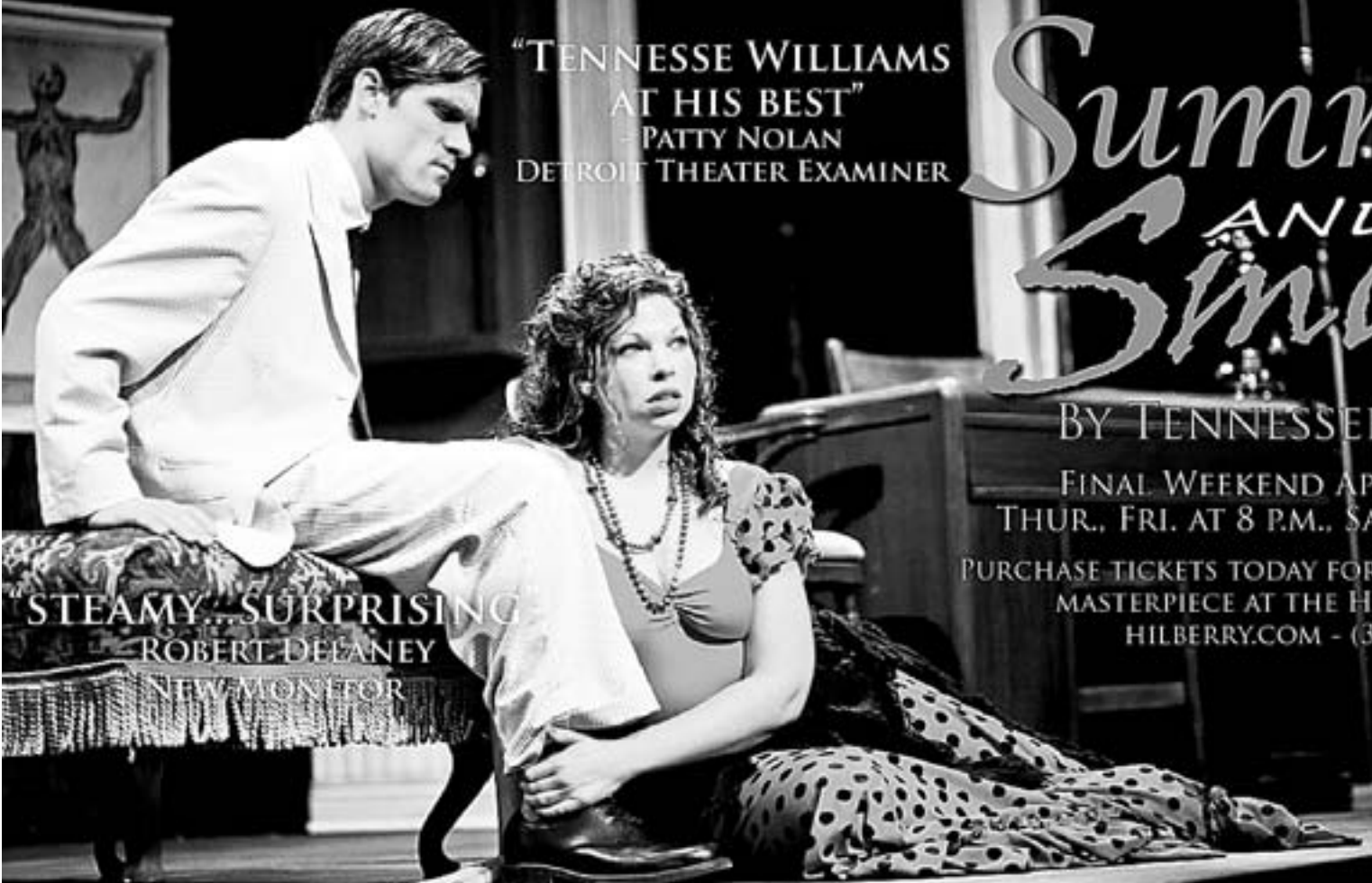
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Hear Me Out

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Madonna fights to keep up with the kids



Madonna, 'MDNA'

No one can replace Madonna. We get it. And should we not, the queen of pop's latest electro-romp and eighth No. 1-charting album, "MDNA," reminds us that, despite other "reductive"-sounding acts, she's still... well, the queen. She brags with desperate swagger about being the best on "Some Girls," presumably defending more than her bad romance with other chicks, and gets some kiss-ass from collaborator Nicki Minaj, who basically waxes her ego's ego. If only the songs, from pretty pathetic radio-baiters to thrilling pop-art provocation, more successfully reinforced this claim that Madonna, at 53, is still knocking 'em dead. She pushes hard – much harder than she did on 2008's phoned-in "Hard Candy" – but the ear-sores are still abundant on the tacky pompom cheer "Give Me All Your Luvin'," ridiculous not only for its tween-leaning silliness but Madonna's vexing desperation to be a girl, and sacrilegious William Orbit-produced "I'm a Sinner" that, while cheeky in tone, is obvious to the point of boredom. Where she triumphs are the confessionals: "I Don't Give A," coolly delivered in faux-rap, doesn't just bare her usual candor but shares the nitty-gritty diary dirt on her divorce from Guy Ritchie; resurrecting the ABBA groove of "Hung Up" with a cool acoustic frame, "Love Spent" is a telling rumination of a flat-lining relationship. Of the two ballads, it's the vulnerable and bereft "Falling Free" – again, suggestive of Ritchie – that sounds beautiful enough to have been a "Ray of Light" outtake ("Masterpiece" is drab throwback balladry that's nothing to

remember). The quiet introspection is offset by moments of suckering pop bliss, "Turn Up the Radio" (into her groove) and "Superstar" (a grade-school love letter), that cast Madonna as her younger self, trying to fit in with those "girls" rather than standing out from them. Hence the suggestive drug-laced album title, relentless narcissism, resistance to aging, collaborators du jour. But on "Gang Bang," she shows us who's boss: her boldest, most balls-out song in years, a bloodthirsty rip into an ex (wonder who that is), is a maniacal murder epic set to cinematic sound-effects of car chases and gun cocks that confirms Madonna – when she's touting her own brand – isn't all talk. *Grade: B-*

Also Out



Macy Gray, 'Covered'

Not even a meat dress has anything on her nuttiness, but Macy Gray still can't seem to claim the fame.

Having had a hard go at recapturing her early-2000s success, she takes a different approach, channeling herself through songs – and hilariously in a career-commentary skit with Nicole Scherzinger – that aren't her own. From a moodier "Here Comes the Rain Again" to poignantly taking

on Radiohead's "Creep," her surprising selections not only reach outside-the-box to fit her inner freak but sound wonderfully in-sync with Gray's personality – and her ability to find a fresh twist on some done-to-death tunes. Just having her gruffness in place of Colbie Caillat's vanilla voice on "Bubbly" practically puts the song in 3D.



'The Hunger Games: Songs from District 12 and Beyond'

What, exactly, sounds like a dystopia where mere kids fight to the death? It's hard to say, but T Bone Burnett's big-name compilation definitely finds the right tone – disturbing, dramatic and achingly sad – to reflect such horror. Working against type, boy-balladeer Taylor Swift sings a quiet hymn – with The Civil Wars – that features her unadorned voice and a rootsy feel, working the haunting melody into sublime Bon Iver territory. "Just a Game," sung beautifully by Birdy, fittingly borrows "Mad World"; Maroon 5, sounding nothing like Maroon 5, surprises with "Come Away to the Water"; and Miranda Lambert's group-venture Pistol Annies is country tragedy at its best.



