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INVITED TO PRIDE**

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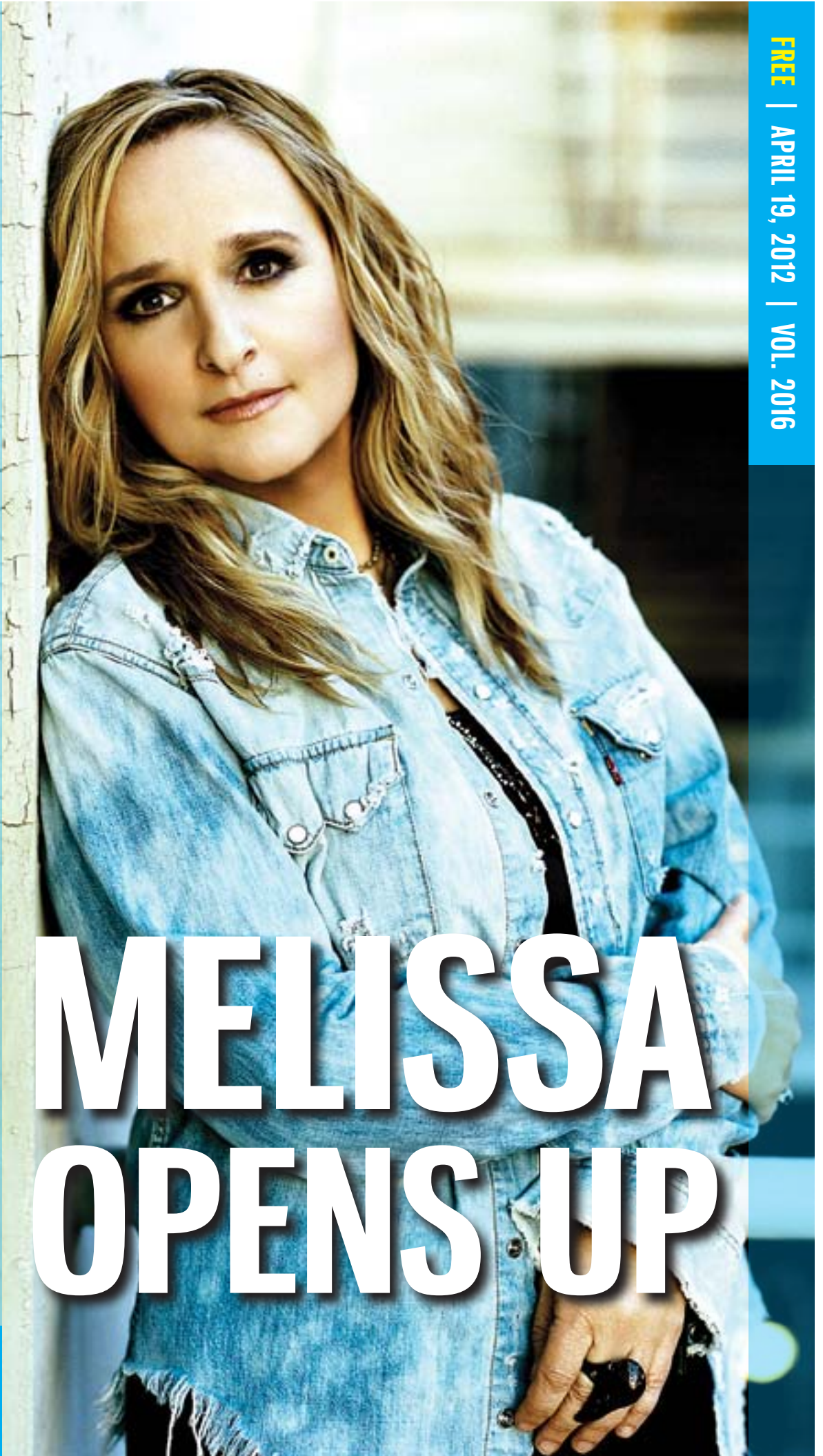
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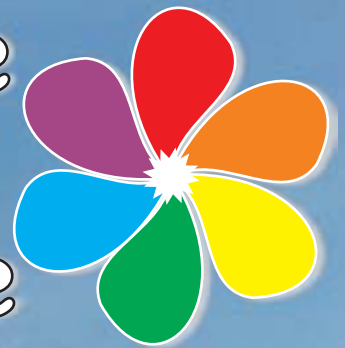


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State's Republican attack on democratic process staple of 'The Rachel Maddow Show'

Michigan Pride invites her to June 16 rally

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

The push is on to convince journalist Rachel Maddow to come to Michigan Pride, which takes place in Lansing on June 16. Organizers have started a Facebook Page called Rachel Maddow - Please come speak at Michigan Pride 2012, which has over 300 likes in its first few days online.

The description for the page is simple: "Rachel - We need your intelligence, insight, humor, encouragement and brilliance... this year more than ever."

Maddow is host of MSNBC's "The Rachel Maddow Show", the platform through which she shares national news with an openly liberal perspective. Maddow is a 39-year-old lesbian who is also a Rhodes Scholar that earned her doctorate of philosophy in politics from Oxford University. She was the first openly gay American to receive the prestigious scholarship. Upon returning to the states, Maddow worked her way up through the media, starting as a morning talk show sidekick at a Holyoke, Massachusetts radio station and moving on to a liberal talk radio platform Air America, where she was noticed by corporate news professionals and began making guest appearances on the big news shows. In September 2008 she got her own show.

When asked why there is a push to bring Maddow to Michigan Pride, Co-Chair of Michigan Pride Emily Horvath said, "We were surprised to see how often she covers Michigan politics. So many folks in the DC/New York area consider the Great Lakes to be 'fly-over states and unworthy of political attention. She's focused regularly on emerging issues here in Michigan and we appreciate that she's raising our political challenges to the national level."

Immediate Effect law

Earlier this month, Maddow reported startling information about the threats to democracy taking place at the Michigan capitol. The Democrats in the State House of Representatives have sued the State House Republicans because the



Michigan Pride 2012 invitation to Rachel Maddow, inviting her to keynote the rally in Lansing on June 16. BTL Photo: Roxanne Firth

Republicans have been passing legislation using an "immediate effect clause," by lying about the number of votes and refusing demands for a roll-call vote. Normally newly approved legislation does not go into effect until 90 days after the close of a legislative session. This gives people affected by the law time to adjust, and also gives those opposed to the law an option to fight it.

Immediate Effect is a provision in the Michigan constitution that allows lawmakers to by-pass the waiting period in the event of an emergency. To do this requires a two thirds majority vote. Republicans do not have that majority, yet the records show that in 546 of the last 566 bills that have been passed, Immediate Effect has been applied.

Besides ignoring the votes of elected officials in order to implement these laws quickly, many of the laws further strip Michiganders of their rights. The Emergency Financial Manager law gives the state the right to take over any municipality or school district that is having financial troubles and appoint a manager that has

no accountability to the people. Elected officials are stripped of their power and public assets, including beaches, museums, parks and other attractions that can be sold to private corporations without any say of the people who live there. In the city of Pontiac, for example, the Emergency Financial Manager dissolved the police department and set up contracts with Oakland County.

In Benton Harbor the controversy is over allowing the EFM to sell the city's public beaches and have them turned into a golf course, and in Muskegon Heights children's educations are on the line as an EFM considers dissolving the district.

Other laws enacted with Immediate Effect include stripping public employees of the right to have domestic partner benefits, which happened without warning just days before Christmas last year; the allocation of \$10,000,000 to hold a confusing Presidential Primary, and a law to prevent the expansion of a graduate student union at the University of Michigan.

See Maddow, page 5

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► **Maddow**

Continued from p. 4

BTL reported April 17 on news of the redistricting law that garnered both Immediate Effect rule and somehow surpassed the criteria for a Local Rule, which should have required a super-majority vote.

Maddow's reporting did not get any logical

"We were surprised to see how often she covers Michigan politics. So many folks in the DC/New York area consider the Great Lakes to be 'fly-over states and unworthy of political attention. She's focused regularly on emerging issues here in Michigan and we appreciate that she's raising our political challenges to the national level."

- Michigan Pride, Co-Chair of Michigan Pride Emily Horvath

responses from the state Republican party, though she has received quite a bit of insults. Horvath assures the superstar reporter that she would be well-received in Lansing, and that many people in Michigan share her progressive values.

"We think she'd like to know that the Greater Lansing area boasts the very first Human Rights Ordinance in the country EVER (East Lansing, 40 years ago), the Angriest Mayor (and pro-LGBT powerhouse) Virg Bernero, a vibrant arts and cultural community and a dedicated group of community leaders who stand up for same-gender marriage, two parent adoption, domestic partner benefits and full equality for LGBT people," said Horvath.

"Michigan Pride is a major statewide event that attracts people from all walks of life from all over the state and even the region. As Michigan Pride grows, we think it only appropriate to ask someone with Ms. Maddow's national profile and personal interest in Michigan politics to come to our rally and speak to us about her observations. Rachel Maddow makes an impact when she talks about Michigan politics and Michigan Pride makes an impact on Michigan politics – there's a direct connection between her work and ours," Hovarth added.

Those who want to join in the grand invitation can take part by liking www.facebook.com/RachelMaddowPleaseComeSpeakAtMichiganPride2012/ info on Facebook. Find out more about Maddow at www.rachelmaddow.com. Learn more about Michigan Pride at www.michiganpride.org.

Transgender Empowerment Task Force reports back one year later

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

FERNDALE - While the broader society still stumbles in grasping what it means to be transgender, and the lesbians, gays, and bisexuals who make up the LG and B wonder if the T really has a place in the gay community, the Transgender community themselves faces challenges reconciling the different types of people that fall under the umbrella term.

That's why the Michigan Transgender Empowerment Task Force was formed last April. The group presented their one-year results as part of the Transgender Day of Empowerment on April 14 at Affirmations Community Center in Ferndale.

Representatives from Horizons Project, AIDS Partnership Michigan, Transgender Detroit and the Ruth Ellis Center have taken the lead on this project, which seeks to discover the most pressing needs in the transgender community.

Two concerns were the most dominant. Steph Turner of Transgender Detroit presented information relating to the employment needs of transgender people, and Ryan Oliver of AIDS Partnership Michigan spoke on the importance of having a more diverse presence in the transgender rights movement.

"At the April event last year, when we met back up we found a significant under representation of color, youth and FTMs in the transgender organizations," Oliver said. "We decided we needed to build relationships with people of color and we started the Transgender People of Color Task Force, which has been building relationships and planning focus groups."

Oliver said they first identified approximately 50 people of color who gave insight into their experiences. Most of the participants were from Oakland and Wastewaw counties. "They tended to be people who knew people at Affirmations already," he said. This fact illuminated another problem, how to reach the inner-city transgender population, especially the youth?

"Historically it's a lot easier for white people to come out," Oliver said. "They have more resources, access to the internet, or connections to other transgender people. Often they feel like they are the only one." A common story is that when young transgender people, particularly feminine-identified, come out they are forced from their homes and end up in the protection of seasoned transgender women who take on the role, and even the title, of mothers, sisters or aunts. Unfortunately many of these young women, with no clear path to support, turn to sex work to survive.

This is not true of all transgender people,



Ryan Oliver of AIDS Partnership Michigan spoke on the importance of having a more diverse presence in the transgender rights movement. BTL file photo: Andrew Potter

but it is a reality that anyone seeking to unite the transgender community must acknowledge. Recognizing this trend, Oliver teamed up with workers at Ruth Ellis Center, KICK and AIDS Partnership Michigan, to reach out to this population of transgender people. The result has been a renewed interest in activism and a spirit of cooperation that wasn't there before.

"What we hear over and over is that people come along with these big ideas to help, they ask a bunch of questions, and then nothing else gets done. ... The women finally felt like things were happening when we started bringing in organizations in Detroit. But we can't just ask questions, we need to show them results."

In an economy and environment where resources are scarce, demonstrating results can be a challenge. But Oliver and his team have found a way. AIDS Partnership Michigan is now hosting retreats for transgender women where they can come in and get to know each

other in a safe, comfortable environment.

There have been two retreats so far, and the women seem to be warming up to the idea of bringing their voice to the table. "We're hoping to bring everyone together for the Transgender Health Fair in September," he said. Oliver said task force members are also working hard to connect with the Latino and Middle Eastern transgender communities.

The issue of viable employment is also one that The Transgender Empowerment Task Force has learned is a concern. From the people who are ingrained in a lifetime at a job they risk losing if they transition, to those that are young and have limited career paths, the barriers to employment are great.

