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News

- 4 | Ferndale Police Department talks transgender**
Transgender Day of Empowerment offers community a unique opportunity
- 5 | 'Gentlemen' discuss women's issues and sexism**
- 6 | MPA convention to focus on LGBT issues**
Dr. Amorie Robinson to present on LGBTs of color
- 7 | Status Sexy hits bus stops in Pontiac, Detroit, Washtenaw County**
After setback, Ann Arbor transit to display campaign
- 7 | Dignity Detroit celebrates 38th anniversary with banquet, liturgy**
- 10 | Register now for Rainbow Run**
- 11 | Transgenders receive job protection thanks to EEOC**
- 14 | A power team of employee activism**
Suzanne Wait and Michelle Walters win Jan Stevenson Award at Spring Bash

Opinions

- 8 | S/he Said**
Rainbows and Glee
- 8 | Heard on Facebook**
Rugby player's stroke "turns" him gay?
- 11 | Creep of the Week**
Heather Wilson
- 12 | General Gayety**
A familiar issue needs to vent
- 13 | Parting Glances**
Same-Sex Wedding Gospel

Wedding Guide

- 15 | Dos... and don'ts**
LA planner dishes on bucking trends and saving money
- 18 | Princess charming**
Lesbian couple talks fairy-tale wedding
- 20 | Tough love**
Traditional marriage meets transgender love
- 23 | Setting the stage for love**
The Ringwald's Joe and Joe on their biggest production...their wedding!
- 24 | Wedding help to the rescue**
Local vendors offer tips on dress, photos and fun
- 25 | Expo exhibitors**
- 28 | Have some 'Manners'**
Author offers etiquette on same-sex weddings

Life

- 35 | Express yourself**
Detroit's Peacock Room does fashion with a twist
- 37 | Hear Me Out**
Nicki Minaj's ridiculous "Reloaded." Plus: Bonnie Raitt's first in seven years
- 39 | Glorious rhythm & blues 'From My Hometown'**
- 40 | Happenings**
Featured: "Abstract Expressionism" at the Flint Institute of Arts

Rear View

- 42 | Puzzle**
- 43 | Horoscopes**
- 45 | Classifieds**
- 47 | Deep Inside Hollywood**

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Ferndale Police Department talks transgender

Transgender Day of Empowerment offers community a unique opportunity

BY CRYSTAL PROXMIRE

Citing a history of violence against transgender people in the prison system, the Los Angeles Police Department has announced plans for a 24-bed holding facility for transgender detainees in their women's facility. It is the first of its kind in the nation according to The LA Times.

This story was quick on the minds of the women who met with a member of the Ferndale Police Department as part of Transgender Day of Empowerment on April 14.

"What does Ferndale do when they arrest a transgender person?" asked one of the workshop's attendees.

That particular attendee shared a bad experience she had in another Southeast Michigan city. She had just gotten out of a public pool, wearing a swimsuit, shorts and a pair of flip flops, when she got into an argument with a visitor. Police arrested her, and booked her as a male because she had not yet completed the steps required to change the gender marker on her license.

"They put me in a cell with a bunch of guys. I had guys looking at me and licking their lips," she said. The police hadn't allowed her to put on clothes and instead sent her into a jail cell full of potentially violent prisoners. "A female cop brought me a blanket and then moved me into my own cell. She was the only one who did anything."

Officer Jason Colette has been with the Ferndale Police Department for twelve years and, though he has never arrested a transgender person, he has some experience with the community and knows that his job is to respect members of the public. The FPD sent Colette to participate in Transgender Day of Empowerment so that the transgender community could pose questions about law enforcement to an officer that they could trust. The meet also gave Officer Colette a chance to interact with more transgender people than he'd ever talked to in his life.

"I've never arrested a transgender person, but there are a few that we interact with who sometimes stay at the Motorama," he said. "If we did arrest a transgender person, we would put them in the individual cell that is away from the others. That would be the most logical thing to do."

Ferndale is known for its anti-discrimination polices and welcoming nature. Home to the Affirmations Community Center, Transgender Michigan, Michigan AIDS Coalition, and many LGBT-owned and friendly businesses, it has earned the nicknames San Fran-Ferndale and Fabulous Ferndale. In 2004 the Ferndale Police teamed up with Friends and Neighbors of Ferndale, a now-disbanded gay community group, to hold diversity training for the police force. Colette said officers are frequently doing various trainings and it's hard to remember if



Members of Transgender Michigan, Transgender Detroit and the Ferndale community talk with FDP Officer Jason Colette about law enforcements and transgender issues. BTL Photo: Crystal Proxmire.

he did one on transgender issues or not, though there is a clear expectation of professionalism on the job.

The transgender women who attended the event discussed different situations with the officer, including how he might handle a bathroom complaint, or how he might respond to someone pulled over wearing women's clothing but with a male name and gender marker on their license.

"If someone is in a restaurant and they are asked to leave because of a dispute over which bathroom they use, we don't really get involved because they have a right to refuse service to whomever they want and it's not a criminal issue," Colette said. He also explained that if he pulled over someone, he would most likely look at the license's gender marker, but that if they were presenting as female, he would use female pronouns.

Like many people unfamiliar with the transgender community, Officer Colette sometimes stumbled on which pronouns were the

right ones to use, unintentionally demonstrating that even well-intentioned people can get their terminology confused.

Police officers are confronted more and more with situations involving transgender people, though they often have never been trained the most culturally-sensitive ways to react. "Most officers are just trying to figure out what's going on, they don't set out to offend anybody," Officer Colette said. "If you're nice and respectful to us, in general we will be too."

One woman suggested that carrying a "carry letter" from a doctor explaining the individual's transgender status to bridge the communications gap when being questioned by the police.

"I always carry my name change letter," one of the women said. "When I got [in St. Clair Shores] pulled over it was like every nightmare story rolled into one. I couldn't find my license and I hadn't paid my car insurance. All I had on me was my letter. ... The officer was really nice about everything. He told me

to step out of the car so they could record my face for the camera [which is standard procedure for people pulled over who forgot their license, just in case the person is lying about who they say they are], and that I wasn't in trouble. I was 'mam'd and 'miss'ed and told to have a good day."

Someone pointed out there are many times when people are treated with respect, and commended the FPD for having good relationships in the gay and transgender community, and for sending an officer to speak at the event.

Transgender Detroit founder Michelle Fox-Phillips said she hopes that the Ferndale Police and other law enforcement agencies will allow Transgender Detroit to come in and talk with them about how to best relate to transgender individuals.

For more information about Transgender Detroit, go to Transgenderdetroit.org.



Members of Gentlemen discuss the use of women in advertisements during their April 11 meeting. BTL Photo: Crystal Proxmire

‘Gentlemen’ discuss women’s issues and sexism

BY CRYSTAL PROXMIRE

Gentlemen is an antisexist group for men – “For men, not of men,” organizers are proud to point out.

“We welcome and need voices of different identities so we can all challenge socialization and play a huge role in holding each other accountable,” said Mark Nesbitt, one of Gentlemen’s founders. Nesbitt is a prevention education specialist at HAVEN, an organization that is committed to creating violence-free communities. He said that much of the work of preventing violence against women focuses on women – teaching them how to avoid rape, teaching them to stand up for themselves, or helping them change their lives to get away from a violent situation. “We can make a huge difference if we get more men engaged in preventing gender-based violence.”

Gentlemen is determined to do just that. The group’s official mission is “dedicated to encouraging healthy and respectful masculinity; challenging sexism and other forms of oppression; and supporting HAVEN in its mission to end gender-based violence.”

There are community discussion meetings on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m., currently being held at Torino Espresso Bar (201 E. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale). There is also a council meeting held at Haven’s office (30400 Telegraph Road, Suite 101, Bingham Farms) on the first Saturday of the month at 10 am.

Discussion topics are feminist issues, including politically-correct humor, birth control, access to healthcare and porn.

The intent is to have an open dialogue so that participants, particularly men, gain an understanding of how these issues affect women. Though the group is essentially men discussing women’s issues, members hope people can begin to “look past the binary” and recognize them as human issues.

Khristoper Kole is one example of how people can do just that. Kole is a transgender male who thinks it’s important to crusade for equality, even though his whiskers and athletic build afford him considerable male privilege.

“I personally identify as being omnisexual and omnigendered as I choose not to use a specific classification. This is problematic because it implies that there is only a binary with which to identify. That we must be one way or the other way,” explains Kole. “Since we live in a world where the binary prevails I choose to identify as male, though I don’t typically talk about being trans unless it becomes relevant to disclose. Being transgendered often times has the advantage of a distinctive perspective, seeing the world through a very unique lens.”

When Kole was first transitioning, he strove to live up to media-pushed images of masculinity. “Men are supposed to be dominant, controlling, a provider and completely self-sufficient. To exhibit anything less is to be less than a man. This was incredibly damaging to me personally and to the partnerships I was involved in. I had become disrespectful to partners and arrogant. This is not who I truly am,” Kole said.

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See Gentlemen, page 6

MPA convention to focus on LGBT issues

Dr. Amorie Robinson to present on LGBTs of color

BY CRYSTAL PROXMIRE

Dr. Amorie Robinson will be among the speakers at the Michigan Psychological Association's 2012 Spring Convention, which takes place April 27 at the Henry Center in Lansing. The conference theme is LGBT issues and five experts will present information that will help psychologists throughout the state to better serve their diverse clientele.

"It's my belief that the majority of those in my profession want to behave ethically when working clinically with patients, especially when it comes to patients that differ from us culturally. However, all psychologists, including myself, are not always equipped or accurately informed about populations that may not have been covered during our graduate school training," says Robinson. "When I was in grad school, there were no courses specifically on LGBTs as patients and gay people were pathologized by terms like 'homosexuality' and 'arrest development.' The MPA's convention is a fine opportunity for psychologists and other mental health providers to gain a critical understanding of the complex nature of having a minority patient with same-sex attractionality and how it impacts their human behavior, identity, and self-esteem."

Presentations include Jay Michaelson speaking about spirituality, Judith Kovach speaking about research, Melissa Grey speaking on working with young adults, Anthony De Orio speaking about working with parents, and Robinson (who is also known locally as Kofi Afua Adoma) speaking about people of color.

Robinson's presentation is called "The Rainbow Within the Rainbow: Working Toward Positive Mental Health Outcomes for our LGBT of Color Clients." The objective is to assist psychologists with becoming more familiar with some of the major psychological challenges of being a lesbian or gay male of color in America. "I plan to focus specifically on gaining insights into many of the psychosocial and sociocultural experiences of lesbian and gay adults and youth who identify as Asian American, Latino/a, Middle-Eastern, and African American and why there is a need for cultural competencies when working therapeutically with such individuals and families," Robinson said. "Psychologists and the public in general, are starting to realize that LGBT's are not going to go away and that it's in our best interests to learn all we can about them as a richly complex and diverse group. My workshop aims to focus on helping psychologists raise their level of awareness and understanding of these complexities for LGBTs of color so that

they can take best care of their patients and their families."

Robinson continues, "For instance, when a patient of Asian descent comes out to her family and you as a psychologist are conducting a family therapy session, who should be in the room? What are likely to be the expectations from the parent(s) that are based on cultural and spiritual beliefs? How is it best to communicate the coming out process to the family with consideration to their cultural values? Likewise, during an era of Trayvon Martin-type reminders of racial profiling, how is it affecting young Black gay youth, some of who are on the street homeless and vulnerable to police interrogation?"

Robinson earned her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the University of Michigan and works at both the Wayne County Third Circuit Court Clinic for Child Study and Lewis & Mikkola Psychological Services, and has multiple publications about helping minority youth. She was recently hired to be part of a team through the Michigan Department of Education to educate school personnel across the state. The training is called A Silent Crisis: Creating Safe Schools for Sexual Minority Youth. Robinson is involved in many other organizations and projects as well.