The All-American Rejects, 'Kids in the Street'

That teen-skewed emo pop? Time to move along, indeed. Indulging

further – and harder – in rock, and easily surpassing their jacked-up third disc, "Kids in the Street" aims to redefine the Oklahoma quartet's juvenile claim to popularity seven years ago, when their "Dirty Little Secret" became ours, too. "Beekeeper's Daughter" doesn't hold like past head-hangers, but orchestral flourishes – a new thing for the band – and a cute couplet ("You're a pretty little flower/I'm a busy little bee") keep it buzzing. Through the acoustic closer "I For You," and especially on cool groove "Fast & Slow," the 13-year-old band makes a pretty convincing argument that they're grown up, and better for it.

Chris Azzopardi is the editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service. Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com.

A stunning exploration of primal themes

BY JOHN QUINN

As the Lakota tell the tale, during a time of drought and famine, White Buffalo Calf Woman came among them. She brought them the buffalo, and taught her people many rituals and other knowledge. Most important of all, she gave them a sacred pipe, the chununpa, holiest of all Lakota worship symbols, which opens communication between Deity and Man. Her tasks complete, she transformed into a bright white buffalo, but promised to return in times of darkness and sorrow.

This strikingly beautiful myth is the centerpiece of the award-winning "White Buffalo" by Dan Zolidis, which is receiving its world premiere at Chelsea's Purple Rose Theatre. Opening on a weekend when two major world religions celebrate their salvations, "White Buffalo" is yet another reminder, as writer Joseph Campbell often quoted from the Vedas, "Truth is one, the sages speak of it by many names." Some truths are so profound they can only be expressed through myth.

If the story isn't fascinating enough, the back story is remarkable. "White Buffalo" is inspired by the birth of Miracle, a buffalo she-calf – white, but not albino – born on the farm of Dave, Valerie and Corey Heider near Janesville, Wisconsin (Zolidis's home town) on Aug. 20, 1994. Recognizing the cultural and spiritual significance not only for the Plains People but for peace-seekers worldwide, the Heiders opened their farm to one and all. The family took no profit from the 10-year experience of their home being holy ground to hundreds of thousands of pilgrims.

Those are the facts upon which Zolidis

Hilberry asks: 'What price salvation now?'

BY JOHN QUINN

While every playwright infuses his or her work with their personal philosophy, few attack the social order with the intensity of George Bernard Shaw. His 1905 play, "Major Barbara," being staged by the Hilberry Theatre, is a biting satire, challenging the status quo in religion, economics and society. Some barbs are dated, some are remarkably contemporary. Shaw plays with an argument still raging among political scientists: Is social inequality bred by a broken economy or an unfair class system?

Barbara Undershaft (Danielle Cochrane), child of privilege, is now a major in the Salvation Army. The London shelters have fallen on hard times. Barbara's strong moral compass is knocked out of kilter when the Army accepts a generous donation from her estranged father, Andrew (Edmund Alyn Jones), an arms manufacturer. Daddy Warbucks is tempting Barbara to join him on the dark side. Temptation is the operative word, as Undershaft is frequently referenced in devilish terms. The paradox in "Major Barbara" is that the business mogul speaks in

REVIEW

White Buffalo

The Purple Rose Theatre Company, 137 Park St., Chelsea. Wednesday-Sunday through June 2, plus Tuesday, May 29; no performance April 8. \$17.50-40. 120 minutes. 734-433-7673. www.purplerosetheatre.org



The world premiere of "White Buffalo" at The Purple Rose Theatre continues through June 2. Photo: Sean Carter

builds his fiction. When a white buffalo, named "Hope," is born on Carol Gelling's (Michelle Mountain) small Wisconsin farm, she and daughter Abby (Stacie Hadgikosti) consider it odd, but no big deal. It's not until John Two Rivers (Michael Brian Ogden), a young Lakota who arrives magus-like at the stable, tells the women the story of White Buffalo Calf Woman that they realize her birth is a prophecy of peace and unity. The publicity reaches Carol's long-estranged husband (Alex Leydenfrost), whose return further complicates Carol's life. But John and Alex are not the only ones with a special interest in Hope. Wealthy businessman Anderson Wilkes (David Daoust) offers \$2 million for the calf; Carol and Abby are caught on the horns of a dilemma. Do they profit on the piety of others, or preserve the sacred trust handed them?

The characters Zolidis has created for "White Buffalo" are utterly compelling. None of them is based on stereotype. Their motivations and behavior are as unpredictable as – well – real people. This is especially true of John Two Rivers, who is conflicted by the contrast between the traditional symbol of salvation and the harsh reality of modern tribal life. Yet the five characters mentioned are literally only half the story.

There are four more cast members,

clad brilliantly by costumer Christianne Meyers in the traditional skin robes and shirts of the Plains peoples. They act as a chorus, and with the help of drummer Gregory Butka tell the legends, intone the prayers, and act in the place of the thousands of visitors. For someone raised in European tradition, their presence is wonderfully expressionistic. As First Woman (Rainbow Dickerson) dances before the calf, her sheer joy washes over us. It is a very special moment between artist and audience, thanks in no small part to Rhiannon Ragland's choreography.

Guy Sanville, perennial Purple Rose favorite and director of "White Buffalo," gifts us with a worthy premiere of a worthy play. If Miracle's birth on that Wisconsin farm didn't quite herald peace on Earth, good will towards men, it is our responsibility not to give up "Hope." Again in the words of Joseph Campbell, "Myth must be kept alive. The people who can keep it alive are the artists of one kind or another." The artists in Chelsea are holding up their end of the bargain; can we do less?

REVIEW

Major Barbara

Hilberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. Plays in rotating repertory through May 5. \$12-30. 164 minutes. 313-577-2972. www.hilberry.com



Danielle Cochrane, Edmund Alyn Jones and Brent Griffin in "Major Barbara" at the Hilberry Theatre. Photo: Alexandra Stewart

Socialist Shaw's voice. "When you vote, you only change the names of the cabinet. When you shoot, you pull down governments, inaugurate new epochs, abolish old orders, and set up new." Shaw's contempt and cynicism for the established order is the fabric from which he fashioned his satire.

But perhaps the most chilling theme of "Major Barbara" is Shaw's insight on "crony capitalism," a topic we're hearing much discussed lately. In a searing dialogue with his son, Stephen (Topher Payne), Undershaft lashes out. "The government of your country! I am the government of your country! ... Do you suppose that you and half a dozen amateurs like you, sitting in a row in that foolish gavel shop, can govern a country like England?" What would Shaw

make of the U. S. Congress?

Be forewarned: "Major Barbara" is a little didactic. Shaw's intent is more educational, less entertainment. That being said, when the satire flies, it soars. The play is written in three acts, but here performed in two. The first is long on plot and character development; the last is when the fun really begins. Give credit to director Carolyn M. Gillespie for not letting Shaw's political ranting overwhelm the evening. If your sole encounter with G.B.S. is "My Fair Lady," here's a chance to know the Irritated Irishman better.

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Editor's Picks

Outings



Metro Detroit's LGBT Twenty-Somethings are having a group outing to the Birmingham 8 Movie Theater at 1:30 p.m. April 15 to see the groundbreaking documentary "Bully."

This controversial documentary on peer-to-peer bullying in schools throughout America includes the stories of five bullied teens, including 16-year-old Kelby Johnson, an out lesbian, of Oklahoma. The film originally received an R rating for language, but was recently lowered to PG-13.

Twenty-Somethings is an LGBT group of volunteers seeking to offer group social alternatives to the bar scene and opportunities to be more engaged in the metro area community. Following the film, the group will migrate to the Zuma Coffee House – next door to the theater – for a discussion on bullying.