Turner is just wrapping up her BFA, and intends to start a business that will provide steady work for transgender people. Over the past year she has explored ways that employers might be incentivized to hire transgender workers. One option might be to get a consumer group together that promotes and supports businesses that hire transgender people. Another is to create a list of companies that are transgender friendly, such as Goodwill Industries. Working with agencies that do training might also be helpful for transgender workers.

Transgender Day of Empowerment was a day-long series of workshops with resources for the transgender community and allies. Find out more about Transgender Detroit at www.transgenderdetroit.org.

"Historically it's a lot easier for white people to come out," Oliver said. "They have more resources, access to the internet, or connections to other transgender people."

- Ryan Oliver

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BY ERIC W. RADER

Michigan voters will have a lot to consider when they go to the polls this November. In addition to electing a president, citizens in our state will be choosing a number of other federal, state, and local officials. Additionally, it appears likely that there will be several important citizen initiatives on the Nov. 6 ballot. In the past, such initiatives have sometimes been used for ill purposes in this state. We in the LGBT community were the target of Proposal 2 in 2004, a measure approved by voters that banned marriage equality in Michigan. This amendment has been used to prohibit public employers from granting domestic partner benefits to employees with same-sex partners.

While the constitutional amendment process has sometimes been used for divisive purposes in recent years, it can also be a way to protect individual rights. There are a couple of petition drives underway right now that would place progressive proposals before the voters. Some people believe the state's constitution should not be used to advance specific policies, since the constitution is the fundamental law of the state. Unfortunately, the political reality in Lansing is not conducive to solid public policy these days. As a result of the 2010 elections, Republicans control the levers of power of all three branches of state government. The legislature is a rubberstamp for Gov. Snyder's worst ideas. The governor refuses to veto noxious legislation passed by the legislature, and the supposedly nonpartisan Michigan Supreme Court enthusiastically upholds any law passed by the majority Republicans in Lansing, even if the legislation clearly violates the Michigan Constitution. Thus, amending the constitution itself is the only viable option for progressive change at this time in Michigan's history.

Across the industrial Midwest, collective bargaining rights have been under assault since Republicans swept to power in 2010. Most of the national media has focused its attention on the powerful assaults by Ohio's and Wisconsin's governors on the collective bargaining rights of public employees in those states. Citizens in both states have fought back. Last fall, Ohioans repealed the anti-collective bargaining law in that state by an overwhelming margin. Soon, Wisconsin citizens will decide the fate of their polarizing Republican governor, Scott Walker. His facing a recall election in June. With all the media attention on these two states, it's easy to overlook the decisions Michigan's "moderate" governor has made regarding employee rights. Since taking office on January 1, 2011, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder has signed a series of harsh laws that deny public employees a number of basic labor rights, or seek to make

Speak Out Michigan's 'moderate' governor no friend of labor

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder has signed a series of harsh laws that deny public employees a number of basic labor rights, or seek to make life more complicated for unionized teachers, fire fighters, and police officers.

life more complicated for unionized teachers, fire fighters, and police officers. The governor also signed legislation last December that effectively prohibits governments in the state from offering domestic partner benefits to their employees. Though public institutions were not able to specifically offer such benefits to same-sex couples, some institutions found ways to grant them without contravening Michigan's anti-gay marriage amendment. These employers now have to take back these important benefits from many Michigan families, both gay and straight, thanks to the rabid partisans in Lansing. Gov. Snyder, who talks frequently of "relentless positive action" and ending divisiveness in our state, has only served to further divide us, pitting Michiganders against each other in a cynical effort to undermine his political opposition.

One of the petition drives underway right now in Michigan would place a measure before

the voters that, if approved, would guarantee the right of all employees in the state to bargain collectively with their employer. This is an effort to place a provision in the Michigan Constitution to guarantee a basic right of democracy — if a majority of workers want to band together to protect themselves, they should be allowed to do so. The measure says nothing about the specifics of collective bargaining agreements, and would not require workers to bargain collectively if they do not wish to do so.

If such a right were protected in the Michigan Constitution, the LGBT community would have a lot to gain. No longer would our basic civil rights at work be subject to the vagaries of election results and the whims of elected officials. If workers want to negotiate important benefits or anything else with their employer, no governor would be able to sign a bill telling them they can't do it. Collective bargaining means just that — two sides sit down together to hammer out a mutually agreeable labor agreement. Neither side in a labor agreement should be able force the other to do something that is contrary to their interest, but right now, the Republican leaders in Lansing have the upper hand and want to deny workers any right to bargain with their employer. The proposed constitutional amendment would restore balance to the democratic process in Michigan. This is something we should all welcome and support.

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Transgender children share empowered coming out stories

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

FERNDALE – The little girl in the audience had a hard time sitting still. She lay across her grandmother's lap and kicked her little purple-tight-covered legs in the air, amused by the way her lavender tutu skirt crunched as she moved. In front of the crowd a panel of parents, and one grandparent - her own grandfather, spoke about what it's like to have a transgender child.

Dr. Antonia Caretto, a well-known psychologist, hosted the panel as part of Transgender Day of Empowerment. The issue of children transitioning can be a controversial one, but studies show that transgender people known from the time they are toddlers that they have a strong disposition towards a gender expression that is different from the one that is expected of them based on their body parts.

Brian, the six-year-old's grandfather, shared his experience and advice so that other parents who might have transgender children could learn from the things his family experienced.

"The best advice we can share is to be supportive," he said. "The worst advice we got, from a psychologist, was to remove the (female) clothes from the home." The psychologist said that "reparative therapy" was needed, and eventually Brian and his wife decided that the child is much happier being herself. Now she goes to a private school where she fits in with the other girls, who do not know she is transgender.

Eleven-year-old Jackie and 17-year-old Sagan were there with their parents too. When Jackie came out as transgender a little over a year ago, her family was supportive. Big sister Sagan even took on the daunting task of letting Jackie's classmates know what to expect when Jackie returned following a break from school.

"I went down to Jackie's classrooms and I told them that Jackie's going to be a girl, and I told them it would be really nice of them if they could be nice to her and call her 'she' and not make fun of her. I wasn't expecting the reaction I got from the fourth graders. The girls cried and the boys were really nice," Sagan said.

Jackie's parents remembered the struggles when she was younger. "We used to have what was like our secret code," Jackie's father said. "Jackie would be in the store looking at dolls, and parents and other kids would say things about it. So we had to make a story so it would sound like she was looking for a toy for some cousin. She'd show me what toys she liked and I'd say 'oh wouldn't Sara like that for her birthday,' just so other people wouldn't say things. It's a lot easier now not having to hide or explain things."

He recalled Jackie coming out to his wife first. "A little over a year ago when she came



Panel discussing transgender children featured 16 year old Spenser with his parents. Their response was to find resources when he came out two years ago. BTL photo: Crystal Proxmire.

out ... she said 'There's something I have to tell you, I can't keep it in anymore, I'm a girl.'"

Jackie's mom explained that when it happened they felt like they were the only family in the world, but that they were determined to help their child be happy.

Pause button on puberty

A very happy 16 year old transgender boy also sat on the panel with his parents. Testosterone has given Spenser obvious signs of a masculine puberty, with a deepening voice, more solid body mass, and even some teenage acne.

"I don't think he wants to be 'that transgender kid,' he just wants to be Spencer," said the teen's dad.

Spencer came out as transgender two years ago, and his mother's immediate response was, "Let's find some resources and see how we can support you." She said, "finding Dr. Caretto was a live saver for us, and the book 'Your Transgender Child' was really helpful."

Spencer said he always felt like he was a male. "In seventh grade I learned the term transgender and I identified. Some people don't like labels, but to me it felt good to have a label and not to be on my own."

He explained that he'd been raised in the Universal Unitarian church that was already very accepting of people in the LGBT community, and that he didn't experience any of the social stigma that he realizes other people have had. "My parents got me on hormones and I'm getting surgery soon. I just wish the word 'transgender' had been more known when I was younger."

Dr. Caretto explained that when young people come out as transgender, parents have

the option of asking a doctor to proscribe hormone blockers to "put the pause button on puberty." Hormone blockers can also be given to youngsters who are maturing years before they should.

The controversy in hormone therapy for youth comes from some people who worry the youth will regret their decision later in life. Others argue that transitioning early can help with socialization, leaving less of a past-identity footprint on one's life, and it can keep the body from changing. Female-born youth can be spared from menstruation and breasts, and in male-born youth it can slow the deepening of the voice, thickening of the Adam's apple, and the growth of facial hair. These are features that people who transition later in life often struggle to change or minimize.

Spencer doesn't hide the fact that he is transgender, but he doesn't exactly advertise it either. "I've already socially transitioned and I don't feel the need to come out to everyone. I'm not ashamed to be transgender, but it's not a huge part of my life," he said.

His parents both said they are proud of him, many times during the presentation. "The first thing I noticed was that within a week he was more confident. We knew we were on the right track when he could just get it out."

Spencer, who handled questions from the audience with only a little bit of shyness said, "My personality hasn't changed, except that I've become more outgoing because I don't have to hide who I am."

To find out more about Transgender Detroit, which organized the event, check out www.transgenderdetroit.org. Learn more about Dr. Caretto and her services at www.betreatedwell.com.

Update: Troy Mayor recall efforts reaches milestone

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

TROY – The Recall Janice Daniels group has until June 15 to gather the required signatures and they have reached a major milestone in the first three weeks of that effort. More than 33 percent of the 7,895 signatures have been collected and verified to remove Troy Mayor Janice Daniels from office.

The group started collecting signatures in March and community reception to the recall effort has been overwhelmingly supportive, according to John Kulesz, a local attorney, longtime resident of Troy and volunteer for the campaign. "We're thrilled. People are thanking us for our actions and are actively seeking us out to sign the petition, including former supporters of the mayor and remorseful voters," said Kulesz.

More than 80 dedicated volunteers and signature collectors are at the Troy Public Library every Saturday and Sunday during normal library hours for at least the next three weeks. They are also canvassing the neighborhoods, going door-to-door to give people as many opportunities to sign the petition as possible.

"The team is grateful for the dedication and determination of all its volunteers and welcomes all concerned citizens to join in this effort," said Kulesz. "Once the signatures are certified by the Oakland County clerk's office and this is on the ballot and the mayor is recalled then the city charter will take over. The remaining council are empowered to select a replacement who would fill the position until the next regularly scheduled election, either next August or November."

The group has received some criticism from the mayor's supporters, mostly in the form of name calling. "We have the mayor's supporters' show up to the library while we collect signatures with protest signs. On one particular Saturday, three of Daniels' supporters held signs that read 'Support Janice Daniels' and 'Janice Daniels is an American Hero,'" said Kulesz.

When Mayor Daniels was contacted about the news and asked what she was feeling, she said, "I love the City of Troy. I always have and I always will."

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Heard on Facebook

One Million Moms outraged over a same-sex kiss in Urban Outfitters

It looks as if Urban Outfitters is using the photograph to appeal to young men who want to watch two women kiss. When that's the intent, we can forget about the photo being a statement in favor of LGBT rights. It's just erotica, which some people appreciate and others don't. Given the company's right-wing background, LGBT activists should take offense at this.

—Ann Mason

Why make a big issue out of something that isn't that big of an issue? It's not as if it was in a Toys R Us catalog. How stupid!

—Jeffrey Olivier

That's just because it turned their husbands on.

—DL Brandon

Big deal! Two chicks kissing! People are killing people for no reason all over the world! Get your priorities straight, OMM.

—Matteo de Girolamo

Sounds to me like Richard Hayne just wants to fly on the propaganda to make a buck, especially after reading this article... The man is a greedy American exploiting the plight of a group of Americans to benefit himself.

—Deborah R. Hartman Hammons

Comments may be edited for grammar and length.



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S/he Said

Coming out, latest research

COMPILED BY HOWARD ISRAEL



Melissa Febos

"Bisexuality made sense to me, in theory, before I ever kissed a girl. And this was pre-Madonna kissing Britney Spears, pre-'Girls Gone Wild' (at least in my house, where we watched only PBS). My conception of girls kissing girls was not defined by a male gaze; I grew up with books like 'Closer to Home: Bisexuality and Feminism' on the shelves. My mother was a Buddhist therapist, and I had known before our landmark conversation that she not only identified as bisexual but moreover understood that being one was largely unremarkable. It seemed logical to me that people were bisexual until proven otherwise."

—Melissa Febos, in her column titled "Bisexual in a Small Town: How My Family Helped Me Deal," www.alternet.org, Apr. 11.



Crosby Burns

"Due to narrow definitions of who constitutes a 'family,' many of the more than 2 million children living with gay and transgender families do not have the same access to the economic safeguards afforded to other children in the U.S. today. Moreover, this discrimination in government programs exacerbates the economic insecurities created by the high rates of discrimination facing the gay and transgender population. Discrimination in health care, housing, and the workplace leaves far too many gay and transgender families without health insurance, affordable housing, and a job to make ends meet."