Robinson has been passionate about psychology for much of her life. "I was inspired to become a psychologist at an early age when my mother was studying to become one. As she was studying for her doctorate degree, she had lots of books lying around and I got a hold to some of them. The career was a good fit. It helps me to make sense of the natural world, while spirituality helps me makes sense of the spiritual world. And I love being able to help people make sense out of their lives. It's a healing profession and I come from a long line of 'healers' in my family. My grandfather was a surgeon, my great aunt was a nurse, and my mother was a psychologist. I like the fact that I am in a humble yet powerful position to be used in service so that individuals



Amorie Robinson

can empower themselves to affect healthy changes in their lives.

"Psychologists play a key role in making change in this country. The best psychologists are the ones who are the most knowledgeable and compassionate about human variation and the impact of race, gender, gender identity, gender expression, attractional orientation, socioeconomic class, disability, and other social identities that are members of an oppressed and marginalized class."

Robinson noted that while the profession is evolving, not every therapist is experienced in LGBT issues. "Psychologists, like LGBTs, are a heterogeneous group and not all psychologists are therapists. My message to my fellow LGBT community members is when seeking a therapist, do some shopping and feel free to ask the therapist if they are 'gay-affirming,'" Robinson said. "You have the right to ask questions about whether they have had courses or trainings in LGBT psychology, as well as the extent of those trainings. It is not your job to 'teach' a therapist about LGBT identity. It is their responsibility to get the information they need to serve their clientele. Contacting the Michigan Psychological Association is a good first step to locating experienced clinicians."

Find out more about the Michigan Psychological Association at Mpsych.affiniscap.com.

► Gentlemen

Continued from p. 5

commercially-idealized masculinity, and a realistic approach to living as an individual human being, Kole began looking for ways to rise above the binary and bring attention to the issue of sexism. "I am still learning every day that I live. It is not to say that I don't have regrets and that others were not hurt in the process; however, I can only choose to move forward and work to do something better."

He discovered Gentlemen by a chance invitation from a friend-of-a-friend. "Strangely, it was exactly the type of community work that I had been searching for," Kole said. "Since that initial meeting, Mark and I have been working diligently to provide an environment where Gentlemen can take shape. We are doing this through hammering down Gentlemen's mission statement, principles, and outlining a strategy for positive activism."

The group's April 11 discussion centered around images of femininity in the media. They watched part of the Jean Kilbourne's "Killing us Softly 4." Kilbourne's documentary shows how sexist advertising, television and media create a culture where women are constantly objectified and belittled. This leads to an expectation of submissiveness and violence. The film also points out that men do not live in a world where they are continuously, pervasively, judged by their looks – unlike women.

With many examples of demeaning ads, the film is fun and easy to watch, but also shocking. The Gentlemen group watched a clip of the film on a laptop and also shared some ads that they found off the internet they found appalling.

The Gentlemen discussion group talked about the ads and what they could do to counter the effects. Suggestions included standing up to people who make sexist jokes or comments, sharing videos like "Killing Us Softly" with others, boycotting companies that use sexism to sell, and giving thought to the amount of time, money, and emotional energy that is spent in the pursuit of unobtainable beauty.

Another powerful suggestion made was to avoid comments about people's appearance altogether. Judgmental attitudes are an obvious by-product of a sexist culture, but even the propensity to tell others that they look nice, or thin, feeds into the culture of objectification.

"Unfortunately when men speak about sexism, it has more power. That's the case with any marginalized group in history. When a woman speaks up to a man, it's dismissed as her just being a feminist; but if a man speaks up to a man, it's more likely to lead to a real conversation," says Nesbitt. "I wish the world didn't work that way – which is exactly why I'm here – But unfortunately it does. We need men to recognize this as a problem."

For more information on Gentlemen, like them on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/HAVENGentlemen or email gentlemen@haven-oakland.org. Learn more about HAVEN at <http://www.haven-oakland.org/about-haven>.

Status Sexy hits bus stops in Pontiac, Detroit, Washtenaw County

After setback, Ann Arbor transit to display campaign

BY CRYSTAL PROXMIRE

Positive or negative, knowing your status gives you confidence. And confidence is always sexy. That's the theme behind the Status Sexy campaign, which features slim, muscular, aesthetically pleasing and shirtless men urging men who have sex with men to get tested for HIV/AIDS. *What's your status?* is the underlying question. *Status: Sexy* is the answer for those who are in the know.

The campaign is partnered with "Sexy Testing Sites" in Washtenaw County, Pontiac and Detroit, including The HIV/AIDS Resource Center, Washtenaw County Health Department, EMU Wellness Center, AIDS Partnership Michigan, Detroit Community Health Connection, Horizon's Project, Access, Detroit Health and Wellness Promotion, Teen Health Center, and APM Pontiac.

The campaign recently added bus stop billboards in Pontiac and Detroit, and will soon be doing advertising inside public buses in Ann Arbor. The Ann Arbor placards are a victory in particular, as the campaign's Washtenaw County plans had fell through last year.

"The first year of the campaign, the Ann Arbor Transit Authority approved our images and later retracted approval after we sent proofs of the website before it went live, explains Wil Bowen, Community Mobilization Project Associate with AIDS Partnership Michigan. "They deemed it 'inappropriate' and offered no explanation or ways to fix it. This second go-round, the AATA has approved the campaign to run inside buses and we think it'll make a huge impact on fighting HIV/AIDS in Washtenaw County."

Despite the seemingly simple approach, much thought and effort went into designing the campaign. "The first eight months were spent building the community planning groups and getting insight into what this community wanted and needed from a prevention campaign. All of these concepts were then pulled together by a local creative boutique we partnered with for this effort, AndSoSheWrote. Of all the times sex has been used to sell something, sexual health doesn't seem to be one of them," says Bowen. "Fear, homophobia, racism and a top-down mentality are factors that we feel enable this epidemic, so we won't allow those factors to guide this campaign. Any negative feedback we got early on came from people who don't know or interact with this community. The negative feedback has been overwhelmingly outweighed by the positive feedback. Everyone is allowed to have an opinion, but the opinions of our community are the ones that matter. We didn't set out to make everyone happy. We're fighting AIDS."

Detroit is the epicenter of the AIDS epidemic in Michigan. The Status Sexy campaign's target locations are based on the stats that come from the Center For Disease Control and the Michigan



AIDS Partnership Michigan has received requests to bring the Status Sexy campaign as far as New York, Philadelphia and Florida. BTL Photo: Crystal Proxmire

Department of Community Health. According to Michigan's January 2010 Quarterly HIV/AIDS Report there are an estimated 18,800 men, women and children living with HIV or AIDS in the state of Michigan; 64 percent live in the proposed target area of Wayne County (9,230), Oakland County (2,250) and Washtenaw County (650). The "Male to Male Sex" risk category for African American

Males is the largest in at-risk behavior group in all three of these communities, according to Bowen.

Interest continues to grow for the program, and the advertising seems to be having an effect. "We're always getting requests to expand the campaign, to other cities across the state and as far as New York, Philadelphia and Florida," says Bowen. "However, the most important feedback

comes from the community we're reaching. When I hear 'this site made it easier to get tested,' or 'I used Status Sexy to talk about HIV with my new boyfriend,' – that's what lets me know we're doing the right thing."

Look for Status Sexy advertising in Detroit, Pontiac and Washtenaw County, and find more information about the campaign at www.Statussexy.com.

Dignity Detroit celebrates 38th anniversary with banquet, liturgy

Dignity Detroit celebrates 38 years of ministry to the LGBTQ community of the metropolitan Detroit area with an evening of dining and dance as well as special liturgy on the weekend of May 19.

Dignity Detroit is a faith community of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and allied Catholics rich with diversity that worships in an affirming and supportive setting.

Dignity's festivities begin May 19 with a dinner and dance at Park Place Banquet Hall in Dearborn. Along with cocktails, food, dancing and a silent auction, guest Dr. John Corvino, a noted author, national speaker, Wayne State philosophy professor and regular Between The Lines contributor, will attend the celebration to speak. Dr. Corvino has educated and entertained professional organizations,

government contractors, churches, and hundreds of college and university audiences.

On May 20, Dignity's celebration continues with a 38th Anniversary Liturgy at the usual 6 P.M. service at the Sacred Heart Chapel of Marygrove College.

This year's theme for the celebration is, "Changing Lives Together," as Dignity just does that every year through ministry and outreach programs. During its 38 years, Dignity Detroit has held canned food, clothing and personal hygiene kit drives, organized a Christmas Giving tree program to benefit families in the parishes of presiders, participated in the Breast Cancer Race for the Cure, AIDS Walk Detroit fundraiser, and the IHM South African AIDS Ministry Outreach Program.

"This is an opportunity to celebrate who

we are and what we're all about," says Dignity Detroit President Frank D'Amore. "When we look at all the things we've done in the last 38 years – that's what it boils down to. Everything that we do as a united community of faith is 'Changing Lives Together.' I'm extremely proud to be a part of that."

The banquet begins at 6:30 p.m. May 19 with dinner served at 7 p.m. No tickets at the door. While the Liturgy is open to anyone interested in attending, tickets are required for the dinner/cance. The tickets are \$50, are available until May 13 and will not be sold at the door.

Heart Chapel of Marygrove College is located at 8425 W. McNichols, Detroit. Park Place is located at 23400 Park St., Dearborn. For further information, e-mail dignitydetroit74@yahoo.com.

Heard on Facebook

Telegraph ran an interesting follow up with the rugby player who suffered a stroke that “turned him gay.” What do you think? Can something like a stroke “turn” someone gay? If so, how does that challenge the nature vs. nurture argument?

Sorry; not buying it. More likely he was always gay and is using this as a way of making himself alright with his orientation.

—Laura Lynn

Maybe the stroke damaged that part of his brain that maintained his “defenses” to the outside world?

—Alex Hardesty

It's sad that anyone still feels the need to “blame” something/someone for being who they are. One day, I hope folks can fully accept and love themselves regardless.

—Brenda Tanner Buehler

What if it did change his brain chemistry to make him feel an attraction toward members of the same sex, though? I think it could be possible that a stroke could've changed his brain chemistry so that he likes guys now. I'd have to do a little more research on the nature of strokes, and I think it would be good if doctors could study his brain. That said, I wouldn't be surprised if Laura Lynn is completely correct in her assertion.

—Jay Topham

This man claims a medical condition made him gay. Cynthia Nixon claims she chose her identity. How people come to realize who they are and who they love is not my concern. It's how they live their lives from then on that interests me. None of these debates will silence the bigots or make me less proud of who I am.

—Quinn Phillips

Comments may be edited for grammar and length.



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COMPILED BY HOWARD ISRAEL



Ken Hutcherson

“Let's take back the rainbow for God. Let the homosexual community find a different religious symbol to commandeer. If they were feeling congenial, perhaps the Muslims would let them borrow their crescent moon. In these desperate economic times, maybe the Wiccans would rent the Pentagon to them. I don't really care. What I want is for the Christian community to wake up and realize that they are in a spiritual battle that isn't going away. The rainbow is a symbol, but it's meaning points to the very character of God. So Christians, use this God-given symbol for His glory. Using it won't make you a homosexual, but it might allow you to get into conversations with people who need to meet the very One Who gave us His promise in the first place.”

—Dr. Ken Hutcherson Senior Pastor and Co-Founder of Antioch Bible Church in Redmond, WA and Pastor James Hansen, Antioch's Bible school director, in a collaborative commentary titled “Take Back the Rainbow,” www.abchurch.org, Apr. 17.



Bill O'Reilly

“Do I really think that this is the kind of thing that's contagious? I don't know. When I was a teenager and I saw James Dean smoking, it made me want to smoke.”

—Bill O'Reilly, on the Culture Warrior segment of his show, Fox News' The O'Reilly Factor, with Gretchen Carlson, co-anchor of “FOX & Friends,” attacking an episode of Glee for featuring a storyline about a transgender teenager, in an article titled “Fox's O'Reilly, Carlson Warn That Glee Makes Kids Experiment With Homosexuality, Identify As Transgender,” www.mediaite.com, Apr. 20.