This event is open to the public ages 18-33. The Birmingham 8 Theater is located at 211 S. Old Woodward Ave. Tickets for the matinee cost \$6. For more information, go to The20somethings.org

Theater

Haunting. Emotional. Beautiful. Thrilling. Stagecrafters' latest production, "Titanic – The Musical," is all of these and more. While the fateful and tragic ending of the luxurious ocean liner is known worldwide, this compelling musical gives voice to the many passengers who were actually aboard the ship. "Titanic – The Musical" runs April 13 through May 6 at the Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette in downtown Royal Oak.

Although the ensemble is large – 49 actors from the Detroit area – small, individual vignettes give life to personal stories about the different classes of passengers and why they are aboard.

Rodel Salazar volunteered to direct this musical based on his fascination with the tragedy. "Even before the musical or the big blockbuster movie came out, I've always been fascinated with Titanic's magnificent story. When the opportunity to direct this show arose in 2010, my wonderful journey commenced with this glorious musical."

Advance tickets for regular performances are \$18 and \$20. Tickets may be purchased by phone at 248-541-6430. If shows have not sold out, tickets can be purchased at the box office one hour prior to the performance for an additional \$2 per ticket.



OUTINGS

Thursday, April 12

Legal Referral Services 4 p.m. Weekly advocacy program and referral services provided by AJ Skillman. AJ Skillman P.C., 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Meet 'n Greet 7 p.m. Meet new people, socialize and discuss age-relevant issues. Dinner at local restaurant afterwards. Ages 18-33. Metro Detroit LGBT 20Somethings, 290 West Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. Def20somethings@gmail.com The20somethings.org

Friday, April 13

Black Lesbians Fifty and Over 6 p.m. The new support/discussion group for Black lesbians who are gracefully transitioning into their 50's and beyond. Meetings cover topics relevant to the aging process and include issues around self-care, family, romantic relationships, travel, retirement, eldership in the Black community, etc. and are potluck. Contact Fela Smith for location and information at 313-978-7918. **Black Lesbians Fifty and Over**, RSVP to receive address, **Detroit**. 313-978-7918.

Older Lesbians Organizing 7 p.m. Provides older Lesbians with the chance to meet like minded women in their common struggles, to share mutual interests and to play and work together. Meets the 2nd Friday of every month. Older Lesbians Organizing, 319 Braun Court, **Ann Arbor**. 734-678-2478. jasmithers@sbcglobal.net

Womyn's Film Night 7 p.m. Film "Prayers for Bobby" Sigourney Weaver stars in this heartbreaking TV drama inspired by the true story of gay rights advocate Mary Griffith. At odds with her gay son, Bobby, over his sexuality, Mary finds her once-unshakable faith on rocky ground when he commits suicide. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Drag Queen Bingo 8 p.m. "This ain't your grandma's bingo." Hosts Sabin, Trixie Deluxe or September Murphy. Open to all 18+. Refreshments and bingo food fare. Reservations available by phone. Five15, 515 S. Washington, **Royal Oak**. 248-515-2551. Five15.net

SingAlong Game Night 8 p.m. Little Shop of Horrors, board games and entertainment. Dessert and other nonalcoholic refreshments served. Bring a dessert to share. Volunteer Leadership Committee, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. jffryoliver@yahoo.com GoAffirmations.org

Saturday, April 14

Living Recovery in an Addictive World 7:30 a.m. Speakers Terrence Shulman will present on understanding our relationship to money and things. Helen Lombardo will be presenting on communication and conflict resolutions skills. Steven Fischer will present on nutrition and meditation as essential aspects of recovery. Registration \$15. The Shulman Center for Compulsive Theft, Spending and Hoarding, 540 W. Lewiston, **Ferndale**. 248-358-8508. Terrenceshulman@theshulmancenter.com TheShulmancenter.com

Pancake Breakfast 8 a.m. E-mail info@sistrum.org for tickets. A fundraiser for the LGBT Lansing Women's Chorus. Sistrum, 5330 West Saginaw Highway, **Lansing**. Info@sistrum.org sistrum.org

Living Recovery in an Addictive World 8:30 a.m. Admission \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door. Topics covered will be money issues, meditation and nutrition, and conflict resolution communication skills. The Shulman Center for Compulsive Theft, Spending and Hoarding, 540 W. Lewiston, **Ferndale**. 248-358-8508.

Terrenceshulman@theshulmancenter.com TheShulmancenter.com

Crossroads 6 p.m. Southeast Michigan's oldest and largest transgender support/social group will hold its monthly gathering. Guest speaker, Dr. Sandra Samons, is a counselor and author of When the Opposite Sex Isn't. Her topic for the night will be based on her book and on, "Building Your Own Prison." \$5 meeting fee. Crossroads, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 586-738-4660. CrossroadsMi.com

Motor City Bears 7 p.m. Monthly meeting for on every second Saturday. Motor City Bears, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Sunday, April 15

Sunday Movie Matinee Bully 1:30 p.m. Enjoy the powerful film, "Bully," followed by discussion over coffee. Please RSVP via email for more info. Ages 18-33 welcome. Cost \$6. Metro Detroit LGBT 20 Something's, 211 S Old Woodward Ave., **Birmingham**. Det20somethings@gmail.com The20somethings.org

PFLAG Ann Arbor Meeting 2 p.m. 3rd Sunday of every month. Support group and monthly speaker at each meeting. PFLAG Ann Arbor, 306 N. Division St., **Ann Arbor**. Pflagaa.org

PFLAG Tri-Cities Meeting 2 p.m. PFLAG offers support, education and advocacy for equality. PFLAG Tri-Cities, 2525 Hemmeyer Road, **Saginaw**. 989-941-1458. Pflag@pflag-mbs.org Pflag-mbs.org

Sabotaging Democracy Roadblocks to Political Engagement in Communities of Color 2 p.m. ACLU of Michigan Racial Justice Project Staff Attorney Mark Fancher and Legislative Director Shelli Weisberg. This event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served. Reservations are preferred but not required. ACLU of Michigan Oakland Branch, 38651 Woodward Ave., **Bloomfield Hills**. 313-578-6800. Acumich.org

Conversation Station 6 p.m. LGBTQI and allies, 25 and over-join GOAL each week for discussion, food and fun. This week's topic if you could go back in time and talk to yourself at age 16, what would you say? **Get Out And Live!**, 714 S. Washington St., **Royal Oak**. 248-981-4227. MarciLWilliams@yahoo.com GetOutAndLive.me

Tuesday, April 17

LGBT Cultural Competency Training 8:30 a.m. Part 2 LGBT Cultural Competency Training for Aging Service Providers at MedLodge organized by the LGBT Older Adult Coalition. LGBT Older Adult Coalition, 26715 Greenfield Road, **Southfield**. 313-578-6812. jkaplan@aclumich.org

PFLAG Family Reunion Meeting 6:30 p.m. Third Tuesday of every month at the Fellowship Chapel. All LGBTIA and parents of LGBTIA invited to attend and share support. PFLAG Family Reunion, 7707 W. Outer Dr., **Detroit**. 313-286-8572.