—Crosby Burns, Research Associate, LGBT Research and Communications Project, Center for American Progress, in his article titled "The Federal Budget and Gay and Transgender Families," www.americanprogress.org, Apr. 11.



David Dutwin

"There is a clear misperception among the general population about where Latinos stand on LGBT issues, partly because the media pushes this narrative that the culture and values of Latinos and LGBT progress are simply incompatible ... In reality, as society is evolving on LGBT issues and becoming more accepting of this community, so too are Hispanics. Latinos mirror the general population in that there are groups within the Hispanic community that are more intolerant than others. Across the board, we're seeing that exposure to the LGBT community is really the key to acceptance and tolerance for Latinos."

—David Dutwin, Vice President, Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS) and author of the report titled "LGBT Acceptance and Support: The Hispanic Perspective," www.hispanicallyspeakingnews.com, Apr. 14.



Emily Rothman

"Researchers determined that two-thirds of LGB adults in a representative Massachusetts sample reported receiving positive support from their parents after coming out to them. Their incidence of mental health and substance abuse problems was significantly lower than those who did not receive support, the authors reported. Researchers discovered 75 percent of Massachusetts LGB adults have informed their parents on their sexuality. Gay and bisexual males whose parents did not support them, for example, had six to seven times the odds of serious depression and binge drinking, while lesbian and bisexual females had five times the odds of developing serious depression, and 11 times the odds of illicit drug use."

—In an article titled "Parental Support of Coming Out Improves Long-Term Health," about a Boston University study by Emily Rothman, <http://psychcentral.com>, Apr. 11. Surveyed were LGB 5,658 adults ages 18-64 years old in Massachusetts.

Parting Glances



Pages past tense #7

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

There was a time – oh, so long, long ago – when I would stand on Hub Grill corner in downtown Detroit and within five flattering and exciting minutes be offered a lift by some accommodating driver cruising by.

I was hot stuff at 19. Or, so I fancied myself. I took a risk hitchhiking, not because hitchhiking was dangerous. It wasn't in 1955 (until I encountered a would-be sadist, but that's another story). Unfortunately I'm nearsighted and couldn't see what a driver really looked like until seated next to him.

My fast exit line, "Oh, my God, I've left my wallet with my draft board ID at the restaurant. Take me back. I'll just be a minute." Of course, I had no intention of returning, choosy (and myopic) trick-tease that I was.

Screw what the world might think: I was happy to be gay, and so damn energetically alive.

One June evening I saw a tall, elegant guy stroll by, wearing trim Levi's, a white T-shirt like actor James Dean. I liked the precision of his narrow-hipped walk. His erect carriage. Much like that of a Flamenco dancer. (Oh lay!)

"Who's that?" I asked proud, Black-and-bold Miss Bruce, (actually a well-built factory worker) who knew everybody circling the streets like hawk of prey. "That's T.D., 'Tall Dick,' He's your kinda man, honey."

Miss Bruce made intros. "T.D., this big bit o' chicken feed likes you," he said, leaving me, new kid on the same-sex block, to carry on small talk. T.D. listened comfortably, smiled neatly, captivated me with his lanky presence. "Got time for coffee, Al?"

When I was 19 if I slept with a guy twice I was "in love," and T.D. soon became my first summer-of-coming-out romance. He was 25, lived in an upper flat with gay couple, butch Hank, baby-soft Rick. He worked as an orderly at nearby Highland Park General Hospital.

Our first night together T.D. played "Music For Lovers Only," an LP with Jackie Gleason's easy listening orchestra, and I took on an emotional and sentimental glow that kept me lighthearted for days. It didn't last.

One sultry July, T.D., Hank, Rick, and I went sailing on the Detroit River. I sat in the back of the boat, nestled safely in T.D.'s arms. I was content as we drifted serenely past Belle Isle and the Seven Sisters smokestacks. Screw what the world might think: I was happy to be gay, and so damn energetically alive.

As fall approached T.D. and I saw less of each other. He spent more time with Eleanor, a straight friend his age. They were Ayn Rand Objectivism clones. T.D. advised me not to get 'swoony'. "You're young. Someone will come along really worth your time." Our fledgling affair vanished for good Halloween Night.

As I watched the peacock-plumed, colorful drags parade at Farmer and Bates, pose, bow and cavort, T.D. unexpectedly stopped and kissed me sweetly on the cheek. I didn't recognize him at first. He was dressed all in fluttery feathers, a tapered silk-and-sky-blue sequined gown.

Lovely to look at. Simply stunning. I felt totally betrayed, wiping off his lipstick. A real queen! He wasn't the man of my dreams after all.

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SYDNEY L. JACKSON at 313-820-9224 or 313-286-3279

The interviews will be conducted at a time and location that is convenient for you.

By participating in this study, African Americans will add to the body of knowledge about "how" these families and their offspring experience the transition from heterosexual to same-sex relationship family lifestyles. This study provides an opportunity for those who desire, to share their stories, while informing and educating the public by providing a much needed perspective. Your participation will also help this doctoral student complete her dissertation.

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Creep of the Week

James Loomer

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI



James Loomer

Have you heard the one about the National Day of Silence? Here's the set up:

A teen walks into her high school. A few of her friends are all, "What's up, girl?"

And she's all, "..."

And they're like, "What's your problem?"

And she hands them a card that reads, "Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I am participating in the Day of Silence, a national youth

movement bringing attention to the silence faced by LGBT people and their allies. My deliberate silence echoes that silence, which is caused by anti-LGBT bullying, name-calling and harassment. I believe that ending the silence is the first step toward building awareness and making a commitment to address these injustices."

And her friends say, "OMG! Getting bullied for being gay? Sign us up!" And they start dyking it out in the hallway. Then some boys passing by are also handed a card and, after reading it, become gay-homo forever and ever, Amen. Teachers and administrators who support the Day of Silence nod in approval. Gay at last, gay at last. Thank God almighty, the school is gay at last! All students who refuse to turn gay and claim religious objection are rounded up and sent to gay reform school.

This is apparently how James Loomer, a Christian pastor in Connecticut, envisions how the Day of Silence goes down (no pun intended) across America and why he, and many others, wants it banned. "Shut it down!" he told his local school board.

But they said no. Because they hate God, obviously.

That hasn't stopped Loomer from railing against Day of Silence and right-wing ilk giving him a platform to do so. In an radio interview with Focus On the Family's Tony Perkins, Loomer said, "If the board decides they don't want to take any corrective actions we're already making plans to call the city families together and just apprise them of the situation. And I think the parents will be so appalled at what the Day of Silence could lead their children into that they're going to want to stand up and say, 'let's get rid of this.' There are alternative programs that focus on disrupting the bullying that goes on in schools but this is one that's got a serious kickback to it."

Just what could Day of Silence lead children into? How about an open mind? The ability to respect people who are different than them? Compassion and understanding? Oh, the horror.

Also, I think Loomer means "drawbacks," not "kickback." Unless he's claiming that GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) is getting rich off of this. Then again, considering how far off his info is, I wouldn't be surprised if he thought such a thing.

Perkins had nothing but praise for Loomer. "Look, bullying should not be taking place in our schools, every child in America should be able to go to school ... without the fear of threat or being intimidated, regardless of what the cause is, whether they're overweight, whether their religious viewpoints, no child should be bullied because they are effeminate or because of their sexual orientation or whatever, it shouldn't happen," Perkins said, "but we cannot allow these programs like the Day of Silence to come into our schools as a cover for the promotion of homosexuality. That's what is happening with this so we appreciate Pastor Loomer and others who are drawing attention to this in communities across the country."

If only we could compel the loudmouth bigots to shut up for one day a year.

Philly housing planned for elderly gays moves ahead

BY KATHY MATHESON

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - Construction is to start this fall on one of the country's only affordable housing complexes aimed at elderly gay people after developers received what they described as critical state tax credits for the long-stalled project.

The 56-unit, \$19 million development is planned for a section of Philadelphia affectionately known as the Gayborhood. The project had been stymied for years by financing and logistical problems, but received tax credits this week from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency.

Such challenges only seemed to build interest in the badly needed facility, said Mark Segal, director of the Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld Fund, which has spearheaded the plans and fundraising. It was developers' second attempt at securing the credits.

"If anything, it made people more supportive of the project," said Segal,

who also publishes the Philadelphia Gay News. "I have never seen this community so united behind a project."

Experts say such housing is needed because many gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender seniors fear discrimination or disrespect by health care workers and elder housing residents. Some go back into being secretive about their sexual orientation after years of being open.

At least 1.5 million elderly gay people live in the U.S., a number expected to double by 2030, according to the New York-based group Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders.

"Welcoming and affordable housing is one of the most important needs of LGBT elders," SAGE executive director Michael Adams wrote in an email. "Unfortunately, this housing is in very scarce supply."

Anti-discrimination laws prohibit gay-only housing, but projects can be made GLBT-friendly through marketing and location. Private gay-friendly retirement

communities exist but are usually only affordable for the most affluent seniors.

In Philadelphia, most of the one-bedroom units will rent for between \$615 and \$775 per month, said Jacob Fisher, a senior developer at Pennrose Properties, which will build and manage the facility.

With \$8 million in funding on hand, Fisher said, the remaining \$11 million in financing for the project will come from selling the tax credits to a private investor who has not yet been determined.

Segal said he doesn't anticipate any problem finding an investor. He expects the first residents to move in about 15 months after construction begins.

An official announcement of the October groundbreaking is planned for Monday evening, Segal said.

The nation's first gay-friendly affordable senior housing facility opened in Los Angeles in 2007. Projects in Chicago and San Francisco are also on the drawing board.

Effort for gay marriage in Ohio has mixed support

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) - A 30,000-member gay rights group won't support a current ballot initiative aimed at overturning Ohio's ban on same-sex marriages.

Equality Ohio's executive director Ed Mullen told The Columbus Dispatch he's concerned there may be problems with

the language proposed by backers of the constitutional amendment and that more analysis is needed.

Ian James of the Ohio Freedom to Marry coalition that's proposed the amendment says the initiative will continue. He said the drive to overturn the ban needs to begin now.

The ballot issue would ask voters to repeal a 2004 amendment that says Ohio recognizes only a marriage between a man and a woman. Supporters must collect about 385,000 valid voter signatures for the issue to appear on the ballot.

Same-sex benefits case goes to Montana Supreme Court

MISSOULA, Mont. (AP) - Six gay couples who are suing Montana for the benefits that married couples have asked the state Supreme Court on April 13 to rule that denying those benefits is an unconstitutional violation of their equal

protections.

The couples' attorney, James Goetz, said his clients are not asking for the right to marry, but they are entitled to make the same decisions about their families' health care and finances as married couples under

the Montana Constitution. The state's refusal to expressly provide those rights is discriminatory, he said.

Read more online at www.pridesource.com

Gay rights group sues Nevada for same-sex marriage

LAS VEGAS (AP) - A national gay rights advocacy group took its state-by-state fight for same-sex marriage equality to a federal court for the first time Tuesday, filing a lawsuit in a bid to force Nevada to allow gay and lesbian couples to marry.

The Lambda Legal Defense and

Education Fund lawsuit focused on the differences between rights granted by a domestic partnership law passed by the state Legislature in 2009 and a gay marriage ban made part of the state constitution by voters in 2002.

It seeks to void the constitutional ban

"and any other sources of state law that exclude same-sex couples from marriage," and to recover unspecified legal costs and fees. It claims eight same-sex couples are being discriminated against because they aren't allowed to marry.

Read more online at www.pridesource.com

Obama's LGBT political calculation

No executive order for now banning discrimination by federal contractors

BY LISA KEEN

The Obama administration revealed a political calculation last week: Now is not a good time to sign an executive order prohibiting discrimination against LGBT people who work for federal contractors.

There has been more than the usual expression of "disappointment" from various quarters, but not much more. The general tenor of comments reacting to the news on various gay and gay friendly news sites has been "no one really gets everything they want," "Rome wasn't built in a day," and "the President will probably have the same position as Mr. Romney."

All four openly gay members of Congress signed a letter to the president April 3, urging him to sign an executive order, but they made no fuss when White House officials announced he would not do so. The only one to issue a statement, Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.), essentially stood behind the decision, saying, "President Obama has advanced protections for the LGBT community significantly, but there's no substitute for having a bill for the President to sign. We have to focus on the importance of passing an inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) in Congress."

That was the White House's message April 11 when senior Obama administration officials informed five LGBT leaders that the president would not sign an executive order "at this time" and, instead, wants to work on a strategy to pass ENDA through Congress.

ENDA, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, is more comprehensive than the proposed executive order. ENDA would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in both public and private employment. The sought after executive order would prohibit such discrimination for people employed by federal contractors.