Gretchen Carlson

“Here we go again, pandering to .3% of the American population that considers themselves transgender. Now I get to explain this to my 8-year-old, if I want her to see a nice family show with some nice music. By the way, in the same episode there were two cheerleaders who apparently are lesbians with each other and they put out a sex tape. And oh, by the way, there are two seniors who are engaged to get married to each other, so I get to explain that at the same time. They seem to have a positive message about hopes and dreams and taking risks. But why do they have to come up with these wild story lines to prove their point? I don't get it.”

—Gretchen Carlson, co-anchor of “FOX & Friends,” on the Culture Warrior segment on Fox News' The O'Reilly Factor, www.mediaite.com, Apr. 20.



Mary Elizabeth Williams

“I don't believe for a second that gay and trans kids are trying to ruin anybody's Tuesday evening musical entertainment with an agenda of indoctrination. They're not trying to entice America's little boys to put on dresses. Good entertainment is just about understanding the human condition, about empathy for characters whose lives and experiences may be just like ours, or completely different from them. I'm about as non African-American transgender male teenager as it gets, and I can honestly say that having one on television poses exactly zero threat to my family or the identity of any member within it. 'Glee's' Unique (the transgender character) isn't out to change your kids or mine. Unique is just a fellow human being, with dreams and disappointments and dignity, whose boogie shoes just happen to be silver, and very, very high.”

—Mary Elizabeth Williams, in her column titled “Glee makes you trans: Bill O'Reilly thinks the show is coming for your children - and once again misunderstands inequality,” www.salon.com, Apr. 20.

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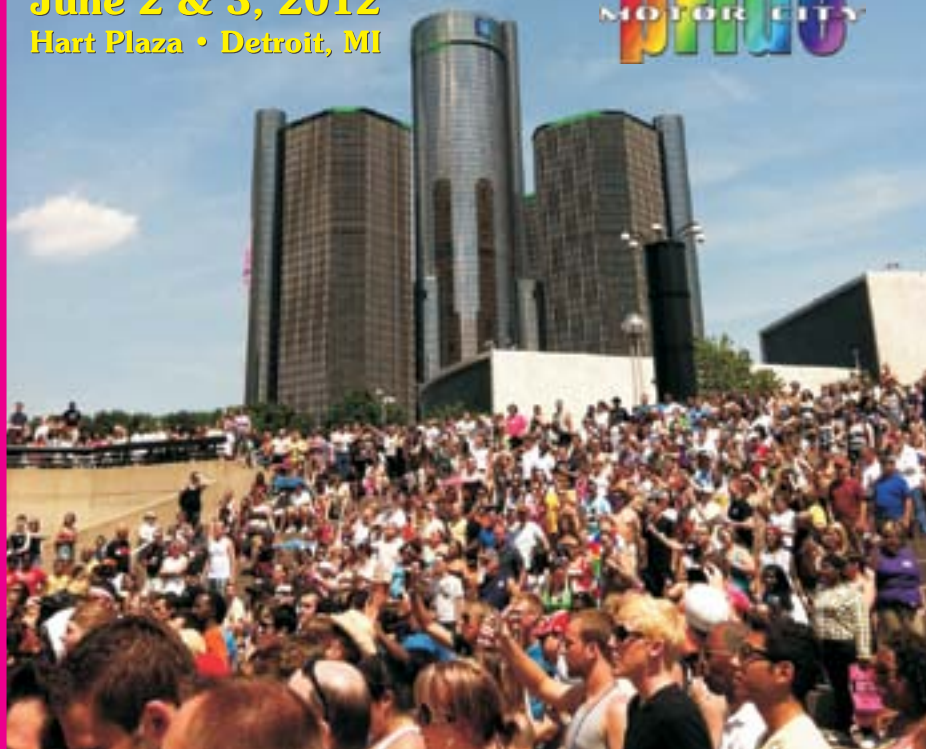
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Prizes will be given for the following categories

Best Non-Profit Entry
Best Corporate Entry
Most Colorful



Rainbow Run volunteers at a previous Holi powder 5k fun run. Photo: Rainbow Run organizers

Register now for Rainbow Run

BY CRYSTAL PROXMIRE

Ferndale Pride is setting a jovial pace for Father's Day weekend activities. Not only will there be Ferndale Pride Market Daze, the Annual Dyke March, a balloon launch (with biodegradable balloons) and a new Light the Night event, there will also be the messiest and perhaps the merriest event of all: the Rainbow Run.

This 5k fun run will raise money for The Ferndale Area Chamber of Commerce, The Ferndale Community Foundation, Affirmations LGBT Community Center, and Upstander, an anti-bullying program established by the Friendship Circle.

Unlike at other marathons, participants in the Rainbow Run will be showered in color as they run by a series of paint stations.

"The idea of throwing the color comes from a festival in India called the Holi Festival. Holi powder comes in a variety of vibrant colors and when you see the images of the people throwing it and covered in it, it looks like they were splattered by a rainbow," explained Chamber Executive Director Jennifer Roosenberg.

She explained that quality Holi powder, such as the kind they are special ordering for the event, is made with 99% food grade corn starch and 1% coloring agent. There is a slight chance the powder could stain clothing, so runners are advised to wear shorts they don't mind getting stained. Runners will receive a commemorative shirt that is white, so the colors will show up well. Runners may spray their

shirt with vinegar and iron them flat so as to retain the coloring of the Holi powder on their shirt.

Roosenberg is very excited for the new events coming to Ferndale for this year's Pride, particularly

"The idea of throwing the color comes from a festival in India called the Holi Festival. Holi powder comes in a variety of vibrant colors and when you see the images of the people throwing it and covered in it, it looks like they were splattered by a rainbow."

– Jennifer Roosenberg,
Ferndale Chamber of Commerce
Executive Director

their ability to boost the community's economy and image. "The run gives us an opportunity to show off Ferndale to folks who have never been here or haven't been here in a long time. So far, over 90 percent of the runners who have registered are from outside of Ferndale," explains Roosenberg. "The route we chose weaves through some beautiful tree-lined streets, around a park, and starts and stops in the downtown. They'll get a taste of why Ferndale is a nice place to live, play, shop, dine and work."

Because of the silly nature of the run, those who wish to walk are welcome to and times will only be kept for fun. There is also a 2k course for children and more leisurely-paced adults.

The race costs \$25 per person for the 5k run/walk and \$15 per person for the 2k run/walk (only three colors will be thrown on this route). Participants must register in advance, as Holi powder must be ordered from India ahead of time. In the unlikely event that there are openings on the day of the run, the price will increase \$5 for day-of-event registration.

For more information and to register online, go to www.Rainbow-run.com. Ferndale Pride is also accepting sponsors, booth rentals and volunteers. Booth rental is limited so make your reservations early. Get involved at www.ferndalepride.com.

Transgenders receive job protection thanks to EEOC

CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

WASHINGTON D.C. – A ruling by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission means that transgender people who are discriminated against now may have recourse under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination “based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin.” The opinion issued April 23 in the case of *Macy v. Holder* is the first time the EEOC has ruled on whether discrimination against transgender people is discrimination based on sex. And now, officially, it is.

Courts at various levels have come to a similar conclusion over the past few years, but the EEOC sets the rules that the entire country must follow, including the 34 states that currently don’t have employment protections specifically for transgender people.

Equality activists in Michigan are pleased with the decision. “This ruling is a major advancement in transgender rights that will be a significant tool to fight discrimination,” said Rachel Crandall, co-founder of Transgender Michigan. “It will also help us to advocate for still needed protections in the Elliot Larsen and other Michigan ordinances.”

In Michigan, while transgender individuals are now more protected under the EEOC ruling, gay, lesbian and bisexual people can still be fired if their employer does not want to have gay people working for them, and transgender people can still be fired for reasons not related to sex discrimination. Because Michigan is an “at will” state, employers can fire employees without reason – except for reasons that are prohibited by the Federal Civil Rights Act.

Recently, Michigan Sen. Rebekah Warren (D-Ann Arbor) announced legislation that would amend the Elliott Larsen Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity. The fight for employment equality in Michigan continues, with the “Don’t Change Yourself, Change the Law” campaign helping to raise awareness of this issue. That movement can be found online at Dontchangeyourself.com/i-can-be-fired.

ACLU LGBT Project Attorney Jay Kaplan, speaking about the EEOC ruling said, “Courts have been recognizing that discrimination in employment against transgender persons may constitute sex

discrimination, as a result of gender stereotyping by the employer (you don’t look or act the way a biologically born female or male should). This is particularly important for transgender persons who live states like Michigan, where our state civil rights laws do not have specific protections against discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression.

“The EEOC’s decision sends a strong message that transgender persons

“As a veteran and a police officer, I’ve worked my whole career to uphold the values of fairness and equality. Although the discrimination I experienced was painful both personally and financially, and led to the loss of my family’s home to foreclosure, I’m proud to be a part of this groundbreaking decision confirming that our nation’s employment discrimination laws protect all Americans, including transgender people.”

– Mia Macy,

who have been victims of employment discrimination may have viable claims regarding sex discrimination. The EEOC decision is also consistent with previous Court of Appeals decisions in the 6th Circuit (which covers Michigan) holding that transgender discrimination may constitute sex discrimination in violation of Title VII. We still need federal and state civil rights laws that include the categories of gender identity and expression, but this EEOC decision will provide a remedy for many transgender persons who have been denied employment opportunities or have been terminated from their jobs due to gender discrimination.”

The case that brought about the ruling involved Mia Macy, a transgender woman who allegedly was denied a job as a ballistics technician at the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives laboratory in Walnut Creek, California, after she announced she was transitioning from male to female.

According to the Transgender Law Center, who helped bring the Macy case before the Commission, “Ms. Macy,

a veteran and former police detective, initially applied for the position as male and was told that she virtually was guaranteed the job. Ms. Macy was exceptionally qualified for the position, having a military and law enforcement background and being one of the few people in the country who had already been trained on ATF’s ballistics computer system. After disclosing her gender transition mid-way through the hiring process, Ms. Macy was told that funding for that position had been suddenly cut. She later learned that someone else had been hired for the job.”

Macy told the Transgender Law Center, “As a veteran and a police officer, I’ve worked my whole career to uphold the values of fairness and equality. Although the discrimination I experienced was painful both personally and financially, and led to the loss of my family’s home to foreclosure, I’m proud to be a part of this groundbreaking decision confirming that our nation’s employment discrimination laws protect all Americans, including transgender people. I’m grateful for the help of Transgender Law Center, which believed in me from the start and helped guide me through this process. No one should be denied a job just for being who they are.”

Kaplan cautioned that not all situations where a transgender person is fired or denied employment are instances of discrimination based on gender stereotyping, which is a specific requirement for a claim. He said those who feel they have been discriminated against should contact the LGBT Project at the ACLU of Michigan through their website <http://www.aclumich.org/courts/lgbt-project>. “Depending on the facts and circumstances, they may have viable complaint to file with the EEOC regarding employment discrimination. I think though it helps to talk them through the situation and figure if this would constitute a sex discrimination claim. Not all cases of transgender discrimination are based on gender stereotyping.”

To learn more about this case, visit the Transgender Law Center website at Transgenderlawcenter.org/cms/blogs/552-24#ruling. For more on Transgender Michigan go to www.transgendersmichigan.org. For more on the EEOC, visit www.eeoc.gov.

Creep of the Week Heather Wilson

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

I’ve been reading about Kenneth Weishuhn, a 14-year-old who recently took his own life after reportedly enduring death threats after coming out as gay at school. Especially heartbreaking was that, according to the Huffington Post, Weishuhn had a Pinterest page with a “When I get married” section featuring “photos of vintage menswear, candle centerpieces and wedding cake toppers depicting two grooms.”



Heather Wilson

In other words, the kid really did think he had a future. And yet, now he doesn’t.

And neither do the many other LGBT kids who have killed themselves because they felt that death was a better option than this painful, cruel world.