Gay-Straight Alliance in Faith 7 p.m. A group of LGBTQ and allied young adults ages 14-23 welcoming those of all faith backgrounds or no faith background, honoring and respecting each person's faith and spirituality. Alternate between topical discussions and guest speakers on relevant topics for LGBTQ youth. Meets the first and third Tuesday of every month. G-SAF, 207 E. Fulton St., **Grand Rapids**. GaysinFaithTogether.org

LGBT and the Law 7 p.m. Attorney Timothy Cordes, president of the Stonewall Bar Association, presents "LGBT and the Law," at OCC's Royal Oak Campus, a discussion of how current laws are interpreted for the LGBT community. Cordes will provide an overview of such topics, as marriage equality in Michigan, adoption rights for same-sex couples, child custody for same-sex parents,

hate crime statutes and anti-sodomy laws. Oakland Community College, 739 South Washington, **Royal Oak**. 248-341-2000. Oaklandcc.edu/news

Wednesday, April 18

LGBT Older Adult Coalition 9:30 a.m. Collaboration of people and organizations in Southeastern Michigan who are working to establish effective programs and services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older adults, hosted by the ACLU of Michigan and is supported by a grant from the HOPE Fund. Meets third Wednesday of every month. ACLU of Michigan, 2966 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. 313-578-6812. jkaplan@aclumich.org

Wild Wednesday 5 p.m. A supportive LGBT youth group that meets every Wednesday. All youth are welcome. Dedicated to Make a Change, L3C, 319 Braun Ct., **Ann Arbor**. 734-657-1792. Gailvolkoff@gmail.com

Ties Like Me Professional Networking 5:30 p.m. Ties Like Me was created for the professional gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community to network. This networking opportunity creates an environment to meet new friends, engage in casual conversation and strengthen our community with strong business ties. Join Ties as they welcome first time sponsors MDSL and attorney Erik Buckstad. Come out to meet the softball players in person. Ties Like Me, 611 W. 12 Mile Road, **Madison Heights**. Tieslikeme.org

Chen Style Tai Chi (QiDong) 6 p.m. Provided by Shaolin Master Mesan Williams through April. Program may continue if interest follows. For more information, contact Director of Programs at J.Jenkins@GoAffirmations.org. Shaolin Master Mesan Williams, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Musical Chair Single Mingle-Lesbians 7 p.m. Tired of the bar scene? Tried online dating sites with no success? Lesbian only night. Appetizers, soft drinks, bar available. Admission \$29, must register in advance. **Get Out And Live**, S. Washington, **Royal Oak**. 248-629-0355. Info@getoutandlive.me Getoutandlive.me

Network Men's Group 7 p.m. A support group for bisexual, gay, and coming out men, 21 and up. Single or partnered are invited to join the group. Weekly discussion topics and issues. The Network, 345 Atlas Ave., **Grand Rapids**. 616-458-3511. Grlgbt.org

Friday, April 20

Open House Somos Unidos 6 p.m. This free event is a networking opportunity to learn more about Detroit Latin@z organization and expand the conversation on how to work together to create a more vibrant and safe City of Detroit. **Detroit Latin@z**, 1211 Trumbull, **Detroit**. 734-796-0910.

Special Acquaintances 6 p.m. Members of KICK are invited to an evening of wine and entertainment. To join KICK, go to E-kick.org. KICK, 41 Burroughs St., **Detroit**. 313-285-9733. E-kick.org

Bisexual Peer Group 7 p.m. Meets monthly on the third Friday of each month. Discuss relating to bisexuality, pansexuality, and/or omnisexuality. Allies are encouraged and welcomed to attend. Meeting usually followed by dinner at aut Bar, two doors down. Bisexual Peer Group, 319 Braun Ct., **Ann Arbor**. 734-678-2478. Biprideannarbor@gmail.com Facebook.com/groups/110918256984/

Womyn's Film Night 7 p.m. Film "In Passing" With New York City as a backdrop, actress Vanessa Kelly and playwright Julia Garrison fall in love in this tender lesbian romance that faces a singular set of challenges. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Sunday, April 22

TransCend 4:30 p.m. Open to persons 18 and older. Younger are welcome with parent or guardian permission. Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer Street, **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. Tracy@kglrc.org kglrc.org

Conversation Station 6 p.m. LGBTQI and allies 25 and over. Join GOAL each week for discussion, food and fun. New topic each week. This week's topic Do beliefs determine behavior? Can a person behave differently than they believe? For example, can a doctor who is pro-life perform abortions? Can a president who is a pacifist support war? **Get Out And Live!**, 714 S. Washington St., **Royal Oak**. 248-981-4227. MarciLWilliams@yahoo.com GetOutAndLive.me

MUSIC & MORE

CLASSICAL

University Musical Society "Pavel Haas Quartet" Based in Prague, the Pavel Haas Quartet is named for Czech composer Pavel Haas, who was imprisoned at Theresienstadt and died at Auschwitz in 1944. Performing Tchaikovsky, Smetana and Pavel Haas. Tickets \$20-42. Rackham Auditorium, 825 N. University, **Ann Arbor**. 7:30 p.m. April 18. 734-764-2538. ums.org

Detroit Symphony Orchestra "Viva Italia" Special guest vocalists Poperazzi take you on a tour of sunny Italy. Tickets \$19. Max M. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. April 13-April 15. 313-576-5111. Dso.org

University Musical Society "Charles Lloyd New Quartet" Tickets \$18-44. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., **Ann Arbor**. 8 p.m. April 14. 734-764-2538. Ums.org

Woodside Church "Jazz Vespers" Presented in a coffee house setting, the service offers a mix of outstanding music and readings focused on a special theme. Theme Dreaming of Healing with Marti Lawrence. Woodside Church, 1509 E. Court St., **Flint**. 6 p.m. April 20. 810-767-4911. WoodsideChurch.net

CONCERTS

Lansing Symphony Orchestra "Piano Man The Music of Billy Joel" The music of Billy Joel takes center stage with the Lansing Symphony. Wharton Center for the Performing Arts at Michigan State University, Michigan State University, East Lansing. 8 p.m. April 14. 517-353-1982 ext. 14. Lansingsymphony.org

Michigan State University College of Music "Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Competition" Third day of 32 Annual Jazz Spectacular. \$10 general admission, \$8 seniors, students free with ID. Music Building Auditorium, Michigan State University, East Lansing. 8 a.m. April 21. 517-432-2000. Music.msu.edu

Olympia Entertainment Nickelback's "Here & Now Tour" with Bush, Seether and My Darkest Days. After back-to-back sold-out shows in 2006-07 and again in 2009-10, Nickelback, one of the biggest rock bands of the past decade, will return to Detroit's Joe Louis Arena for the first North American arena tour. Tickets \$40-75. Joe Louis Arena, 19 Steve Yzerman Drive, **Detroit**. 6 p.m. April 14. 313-396-7000. Olympiaentertainment.com

Royal Oak Music Theatre "Rodrigo Y. Gabriela and C.U.B.A." Rodrigo y Gabriela, also known as "El Rodri y La Gabi", are a Mexican musical duo who specialize in playing fast, rhythmic acoustic guitars. The duo's members are Rodrigo Sanchez, lead guitar, and Gabriela Quintero, rhythm

For expanded listings & to add a listing, visit our website

guitar and percussion. Tickets: \$35. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. 7 p.m. April 14. 248-399-2980. Royaloakmusictheatre.com

The Ark Anais Mitchell, produced by Ani DiFranco. Tickets: \$15. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. April 16. 734-761-1818. Theark.org

The Ark "Bela Fleck & The Flecktones" A primarily instrumental group from the United States that draws equally on bluegrass, fusion and jazz sometimes dubbed "blu-bop." Tickets: \$29.50-65. The Ark, 316 S. Main, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. April 19. 734-761-1800. Mutotix.com

The Palace Bruce Springsteen performing with the E Street Band. Tickets \$35-95. Palace of Auburn Hills, 5 Championship Dr., Auburn Hills. 7:30 p.m. April 12. 248-377-0100. Palacenet.com