But the executive order could be activated with a signature from President Obama and ENDA requires approval of both chambers of Congress, one of which is currently controlled by Republicans who will not allow the bill to advance. And, in 2009 and 2010, when President Obama was in the White House and both chambers of Congress were run by Democrats, ENDA still didn't move.

There was consternation over the no executive order announcement. Rea Carey, head of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, said she was "extremely disappointed" and that NGLTF members "strongly disagree" with President Obama's strategy. Tico Almeida, head of a group dedicated to fighting discrimination against LGBT people in the workplace, Freedom to Work, said the administration gave not "one single valid reason" for not signing an executive order. Joe Solmonese, president of the Human

The unanswered question for the LGBT community is whether President Obama will sign an executive order after the election (assuming he wins) or whether he really intends, as some reports have suggested, to require such protection to come through Congress.

Rights Campaign, issued a statement saying HRC was "extremely disappointed." And former HRC official Winnie Stachelberg, now with the Center for American Progress, said the executive order was the "best chance" of ending workplace discrimination and she was "disappointed" the White House has a different timetable for seeing it done. Former counsel to Rep. Frank, Robert Raben, was the fifth LGBT leader at the meeting but could not be reached by deadline for comment.

"The reality," said Stachelberg, "is we've been working on ENDA for 18 years and only in two of those years was there what I would call a pro-ENDA Congress and we still couldn't get it done. It's an enormous challenge to pass any kind of civil rights legislation, so our best chance is to have an executive order first....Suggesting that an executive order needs to wait for passage of a piece of legislation is not a good strategy."

Stachelberg and the others promised to keep pressing for an executive order despite the White House's decision.

But few expressed surprise at the decision.

Election year challenge

Obama is running for re-election this year. Everything he says and does will be used against him in a court of public opinion. And anything LGBT seems inherently vulnerable to manipulation in the political arena. Efforts to prohibit discrimination based on transgender identity are routinely characterized as threats to women and children in public restrooms. Opposition to same-sex couples obtaining marriage licenses is often stoked by the fear that children will easily cast off hard-wired genetics and decide to become gay.

And given the media frenzy that erupted this month around lesbian CNN commentator Hilary Rosen's barb that Ann Romney "actually never worked a day in her life," it's not hard to imagine the campaign of Republican nominee-apparent

Mitt Romney attacking an LGBT executive order as another burden on businesses struggling to recover in a still rocky economy.

It's also interesting to note that the White House staff - senior advisor Valerie Jarrett, openly gay OPM director John Berry, and others - who met with LGBT leaders April 11 to deliver the bad news, made clear that the president's "I'm not going to sign" message, included a "not at this time" qualifier. That's not a promise to sign later, but according to accounts from several attending that meeting, the phrase was used repeatedly. And that's at least as meaningful as the president's overheard comment to the Russians that he'll have "more flexibility" after the election to negotiate their disagreements over a European missile shield.

It's easy to see how "not at this time" comments, while frustrating for those on the waiting end, could come back to haunt the president. One of the chief weaknesses of his apparent GOP opponent, Mitt Romney, is that Romney has often seemed to say what his audience wants to hear. The Romney camp will almost certainly try to argue that the president does the same thing. And given that Romney has stated explicitly that he is against discrimination against gays, Obama's "no" on the executive order will give Romney some power to hang onto the one in four gay votes that went to the Republican presidential candidate in 2008.

So, there are consequences for President Obama's decision to decline, or defer, the LGBT executive order on federal contractors. And his campaign has, no doubt, done the math and figured either that they have no chance of persuading those gay Republican voters to vote for Obama or that their numbers are too small to offset the potential fallout an executive order would cause.

Post November strategy

The unanswered question for the LGBT community is whether President Obama will sign an executive order after the election (assuming he wins) or whether he really intends, as some reports have suggested, to require such protection to come through Congress.

In a rare moment of being prepared to answer a gay-related question during a routine White House briefing, Press Secretary Jay Carney said April 12: "The President is dedicated to securing equal rights for all LGBT Americans. And that is why he has long supported an inclusive (ENDA) which would prohibit employers across the country from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The President is committed to lasting and comprehensive non-discrimination protections, and we plan to pursue a number of strategies to attain that goal. Our hope is these efforts will

result in the passage of ENDA, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which is a legislative solution to LGBT employment discrimination. And I would make the comparison here that pursuing that strategy, the passage of ENDA, is very similar to the approach the President took for the legislative repeal of "don't ask, don't tell."

This administration doesn't say anything on gay issues that isn't highly scripted ahead of time, and Carney's statement was not an off-the-cuff ramble. It said the president plans to pursue "a number of strategies" to attain "lasting and comprehensive" protection; and remember "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

The LGBT community clamored for an executive order to dismiss DADT, but President Obama didn't sign one. Instead, his administration brought together all interested parties - including opponents of DADT repeal - and constructed a legislative repeal measure that opponents could not say no to without voicing blatant bigotry. Even so, it was a nail-biter that required three cloture votes in the Senate to get to the floor and six moderate Republicans to abandon their party's line. And it passed in the House largely because it was attached to a defense spending bill, which Congress had to approve.

The LGBT community is left hoping for three other things: that Obama is re-elected, that the House will be won back by Democrats, and that the Senate remain in Democratic hands.

Romney is against discrimination of gays, but he's a fierce advocate for business. It seems unlikely that, if elected president, he would push Congress to approve ENDA.

In the House, DADT repeal was approved largely because it was attached to a defense spending measure. ENDA won't have that advantage. There is no equivalent spending bill that Republicans will feel compelled to approve.

And, in the Senate, DADT repeal could not have happened in the Democratic-controlled Senate without those six moderate Republicans. Two-thirds of the Senate seats up for re-election this year are Democratic seats. Democrats have a tough fight on their hands to hang onto the Senate majority this year.

The LGBT community is left hoping for three other things: that Obama is re-elected, that the House will be won back by Democrats, and that the Senate remain in Democratic hands.

Same-Sex Wedding Expo sure to be fabulous

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

LIVONIA - Imagine walking into a grand ballroom full of gay people, in both senses of the word. As you enter you are greeted by a well-dressed guide, looking snazzy in a wedding-ready tuxedo and wearing a most friendly smile.

Perhaps he tells a joke, probably something wedding related, before introducing you to the buffet of wedding expo options. Do you start at the luxurious chocolate fountain? Would you like to head to the photo booth before the lines start forming? Or do you head for the lavish delicacies provided by Sweet Lorraine's?

There's other food there too. Wedding cake from Zingerman's Bakery and The Pastry Palace that just might be the most delicious you've had in your entire life. And caterers from Fishbones, Chef Ben and The Produce Station will each be offering tastings of their finest fare.

All through the room, hand-selected LGBT-friendly vendors await. You can talk with a qualified, specialized lawyer or financial planner about making legally-sound decisions about your household set-up. You can meet photographers who specialize in same-sex wedding ceremonies, find a tuxedo shop that is happy to help any husbands-to-be or wives-to-be pick out the perfect tux. And of course there will be wedding dresses, bridesmaids dresses, beauty salons,



The second annual Same-Sex Wedding Expo will offer a wide variety of vendors, food, financial and legal services for LGBT and allied community April 29 at the Detroit Marriott Livonia from 1 - 5 p.m. BTL File Photo: Andrew Potter

wedding planners, jewelry stores, invitations, rental facilities and everything you need to plan the perfect ceremony.

But what if you're not gay? Or what if you're not getting married?

So what? The cool thing about the LGBT

community is that they pretty much love and accept anybody that isn't a jerk to them. A lot of straight people intentionally seek out businesses that are LGBT-welcoming because they see it as a good sign that the company has good business practices and knows how to respect a customer.

What if you don't know a thing about same-sex marriage? Not a problem. ACLU staff attorney Jay Kaplan will present a half hour workshop highlighting all the salient facts about marriage laws here and across the country, and discuss the prospects and strategies to eventually legalize same-sex marriage.

And what about all those "grown-up" things you need to know about before establishing a dual household? No worries. Comerica's Vice President Christopher Kelly will present a half hour workshop with valuable tools on asset protection, wealth management and transfer, insurance and risk management and financial planning for your future life together.

And if you're not getting married, it doesn't hurt to go and get familiar with the companies that are out there catering to the community.

While you're at it with the questions, who's the handsome guide that's showing you around it? And why is he suddenly running off, saying that he's late, he's late, for a very important date?

So many questions and more will be answered at the Wedding Expo next weekend. The Same-Sex Wedding Expo: Celebrate the Power of Love will be April 29 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Detroit Marriott Livonia, on Six Mile Rd., just east of I-275. Tickets are \$10 at the door, with discounted \$5 tickets available at www.PrideSource.com and at www.DailyGaypon.com.

Community dog hikes offer way to connect

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

Get Out And Live may be barking up the right tree with their monthly dog hikes for LGBT people and their pooches. This year they've partnered with professional dog trainer Jen Guthrie from Pro K-9 to offer the group walks, which take place at various parks throughout southeast Michigan.

"I decided to sponsor the hikes because it's the most productive exercise and social activity for dogs who are just meeting each other, vs. dogs parks, play dates, etc.

"Once we get walking as a 'pack,' the dogs settle down and usually get along well by the end. And everyone, people included, can have a safe and fun afternoon hike," Guthrie said.

The first hike took place on April 1, at Maybury State Park in Northville, with five dogs and seven people, including one person who didn't own a dog but wanted to tag along for the hike.

"At first, some dogs were overly excited and I could see which ones needed a little help. When we first gather and wait for everyone to arrive, I try to have owners keep those dogs walking around and distracting them until they settle, or until we get moving. Once we start hiking and moving forward, the dogs did wonderfully. When we pass other dogs on the trails, we'll stop as a pack and put everyone in a sit, and wait for them



Hikers and their canine friends get ready to take to the trails April 1 at Maybury State Park in Northville. Other hikes are planned. See schedule below. Photo: Courtesy of GOAL

to pass without issue - all the dogs this last hike did great with that," said Guthrie.

"The weather was a little chilly, but mild and turned out to be perfect hiking weather. We went for an hour and a half hike through the wooded trails and around a pond. All human hikers were laughing and chatting while we hiked, and the dogs were ready for long afternoon naps at home

by the time we were done! It was a success," she said.

As one might guess, Guthrie loves animals. She currently has three rescue dogs, and opens her homes to foster animals through Better Life Canine Center. For Guthrie, the benefits to pet ownership seem endless. "Besides their unconditional love and companionship, my dogs

have taught me more about life than I could have imagined. I'm often told I'm the most patient person someone's ever met, and I attribute that to my dogs," she said.

Hikers must follow the rules of the parks they go to, and GOAL requires them to keep dogs on a six foot leash. No food or toys are allowed in front of other dogs and owners are responsible for their pets.

The next Get Out Dog Hike event is on Apr 29 at Rotary Park in Livonia at 1 p.m., with participants meeting in the back left corner by the baseball diamonds. Hikes last about two hours, and bringing water for the pets is recommended.