Which is why I feel angry when I watch Heather Wilson, a New Mexico Republican running for U.S. Senate, shrug off bullying and deride Senator Al Franken’s (D-Minn.) attempt to do something about it.

Franken’s Student Non-Discrimination Act, a.k.a. SB 555, would, according to Franken’s website, establish “a comprehensive federal prohibition against discrimination and bullying in public schools based on sexual orientation or gender identity.”

In an April 12 debate, Wilson stated her opposition to the bill, and demonstrated a lack of regard for LGBT young people and showed that she doesn’t seem to be aware of or care about the rash of LGBT suicides.

She begins by saying she can hardly imagine a bill that she and Franken might agree on, but that this certainly isn’t one of them.

She continues, “[SB 555] is an act that would criminalize harassment or bullying in schools of children who are gay or who - it criminalizes bullying.”

If you watch the video you’ll see how hard it is for Wilson to even say “gay.” She stumbles around that word like a pair of roller skates on a stairway. Perhaps she has a hard time with the idea that children could be gay at all. That a child, especially a young one, could “know” his or her sexual orientation feels, to some, kind of icky. A seven-year-old who declares he loves and wants to kiss Justin Bieber freaks people out. But if that boy says the same thing about Selena Gomez, no problem. There’s no difference in the level of sexuality in either statements. The level of stigma, however, is vastly different.

Wilson says that SB 555 is “misplaced.”

“With respect to this particular agenda we have to recognize as parents that children tease each other because you’re short or you’re tall or you’re a redhead or because you’re ugly or because you’re smart or because you’re dumb or all kinds of differences and as parents we have to deal with that and strengthen our children to be comfortable with themselves and also to show empathy and acceptance towards others,” she says.

She’s right in that the best way to stop bullying is to raise kids to be confident in who they are and caring towards others. But texting a gay kid with death threats or making his life a living hell with constant harassment is not the same thing as being teased because you wear glasses. Sure, you could argue that even if Weishuhn’s school had some kind of anti-bullying policy that he may have still killed himself. But by making discrimination against LGBT kids official policy a school or a state or even a federal government is saying, “We acknowledge this is happening, we want it to stop, and we’re not fucking around.” It sends a message to these kids that they matter. That someone not only knows that they are alive, but wants them to stay that way.

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PUBLISHERS

Susan Horowitz & Jan Stevenson

EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief

Susan Horowitz
susanhorowitz@pridesource.com

Entertainment Editor

Chris Azzopardi
chrissazzopardi@pridesource.com

Arts & Theater Editor

Donald V. Calamia,
curtaincalls@pridesource.com

Calendar Editor

Benjamin Jenkins
calendar@pridesource.com

CREATIVE

Art Director

David Ano, davidano@pridesource.com

Webmaster & MIS Director

Kevin Bryant, kevinbryant@pridesource.com

Contributing Writers

Charles Alexander, Michelle E. Brown,
Zach Childree, Jack Fertig, Lisa Keen,
Jeremy Martin, Anthony Paull, Andrea Poteet,
Crystal Proxmire, Bob Roehr,
Hannah Schwab, Jody Valley,
D'Anne Witkowski, Rex Wockner, Dan Woog

Cartoonists

Paul Berg, Dave Brousseau, Joan Hilty

Contributing Photographers

Andrew Potter

ADVERTISING & SALES

Director of Sales

Jan Stevenson, jan@pridesource.com

Sales Representatives

Ed Bohach, ed@pridesource.com
Ann Cox, anncox@pridesource.com

National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media, 212.242.6863

Business Office

Diane Smith, dianesmith@pridesource.com
Nancy Blankenship

Circulation & Distribution

Diane Smith

Pride Source Media Group

11920 Farmington Road
Livonia, Michigan 48150
Phone 734.293.7200 • Fax 734.293.7201

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General Gayety

A familiar issue needs to vent



BY LESLIE ROBINSON

I'm Gay Marriage, and I'm mad.

Those alleged experts over at the Pew Research Center for the

People & the Press—and what a stupidly long name that is—conducted a national survey to find out which issues matter most to voters, and I'm certain the pollsters were drunk and the respondents were house pets.

C'mon, what other explanation can there be for putting me, Gay Marriage, at the bottom of the list? The BOTTOM, for chrissakes.

Oh, I get it that the Economy takes the top spot, followed by Jobs. Those show-offs.

Freakin' 86 percent of voters rated the Economy as "very important" to their vote. Don't they know what really counts? I'm Gay Marriage, with the power to bring down civilization! Prioritize, people!

And such pretenders are next on the list. The Budget Deficit, Health Care, Education, Medicare, Energy, Taxes. Amateurs, one and all.

Taxes earned a 61 percent rating, so you'd think I'd be showing up at least in this range, but nooooo. Instead, it's a different fear that gets the love: 59 percent of these dolts decided Terrorism is "very important" to their vote. What does Terrorism have that I don't?

The people of Pew—so aptly named—conducted this so-called survey from April 4 through April 15. It's crystal clear to me that a bunch of those surveyed had given up thinking for Lent.

The impossibly boring Foreign Policy collected a 52 percent rating, with the Environment just behind. Please, the Environment. Like whether the earth can continue to sustain life could possibly matter as much as whether two men can register at Crate & Barrel.

Iran is next on the appalling list, then Gun Control and Afghanistan. Looks to me like Afghanistan is getting the shaft, too, seeing as the U.S. is fighting a war there. I wish we could join forces—Gay Marriage in Afghanistan—and double our numbers.

You're just dying to know what my

score is, aren't you? To see how low I've sunk? Well, Immigration comes in at 42 percent, then Abortion at 39 percent and Birth Control at 34 percent.

And. Then. There's. Me.

I, Gay Marriage, bring up the rear at 28 percent. Less than 30 percent of voters consider me critical to their vote. I could die from the shame.

Once I was in the big-time. I'm talking a mere two presidential elections ago. In 2004,

Once I was in the big-time. I'm talking a mere two presidential elections ago. In 2004, Karl Rove made me a star. I firmly believe I gave George W. Bush Ohio, which won him re-election. Now? Now Bush's wife says gays should be able to marry and his campaign manager has come out! How can a wedge issue work under these conditions?

Karl Rove made me a star. I firmly believe I gave George W. Bush Ohio, which won him re-election.

Now? Now Bush's wife says gays should be able to marry and his campaign manager has come out! How can a wedge issue work under these conditions?

Can't give up. Must regroup. Abortion and Birth Control are down here in the cellar with me. The economic situation has everyone's

attention. If it turns around, I bet the hot-button social issues will rise again in the polls.

At least past Foreign Policy. Sheesh.

But the Pew-y president said I don't energize the conservative base like I used to. Some older Americans have even changed their minds about me. Turncoats! Poltroons! Sissies!

Maybe I really have lost my mojo. I'm deeply depressed. Abortion and Birth Control and I should join a therapy group for social issues whose hot buttons have cooled.

How else can I, Gay Marriage, recover my self-esteem? I could fight back—threaten that in addition to bestiality, I'll lead to mandatory sex with unicorns—but my heart isn't in it.

I have to face it. I'm not the issue I was. I'm impotent. And there ain't no Viagra for me.

Leslie Robinson loves the word "poltroon." Email her at lesarobinson@gmail.com, and visit her blog at www.generalgayety.com for (almost) daily funnies.



Parting Glances



Same-Sex Wedding Gospel

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

1. In the Year of the Grand Delusion, during the Reign of Lost War Rumors, a decree went out from the Tetrarch of Theocracy, abiding in the Capitol of Divine Cacophony, that all same-sex couples must register, under penalty of eternal banishment.

2. Now Merry, being espoused to her soulmate Myomy - in sickness and health, for richer and poorer (but surely richer, as her dad was wealthy and cunningly powerful) - deemed it wise that they, once closeted but now of open accord, should journey without fanfare to register.

3. Merry, who was with child - presumably engendered by a handsome, DNA creative donor - also decided it circumspect to travel without family, servants, or thick-skinned, trumpeting, pachydermal bodyguards.

4. And while the two lovers pondered upon the sojourn, Merry had a dream. An angel in a bright sequined gown with feather boa visited her as she slept a deep untroubled sleep. For Merry knew in her heart of twice decades plus five that her life and that of her espoused Myomy, of thrice decades plus seven, was truly about to be blessed.

5. And the Angel of Heavenly Drag said, "Merry, Merry, take things not quite so contrary, but go forth to the Capitol of Divine Cacophony, register as required. Boldly proclaim your love as worthy, meritorious, tax deductible (even if your father shall be accursed as a backslider by the Tetrarch of Theocracy)."

6. Merry arose, kissed Myomy gently on her forehead as she slept, and fixed herself a glass of warm, homogenized milk. And, lo, it seemed to Merry as she pondered her dream that of all womyn, Merry felt surely most singular blessed.

7. Thus, full of patience and quietude, the two womyn hand in hand boarded a second-class passenger coach for the overnight trek to the Capitol of Divine Cacophony. (The Bipolar Express was full. And although Merry and Myomy felt alone, they saw that many traveling wore about their person telltail ribbons from Life's Coat of Rainbow Technicolors.)

8. Hailing a Checkered Cab the two espoused womyn upon arrival sought refuge in nearby hotels. And although Merry's father's platinum VISA was often Open Sesame, she and Myomy found neither room, nor food, nor service, nor kind words wherever they sought lodging.

9. "Two women - shamefully one so big with sin - are not welcome here without the wedding band of a politically correct father," said seven-times-70, pinch-nosed desk clerks. (They belonged to the Union of Sad-u-sees, Scare-a-sees & Naysayers.) "Go walk the straight and narrow. But do get lost."

10. After hours wandering lonely streets, an Angel of Most High Camp and Compassion appeared, pointed to a spangled disco star, and said, "Follow, Soul Mates! I know a place where you can safely recoup." Holding hands against a forbidding underdraft, Merry and Myomy did as they were bidden to do.

11. And so, in a safespace of unexpected seasonal warmth, radiant with ample afterglow, they were welcomed by a T - as in tiara - mom, a stand-in, stay-at-home dad, four LA Fitness shepherds, three kings (actually queens), six pink sheep; and soon a smiling, radiant child. Amen, er, A-womyn! and Get You, Merry!

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A power team of employee activism

Suzanne Wait and Michelle Walters win Jan Stevenson Award at Spring Bash

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

DETROIT – When one of the founders of Ford Globe met one of the founders of Chrysler's People of Diversity at an employee resource event in 1998, the wheels started turning on a relationship based on mutual love for each other and for activism.

Suzanne Wait, an engineer in Powertrain Controls for Ford, and Michelle Walters, who was a manager in Chrysler's Procurement and Supply department before retiring in 2008, make a great team.

The Royal Oak couple recently won the Jan Stevenson Award for Service at the Affirmations Spring Bash for their years of service not only at their jobs, but through the community center as well.

The most obvious thing Wait and Walters have in common is their passion for workplace

equality. In 1994 Wait was among the first to attend organizational meetings for Ford Globe, the employee LGBT affinity group.

"Workplace issues have always been important to me. People need to be able to be their true selves at work," Wait said. She stayed with Ford Globe all these years, often serving on the board for years at a time.

Meanwhile over at Chrysler in 1996, Walters had just come out of the closet and was working hard to co-found People of Diversity (POD). Thanks to efforts by Walters and the other employees who were bold enough to stand up first and create change, Chrysler included sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policies in 1997, and after that grew to offer partner benefits and include transgender individuals in their protective practices.

In 1998 each of the women in this romantic tale were already on top of their respective worlds. The multi-national auto manufacturing corporations



Suzanne Wait (Left) and Michelle Walters (Right) relaxing in the Affirmations Community Center. Wait and Walters helped fundraise for the recent renovations and are pleased to see the center's increased usage. BTL Photo: Crystal Proxmire

were changing because of them. In a society that largely discriminated against gays and lesbians, each had a job where they could feel secure both economically and personally. And each was out of the closet and confident in themselves. And then those two strong worlds combined.