OTHER

Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase Gary Gulman Tickets \$11-17. Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase, 314 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. April 19-April 21. 734-996-9080. AnnArborComedyShowcase.com

DJ Lena "Electronic Thursdays" Gay night at Shelby's, a neighborhood bar with a history of being a Disco Bar in the 70s and 80s. Join DJ Lena and "invoke the spirits of boogie and down!" No cover. Shelby's, 15301 W. Warren Ave., Dearborn. 313-846-9388. Djsirlena.com/edm

Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center "Kalamazoo Women's Music Fest" A variety of music will be performed by numerous female artists, some local and some not-so-local. A complete list of performers and more info to be posted on the Kalamazoo Pride Facebook page. Tickets \$10. Metro Nightclub, 411 N Westnedge Ave., Kalamazoo. 8 p.m. April 20. Kglrc.org/pride

THEATER

CIVIC/COMMUNITY THEATER

Brighton Beach Memoirs \$22+. The Kalamazoo Civic Theatre at Civic Auditorium, 329 S. Park St., Kalamazoo. Through April 21. 269-343-1313. kazooicivic.com

Titanic-The Musical \$30. Stagecrafters at Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette Ave., Royal Oak. April 13-May 6. 248-541-6430. Stagecrafters.org

Waiting for Godot \$12. St. Dunstan's Theatre Guild of Cranbrook, 400 Lone Pine Road, Bloomfield Hills. April 13-21. 248-737-3587. StDunstansTheatre.com

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY THEATER

Guys and Dolls \$9-15. Eastern Michigan University Theatre at Quirk Theatre, 103 Quirk, Ypsilanti. April 13-21. 734-487-2282. emich.edu/emutheatre

Hairspray \$12-15. Bonstelle Theatre, 3424 Woodward Ave., Detroit. April 13-22. 313-577-2960. Bonstelle.com

Legally Blonde \$20. Wharton Center's Pasant Theatre, Michigan State University, East Lansing. April 20-29. 1-800-WHARTON. WhartonCenter.com

Tony n Tina's Wedding \$45. The University Theatre at Cityscape, 125 S. Kalamazoo Mall, #102, Kalamazoo. Through April 15. 269-387-6222. wmutheater.com

PROFESSIONAL

Dead and Buried \$17-20. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. Through May 20. 313-868-1347. detroitreptheatre.com

Disney's Beauty and the Beast \$32+. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. Through April 22. 313-872-1000. BroadwayinDetroit.com

Fiction \$28-\$30. Tipping Point Theatre, 361 E. Cady St., Northville. Through April 15. 248-347-0003. tippingpointtheatre.com

God of Carnage \$23-27. Farmers Alley Theatre, 221 Farmers Alley, Kalamazoo. April 13-29. 269-343-2727. farmersalleytheatre.com

Godspell \$18-32. The Encore Musical Theatre Company, 3126 Broad St., Dexter. Through April 22. 734-268-6200. theencoretheatre.org

Red Green \$46. Ford Community & Performing Arts Center, 15801 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. 7 p.m. April 15. 313-934-2354. dearbornfordcenter.com

Red Green \$45.50. Macomb Center for the Performing Arts, 44575 Garfield Road, Clinton Township. 7 p.m. April 13. 586-286-2222. MacombCenter.com

Remembering Titanic \$5-10. Flint Youth Theatre, 1220 E. Kearsley St., Flint. April 14-15. 810-237-1530. FlintYouthTheatre.org

Romeo and Juliet \$10-15. Pigeon Creek Shakespeare at Dog Story Theatre, 7 Jefferson Ave., Grand Rapids. April 12-22. DogStoryTheater.com

Spring Awakening \$15. The AKT Theatre Project at The Wyandotte Arts Center, 81 Chestnut Road, Wyandotte. April 13-28. 734-258-8370. AKTtheatre.com

Summer and Smoke \$12-30. Hilberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. Through April 21. 313-577-2972. hilberry.com

The Pearl Fishers \$29-121. Michigan Opera Theatre at Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St., Detroit. April 14-April 22. 313-237-SING. MichiganOpera.org

ART 'N' AROUND

Ann Arbor Art Center "the PRINT" Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 W. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. April 1-June 10. 734-995-8004. AnnArborArtCenter.org

Costick Center "Art After Dark" Wine tasting, live jazz and art at the Costick Center. \$25 door. Costick Center, 28600 W. 11 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. 7 p.m. April 20. 248-473-1848. Recreg.fhgov.com

Cranbrook Art Museum "The 2012 Degree Exhibition of Cranbrook Academy of Art" Cranbrook Art Museum, 39221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. March 21-April 13. 877-462-7262. Cranbrookartmuseum.org

Flint Institute of Arts "Dolce Italia Wine from the Ancient Peninsula" Admission \$60-75. Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley, Flint. 7 p.m. April 14. 810-234-1695. Flintarts.org

Lawrence Street Gallery "Exposures Photography 2012" 22620 Woodward Ave. Suite A, Ferndale. April 4-April 27. 248-544-0394. lawrencestreetgallery.com

Michigan State University Museum "On Equal Terms" West Circle Drive, East Lansing. Feb. 5-May 13. Facebook.com/MSUMuseum

NorthStar Center "Heywood's Photographs of Hate" 106 Lathrop St., East Lansing. April 2-April 30. 517-371-2001. Northstarcenter.net

The Detroit Institute of Arts "Detroit Revealed Photographs 2000-2010" 2100 Woodward, Detroit. Oct. 16-April 29. 313-833-7900. Dia.org

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Haroon Mirza" UMMA, 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. March 4-July 22. 734-647-0524. Umma.umich.edu

► Mike Ruiz

Continued from p. 37

How much of these reality TV shows are actually reality?

These days, honestly, none of it is reality. I've done everybody's show, and I love them, but it's no secret. I've worked with Kim Kardashian and Khloe Kardashian and I'm like, "This is so put on. None of this stuff is real." It's all fabricated for TV. Something may happen but then, from a producer's standpoint, they think, "How am I gonna spin it into a whole storyline?" That's when the artificiality comes in. So reality TV is not real.

How did the idea for the book "Pretty Masculine" come to you?

I don't typically shoot men a lot and being a gay man I was thinking, "Why haven't I shot men much?" I wanted to figure out a way to do something that wasn't gratuitously homoerotic – that stuff doesn't appeal to me. Because of my whole outlook on life, and everything being very fantasy-driven with me, I wanted to carry that over into this book and do something super stylized and take hyper-masculine men and soften them up a bit and portray them out of context. It just grew into this book to buck the stereotype of what people think masculinity is.

This idea of an alternate reality has always interested you, right?

I was always a sci-fi geek and before that, I loved musicals from the '40s and '50s where everything was Technicolor and everyone's hair was perfect. That's kind of where I needed to live when I was a kid, because my childhood was very gray and dingy. It started out as just as a very rich fantasy life as a kid, but then it eventually manifested into a tactile thing; I actually had to start creating this for myself.

You know, I used to see things on TV – we had three channels because we didn't have cable back then – and every once in a while we'd get a news clip from Studio 54 and that would fuel me. I just needed to see a 30-second clip from Studio 54 and I would have months of daydreams fabricated around it. (Laughs).

When did you start applying that to photography?

I got the camera when I was around 30, and that's when I started my photography career – but I started implementing the idea of creating a more beautiful reality around me much before; as soon as I was able to leave home is when it kind of happened. I was a model and my childhood was very tumultuous, so I always had to create a very serene, calm sort of vibe around me, and I was pretty successful at creating, on the surface anyway, this much happier and calmer environment.