Future dates and locations are:

May 27 - Barton Nature Area, Ann Arbor

Jun 24 - Orion Oaks County Park, Lake

Orion

Jul 22 - Lower Rouge Trail, Canton

Aug 19 - Lyon Oaks County Park, Wixom

Sep 16 - Detroit River Walk (Rivard Plaza)

Oct 14 - Island Lake State Park

GOALS Get out and Hike events give dog owners a chance to connect, while just being out in public with others in the gay community. They also have other events for LGBT people, all with the aim of creating a central place for social connections. Find out more about the hikes at: <http://getoutandlive.me/index.php/events/193-dog-hike-lgbt-gay->



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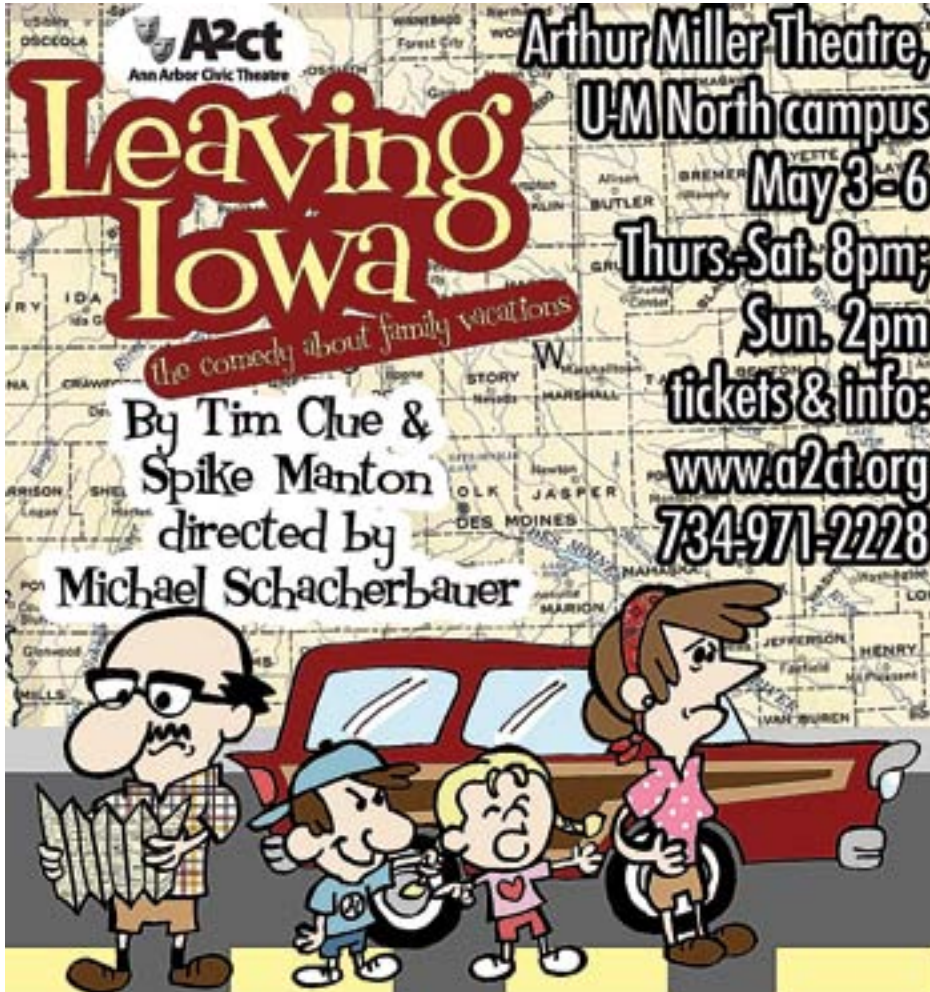
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Melissa Etheridge (Kind of) Opens Up

Rocker talks life after ex, upcoming LP and getting underwear-bombed

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Come to her window, but Melissa Etheridge won't be around. Why? Because she's everywhere else — on tour, stopping by Sound Board at Detroit's MotorCity Casino Hotel at 7:30 p.m. April 22, and in the studio laying down tracks for her first album since 2010's "Fearless Love."

And, in the midst of a heated custody battle with her ex, she dished on both during our recent interview: what to expect from the new music (songs about her split, of course), tentatively due in September; how, despite her breakup, "it's not as heartbroken" as past albums; and, of course, getting underwear-bombed onstage.

How's life treating you these days?

It's pretty incredible. Very full and very fun. There's always a new adventure around the corner. I have four kids and I'm very happy.

What's it like raising teens?

My kids are 13 and 15, and I have two 5-year-olds; surprisingly, it's very similar. (Laughs) They require all of your attention and they don't remember anything you've told them.

What's inspiring this upcoming album?

Life has always inspired whatever I'm singing about, so events in my life in the last couple of years: new love, saying goodbye to an old love, and my kids and my hopes and my dealings of life are all there.

So "Lucky" meets "Skin"?

(Laughs) That's funny, but no actually. Better than that. I was pretty down and out during "Skin" — that was hard! I'm in a much better place and I feel much better, so I think it's more up. It's hard for me to tell when I'm just starting, when I'm just making it, but I feel like it's not as heartbroken as "Skin" was. We're never going back there.

But some fans miss sad Melissa.

I know! Some people say "Skin" is their favorite and I'm like, "Aww, I'm sorry." (Laughs)

On your last album, "Fearless Love," you started writing from other people's perspective. Will there be more of that on the upcoming album?

I found that I'm writing from another point of view as if it were my own. They're memories, like, "What if I was still there, what would this be like?" I've written a couple of those.

It's been a couple of years since you and Tammy Lynn Michaels split, though it's still making headlines. What's been the hardest part about getting through a public breakup?

That it was public. (Laughs) Some private pains and anger and heartache gets out there and no one understands, nobody except who is in the relationship knows what's going on, and there's always two sides to everything. I don't ever

Melissa Etheridge

7:30 p.m. April 22
Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel (\$65-\$85)
2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit
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like to do anything public; whereas she might take things public, I keep very quiet about it, so that's hard. You can't win that, ever.

People naturally make assumptions and start rumors. Is it better not to say anything or clear the air?

You know, I wish it was possible to just go on and say, "Hey, this is my truth, this is it," but it never stops. When you engage in that then you're in it and it gets all mucky and you can't win. You can't change what people think. Some people are just out there assuming away and I can't change that. So I accept it. It'll all be in the past soon.

Except you'll be reliving it on this album.

(Laughs) Yes, that's the thing. And that I can control. I can control my art, and I can control what I say and how I say it.

Do songs that you're performing from decades ago bring you back in time? Like, how do you feel when you're performing "Bring Me Some Water" now?

Well, certainly the feelings aren't the same. I'm not in that place anymore, yet it's a blast; it's so much fun to play ("Bring Me Some Water"). The song rocks and the people enjoy it and I have such a good time. It's easy to get right back into that moment. I imagine it's like acting: You're just truthful in the moment when you're singing it, but you don't have to live it.

Do you relate to songs you were singing 20 or 30 years ago?

I wouldn't say I would relate to them in that I'm in that place right now, but there's always some bit of truth — it's a part of me that I understand. I find new meaning in them and I find new ways of approaching them. It's actually kind of fun.

What about performing still gives you goose bumps?

The audience. Whenever I can find a place, an audience that is receptive, is listening, is there to enjoy themselves and have a good time, and they came with an expectation, that can really move me.

Your shows lure lots of lesbians. Before settling down into motherhood, you... um... had a lot of options.

(Laughs) It's rock 'n' roll, you know!

Do you have fond memories of those days?

Fond? Yes! I have many fond memories of that,

See Melissa Etheridge, page 21



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Musical memoirs chronicle lesbian's liberating journey

One-woman show takes on aging, burying a family curse

BY BRIDGETTE M. REDMAN

Age can bring a lot of surprises. Some of the surprises, such as menopause-induced instability, are less than welcome, while others, such as the wisdom and courage to be someone new, can make aging an exciting journey.

Jeanne Mackey has spent her adult life on the music circuit, singing songs about social justice and women's issues at rallies, in coffee houses and at women's events. Until she was 50 years old, she sang other people's songs.

"I had never written my own songs," she says. "I had found other people's songs that said what I wanted to say."

But she decided that for her next milestone birthday, that would change.

"Sixty is a big one. I said to my friends, 'I'm going to do an all original show of songs and stories,'" she says, "which was a little brash, because up to this point there was no evidence I could do it."

She found a writing coach, Stacie Chaiken, who walked her through the process of turning her autobiographical information into a show – and thus "Drop the Knife" was created and premiered in Ann Arbor in 2010, when Mackey turned 60. After taking the show to her hometown and then the city where she spent much of her adult life, it is returning to Ann Arbor for a one-night performance April 21 at Washtenaw Community College's College Theatre.

The memoir-in-song centers around two major life events: the first a vision fast where she spent four days alone in nature in the mountains of California and the second a trip to Ireland to bury the hatchet and get rid of a family curse. Both events help her define herself and how she relates to others and the world around her.

"I experience my sense of spirituality through the natural world," Mackey says. "I believe that everything has a spirit and I am part of the natural world and it is part of me. I believe in magic. When I was on my vision fast, I experienced things that were magical. And just being in Ireland is magical. There is such a deep, deep history and the connection between the people and the land is so deep."

It is during the narration of the Ireland trip she explores her relationship with Pattie, her partner of 25 years. Pattie joined Mackey on the three-week journey and met her Irish relatives. One song in the memoir performance talks about Mackey struggling with whether she should reveal to her Irish



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relatives that she is a dyke, a pagan and wants to bury a hatchet on the family land.

"Through the miracle of technology, I sent (my Irish relatives) a YouTube video," of the song where she talks about them. "I didn't hear from them for quite a while. Finally my grandmother's niece's daughter wrote this lovely email saying, 'Yeah, we are Catholic, but it is clear you and Pattie have found true love and we celebrate it.'"

The memoir-in-song lets Mackey share her experiences with other older lesbians who are struggling with new ways to age.

"My aging process doesn't look anything like my parents," Mackey says. "My mom is 92 and in a cushy nursing home and has three kids to visit her. I honor my queer friends who have kids, but there are fewer of us who did have kids. We're not going to have that built-in support. It is a different world to be getting old in than the world of my parents, and we're kind of making it up. It helps to be able to look at each other... we can inspire each other and learn from each other's mistakes."

The more specific she gets, Mackey says, the more others are able to relate to

her stories. During her vision fast, she said that she discovered her two sacred weapons are nakedness and mirth. "My sense of humor and being able to emotionally put it all out there, that's my saving grace. I've always been really comfortable talking about and revealing my own struggles at a very deep level. I had a writing coach who talked about microscopic truthfulness. I've found that as an artist, the more I reveal the intensely personal details of my life, the more universal it seems to be."

Mackey celebrates the challenges of aging with a partner, saying she was grateful that Pattie is 10 years younger than her so that they didn't have to go through menopause at the same time. She was disembarking the emotional roller coaster of menopause just as her partner launched into it.

"Someone ought to write a book about lesbians going through menopause," Mackey says. "I think for all of us, as we get older, we have to face disappointments. We have to face illusions that tend to crumble. What I'm finding is that when you really face the disappointments and go through that whole process, what is left is still good. There is still juicy, satisfying stuff about being alive that is still there when everything falls away."

Part of that juicy, satisfying stuff, Mackey says, is discovering new things about herself.

"A huge gift of aging is that I'm now a songwriter. I thought I didn't have songs... my inner critic was so loud, it took getting to this age and this level of maturity so those critical voices got soft enough that I could hear what is there."

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Out comedian speaks at Planned Parenthood event

'SNL' writer Carol Leifer to host Annual Luncheon

Out comedian Carol Leifer will speak at Planned Parenthood's 18th Annual Luncheon from noon to 2 p.m. April 24 at the Troy Marriott. A trailblazing female standup comic and vocal supporter of Planned Parenthood, Carol Leifer has written for "Saturday Night Live," "Seinfeld" and HBO's critically acclaimed "The Larry Sanders Show." Recently, Leifer won a 2012 Writers Guild Award for her work on the Emmy Award-winning show "Modern Family" and was one of the writers for the 2012 Academy Awards hosted by Billy Crystal. She has starred in several of her own comedy specials which have aired on HBO, Showtime and Comedy Central. Leifer has appeared on such shows as "Oprah," "The View," "Late Show with David Letterman" and "Larry King Live."

The author of "When You Lie About Your Age, the Terrorists Win: Reflections on Looking in the Mirror," Leifer focuses her sharp wit on her experiences growing up Jewish, facing the prospect of breast cancer and coming out as a lesbian in her 40s. Leifer was selected to address the luncheon after the previously scheduled speaker, Rosie Perez, went into production for a motion picture. Leifer is a member of Planned Parenthood's Board of Advocates, a diverse group of more than 400 leaders in the arts and entertainment community united by their commitment to the mission of Planned Parenthood.