"We were dealing with the same issues," Wait said. "Not just in fighting for domestic partner benefits, but just being part of the corporate world. There are a lot of commonalities between the environments. That's why Dilbert is so popular. Lots of people can relate.

"I liked Michelle's intelligence and quick wit, and that she seemed to enjoy life very much," said Wait.

Wait and Walters continued to remain active in their work communities, the broader LGBT community, and the larger community of southeast Michigan. Walter spent six years serving on the board of her neighborhood association in Rosedale Park. Wait served on the Women's Committee for Hope Fund, helping to send impoverished refugees to universities.

Affirmations community center is one of the causes near and dear to their hearts. They recently served on the "Women's Group," a female-centered fundraising committee that was part of the Campaign for the Future. Walters is also preparing to end her run on the Multicultural Advisory Committee, which since 2008, has been exploring ways of increasing diversity at Affirmations. The committee will be coming to an end, but she may be involved in presenting reports and recommendations for moving forward.

When asked why they are so engaged Walters

said, "I like to work with smart people and do smart things for the community. Not just the LGBT community, but broadly."

"The only way to make things better is to get in involved. A few people can make a difference. We can have an effect. I've seen it," said Wait.

They are also inspired by the changes they've seen at Affirmations. "When they opened the doors to the new building, that was a proud day," Wait said. "Knowing that we helped fundraise to make that happen, and knowing all the people who would be helped by it," Walters said she's excited about the increased usage and being able to see the way programs have changed people's lives.

The women said they've had great role models over the years, including Howard Israel. "I'd heard of him for years and we finally met at a Lambda Legal fundraiser," Wait said. "He encouraged us to reach out to other communities and his passion is beyond compare."

They are also inspired by the changes they've seen at Affirmations. "When they opened the doors to the new building, that was a proud day," Wait said. "Knowing that we helped fundraise to make that happen, and

knowing all the people who would be helped by it," Walters said she's excited about the increased usage and being able to see the way programs have changed people's lives.

"I love that Suzanne is smart and witty and generous and kind," gushed Walters. "Without her I never would have watched 'West Wing' which was the best TV show ever." She said that as the MAC winds down she's sure something else will pop up to fill that time slot, but she'll take her time to decide.

"I've never have a plan," Wait said. "I just look around and see what needs doing. ... Once you've won the Jan Stevenson award, what more is there to achieve?"

The Jan Stevenson Award is named after Affirmations first executive director. Stevenson is now co-publisher of Between The Lines.

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BTL Wedding Guide

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Dos ... and Don'ts

LA planner dishes on bucking trends, saving money and 'Bridesmaids'

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

The “big day” is a big deal for Brian Worley.

For one of the first weddings he orchestrated, the LA-based party planner went all out: Flowers were flown in from Ecuador, fabrics came from Milan and he drove over three hours to San Antonio just for the chairs. Sure, it was his sister's, but even his parents thought he was nuts. “They were like, ‘Why

are you doing this?’ and I said, ‘Because! You have to!’”

His passion for planning and design is deep-rooted in his childhood, when Worley made clothes for his sister's Barbies. That creativity spills over into his career now, and not just as a wedding planner – he recently created eight full wedding displays for the famous Hotel del Coronado in San Diego – but also as the artistic mind behind “American Idol” parties and over 60 movie premieres. He

even planned the Santa Barbara polo match that Prince William and Kate Middleton partook in during their recent trip to the U.S. Worley has also starred on wedding-themed reality shows like The CW's “Shedding for the Wedding” and TLC's “Battle of the Wedding Designer.” “If there's a wedding show,” he says, “I've pretty much been on it.”

With those types of credentials, it only made sense to go to Worley for some tips on making the big day the best day.

How did you get interested in planning weddings?

I think that weddings are fun because it's such a personal day. Weddings are way different than dealing with corporate clients because, especially as the designer of them, I get to spend so much time getting to know whoever is getting married and really figuring out who they are. I call it “psychologizing” my clients – what makes them tick? – and you tend to

See **Wedding Dos ... and Don'ts**, page 16



► Wedding Dos ... and Don'ts

Continued from p. 15

become a therapist as well, and also a friend. You're creating something magical for someone for this day they've been dreaming about for the majority of their life. There's a reward at the end of the tunnel when you see what you've created actually makes someone happy.

My sister's wedding was one of the

greatest weddings I ever did. She had no idea what her wedding was going to look like, and she walked in after it was all set up and she just started crying. There was nothing better than throwing my sister her dream wedding. She left it all up to me to create something magical. So when people ask why I like doing weddings, that's the icing on the cake right there.

How often do you plan gay weddings?

I haven't done any gay weddings since the influx of, "Is it legal? Is it not legal?" Back in the day when it was commitment ceremonies I used to do a lot of those, but now that everyone is trying to figure out if they can get married or not, it's been a weird thing. There's this ambiguity of, "Should we have a big wedding?"

I think people are doing weddings differently these days; it's become more of a party than a traditional wedding. I always say to my clients, "It's not your grandmother's wedding, it's not your mother's wedding, so break tradition; there really are no rules anymore."

My whole philosophy on weddings is that you're throwing a celebration and bringing people together who care about you – make sure it's fun and memorable! The day goes by so quickly that if you don't take time to smell the roses, then it's gone and the roses are dead.

What traditions and trends do you find people breaking most?

The idea that you have to have a sit-down dinner. You get a lot more bang for your buck if you really are just wanting to throw a fun party. I've had clients who didn't understand

how they'd afford a wedding that they wanted with the money they wanted to spend and I said, "Have the ceremony for 7 p.m., have a great band, have appetizers." You save a huge chunk of money by not having a sit-down dinner or buffet; just feed them with heavy appetizers and a dessert station, and have the party you want to have. You don't have to have a program if you don't want to have a program. You don't need to have the set itinerary of the dos and don'ts of having your wedding. Just make it fun. I look at weddings like birthdays – it's your day to shine and have fun and do it your way. If you want everyone to dress like Stormtroopers, do it. If you're into My Little Ponies, go for it.

One rule I'd like to see broken is that people stop playing "Butterfly Kisses."

I had a client who got married and all of the songs during their ceremony were Pink Floyd, Led Zepplin and Guns N' Roses. Then, during cocktails, the orchestra played all of their favorite theme songs from their favorite TV shows, and during the reception we had a jazz/soul band. So the music was very different and very nontraditional. People are choosing songs that mean more to them instead of just Googling them.

You've said that people are having weddings without guests. What do you think?

A lot of people do it, and I actually I think it's a great idea. Just the two of you, go get married on the beach or somewhere tropical, somewhere that means something to you. If

your first vacation was Provincetown, go there. Go somewhere and get married in a location that you can relax and enjoy yourself and have fun just the two of you, and then come back and throw a party for everyone to join. It saves you expenses if it's just the two of you, or the people closest to you, instead of making a big production out of it.

What places do you suggest for destination weddings?

Besides P-town, Mexico is a great place to go for a wedding, especially if you're from the U.S. I've done weddings in Cabo and I've done weddings in Cozumel and on the Mexican Riviera. Mexico is a really great, inexpensive place to go. It's beautiful, you get the sun and I think most gay men, and lesbians as well, want to go somewhere tropical – they want ocean and a tan. Being somewhere beautiful and seeing a beautiful sunset is just romantic and charming and has all the elements of what a wedding should be.

So, after seeing "Bridesmaids," I have to ask: Is it ever OK to eat ethnic food before a fitting?

(Laughs) If you're eating somewhere that's reputable! But in "Bridesmaids" I don't think they went to a restaurant that had a grade-A stamp of approval, so maybe then you run the risk of not having the most sanitary of standards.

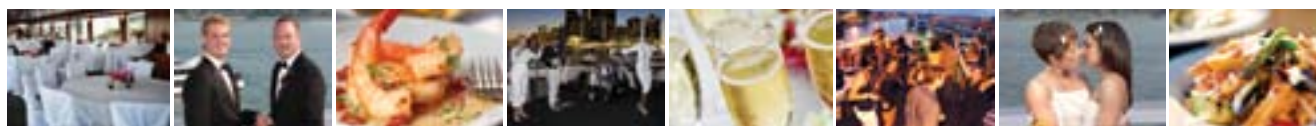
For more information on Brian Worley, visit brianworley.wordpress.com.

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Princess charming

Lesbian couple talks fairy-tale wedding

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

“Getting married is not a political statement; it’s a lifelong commitment that I hope people will take seriously.” Kay Shelton should know. She and her wife Amanda took the plunge on July 22, 2000.

The Beverly Hills, Mich. couple put a lot of planning both into their life together and into their big day. Their 100-person fairy-tale-themed wedding is an inspiration for couples in the planning stages of a unified life.

Amanda was going to law school and working at a nail salon and handing out business cards at The Rainbow Room. Kay was working as a mechanic. Though not really the hair-and-nails type of gal, Kay made an appointment the next day - and once a week for a while thereafter.

“I saw her and I just knew,” Kay says. “She just does something for me.”

Amanda resisted at first, but she got to know Kay better through her visits to the salon. “She wore me down,” teases Amanda. The young law student wasn’t in a hurry to date. She had recently moved all the way from the farm country of Idaho to Cass Avenue in Detroit to be in a relationship that didn’t work.

“I just didn’t want any more drama in my life,” she says. “But she was persistent, and patient. She told me that she knew we were supposed to be together and that she’d wait as long as it took. Finally I let her take me out to dinner. We went on our first date to get Thai food in Ferndale and it just sort of went from there.”

Amanada went on to complete law school at Wayne State. She is now a practicing attorney

and partner at Shelton Deon Law Group in Royal Oak. She practices family law, employment law, commercial litigation and LGBT law. Kay stays home with their two children, 21-month-old Myles and 4-year-old Maya. (The family was recently the center of a New York Times article about adoption law in Michigan.)

While it’s been nearly a dozen years since the day the Sheltons exchanged vows, their wedding is still a point of pride. “In another life I’d be a wedding planner,” Shelton says, gushing over her giant photo album celebrating the event. “I wanted a fairy tale, and that’s what we got.”

The wedding was unique, and even more challenging to pull off than any typical gay wedding. “There was no wedding expo back then. There was the PrideSource directory but they only had a few places that might help. We went in blind to these businesses, no way of knowing if they’d help,” Kay says.

Amanda recalled the struggle: “We did have a problem finding a venue. We’d tell people we were getting married and they’d say we couldn’t do that,” she says. “The photo company had a hard time understanding. We kept saying ‘the brides,’ and they didn’t get it. They kept saying, ‘So... it’s a double wedding?’ and we kept saying, ‘No, one wedding, two brides,’ and finally they caught on.”

It’s partly because of these frustrations that Amanda is going to be participating in the 2012 Wedding Expo on April 29. Her law firm will have a booth and she’ll be there to answer people’s questions about planning their legal future with their partner. She’ll also tell you about her fairy-tale wedding if you let her.



Her advice to engaged couples: be clear about what you want, and write the guest list out first. “If you get the list done first it’s easier to plan everything else. You need to know the quantity of things to get, how big of a space you need, that type of thing.”

For their fairy-tale wedding, the Sheltons rented The Castle in Detroit, a beautiful building which came with overnight accommodations for the wedding party as part of the rental package. Unfortunately, The Castle is closed, but as an interesting side note the couple went to an auction as the place was closing and were able to buy the dressing table that they took some of their most

precious wedding day pictures in front of.

To go along with the castle theme, they had a large castle cake and their friend hand-made the invitations to look like a little castle opening up in the reader’s hands.

Because it was a beautiful day, they were able to have their wedding outside. One way they added a more personal touch was by having each guest bring a flower from home of their choosing. The mismatched flowers were stuck into the trellis they took their vows under. “That way everybody had a part in honoring our commitment to each other,” Kay says.

Other special touches included an ice carving in the shape of a Native American Totem that the couple had designed to represent their love. The same symbolism was on the castle cards. Kay’s suit was custom-made for the event.