It just started as simple as my environment. I'd make my apartment, wherever I lived, really beautiful and then I started modeling, traveling and getting the inking to get creative and expressive. When I got that camera, it became the spigot for everything that I had to say; it was a way for me to create this alternate reality in a real, tangible way.

How do you come up with the concepts for your celebrity subjects?

It's such a weird, organic thing and it's so second nature, so I don't know. There's always something about a person that I feel, however I decide to portray them, is not completely alien to them; it's something that I think resides in them but hasn't been brought to the surface yet. I don't do it for shock and awe, and I don't do it to make them uncomfortable. It's all aspiration. I want to create a different and perfected version of themselves. I'm not interested in capturing the reality of people, like a lifestyle sitting-on-the-couch-drinking-coffee thing. I like to create this impression that you're looking at a painting. It's a perfected version of reality.

And that all goes back to your childhood, right?

It all goes back to that. Fortunately, I had that to rely on instead of drugs and alcohol, but I struggled emotionally. It wasn't easy. I left home and everything wasn't hunky-dory. I had a lot of stuff to work through. I was a pretty tortured young adult, and then I just kind of figured some stuff out – and then I figured out how to figure out more stuff – and it's been smooth sailing for the past six years.

You've shot Kathy Griffin, Ricky Martin and Zac Efron, to name just a few. Who's been particularly memorable?

When I work with somebody it's like a catharsis. I work with them and get everything out and move on from that. I don't stay in one place; once something is done, I'm onto the next thing, so I don't really have favorites. Basically whoever the last person I worked with is my favorite.

So your body – how do you maintain that?

Photoshop. (Laughs) It's all part of my childhood thing. I was a heavy, unhealthy kid and I had anemia and other health problems – not major but minor



– and I was just tired of it. When I was a kid I used to fantasize about hot, hunky guys, so I thought the only way I'm going to be in that arena is if I take care of myself. And it started out as that, that was my motivation, but then it grew into just feeling better. And I continue to do it.

How does it feel to be engaged? What're your wedding plans?

Being engaged, I don't know. I'm connected to Martin emotionally and spiritually in a way that transcends the need to have a ring or anything like that. The tradition of it doesn't really mean anything to me, but the fact that we are afforded that right in the state of New York, I just wanted to exercise it mostly from a legal standpoint so we're both protected under the law. But I love Martin. He's everything to me. He's a sweet, kind, gentle, compassionate man. We still fall asleep looking into each other's eyes every night. It's hokey, but it's really wonderful being in the same room with him.

You donated all the proceeds from the first 500 copies of "Pretty Masculine" to Gay Men's Health Crisis, and you've supported many other charities. Why is charity work so important to you?

I always knew the moment I had the capacity to do something I wanted to be helpful in the community. Most of my adult life was spent trying to get my shit together, but I always told myself, "The minute you have a platform and you're capable and you're financially secure, you're going to do something beyond you, something that's not completely self-serving." So I've always had that in the back of my mind, and in the past few years with my visibility growing, it's just given me a platform to do something.

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Dating Diet

What Doesn't Kill You (Makes You Stronger)



BY ANTHONY PAULL

My god Becky! The new "it" boy in the neighborhood is a serial rapist. He's the hottest thing since those hideous lawn globes. He's in all the papers. I want him. I HAVE to have him for status – to be a disgusting

social climber – but he won't come to my window.

At night, I keep it open waiting for my Peter Pan moment, but I must not shave my ass enough because he never shows. He's probably holding out for a local celebrity like my neighbor who's famous for meth teeth and a magnificent yard full of night blooming jasmine. At dusk, the flowery aroma fills my room like sweet perfume.

"Did you hear?" she asks, finding me at the mailbox. Her eyes go wide. "He waits for people to fall asleep. Then he strikes."

"Like Santa?" I ask.

She raises an eyebrow, huffing and puffing. "You have nothing to worry about. He only assaults older women."

"Well, let me know when he switches to young men. Baby gets cold."

I know. I know. I shouldn't be desperate, but my boyfriend's been on a business trip for 16 days. I need attention; it builds my self-esteem. I can look. I just can't touch. Well, I can touch but only if I'm raped by a douche searching for a golden girl. Then I'll say he made me do it. "He's a bad man who made me do bad things!" Is that how it works? There has to be a power differential, I hear. Well, if so, let me get this right. If the rapist and I share the same age, gender and height, does that mean I'm not good enough?

FINE. I didn't want to get raped anyway.

"Oh come on. You're pissed off because he didn't pick you?" my friend Ryan asks. He calls on the phone to check on me.

"I get sensitive when I'm alone."

"No. You get psychotic."

He has a point, but at least I put myself out there. He's 34 and a virgin because he hasn't met the right "one" to share his life with. It's admirable but I wish he had the guts to bang a serial rapist or someone. He'd get street cred, and I wouldn't have to suffer through listening to him complain that there's no one out there.

That's his biggest problem. He refuses to go out.

"How do you expect to meet a guy?" I inquire.

"He's not going to crawl through your window." I catch myself, giggling. "Well, he might."

"Stop it. I'm not losing it to some rapist."

"That's your issue. You're too picky."

OK. Maybe I'm overdoing it, but he is selective. He won't use an online dating service because he doesn't want friends to find him pathetic. He won't go on Grindr because it's too slutty. He refuses to hit up the gay bar. Then he calls me crying because nobody wants him.

"Nobody wants you because nobody knows

you exist," I say.

He sees the point, asking for my advice. "Where should I go to meet a guy?" He wants him to be eloquent and cerebral – a man who can carry an in-depth conversation about the arts. In other words, he wants a theater nerd so I send him to a play about gay men who wish they had vaginas. I thought it would be the perfect place for him to find a match. I didn't think he'd actually talk to someone.

"I was sitting by this nice man but he kept hushing me when I would try to start a conversation."

"Why?"

"He wanted to hear the actors."

Yes. Ryan's officially that guy – the one who's been out of the game for so long that he doesn't know where the field is. I love him but he's been sheltered to the point that he's become borderline autistic. I'm so ugly. Why would anyone date me? I don't even know why I try. It's hopeless. Often, he tells me he can't stand the risk of rejection.

How many people have friends like this? They criticize themselves, only to find failure when they try because they have no clue what to do.

"Did you talk to him during intermission?"

"No," he says, sheepishly. "I didn't want to come on too strong so I just stared at him from across the room, near the entrance, hoping he'd make eye contact."

"Did he?"

"Yeah. But he looked away, rushing to the bathroom."

"And?"

"I followed him, pretending to wash my hands."

"OK. See. That's called stalking," I advise.

"Yeah, he darted off, changing seats during the second act."

The situation has led Ryan to isolate further. I only hear from him once a week when he calls to remind me he's alive. He keeps busy, working a job and watching the news. Tonight he calls to say he saw an artist's sketch of the man crawling through people's windows. It made him sad – the thought of a rapist taking advantage of the innocent.

"I don't know how you keep your window open," he says.

"I refuse to hide."

"Why? Aren't you afraid he'll hurt you?"

"Not really. I'm more afraid of not smelling the flowers."