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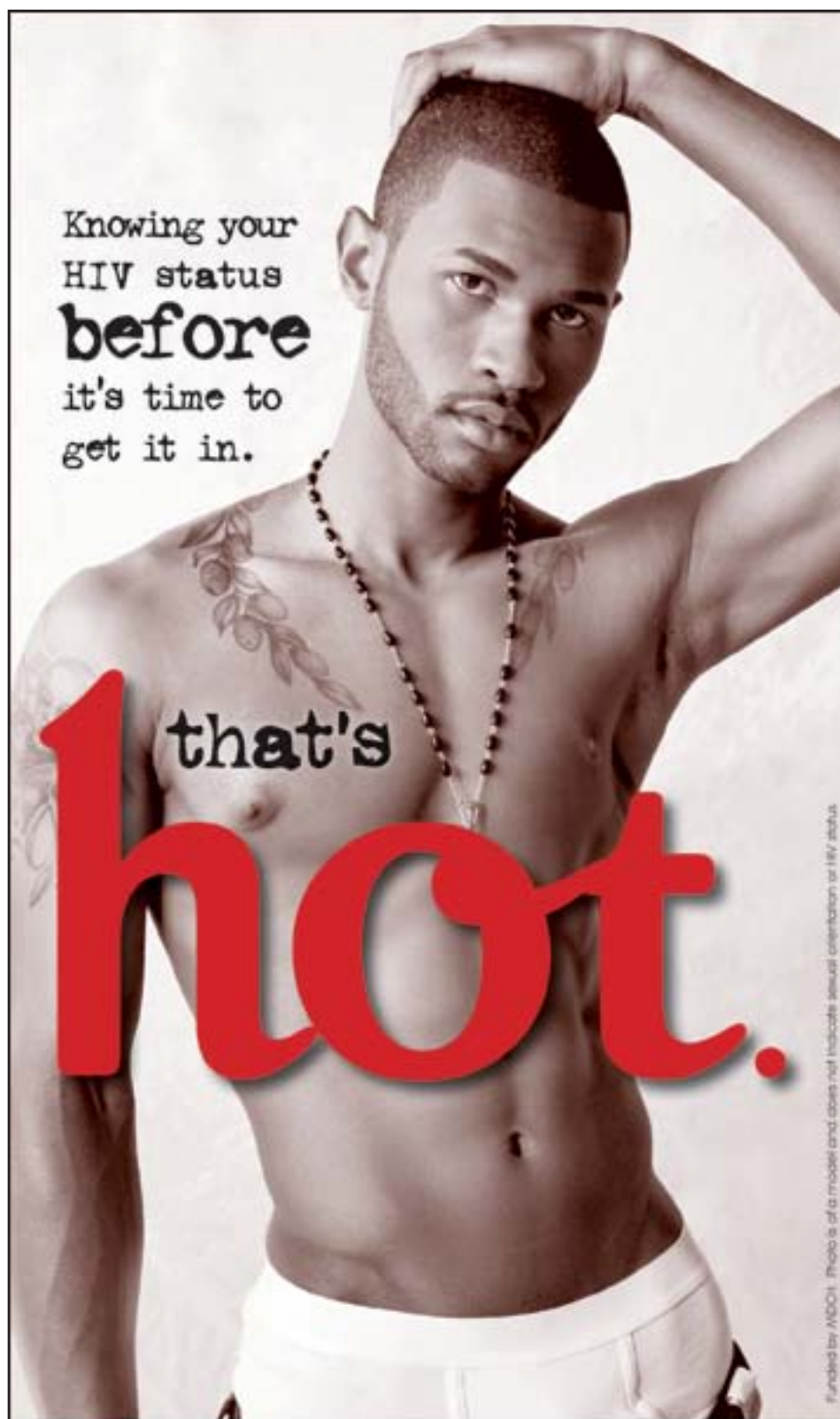
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► **Melissa Etheridge**

Continued from p. 15

of my wild and wicked days. (Laughs) But I'm a family girl now. I can sing about it, though. I've been writing, and on some songs I reminisce about those... certain things.

Do fans still toss panties onstage?

Oh yeah, they tend to do that. I'm not fond of that, but you know, it's an expression, I suppose.

What's the oddest fan "gift" you've received?

Oh lord. Besides undergarments? Hmm. People throw all kinds of things, and of course the minute you ask me I blank on any of the funny stuff.

Bras and underwear are weird enough.

And I'm still getting those. I'm like, "Really? Don't you want that for later?"

How do you put together your set lists?

I use kind of a spine. There are a handful of songs that I'll do every single night for the fans and the people who are just coming for the first time: "Like the Way I Do," "Bring Me Some Water," "I'm the Only One," "Come to My Window." Then after that, I try to mix it up with songs from all different albums, tunes that hardcore fans would be really excited to hear, and I try to play from the newest album.

Is there a certain song in your catalog that's still the closest to you?

They really are like children; you can't pick one. So many of them have parts of me in them and I wouldn't say there's one. I feel like that about all of them.

Do you feel the same way about your albums?

Well, usually the latest album is the one I'm closest to because, well, it's the one that I'm closest to. (Laughs) But I'm proud of them all. I can stand by them and enjoy them and still enjoy playing the music.

"If there's a gay joke, it's me at the end of it."

How's the musical you're working on with your girlfriend, Linda Wallem, coming along?

I hope soon we'll have something out there, once she finishes with "Nurse Jackie" and I finish with my album – but yes, when we have the spare time we're working on it. It's very close. We've worked on it for a while now.

More like "Les Miserables" or "Hairspray"?

It's more like... like nothing you've ever seen. (Laughs) It's an original script with original songs. I'd rather it be more like "Jesus Christ Superstar" meets "Bye Bye Birdie" or "American Idiot." It's a real hybrid thing.

How did you get interested in that?

I've always loved musicals and Broadway. I mean, I am gay! Come on. (Laughs) But when I was much younger I loved "Godspell" and "Jesus Christ Superstar." I loved the drama in them and I always thought that was the ultimate, so that's still my dream.

Where do you think we're headed on the path to equal rights?

It's absolutely going to the Supreme Court,

say. But this time I'd be getting married because she has a job and I wanna marry her because she makes lots of money (laughs) – no, she's a wonderful gal. She's just amazing, and if and when we do it, it would be for my family and really for the reasons that you get married when you're older.

With more celebrities being public about their sexuality nowadays, how do you reflect on your coming out? How does it compare to now?

Now it can be just a part of someone, not the definition. Still, if there's a gay joke, it's me at the end of it. (Laughs) You know, it defined me for a long time. In a weird way, my cancer kind of knocked that out, but for a long time that's what I was known as, so I think now you can come out and still rely on your work. I know now that it's about my work; it's no longer, "How unusual that you're gay!"

How does it feel knowing that being out in your life and in your music changed so many LGBT people over the last couple of decades?

It's just really starting to come back to me now. Recently I did interviews with Australia, because I'm going down there this summer, and (a reporter) said when she was 18 and I came to Melbourne it meant so much to her and it helped her come out. It was just a beautiful thank you. It's really coming back to me right now that what I did 20 years ago really made a difference in the world, and that's a really nice feeling to go to sleep with at night. To have people come up and say, "Thank you, that made my life better" – what more can a gal ask for?

because there's no place in the Constitution that says "everyone except those gays." This is America for everyone, and every time this sort of challenge comes up, the Supreme Court – no matter how conservative – has to put their own personal bigotry aside. I believe it's going to pass the Supreme Court and that's going to change a lot of things. That means the fight won't have to go all the way to the Supreme Court anymore, and that's where we're going to start seeing big changes. And then that's when we'll all sink into the ocean and the world will end. (Laughs)

Is marriage in your near future?

You know, three's a charm! That's what they

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Editor's Picks

Outings

The University of Michigan Spectrum Center is proud to invite the community to its 18th Annual Lavender Graduation ceremony 4:30 p.m. April 26 in the Michigan Union building.

The Lavender Graduation Ceremony is a celebration of graduation for the University's LGBT and allied community. For decades, students with similar cultural heritages have celebrated specialized commencement ceremonies. This graduation ceremony is a similar celebration for students across the spectrum celebrating both their great achievements and their identities.

The ceremony begins 4:30 p.m. April 26 in the Anderson Room of the Michigan Union building on the university's Ann Arbor campus. For more information, contact abostian@umich.edu. If you are a graduating student who would like to participate in Lavender Graduation, go to Spectrumcenter.umich.edu/lavendergraduation.



Music & More



Singer-songwriter Anais Mitchell performs with opener Cuddle Magic on April 19 at The Ark in downtown Ann Arbor.

A native of Montpelier, Vt., Anais Mitchell started writing songs at age 17 and traveled the world, creating a unique and emotive sound that is often compared to the likes of Ani DiFranco, Joanna Newsom and Gillian Welch.

Following on her unique 2010 folk opera "Hadestown," based on the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and set in the Great Depression, Anais returns with another dramatic and bold new release,

"Young Man in America." Mitchell's newest album is an epic tale of multiple protagonists inspired by the loss of certainty and American ideals through the recent recession.

The performance begins 8 p.m. April 19 at The Ark, 316 S. Main St. Ann Arbor. For more information, go to TheArk.org.

Theater

Eastern Michigan University Theatre presents the Tony award-winning musical comedy "Guys and Dolls." Based on the stories of Damon Runyon, this Broadway classic fills the stage with laughter, romance, song and dance. "Guys and Dolls" runs in the Quirk Theatre on April 19 and 21 at 7 p.m. and April 20 at 9 p.m.

It's a sure bet that audiences will enjoy this upbeat musical classic about gambling guys who won't commit and determined dolls who won't give up. Crap game organizer Nathan Detroit, his long-time fiancée Adelaide, gambler Sky Masterson and straight-laced Sarah Brown are the heart and soul of this Tony Award-winning sensation.

Ticket prices for "Guys and Dolls" are \$15 regular admission, \$12 for students and \$9 for Mainstage patrons. Tickets are available by phone at 734-487-2282.

The Quirk Theatre is housed in the Quirk Dramatic Arts Building located at the intersection of East Circle Drive and Best Hall on EMU's Ypsilanti Campus.



OUTINGS

Thursday, April 19

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

Friday, April 20

Open House: Somos Unid@s 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

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

Saturday, April 21

Live Green Fair 10 a.m. Offering Metro Detroiters simple and valuable information from more than 60 exhibitors on how to live a greener, more sustainable lifestyle. Hosted by Grosse Pointe North High, 707 Vernier Road, Grosse Pointe Woods. Admission: \$5 adults, children or students with ID free. Grosse Pointe Live Green Fair, 707 Vernier Road, **Grosse Pointe Woods**. LiveGreenFair.com

Drop the Knife 7:30 p.m. A Memoir-in-Song with Jeanne Mackey. Lesbian feminist singer and storyteller Jeanne Mackey enters her 60s with a disarmingly honest and wryly funny musical chronicle of her search for personal and ancestral healing, from the high desert of the Eastern Sierras to the verdant Irish countryside. Joined by musicians Laszlo Slomovits, Lori Fithian, and Eric Fithian, with guests vocalists Mary Wilson, Dale Petty and Layla Ananda. Tickets: \$15 \$10 students and seniors, available at the door and at BrownPaperTickets.com. Mackerel Productions, 4800 E. Huron River Drive, **Ann Arbor**. 734-546-0243. Jmackey60@gmail.com Umich.edu/mackeyj

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@kgjrc.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? Get Out And

Live!, 714 S. Washington St., **Royal Oak**. 248-981-4227. MarcilWilliams@yahoo.com GetOutAndLive.me

Tuesday, April 24

Men's Discussion Group 6 p.m. Details: This gathering is intended as a discussion and informal support group for gay and bisexual men. Thomas Brubaker will facilitate the group. Contact Thomas@PerceptionsSV.org for additional information or to RSVP. Light snacks will be provided. Perceptions Saginaw Valley, 301 Cass St., **Saginaw**. 989-891-1429. Thomas@PerceptionsSV.org

Local Food to the Rescue 7 p.m. Speaker Joel Salatin is the self-proclaimed libertarian-environmentalist-capitalist-lunatic-Farmer made famous when his beyond organic small scale family farm was featured in Michael Pollans bestselling book, The Omnivores Dilemma, and in the documentary films Food, Inc. and Fresh. Tickets: \$15. Peoples Food Co-op, 603 E. Liberty St., **Ann Arbor**. 734-994-4589. Outreach@peoplesfood.coop Peoplesfood.coop/news_and_events/

Transgender Life Support 7 p.m. Offering support, education, resources and a social structure for Transgender individuals. Facilitated by Arlene Kish, Lorraine Brown, Jessica Manko, Tracy Hoover, Helena Blakemore, Marty Howland and Colt Stacer. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Transgenderlifesupport.org

Wednesday, April 25

Ladies Who Lunch 11 a.m. Ladies meet at Nina's Cafe for food and conversation. Contact Angie to make a reservation. The Resource Center, 1710 W. Main St., **Kalamazoo**. Angiehosewillard@yahoo.com kgjrc.org

Coping with Disabilities 1 p.m. For anyone with a mental or physical illness that makes every-day life more challenging. Discussions about LGBT friendly doctors, counseling, health benefits, and activities. Every second and fourth Wednesday. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.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. Gailwolkoff@gmail.com

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 JJenkins@GoAffirmations.org. Shaolin Master Mesan Williams, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Southern Poverty Law Center - Discussion 6 p.m. Free. Discussing the Southern Poverty Law Center's current priorities. These include children at risk, hate and extremism, immigrant justice and LGBT rights. Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC) - Welcoming and Affirming, 125 S. Pennsylvania Ave., **Lansing**. 517-484-7434. Mike@pilgrimucc.com PilgrimUCC.com

God Rocks in the Stream 7 p.m. Support group for LGBT or allied Christians feeling unheard. Offering the spiritual and emotional support of like-minded individuals. Meets last Wednesday of every month. Gays in Faith Together, 207 E. Fulton St., **Grand Rapids**. GaysinFaithTogether.org