“We used a lot of symbolism and tried to make it very personal. One thing was that everybody had a candle and we passed the light from one to the next, up the rows of people and through the moms on to us,” Amanda says.

“It’s important to make sure you enjoy every step of it. On the day of it, it goes by so fast that you should just take a moment to find a corner and just step back and take it all in. It’s not legal, so some people may not do it as fully as they want. Don’t let it bother you that it’s not legal. Your wedding is as special as any wedding. It doesn’t matter that there’s not a piece of paper from the state. It’s a unification process. It’s something you do with the people in your life to say publicly, “I pick this person for life, I pick this person for real.”

Stop by the Wedding Expo on April 29 for more wedding tips, LGBT friendly vendors, or to meet Shelton for yourself and talk about legal issues.



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Tough love



Photo: M. Russell Photography

Traditional marriage meets transgender love

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

M Kelley and her wife Bec married legally on July 23, 2010 in a large Grand Rapids church with about 120 friends and family there in support. The marriage is legal despite M's feminine appearance, because the gender box

on her driver's license still has the letter "M."

With the wedding party stepping up the aisle in matching red Converse shoes, David Bowie's "Changes" playing for their video slide show, and M dressed to the nines in a cute white pinstripe suit, the wedding was a mix of tradition and personality that only this particular couple

could pull off.

They met, of all places, in a small Christian college. For a while they were just acquaintances, but in 2008 when a mutual friend was getting married, Bec needed a ride to the ceremony. On the two-hour drive they got to know each other some, and shortly after that they started to date.

"On the way back from the wedding Bec actually mentioned that she was going with some friends to a drag show," M recalls. "At that time I had just started coming out, and was tempted to

come out to her on the spot, but instead I simply noted this as a sign she may react well. She was also a social work major, and came across as very liberal and accepting.

M was still living as male when they met. "I hinted it to her about a month into our relationship."

Bec remembered the night the man she'd been dating told her that she felt like a transgender

See Tough love, page 22

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► Tough love

Continued from p. 20

woman. “M first told me that she was trans about a month and a half after we started dating. I came over to her apartment, we were drinking a glass of wine and playing board games and she said, ‘I have something to tell you... I am transgender.’”

“We spent the next several hours talking about it and what transgender is and how it would affect our relationship. After about two months I started to research transgender issues more and began to understand the gravity of it all. After that we had to really work through it.”

Bec had always identified as a straight gal, but even growing up she had convictions about human rights. “I am a firm believer in marriage equality,” she says. “In fact, I wrote a paper supporting it way back in my years at a conservative high school.”

Some of her family did not approve of her essay at the time, and even now find her relationship with M hard to accept.

“It was a very hard situation; it put everybody in an awkward spot – M, me, everybody. My family didn’t really object, they just don’t agree. I told my sister about it while M and I were still navigating through how it was going to work. She didn’t say anything to me except, ‘Well, that must be weird.’ She did later have a long discussion with M about it. Since then, they’ve been clear that they don’t agree with our ‘lifestyle’ but they’ve never been pushy about it.”

Despite some family hesitancy, the big day went beautifully. There were candles along the pews and candles in wine bottles for the centerpieces at the reception, simple touches that Bec enjoyed planning. They also had guests leave them messages sealed in envelopes, to be opened on the anniversary corresponding with the table numbers.

“There are so many memorable moments, but the whole day was a bit of a blur looking back,” M says. “Glad I plan on only being married once, because I would not want to go through that craziness more than once.”

As M and Bec move forward in life together, those around them are recognizing their love.

“Bec has really helped me to come to better

“There are so many memorable moments, but the whole day was a bit of a blur looking back. Glad I plan on only being married once, because I would not want to go through that craziness more than once.”

understand myself. She has been my biggest supporter and encourager. I would never have started coming out without her. She has enabled me to embrace my identity as a female in such a wonderful way. She truly amazes me.”

Bec, too, continues to be enchanted. “I am attracted to M’s confidence in herself. She is a very confident person and that was definitely the first thing that caught my eye,” she says. “I obviously think that she’s cute. When I met her, and we were first starting to date, I had just never met anyone like her before and she fascinated me, and still does. I had never met anyone who hadn’t let society define her, and I just felt like I wanted to get to know this person.”

Faith and activism is still a part of the Kelleys’ lives. M is the founder of the Transgender Education Collaboration, which recently put on a major Transgender Visibility Campaign in West Michigan. (www.trans-edu.com). She is also the vice president of the board of GIFT (Gays In Faith Together), which just kicked off the Gay Christian? Yes! Campaign.

In addition to hoping for increased acceptance for transgender people and LGBTs in the church, marriage is an important topic to them.

“Our best friend who performed the wedding is engaged but unable to get legally married. It breaks my heart seeing such a wonderful couple not able to have their relationship legally recognized,” M says. “Between my own experiences and those of my LGBT friends, I feel so strongly pushed toward activism to help make life easier for everyone.”



Photo: Colleen Scribner

Setting the stage for love

The Ringwald's Joe and Joe on their biggest production... their wedding!

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

Planning a wedding can be a lot of fun, especially if you're in show business. Joe Bailey and Joe Plambeck, owners of the Ringwald in Ferndale, held what they called their "big gay wedding" on Sept. 4, 2010. About a hundred people came to the ceremony, which was held on their very own stage.

Like many of the plays done at the Ringwald, the wedding was quite a production. "Our friend Cassandra really took the reins on most of our wedding planning," Plambeck said. "It was definitely the largest and craziest party I have ever helped put together, but it was the most perfect day I ever had, so it was definitely all worth it."

Like many couples, the guys wanted to make their ceremony very personal. "We asked an amazing and hilarious friend of ours, Jaime Moyer, to officiate; we incorporated three songs sung by a crazy talented friend of ours and included a slide show of photos from our relationship over the years. Figuring out all the pieces, like which three songs for example, was pretty time consuming," Plambeck said.

"I really wanted the wedding to be a reflection of who we are. We incorporated our favorite colors – blue, orange, yellow and brown – into the wardrobe, the stage's painting and all of our print materials for the wedding, like the program, signs, etc. We also started the ceremony off with an 'opening number' which incorporated our family, wedding party and closest friends. We also had some of our besties read some of our favorite romantic quotes from our favorite films, which was a blast!

"Because we worried about the size of our theater for the reception, we also used Go Comedy! for a second reception spot since it was a hop, skip and jump from The Ringwald. We had a midnight improv show and also a photo booth,

which was a huge hit. The snow cone machine and Candy Bar were also big hits."

In the weeks leading up to the wedding, Plambeck kept a video log counting down the days, sharing some of the joys and stresses of planning as well as sentimental stories. At day nine, for example, Plambeck recalls how he and Bailey met.

In 2003 they worked in a traveling theater show together where they quickly hit it off. Their mutual love for theater kept them on the same path and eventually they returned to Bailey's home state of Michigan and opened up The Ringwald. Seven years after they met they tied the knot.

Of Plambeck, Bailey said, "He is very funny and kind and talented. He is a good man and I'm lucky to have him in my life. Plus, he puts up with all of my junk, so how could I not love him?"

Plambeck's favorite moment of the evening was hearing Bailey's vows to him. "I had no idea what to expect, of course, but it was just a lovely moment and I felt so incredibly close and intertwined with him. It was really lovely.

"I love Joe for so many things," Plambeck said. "He is my best friend. He makes my life better and easier. He and I laugh so much it's ridiculous."

The couple is taking part in the 2012 Wedding Expo, as they and other Ringwald performers will be guiding guests and providing a little improvisational entertainment. "It's going to be so fun seeing other couples making their plans," Plambeck said.

His advice: "Do what you want to do! Make sure the day suits you as a couple, first and foremost. You don't have to please or make anyone else happy. It's your day and it should be glorious. But above all: relax! breathe!"

The Same-Sex Wedding Expo: Celebrate the Power of Love is 1-5 p.m. April 29 at the Detroit Marriott Livonia on Six Mile Road, just east of I-275. Tickets are \$10 at the door, with discounted \$5 tickets available at <http://www.PrideSource.com> and at <http://www.DailyGaypon.com>.

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Wedding help to the rescue

Local vendors offer tips on dress, photos and fun

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Dreaming about the big day with the one you love is an exciting time. When it comes time to actually planning the wedding, you'll want to create a budget, get organized and make important decisions in advance so that you can enjoy it.

For example, will it be a small event at your home, a destination wedding or a grand affair? Whatever your decision, there are several LGBT-friendly vendors who understand the powerful, emerging LGBT wedding market.

"One of the aspects I find very fun to help with when it comes to LGBT couples is that most of them come into our store not knowing the traditions," says Kyle Burns from Miner's Den Jewelers in Royal Oak (www.minersden.com). They ask me, 'Do I get to wear two rings or only one?' or 'Can I get down on one knee?' My response is always the same: 'This is your moment that no one can take away from you. How do you want to remember it?'

"The engagement process is

something that is supposed to be fun and exciting, not pressure-filled and intimidating. LGBT couples want the same experience shopping for a ring that heterosexual couples experience."

Miner's Den Jewelers has helped so many couples with their rings that they have seen many different styles leave the store. "Some couples want simple gold bands; other couples want something that has tons of sparkling diamonds," says Burns. "When shopping from us, we want to make sure the customer gets what they want and that they understand their purchase. For example, the benefits of different metals or the 4 C's of diamond purchases. The more knowledge that we possess, the more knowledge our customer will possess."

Many LGBT-friendly vendors are available to provide products, resources and information for same-sex couples looking for something different. Sure, there are traditional elements involved when planning a wedding, but many LGBT people love the opportunity to be non-traditional and reinvent what weddings should look like.

In the men's formal wear business for nearly 19 years, Jeff Nelson serves the LGBT community often as owner of The Tux Shop on Woodward in Birmingham (www.thetuxshoponwoodward.com). In year's past, Nelson produced tuxedos for the Human Rights Campaign Fund Dinner back when the organization did regular black tie galas. As recent as last month, he coordinated with Affirmations to be the exclusive tuxedo provider for their Spring Bash at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

"When helping a couple to decide what to wear, the basic questions are still with tuxedo style and color of tie and vest or cummerbund," says Nelson. "However, when women choose to wear tuxedo formal wear, we explore the different options of men's coats such as tail coats or shawl lapel tuxedos, just as an example. I do have the capability of ordering tuxedos for purchase designed to fit women. With rental merchandise, the ideas and fit is surrounded with men's clothing sizes only. Therefore, I discover what style options would be the best fit

See **Wedding help**, page 26

Join the conversation at these two dynamic workshops



2:30 p.m. "Planning for the Future"

After the orange blossoms have faded and the wedding presents have been opened the business of normal life returns. As individuals or couples, we have to think about planning for the future and taking care of loved ones. Bringing in a charitable giving vehicle into the planning can add so much more to personal goals for financial, tax and

transferring wealth. This session will talk about the simple ways we can generate an income stream for today, generate a current income tax deduction, plan for our partners and spouses, while taking care of the organizations that keep the LGBTQ community safe and strong.

Presented by Christopher L. Kelly, vice president/senior

philanthropic advisor, Comerica Charitable Services Group in the Huron Room.



3:30 p.m. "When will it be legal in Michigan?"

Jay Kaplan will present the overall progress that has been made towards marriage equality through litigation and legislation, and what would have to happen in Michigan in order to achieve marriage equality. Attendees will also learn how they can get involved in efforts to move Michigan toward a more equal society.

Presented by Jay Kaplan, staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union GLBT Legal Project

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► **Wedding help**

Continued from p. 24

per individual.”

For women who prefer to wear a wedding gown, Michelle McFarland from The Wedding Shoppe in Berkley (www.theweddingshoppe.net) said she has had “wonderful experiences” with same-sex couples and looks forward to serving many more in the future. “Honestly, most of the time we don’t even find out our bride has a same-sex partner until deep into the process,” says McFarland. “I don’t really think helping a lesbian bride is any different to helping a heterosexual bride. She’s just a girl in love and wants the same thing: a happy stress-free experience trying on beautiful wedding gowns.”