Solution to puzzle from page 46

S	P	E	W	K	O	J	A	K	L	E	C	H
H	A	L	O	I	N	U	R	E	A	T	R	A
I	T	E	M	P	O	S	T	S	R	H	O	S
N	E	V	E	R	C	T	S	E	R	E	C	T
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I	R	O	N	S	S	Y	D	O	R	D	I	E
C	A	R	L	F	I	N	E	D	A	G	I	N
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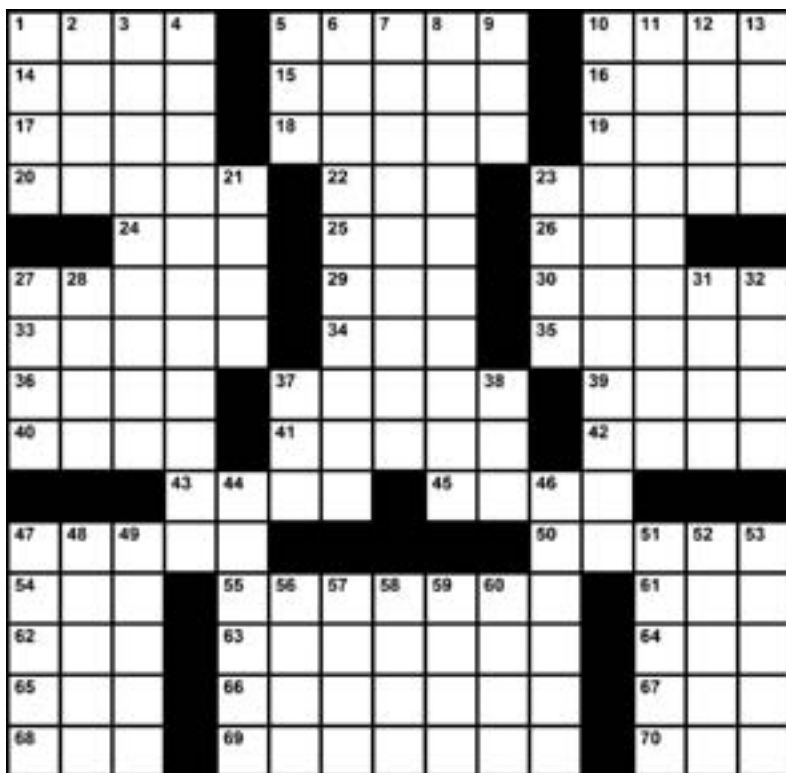
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Let's All Act Up



Across

- 1 Decide not to swallow
- 5 Lollipop cop
- 10 Lustful one, informally
- 14 Mary topper
- 15 Toughen up
- 16 Gillette razor product
- 17 Bit from Ted Casablanca
- 18 Newsgroup messages
- 19 P's for Socrates
- 20 "Over my dead body!"
- 22 Coins w. Abe images
- 23 How Homo sapiens stands
- 24 Darth, as a boy
- 25 St. Louis clock setting
- 26 Land of Damascus (abbr.)
- 27 Barbecue site
- 29 Nonprofessional sports org.
- 30 Drag queen's mini, e.g.
- 33 Jeremy of "M. Butterfly"
- 34 Barrett or Chaplin
- 35 Do ___ situation (crisis)
- 36 Clergyman Bean
- 37 Penalized, as a speeder
- 39 Gomer's "anti"
- 40 On top of that
- 41 Daniel with a coonskin cap
- 42 Manhandle, with "with"

- 43 Fruitless
- 45 Big bag
- 47 Singular men's shorts?
- 50 Exams on sexual technique?
- 54 Ran first
- 55 Novel by 10-Down
- 61 Mama's boy
- 62 Versatile vehicle
- 63 Nocturnal lizards of Tennessee Williams?
- 64 Illegal same-sex vow, in most states
- 65 Pitching stat
- 66 Return to mint condition
- 67 Earlier
- 68 Tchaikovsky's fifth
- 69 Like Shakespeare's writing
- 70 Take home after taxes

- 9 Jennifer Lien's "Star Trek: Voyager" role
- 10 Gay Men's Health Crisis cofounder
- 11 Singer Melissa
- 12 "Peter Pan" critter, for short
- 13 Doest own
- 21 Michael Nava's lawyer Henry
- 23 Petrol station choice
- 27 Not elite
- 28 Russian sea
- 31 Park of Queens
- 32 Perfect scores for Caesar?
- 37 G-man employer
- 38 In excelsis ___
- 44 Ratify
- 46 Had solo sex, with "off"
- 47 Langston Hughes' "The Weary ___"
- 48 Like bell-bottom jeans
- 49 Perfect model
- 51 B.D. Wong, for one
- 52 Gay ski weekend shanty
- 53 Uppity sort
- 56 "The African Queen" author
- 57 Nature's blow job?
- 58 Concert receipts
- 59 ___ about
- 60 Container weight

Down

- 1 Climb, as a tree
- 2 Top of the head
- 3 Lots of people go down on them
- 4 D.H. Lawrence novel for which 10-Down wrote a screenplay
- 5 One of TV's "Bosom Buddies"
- 6 Now and again
- 7 Novel by 10-Down
- 8 Young Michelangelo

Solution on page 45



Meet Bambi!

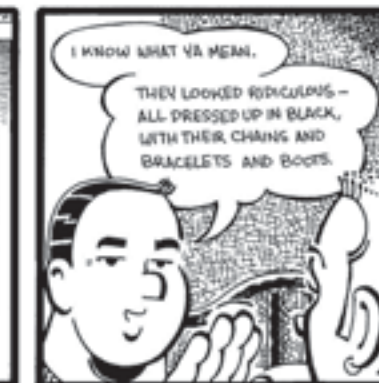
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Horoscopes

Think ahead, Aquarius!

BY JACK FERTIG

ARIES (March 20 – April 19): Rash impulses, touchiness and pushing yourself too hard will only invite trouble. Resisting those demons is a huge challenge right now. Practice meditation, “moderate” exercise, patience and sympathy. If you can’t be nice, take a long meditative walk.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20): Your financial intuitions are good, but you need to discuss them with your banker or accountant who might improve on them. Sexual innovation will help your partnership, but again, better to consult rather than to act on impulse.

GEMINI (May 21- June 20): Charm wins attention and admirers, but real love and commitment take more. Think seriously about where you want to be in 20 years and discuss that with your (prospective) mate. Your boss’s insanity is not your problem; how you respond to it is.

CANCER (June 21- July 22): Listen carefully to colleagues for chances to improve working relationships. Your personal relations are a bigger challenge as you feel pulled between love and work. Right now work has to come first. Your partner will understand.

LEO (July 23 – August 22): As your friends look to you for leadership it’s too easy to fall into pleasant routines. Take a creative challenge and push for something new and different. If you can wait a week or two to make any financial decisions.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22): Er... who’s being irritable and hypersensitive? It’s too easy to blame things on your partner. Even a long, strong marriage needs clear boundaries. Clearing the air can be helpful, but solutions will come later. Be patient.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22): Your flirtatious instincts could upset your sweetie. Take care of what you already have going! A little fresh air and innovation are necessary to keep a relationship alive, but you have to work together on that!

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21): Losing some friends could be good, but slow down and think hard about who you want in your future. A great new passion is probably just a passing fancy, but why pass it up? Just be careful of expectations and prophylaxis.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 20): Throw yourself into your work. Even if you’re feeling disconnected and just running on momentum you can get a lot done. Seeking attention and promotion will backfire. Just keep your shoulder to the wheel. Rewards will come later.

CAPRICORN (December 21 – January 19): Rumblyings close to home point to domestic trouble on the horizon. Those problems aren’t serious – yet. Take some time off from work; make time your mate. Work together on changes. Flowers or dinner out are nice surprises. Redecorating on your own isn’t.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18): Those cuties flirting with you are probably partnered. Nothing wrong with flirting as long as you’re careful. Getting too witty will undermine caution. Think ahead! Write down those bons mots that are too incendiary for conversation.