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

Thursday, April 26

18th Annual Lavender Graduation Ceremony 4 p.m. Undergraduate, Graduate and pre-/Professional graduates may also participate. LavGrad, at its foundation, celebrates the achievements of the graduate through the lens of their identity across the spectrum of gender identity, gender expression and/or sexual orientation. Spectrum Center, University of Michigan, **Ann Arbor**. Spectrumcenter.umich.edu/lavendergraduation

Friday, April 27

MPA 2012 Spring Convention 8:30 a.m. For the first time, the Michigan Psychological Association Program Committee has put together a program that will provide the latest clinical information for working with LGBT clients. There are five experts who will provide clinical updates for use in offices as well as the challenges that faced when working with LGBT clients. Michigan Psychological Association, 3535 Forest Road, **Lansing**. Mpsych.affiniscap.com

Womyn's Film Night 7 p.m. Film: "What's Up Scarlet?" Her mother won't quit hounding her to find a man and her brother won't forgive her mistakes, but everything changes for Los Angeles matchmaker Scarlet Zabrinksi when homeless actress Sabrina Fisser crashes into her car and into her life. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Saturday, April 28

Art for AIDS 11 a.m. An art auction to raise money for the Lansing Area AIDS Network. Organizers are also still looking for additional artists willing to donate their art to be auctioned off. Lansing Community College Gay Straight Alliance, 419 North Washington Square Lansing, Michigan 48933, **Lansing**. 483-1209. Spennyj@lcc.edu Facebook.com/events/323297764394430

Lezread 4 p.m. Ann Arbors book group for Lesbians. Meets the last Sunday of every month. Lezread, 319 Braun Court, **Ann Arbor**. 734-678-2478. lezread@yahoo.com

MUSIC & MORE

CLASSICAL

Michigan State University College of Music "Leon Gregorian Celebration Concert and Reception" Symphony Orchestra, University Chorale, State Singers, Choral Union perform Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with guest artists Melanie Helton, Jayne Sleder, Richard Fracker and Peter Lightfoot. Tickets: \$10. Cobb Great Hall, 1 Wharton Center Dr., East Lansing. 8 p.m. April 28. 517-432-2000. Music.msu.edu

Detroit Symphony Orchestra "Dvorak's 'New World' Symphony" Leonard Slatkin conducts Dvorak's love letter to America, the "New World" Symphony and Jeffrey Biegel is the soloist in two works, Beethoven's a monumental "Choral Fantasy" and the Detroit premiere of William Bolcom's "Prometheus." Tickets: \$15. Max M. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. April 20 - April 21. 313-576-5111. Dso.org

Kalamazoo Bach Festival "2012 Bach Festival Week" Week long festival celebrating the music of Bach throughout venues in Kalamazoo. More information available at KalamazooBachFestival.org. Kalamazoo Bach Festival, Various Venues, Kalamazoo. April 21 - April 25. 269-337-7407. KalamazooBachFestival.org

Lansing Symphony Orchestra "Chamber



Michigan Opera Theatre's "The Pearl Fishers" continues at the Detroit Opera House through April 22. Photo: John Grigaitis

MOT dives deep and comes up with pearls

BY MICHAEL H. MARGOLIN

In 2004, Bizet's exotic masterpiece "The Pearl Fishers" came to MOT dressed to kill with sets to match and a starry cast. This time out the rewards are even greater for the audience in this great work of French opera, transcending even Bizet's "hit" "Carmen"

The sets, with vibrant oranges, yellows, reds and greens, like an overgrown hothouse of tropical plants, is a splendid background for the lush melodies of the composer. (The indefatigable Kendall Smith pulls out the stops with his gorgeous lighting scheme.)

Early in Act I the justifiably famous duet, "Au fond du temple saint," sung by the two male leads, Nadir (tenor Noah Stewart) and Zurga (baritone Nmon Ford), becomes a leitmotif and reappears several times; finally, at the opera's end, plaintively as Leila (soprano Leah Partridge) and Nadir go off together while Zurga stays behind to face the wrath of the superstitious Ceylonese villagers.

The libretto is a pastiche of sentimental, coincidental and pagan ideas, hardly worth discussing. But, oh, the music – delicate, rousing and lyrical make this opera a must hear, a splendid showcase for singers. And this production a feast for the eyes.

The strength of an opera company like MOT is evident in this production. Just a few months ago, the conductor, Mark Flint, a regular on the podium, died. In his place, General Director David DiChiera reached into his bag of musical talent and pulled out Suzanne Mallare Acton, MOT's chorus master and the originator of the Children's Chorus.

She conducted the music with a sure

REVIEW

The Pearl Fishers

Michigan Opera Theatre at Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St., Detroit. 7:30 p.m. April 18, 20, 21 and 2:30 p.m. April 22. 150 minutes. \$29-121. 313-237-SING.

www.MichiganOpera.org

grasp of the French genre, bringing out not only the big moments, but the lovely, lyrical qualities heard in low strings and in horns. The music sounded delicate and forte and genuinely French

One of the other strengths of MOT is in its casting.

Certainly, over the years, the company has brought us youthful singers ascending to stardom because DiChiera has found them and used them well. Such is the case with Noah Stewart, who debuted with a small role in "Nabucco" and has returned for several seasons in larger leading roles, triumphing in this opera, with his beautiful tenor voice floating effortlessly into a forceful, glowing top, a mature voice on its way to top tenorhood. (When the opera was first performed at the Metropolitan, Caruso sang the role.)

So too with Leah Partridge, who was first cast in 2007's world premiere of DiChiera's "Cyrano." Here she gives a wonderful vocal performance with beautiful runs and fine trills and modulating her voice to great effect.

For the third of the trio of leads, MOT has come up with another singer, like his co-stars, American: Nmon Ford has a dark baritone with vibrato that opens up to a pure, exalting top. (Both he and Stewart are examples of DiChiera's attempts to promote singers of color, refusing to honor

the color line still existing in opera today.)

Rhodes not so much costumes the three leads as she undresses them tastefully: The men are often topless and Leila wears a costume that lays bare her midriff, and it is a taut one. The men are well built and inspire admiration for their physical, as well as their vocal, tone.

Once you put together this kind of cast – including Andrew Gray's fine bass (Nourabad) – there is the need for superb singing by the chorus, which has a major role. The singing has to be lyrical with that French legato which Acton nursed out of the orchestra. The chorus exceeds its past triumphs – if you remember the chorus of the Hebrew slaves in "Nabucco." Again, Acton is responsible: If there were a prize for classical musician of the year, she would win it hands down.

Unlike more "traditional" grand operas, "The Pearl Fishers" begins with dancing, and the members of the Eisenhower Dance Ensemble were very good in the melange of modern movement and athleticism by John Malashock. Director Andrew Sinclair works well in the naturalistic style for the three leads, creating swirling patterns of movement and massed effects for the chorus; particularly effective was the scene with Leila and Zurga when he is enraged to hear that she loves his rival and attacks her sexually. The scene could have been vulgar or offensive, but Sinclair made it appropriate to the characters' emotions.

So, if you wonder what makes a fine regional opera company, this production with its extraordinary musical talent and output, its impudent and beautiful production and its depth of creativity, tells all.

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► Music

Continued from p. 22

Series 4: The Music of J.S. Bach and Sons J.S. Bach XX Passacaglia in C Minor, Trio Sonata in G Major, Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, W. F. Bach - Duet in E-flat Major, and C.P.E. Bach - Sonata in A Minor. Molly Grove Chapel, 510 W. Ottawa St., Lansing. 3 p.m. April 22. 517-487-5001. Lansingsymphony.org

CONCERTS

Michigan Philharmonic Michigan Philharmonic performs music of the 60's and 70's. Includes a wine tasting and more. Tickets: \$35 per person, \$60 per couple. Tipping Point Theatre, 361 Cady St., Northville. 7:30 p.m. April 28. 734-451-2112. MichiganPhil.org

Royal Oak Music Theatre "Steel Panther" Steel Panther is a band from Los Angeles, California mostly known for their profane and humorous lyrics as well as their exaggerated on-stage personas that reimagine and parody the glam metal music and lifestyle of the 1980s. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. 8 p.m. April 26. 248-399-2980. Royaloakmusictheatre.com

The Ark Anais Mitchell Tickets: \$15. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. April 19. 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

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

OTHER

Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase "Gary Gulman" Boston's Gary Gulman has appeared on just about every television show a young standup comedian can appear on, including "The Tonight Show" with Jay Leno, "The Late Show" with David Letterman and "Jimmy Kimmel Live" His brand of clever, original comedy has delighted audiences of all ages all over America. 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. March 22 - July 26. 313-846-9388. Djsirlena.com/edm

Greater Flint Arts Council "JazzWalk" Six locations throughout downtown Flint, live jazz musicians at each location. Times are staggered to give everyone a chance to visit every location. Various Venues, 621 W. Court St., Flint. 5 p.m. April 26. 810-238-2787. GeneseeFun.com

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 Westledge Ave., Kalamazoo. 8 p.m. April 20. Kglrc.org/pride

THEATER

CIVIC/COMMUNITY THEATER

33 Variations \$12-23. Kalamazoo Civic Theatre at Parish Theatre, 426 S. Park St., Kalamazoo. April 20 - May 5. 269-343-1313. Kazoocivic.com

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

Little Shop of Horrors \$16-18. Farmington Players, 32332 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. April 27 - May 19. 248-553-2955. farmingtonplayers.org

The Little Prince \$7 adult, \$5 17 and under. All-of-us Express Children's Theatre at Riverwalk Theatre, 228 Museum Dr., Lansing. April 20 - 29. 517-482-5700. CityofEastLansing.com/AllofUs

The Trip to Bountiful \$12-23. Kalamazoo Civic Theatre at Carver Center Studio, 426 S. Park St., Kalamazoo. April 27 - 29. 269-343-1313. Kazoocivic.com

The Vagina Monologues \$15. The Inkster V-Day Coalition at Allen Park Center for the Arts, 19001 Champaign, Allen Park. 7:30 p.m. April 27. Vday.org

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

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY THEATER

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

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

Hairspray \$5-20. Western Michigan University Department of Theatre at Shaw Theatre, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo. Through April 21. 269-387-3227. wmutheatre.com

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

PROFESSIONAL

Adult Education \$10. The Acorn Theater, 107 Generations Dr., Three Oaks. Through June 28. 269-756-3879. acorntheater.com

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

God of Carnage \$23-27. Farmers Alley Theatre, 221 Farmers Alley, Kalamazoo. Through April 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

Jame and Jordan \$10 adults, \$7 children. Performance Network Theatre, 120 E. Huron St., Ann Arbor. 1 p.m. April 28. 734-663-0681. PerformanceNetwork.org

Madre Gets a Job \$28.50-73.50. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. April 26 - 29. 313-471-6611. olympiaentertainment.com

Major Barbara \$12-30. Hilberry Theatre,

4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. Through May 5. 313-577-2972. hilberry.com

Mother Superior's Habits \$14-16. Broadway Onstage, 21517 Kelly Road, Eastpointe. Through May 12. 586-771-6333. broadwayonstage.com

Our Town \$14-18. Flint Youth Theatre, 1220 E. Kearsley St., Flint. Through April 28. 810-237-1530. flintyouththeatre.org

Raven's Seed \$20. Matrix Theatre Company, 2730 Bagley, Detroit. April 28 - May 20. 313-967-0599. MatrixTheatre.org

Red Previews April 19-22 \$26 (\$15-\$32). \$22-41. Performance Network Theatre, 120 E. Huron St., Ann Arbor. April 19 - May 26. 734-663-0681. PerformanceNetwork.org

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

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

The Rise and Fall of Little Voice \$20. Planet Ant Theatre, 2357 Caniff St., Hamtramck. April 27 - May 19. 313-365-4948. PlanetAnt.com

White Buffalo \$17.50-40. The Purple Rose Theatre Company, 137 Park St., Chelsea. Through June 2. 734-433-7673. purplerosetheatre.org

ART 'N AROUND

Ann Arbor Art Center "Potential 2012" Potential is a juried exhibition that showcases the work of Washtenaw County high school artists. Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 W. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. March 27 - April 22. 734-995-8004. AnnArborartcenter.org

Costick Center "Art After Dark" Wine tasting, live jazz and art at the Costick Center. Tickets: \$20 advance, \$25 door. Costick Center, 28600 W. 11 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. 7 p.m. April 20. 248-473-1848. Recreg.fhgov.com/wbws/wbwebtrac.wsc/wbps0210.html

Lawrence Street Gallery "Exposures: Photography 2012" Sixteenth annual photography exhibit, a juried show expected to draw submissions from approximately 100 area photographers. Awards will be given for work in black & white, color and alternative/experimental. Lawrence Street Gallery, 22620 Woodward Ave. Suite A, Ferndale. April 4 - April 27. 248-544-0394. Lawrencestreetgallery.com

Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit "Joshua White and Gary Panter's Light Show" A new exhibition organized especially for the Museum by two great pioneers of multimedia art. Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Feb. 10 - April 29. 313-832-6622. MocaDetroit.org

NorthStar Center "Heywood's Photographs of Hate" Heywood's photo were taken over the course of the last decade and document a variety of hate groups and hate ideologies: including Neo-Nazis in Jackson, the Koran burning Florida pastor Terry Jones, and anti-gay activists. NorthStar Center, 106 Lathrop St., East Lansing. April 2 - April 30. 517-371-2001. Northstarcenter.net

Horoscopes

Go to your room, Aries!