The process of choosing a gown can be challenging. According to McFarland, a starting point is deciding how formal the wedding is going to be: Is it a beach wedding, or is the setting contemporary? Will the reception be formal or informal? “Then we guide the bride toward gowns that coordinate with her surroundings,” she says, adding that many LGBT couples have their plans well formed by the time they visit The Wedding Shoppe. “Their concerns over which type of dress they will choose is the same as everyone else. It’s our job to help each bride discover her own wedding gown style, which best fits her figure and personality.”

Sometimes the bride will wear a dress and her partner will wear a linen or informal suit. McFarland and her staff have seen couples both wear gowns and in that case, they try to help coordinate the looks. “But in the end, we always encourage our brides to wear what

makes them happy. If she’s always wanted a big poofy ballgown on a beach and it makes her happy, then we say go for it,” MacFarland says.

And to capture special moments on camera, including the fabulous attire, are photographers like Steve Schwall and Kathleen Mabbott, co-owners of Rawlinson Photography in Plymouth (www.rawlinsonphoto.com).

“We have been serving the metro Detroit area for 41 years but have never been approached until recently by the LGBT community,” says Mabbott. “We just finished shooting an engagement session for a lesbian couple and it was a wonderful experience. Although we have not had the privilege to shoot an LGBT wedding, we look forward to in the future.”

Schwall and Mabbott have had the pleasure to photograph more than 4,000 weddings and there’s one single factor that every couple wants above all the rest. “It’s simple, good, high-quality photographs so that they can relive that special day for years to come,” says Mabbott. “A common concern when couples come in to talk with us is that they don’t want their photographs to look still like their parents’ wedding photographs. They want to feel and look relaxed, which is why today’s couples see the advantage of a pair or team of photographers at their wedding.”

When asked if shooting an LGBT wedding would be different than a straight wedding, Mabbott says, “No. Love is love. It photographs the same.”

For more information on where to find LGBT-friendly vendors, check out these websites: www.gayweddings.com, www.purpleunions.com, www.rainbowweddingnetwork.com, and www.soyourengayged.com.

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Have some 'Manners'

Author offers etiquette on same-sex weddings

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Changing times means more union celebrations for LGBT couples, who are recognizing their love in the form of commitment ceremonies, domestic partnerships and weddings. With that comes special wedding etiquette that straight people don't have to worry about.

"These celebrations are about commitment and love whether gay or straight, but the details are different," says Steven Petrow, author of "The Essential Book of Gay Manners and Etiquette." He adds that LGBT couples oftentimes struggle to figure out their roles: which person should propose or pay for a ring and whether or not there should be a new last name. Plus, there are homophobic family members to deal with, the wording of vows, and deciding how to celebrate

bachelor and bachelorette parties.

LGBT couples may also have the dreaded and unromantic discussion about prenuptial agreements, for which there is etiquette. First, don't pull out a prewritten agreement the first time the subject is brought up. Fully disclose all your assets. Explain that this kind of agreement is not about a lack of trust, but a business agreement about being able to put financial issues behind you. Don't coerce your partner. Be reasonable and be prepared to make concessions.

"Couples can do whatever works for them, but many don't want to misstep. They choose to stay within the boundaries, but adapt to who they are and to the community," he says.

There's no established etiquette of who contributes to a same-sex wedding, but there is nothing to lose by asking your parents for help.

"Be prepared for a variety of responses and, ultimately, plan to make a greater contribution to yourselves or downscale your plans to fit your budget. At this point, your parents become guests at the wedding instead of hosts and there are certainly advantages to that," he says.

To avoid any uncertainty when purchasing engagement rings, ask friends to recommend an LGBT-friendly jeweler, consult one of the many LGBT-friendly wedding sites, or call a shop in advance and ask if they can provide advice for a same-sex couple seeking wedding bands. "You'll be able to tell a lot by the way they answer your questions," says Petrow.

For those who say that same-sex weddings obliterate tradition, Petrow said that many of us are pulling in different traditions from our background. "LGBT couples are shaking and stirring a variety of traditions - ethnic, racial or family traditions - to create something new. Many LGBT weddings have a political tone to them these days and couples are asking for donations toward organizations like Freedom to Marry," he says.

This is typically true of an older couple that has been together for a while. The younger couples, according to Petrow, are much more traditional and seem to have ceremonies and receptions that mirror heterosexual ones. "They register for gifts and for honeymoons. Younger couples are more conventional in their choices. Couples who have been together longer are doing something more offbeat, edgy and more political. I definitely see younger couples doing more name changes," he says. There are four basic options: keep your surname, use both your names, take your partner's name or choose a brand new name.

The digital generation is pulling together a lot of information via the "wedsite," a wedding site which communicates information about the ceremony, reception and gift registry. It's also an excellent means to share photos, provide maps and directions, and make it easy for guests to RSVP. "It's really convenient and completely appropriate for that generation. There

is certainly no faux pas in having a wedsite, but be considerate of your guests who may not have access to a computer or are not web savvy. Rely on tradition in this case as there is something sentimental about an invitation, which can be kept forever," says Petrow.

What about straight friends and family members who are invited but have a lot of apprehension or don't know what to expect? "Parents and other family members of the brides and grooms may find that their role in an LGBT wedding is much less than what they've experienced at a straight union," Petrow says. "This is in large part because, on average, gay couples marry or partner later, usually after having lived together for many years, often paying for the ceremony themselves and involving close friends in many of the roles usually assigned to family members. In some instances, parents or siblings who harbor some residual discomfort with the idea of gay unions may choose to take a less public role in both the ceremony and reception, or may not be invited to participate."

In dealing with the in-laws, Petrow suggests chatting with your "sons" or "daughters" to get their thinking on the matter, especially if the other family has any issues about the impending marriage. "If given the OK, then go ahead and call, write or email your in-laws-to-be. If they live nearby, invite them over. Otherwise, just use the opportunity to open the door and say how happy you are about the news. If there's any resistance on their end, let's hope your enthusiasm rubs off," he says.

"Overall, whether or not the state sanctions your wedding ceremony or your friends and family support the decision, it's yours. It's a public affirmation of the love between two people in front of their community. That's what weddings are about," he adds. "Despite what some conservative and religious folks say, marriage is not about producing children only. Weddings have the meaning we give them and that our friends and family give them."

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Through the shadows

HIV-positive poet's near-death experience becomes impetus for first book

BY JEROME STUART NICHOLS

Some of the world's greatest works of art were forged in the midst of tragedy. Craig Allen Combs, an openly gay poet living in Toledo, hopes that his debut collection of poems, "Taking Tea in the Black Rose: Singing Through the Shadows Until We're Dancing in the Light," will soon be counted among them. He will appear at 4 p.m. April 28 at SH\aut\ Cabaret & Gallery in Ann Arbor for a reading and book signing.

For Combs, the journey to published poet began in the spring of 1987 when the then-high school senior found inspiration in the music of The Doors.

"I'd always loved The Doors' music," Combs says. "I wasn't really into Chicago or things that were about weekend fun. I was inspired by the groups that had a message and it took some effort, intellectually, to understand the meaning. The Doors pretty much fit that bill for me."

Although he was inspired, it wasn't until he was taken in by The Doors lead singer Jim Morrison's collection of poetry "The Lords and the New Creatures" that his love for poetry truly blossomed.

Combs soon found his new hobby offered him a release from the familial stresses of his teenage years. "I grew up in an alcoholic family, so I had a lot of time to myself. I put all my energy, back then, into trying to make something of myself."

He also had to deal with the internal conflicts surrounding his homosexuality.

"Knowing that I was gay, even back then," he says, "I was pursuing poetry to try to understand myself."

After high school, Combs continued to write poetry through his matriculation at Kalamazoo College, world travels and his eventual relocation to Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

It was during his stay in Fort Lauderdale that a health insurance-related medical exam alerted him to the possibility that he might be HIV-positive.

"The first thing that went through my mind as a gay man was, 'This is it,'" Combs recalls.

After a visit to his doctor in April of 2004 his fears were confirmed.

"I was sitting on the table, (my doctor) came in and he sat down next to me and he put his arm



Craig A. Combs will read from his first book, "Taking Tea in the Black Rose," on April 28 at SH\aut\.

See Craig Allen Combs, page 32

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► Craig Allen Combs

Continued from p. 31

around me and said, 'Craig, what happened?'" Combs says. "I can relive that moment like it was yesterday."

"I got choked up and I looked at him and said, 'Carlos, I don't know what I'm going to do.'"

Although reassured by his doctor that HIV was not a death sentence, the revelation of his HIV-positive status made Combs feel the breath of his mortality.

"I went through a huge depression," Combs says. "I was a mess; I went down the drug path. I basically didn't want to live. I kept telling myself, 'You're a piece of crap. Why'd you go and do this to yourself? How could you be so stupid?'"

The pattern of reckless behavior lasted for about eight months. By January of 2005, Combs pulled his life back together. But it wasn't the last time that he would stare into uncertainty at the hands of HIV, except this time it was the outstretched hand of death that would force him to step back and reevaluate.

When he was diagnosed with HIV in 2004, Combs decided that he would forego traditional medicines and instead chose a holistic path to treatment. He was able to maintain a purely

holistic treatment plan until April 2010 when his HIV got out of control.

Starting with a T-cell count of around 600, which was within the normal range of 500-1,300, he was now down to 67 with a viral load of more than 750,000 and facing the possibility of death.

At the insistence of his doctors, Combs began taking a more modern approach to his HIV treatment. Unfortunately, a few days into the new regimen, a rush of opportunistic infections landed him in the hospital.

Although conceptualized prior, it was during that six-day hospital stay that "Taking Tea in the Black Rose" was born.

"When I came out of the hospital, it was the only thing I wanted to do," Combs says. "I didn't know that the next day I wasn't going to be dead. I swore to myself that I would not be leaving this planet without a legacy."

Fast forward to today: His HIV is under control and the compilation of poetry is completed and published.

Now that his legacy is assured, Combs spends his time sharing his stories and experiences in poem form at open mics around the state.

For Combs, his story is not one of shame or redemption, it is a story of a man who unabashedly did it his own way.

"I am who I am today," he says, "not because of them."

For more information on Craig Allen Combs or his work, visit www.blackrosetea.com.

"I was sitting on the table, (my doctor) came in and he sat down next to me and he put his arm around me and said, 'Craig, what happened?' I can relive that moment like it was yesterday."