PISCES (February 19 – March 19): Domestic and professional relationships can bolster each other, but prioritize the professional for now. It’s hard to maintain focus and people are pulling you in different directions. Principles will offer direction. Focus on what is important in your life and who will fall into place.

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

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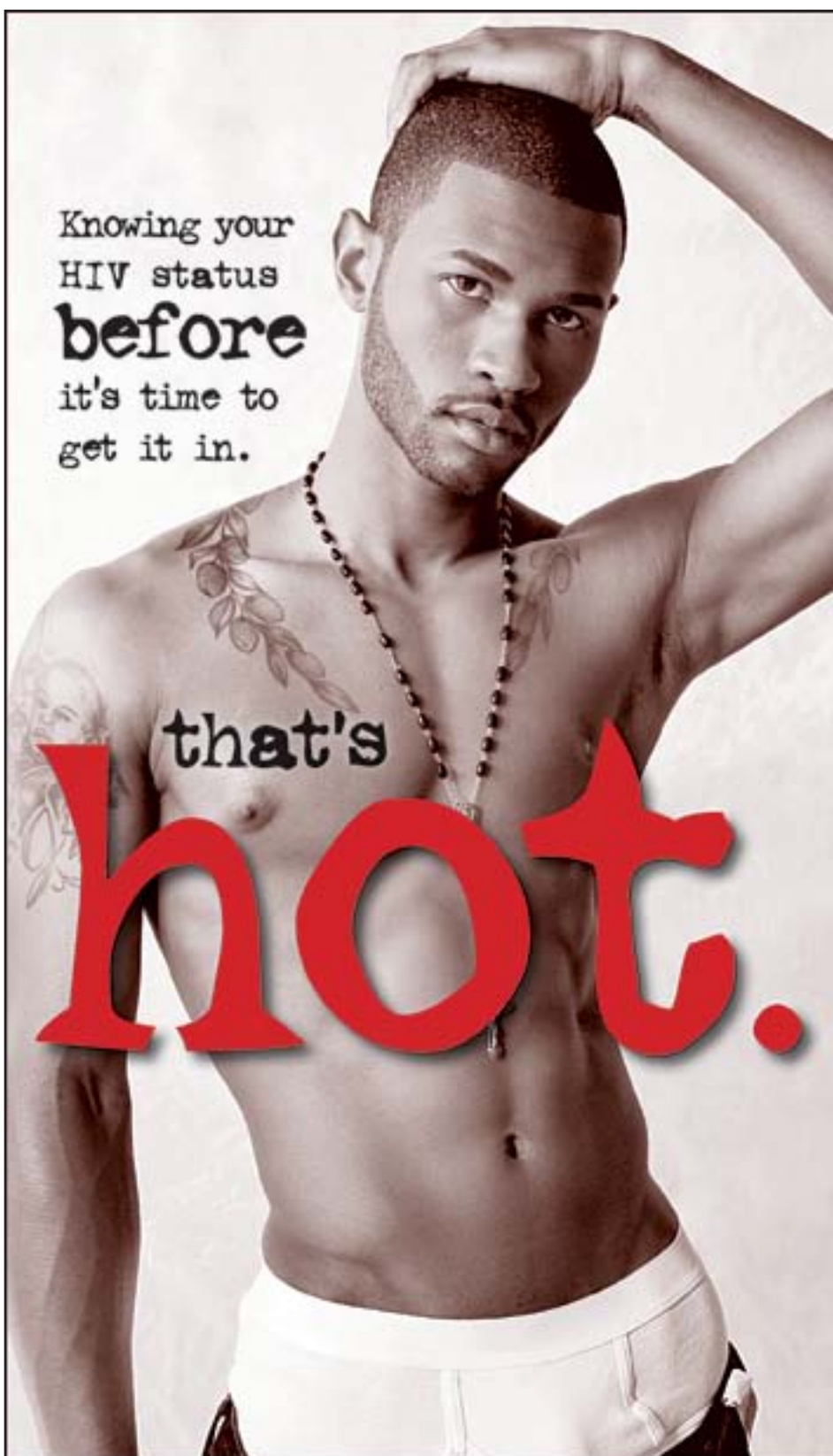
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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE



Sofia Vergara. Photo: Warner Bros.

Sofia Vergara in bed with Sharon Stone and...

Take one actress best known for an iconic lesbian role and another actress that lesbians simply wish would switch teams, put them both in a new film and what do you have? Sharon Stone and Sofia Vergara in bed together in something called "Fading Gigolo." And while you're pretending that the title of the film isn't inherently off-putting and that you're just happy to hear about a lesbian component in a new comedy, here's bit of a twist in the fantasy good news: their sex scene will also involve John Turturro, the writer and director of the project, who stars in the "Hung"-like film as a man forced into prostitution out of economic necessity. Look, don't blame the messenger. And besides, it could be Woody Allen in that threeway instead of Turturro, because he's co-starring in the film, as well. So just count your blessings.

Tom Hardy as gay rugby star. Yes, we buy it.

It wasn't bad news to hear that Mickey Rourke wanted to play Welsh gay rugby star Gareth Thomas in a new film about the athlete's 2009 professional coming out process, but it was, admittedly, odd news. After all, Rourke is in his late 50s and Thomas in his mid-30s. How would it work? And then came news that even Rourke wasn't convinced he was up for the role's physical demands. Enter Tom Hardy, currently in talks to take on the part. Talk about easy casting. This is a man whose body is more than up to the challenge (see "Warrior" or "Bronson" for all the proof you need) and whose chameleon-like abilities can see him dance around the edges of a film like "Inception" or practically into the woodwork in films like "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy." And as for gay? He did that already too, slow-dancing with Gerard Butler in "Rock-n-Rolla." Somebody teach this guy the finer points of rugby and get the cameras rolling.

What that gay guy from 'Happy Endings' is doing next

No, Adam Pally isn't gay. He just plays one on TV. And the slovenly, irresponsible, no-rule-or-stereotype-abiding "Max," on the hilarious, fast-paced sitcom "Happy Endings," is unlike any gay character yet seen in primetime on a major network. So it's good news to see the likeable Pally taking on a film role, during the show's summer hiatus, in "A.C.O.D." (which stands for "Adult Children of Divorce"). The comedy also stars Amy Poehler and Adam Scott, Jane Lynch, Jessica Alba and Catherine O'Hara. Weirdly enough, Poehler and Scott play romantic partners on "Parks and Recreation" but here Poehler will be Scott's stepmother, the third wife of his older father. No word on what Pally's character gets up to, but he's showed a very specific kind of range on the other TV projects, notably as the "Young Hollywood Douchebag" on "Californication" and, well, the "douche" guy on "NTSF:SD:SUV." Here's to future typecasting.

Barbra Streisand and 'Downton Abbey' creator takes on "Gypsy"

The sharp-tongued Dowager Countess might look askance, eyebrows at full arch, at a man who works for a living, but the man who invented her, Oscar-winning writer (for "Gosford Park") and "Downton Abbey" imagineer Julian Fellowes, can't seem to stop. Not only is season three of the hit Brit period soap already shooting, but now Fellowes has been hired by Universal to take a pass at the screenplay for their upcoming adaptation of "Gypsy." Barbra Streisand and Joel Silver are producing the feature based on Stephen Sondheim and Arthur Laurents' Tony Award-winning musical. For the young people out there, it's the story of famed burlesque dancer Gypsy Rose Lee and her relationship with her mother Momma Rose, that already hit theaters in 1962. And as producer, it's Streisand's prerogative to play Momma Rose. And that's just what she's doing. Get ready, gays.

Romeo San Vicente gives roses to his Momma because she was nothing like Momma Rose. He can be reached care of this publication or at DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.

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