BY JACK FERTIG

While the Sun is entering Taurus, Mercury in Aries is semi-square Jupiter in Taurus. It's too easy to start an argument over minor details and dig in your heels. Relax, let go and consider priorities.

ARIES (March 20 – April 19): Stop making trouble and go to your room. It's nobody else's fault that you're being cranky. The hypersensitivity will pass. In the meantime you need time alone for meditation, moderate exercise and simple housekeeping.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20): Luck serves the well-prepared. Your lucky day isn't happening this week, but you should be getting your share of them soon. Fun with friends can go way over the top. How much trouble do you really want to handle?

GEMINI (May 21- June 20): The rush to catch up can have you tripping all over yourself. Slow and easy does it. Breathe. Meditate. No matter how badly your parents screwed you up, you're a grown-up, have to be responsible and fix your own problems.

CANCER (June 21- July 22): New friendships could last forever. Cultivate important connections you can depend on, but be certain you can be counted on, too! You need some time out to charge your batteries, but too much seclusion is an unhealthy indulgence.

LEO (July 23 – August 22): All eyes are turning to you. Strut your stuff; show off your best work. The flip side is that you can't pull anything sneaky. That's not to rule out private pleasures. Have fun, but be very careful not to slide into excess.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22): Some of your darkest, naughtiest secrets are about to be revealed. You might be able to control which ones and to whom. Good luck with that! Opening the right discussion with the right person could open a lot more!

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 starjack.com, and by email at QScopes@qsyndicate.com.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22): Discussions with your (potential) partner can help set limits and structures. It might not be easy or pleasant, but you'll both know where you stand and where to go from there. Whether it creates freedom or security you'll be better for it.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21): Vent about stress at work with your friends safely away from your job. Sure you have legitimate complaints to handle on site, but let off the steam and get others' perspective so you can cool down and deal with it constructively.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 20): What looks like innocent fun can easily get you caught up in stupid arguments or other annoying details that just distract from valued work and pleasures. There may be no avoiding it, but you can easily walk away.

CAPRICORN (December 21 – January 19): Defending your turf will get more contentious than you'd expected. Set limits as diplomatically as you can, but you may have to give a little to protect a lot. Think ahead and be sure you can defend whatever lines you set.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18): New ideas quickly lead to brilliant breakthroughs. Discuss anything and everything openly. Keep your BS filters up, but resist the urge to argue. Friendly advice about your partnership is worth listening to. Be polite anyway.

PISCES (February 19 – March 19): A secret just isn't safe in your mouth. Stay focused on your own business. You could stumble onto a great deal, but is it really? Check it out as carefully as you can, but act fast or forget it. It won't last long.

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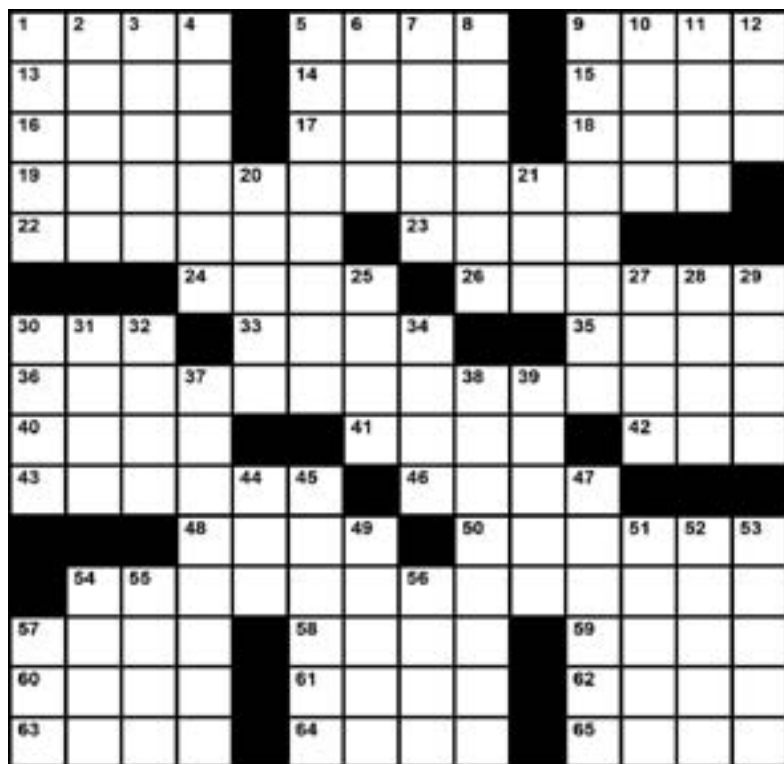
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Mad Women



Across

- 1 Where to pull your drawers open
- 5 More, to a minimalist
- 9 Auntie of Broadway
- 13 Jodie Foster's role with the King
- 14 Precollege ed
- 15 Family group
- 16 Lovemaking response
- 17 Walk wearily
- 18 Carvey who cross-dressed as the Church Lady
- 19 Peggy portrayer on "Mad Men"
- 22 Meat that dangles
- 23 One way to cook fruit
- 24 Swedish automotive import
- 26 Buffy, for one
- 30 "J. Edgar" org.
- 33 Carpenter's connector
- 35 Like a poor excuse
- 36 Writer of 54-Across
- 40 Type of seaman
- 41 Collette of "United States of Tara"
- 42 Army N.C.O.
- 43 Lip service?
- 46 P's pronounced like R's
- 48 Excess supply
- 50 Not digital

- 54 Drama in which 19-Across played a schoolmistress, with "The"
- 57 Jethrene Bodine portrayer Max
- 58 Military cross-dresser Jeanne ____
- 59 Tiny amount
- 60 Caspian Sea feeder
- 61 Falco of "Nurse Jackie"
- 62 Shuttlecock
- 63 Sweaty guys get pinned to them
- 64 Can't do without
- 65 Takes advantage of pupils?

Down

- 1 Edna and Judi Dench
- 2 ____ Gay
- 3 One who comes slowly
- 4 Dorothy's home
- 5 Durango dyke
- 6 Couture magazine
- 7 Oral pleasures at a gay bar
- 8 Naked people on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, e.g.
- 9 Roddy, who "went ape" in some movies
- 10 Couture magazine Wistful word
- 11 "The way to a ____ heart ..."
- 12 "Bambi" doe

- 20 Treasured violin
- 21 Rev. White of Soulforce
- 25 Hit the ball softly
- 27 Targets of a masher?
- 28 Web info source
- 29 Diggs play about leased digs
- 30 Result of shooting off anti-aircraft guns
- 31 Netanyahu's nickname
- 32 Woes of the world
- 34 Norse thunder deity
- 37 1957 Cole Porter musical
- 38 With a little help from Viagra
- 39 "____ and tigers and bears ..."
- 44 Conduit bend
- 45 Without warning
- 47 Mysore misters
- 49 Make a swap
- 51 One under a captain
- 52 Really queer
- 53 Jodie Foster and Larry Kramer, to Yale
- 54 Irene of "Fame"
- 55 Cops, slangily
- 56 Lake traveled by Ohio ferries
- 57 Bottom of the Thames

Solution on page 28



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Ann Arbor-Friday
7:30 pm, St. Andrews Episcopal Church Gay AA, 306 N. Division St. Closed/Discussion.

Bloomfield Hills-Thursday
7:00 pm „Sobriety in The Hills Gay AA, Kirk in The Hills Church, 1340 W. Long Lake Rd. Closed/Discussion.

Detroit-Tuesday / Friday
8:00 pm, Downtown Gay AA, Fort Street Presbyterian Church, 631 West Fort St. Closed/Discussion (Open 1st Friday of every month).

Farmington Hills-Monday
8:00 pm, Suburban West Gay AA, Universalist Unitarian Church, 25301 Halstead (Between 10 & 11 Mile Roads) Closed / Discussion.

Ferndale-Monday / Wednesday / Friday
11:30 a.m., Brown Baggers Gay AA, Affirmations, 290 West 9 Mile Rd. Closed/Discussion.

Ferndale-Wednesday
8 p.m., Diversity Wednesday Gay AA, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 540 W. Lewiston @ Livernois. Closed/Discussion.

Ferndale-Saturday
1 p.m. Brown Baggers Gay AA, Affirmations, 290 West 9 Mile Rd. Closed/Discussion.

8 p.m. Go After Your Sobriety Gay AA, Drayton Ave Presbyterian Church, 2441 Pinecrest. Closed/Discussion.

Livonia-Friday
8 p.m., West Side Story's Gay AA, Providence Medical Center, 7 Mile & Newburgh. Closed/Discussion.

Pontiac-Tuesday / Thursday / Sunday
8 p.m., Pontiac Gay AA, Shrine of St. Joseph, 400 West South Blvd. Closed/Discussion.

Warren-Monday
7:30 p.m., Eastside Serenity Gay AA, Faith-Trinity United Church of Christ, 12221 Martin Rd. East of Hoover. Closed/Discussion.

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Solution to puzzle from page 26

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The façade of Menjo's is now a stunning silver and red. Photo: Jason A. Michael

Menjo's gets makeover

Detroit club-scene landmark undergoes \$100K renovation

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

At one time, there were no less than nine gay nightclubs nestled between Six and Seven Mile Roads in the Palmer Park area. The older crowd can recall countless nights spent at the Glass House, Bookies, Backstage, Tiffany's, Menjo's, Heaven, the Gas Station, the Outlaw and the E-Ramp. But today, only one of those clubs remains, and it's in the midst of a remodel.

Menjo's, located at the corner of Six Mile Road and Hamilton, is receiving a \$100,000 overhaul, just in time to celebrate the first anniversary of its collaboration with AW Entertainment, the outfit responsible for the sensational Saturday night parties at the bar, when its name changes to Club One X.

Anyone over 30 will tell you that One X was originally located downtown on Michigan Avenue. Huge crowds, a unique two-room, two-style musical format and stellar VIP service earned One X a national reputation. But a decade after the club burned down, the man responsible for its success, Anthony Winn, decided it was time to resurrect the name.

"It was something that I believed was a part of Detroit history, the club scene here," said Winn, explaining his decision. "It played an instrumental role in the club history here. I didn't believe that we could duplicate what took place back then, but I

did want to create something now that, at the very least, brought back a sense of that same vibe."

Menjo's had just been purchased by the dynamic nightlife duo of Murray Hodgson and Peter Hendrickson, and a joint effort was soon launched. The two had planned to redo the club since purchasing it.

"It's definitely needed," said Hendrickson. "Menjo's has been the same for so many years. I always say that Menjo's needed an enema, a cosmetic enema. It needed more of a modern look. It was stale."

Stale no more, the just unveiled phase one of its remodel made its debut on April 5.

"The first phase is really more cosmetic," said Winn. "They, of course, redid the bathrooms, and the look of the club in terms of the bar itself. They made it more of an ultra-lounge. They opened up some walls to kind of give it more of an open feel. They changed the color and really upgraded it. You'll see they kind of brought it into the 21st century and gave it an entirely new look and feel, from the countertops to the walls and everything."

Phase two will be revealed next month, in time for One X's official one-year anniversary party, which will include a special appearance by male exotic dancer Redickulous of "Real Housewives of

Atlanta" fame.

"The second phase is going to be more technical, which will involve new lighting, a new sound system and a new dance floor area," said Winn. "One of the major successes that made the original One X stand out was the two different music formats, which was unusual for the club scene in Detroit at the time. Ever since then, we've not had a venue where we could reintroduce that. Now we're setting up so that we can have that."

That's right, one side of the club will feature hip-hop and the other house music. Times have a changed a bit, and now it's hip-hop in the main room and house in the smaller adjunct, the reverse of the original One X.

"But even in the midst of the flipping there's still a huge market in Detroit for house music," Winn said. "I personally believe that is an element that is missing from the club scene. It's something that a lot of people request. It's for the adults, for lack of better words."

The One X crowd won't be the only ones to enjoy all these changes though. Menjo's features College Night on Thursdays and has just started promoting a straight night on Fridays.

"A club this size, and with these demographics, has to cater to all types of people," Hendrickson said.

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