— Craig Allen Combs



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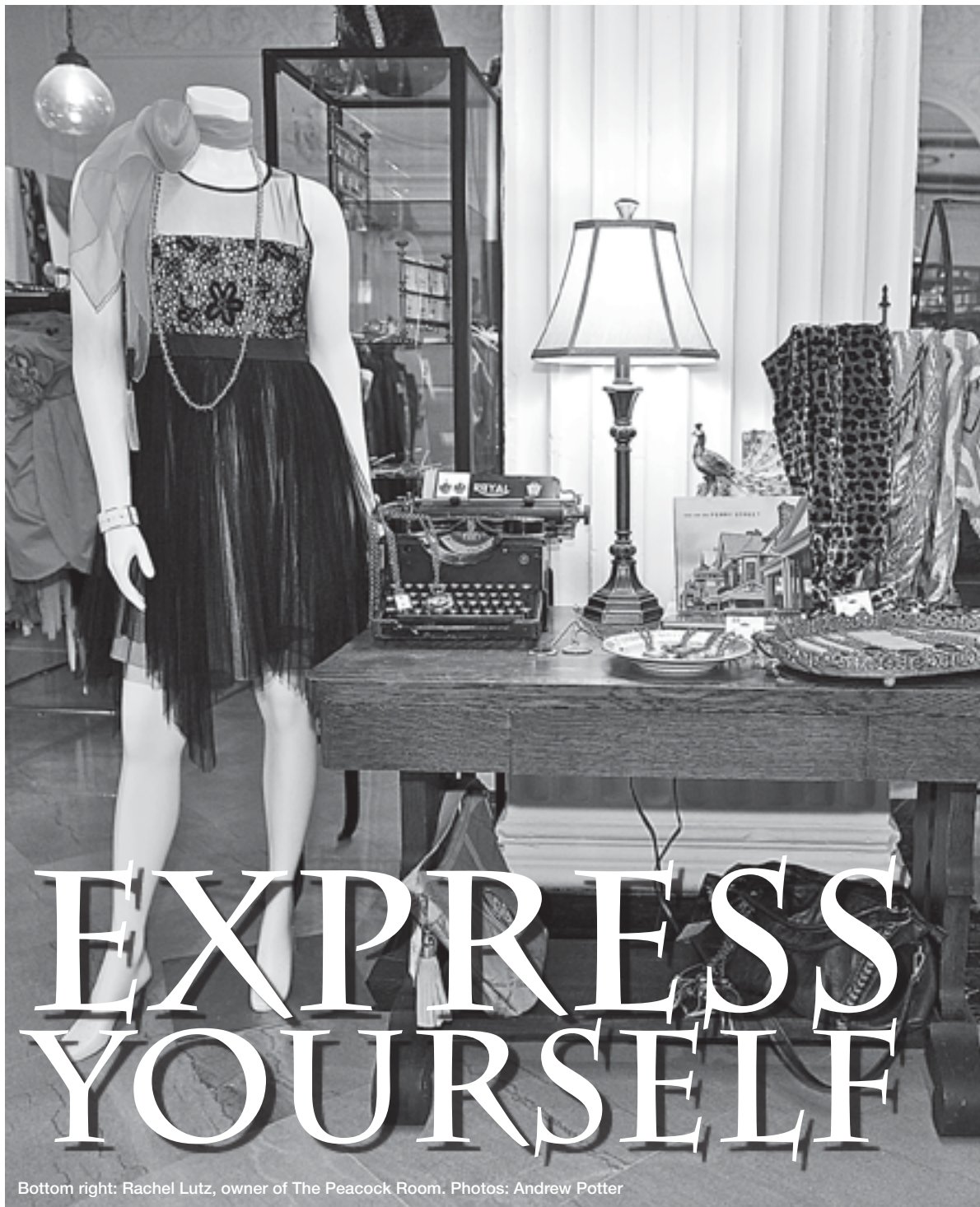
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Bottom right: Rachel Lutz, owner of The Peacock Room. Photos: Andrew Potter

Detroit's Peacock Room does fashion with a twist

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

The Peacock Room has established itself in Midtown as “the little boutique with big architectural treasure.” Not only are people who work and play in Detroit attracted to the museum-quality space, but owner Rachel Lutz has these fashion-forward individuals bagging up her brand-new vintage and quality consignment clothing and accessories.

Open for less than five months, the boutique is located inside The Park Shelton, a grand landmark next to the Detroit Institute of Arts. A masterpiece of colorful interior murals, The Peacock Room

was designed and created by American painter James Abbott McNeil Whistler. The entire room was shipped to Detroit where it was installed in the Ferry Street mansion of prominent industrialist and art collector Charles Lang Freer.

Lutz made a worthwhile investment to properly restore historical features which create a feeling of grandness – marble floors, mirrored panels, beautiful lighting and a gold-painted ceiling – but the 1,000-square-foot room is still small enough to feel intimate.

“That’s the kind of feeling I want my customers to have – boutique shopping that’s affordable and accessible to everybody,” says

Lutz, who takes customers back to a time when personalized service mattered more. Whether it’s the simple act of remembering a customer’s name or going as far as contacting a customer when a new piece arrives, Lutz is doing business in a special way.

That includes hand-selecting everything in the shop ranging from fun print dresses and rompers, bright-colored clutches, scarves, blouses, embellished fedoras and handmade vintage-style jewelry by designers like Ollipop and Sweet Romance. The mix of brand new and old fashions include high-end

“I never want someone to walk out the door with something on that they don’t look good in. I try to be honest. A lot of people know what they like and what they look good in. They just need a little reassurance.”

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► Peacock Room

Continued from p. 35

consignment items from J Crew, Ralph Lauren, Brooks Brothers and Anne Taylor, to name a few. For men, The Peacock Room offers a modest selection of shirts, ties, blazers and cuff links. Basics like Spanx and good quality socks are also available.

Lutz said there is new merchandise almost every day and she rarely carries the same thing in the boutique. Although the boutique is not a home store, The Peacock Room features antique furniture and artifacts, like a 1928 Victrola Phonograph or a 100-year-old Royal typewriter. In the process of being cleaned and restored are four Hudson's display cabinets.

"Whatever you buy from The Peacock Room should get you a compliment," says Lutz, adding that she travels to Chicago, New York and overseas to draw inspiration for her merchandise with Victorian and Art Deco influences. "People might not recognize the brands, but they will recognize the attention to detail."

Lutz said she prizes European makers for their tailoring and materials, but also local and American manufacturing. "We get excellent service at fair prices from the Detroit Store Fixture Co., Detroit Hardware, Motor City Party Supply (formerly Zakoor's), and others," she says. "I love to support groups doing good things in the city." She has made room in the boutique for fashions by Desiree Cooper, Detroit Snob founder, journalist and long-time InsideOut Literacy Arts Project board member, and the clothing line, G.R.inD – Girls Raised in Detroit – designed by Detroit natives Lamar Landers and Sydney G. James.

As a second-generation Midtown entrepreneur in her early 30s, Lutz said there is an obvious and documented need for retail. "Midtown has always been a great area, but people are noticing it now. It's grown richer over the last 20 to 30 years," says Lutz, who serves on the board of Equality Michigan and served on the board of Preservation Wayne for three years.



She coordinated a crowd-sourcing campaign with the nonprofit organization to ensure whatever money is raised goes toward the preservation of The Peacock Room, and not toward building her business.

While she doesn't consider herself a fashion person, Lutz said she is a "style person" and believes it is instinctual. "People need to express their style," says Lutz. This is one of the many things she learned at her job at Nordstrom during high school and college. "I enjoyed helping women feel good about themselves through fashion."

And she still does. Lutz puts a lot of effort into helping her customers decide what to wear. "I never want someone to walk out the door with something on that they don't look good in. I try to be honest," says Lutz. "A lot of people know what they like and what they look good in. They just need a little reassurance."

The Peacock Room is open 11:30 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays, and from 12-5 p.m. Sundays. For more information on The Peacock Room, located in the Park Shelton at 15 E. Kirby (Suite 110) in Detroit, visit the store's website: www.peacockroomdetroit.com.

Hear Me Out BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Nicki Minaj's ridiculous 'Reloaded.' Plus: Bonnie Raitt's first in seven years



Nicki Minaj, 'Pink Friday: Roman Reloaded'

Nicki Minaj botched her Grammy performance so bad earlier this year, when she weirdly channeled "The Exorcist" while hawking new single "Roman Holiday," that even that desperate attempt at shock couldn't be "saved." Her sophomore outing is just as confused and ridiculous and stupid. And it's also completely addictive. Named after Minaj's alter ego, the rapper launches on that schizo lead single with some snappy flair and fierce flow, swapping personalities like wigs and shoehorning "O Come All Ye Faithful" into the spastic mix. She keeps the crazy coming on "Come on a Cone," hilariously cutting into a cappella, and then swags out on punchy boaster "HOV Lane." By the end of the unintentionally comical "Sex in the Lounge," it seems that Roman's been exorcised – at least by the sound of the disjointed disc, which completely goes off into clubland. "Starships," redundant-by-way-of-Katy-Perry, breaks into a hooky chorus that embraces the flying-things-are-inspiring motif. Yeah, it's awesomely bad. And so much of the album's conventional last half – a scattered collection of hit hopefuls that rip off pop-queens du jour – falls into the same black hole. "Roman Reloaded" is a hot mess of the highest order. *Grade: C+*



Bonnie Raitt, 'Slipstream'

Seven years have passed since Bonnie Raitt released an album, but don't expect her to catch up to the trends just to give us something to talk about. "Slipstream" falls back on the veteran's longstanding hybrid of blues, rock and weepies, out to prove nothing but her place in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. No song does that better than the sad stunner "Not Cause I Wanted To," a touching breakup ballad that has Raitt baring her heartache in a devastating gesture of closure – the flip side of her iconic lament "I Can't Make You Love Me." Raitt's sound hasn't progressed much since the release of that masterpiece over 20 years ago, more than halfway into her career – and, because of her timelessness, that's just fine. "Right Down the Line" offers a delicious reggae change-up on the Gerry Rafferty classic (FYI: The video features gay and lesbian couples in love); "You Can't Fail Me Now" emphasizes the snuggly warmth of her voice over a gospel-tinged track; and "Ain't Gonna Let You Go" is a six-minute jam session – a showcase for her bang-up slide guitar skills. Her biting commentary on celebrity, "Marriage Made in Hollywood," serves both as a pointed reflection on society

and the tragic effects of addiction. And she goes out on a high note: "God Only Knows," a life-affirming prayer sung over a few piano notes. It makes you wish Raitt would come around more often. *Grade: B+*

Also Out



Morgan Page, 'In the Air'

The most impressive bit on A-list mixer Morgan Page's third full-length is with talented singer-songwriter

Greg Laswell: "Addicted," a lingering heartbreaker. Not to say that the other 12 tracks, featuring an eclectic lineup of known-names and underground artists, don't cut it; all are particularly strong. Tegan and Sara return to the dance floor for the pulsating innuendo of "Body Work," and again on "Video," the stronger – and more original – of the two. The title track, featuring a soothing vocal from Angela McCluskey, stands out for its evocative sense of free-spiritedness – hey, xylophone! – gracing the driving house beat. These flourishes elevate an album that, though listenable and quite innovative, circles itself one too many times.



Katy Perry, 'Teenage Dream: The Complete Confection'

Katy Perry's ubiquitous sophomore disc had enough ear candy on it to cause a cavity, from pop-doozy "Teenage Dream" to the galvanizing "Firework." And it even got creative with whipped cream. But once was enough. Her Lolita shtick on "Dressin' Up" doesn't "come alive" as she promises, and the same goes for "Wide Awake," a forgettable mid-tempo. Both are so last Friday night. "Part of Me" is far from any teenage dream, but it's not a bad fist-raising breakup anthem. Better, as far as special-edition tracks, is the acoustic makeover of "The One that Got Away." Sure, it's no "Hummingbird Heartbeat," an overlooked "Teenage Dream" track, but then again, not much beats suggestive bird references set to an '80s chirp.

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Alexander Elisa, Will Lee-Williams and Tyrick Wiltez Jones in "From My Hometown" at Meadow Brook Theatre. Photo: Rick Smith

Glorious rhythm & blues 'From My Hometown'

BY JOHN QUINN

Devotees of both music and theater will recognize the genre of "From My Hometown," a 2004 off-Broadway hit receiving its Michigan premiere at Meadow Brook Theatre. Assemble a selection of evocative songs, link them in a suitable plot, and, voila! One has a musical on his hands. But, while "From My Hometown" boasts a built-in appeal to patrons of a certain age – in fact, my age – it is no mere walk down memory lane. It is a tribute to the fundamental beauty implicit in a simple three-note musical chord.

Why three notes? "From My Hometown" is about three vocalists – each seeped in the musical traditions of his hometown, lured from their roots to seek fame as recording artists in New York City. Our three are Alexander Elisa ("Memphis"), Will Lee-Williams ("Philly") and Tyrick Wiltez Jones ("Detroit"). Fate throws the guys together when they attend open auditions at the fabled Apollo Theatre. Each is dreaming of making the cut, because the exposure would make

REVIEW

From My Hometown

Meadow Brook Theatre, 2200 N. Squirrel Road, Rochester. Wednesday-Sunday through May 13. 115 minutes. \$30-39. 248-370-3300.

www.mbtheatre.com

his career. But – one, two, three strikes – they're out. While it takes time for damaged egos to heal, they eventually find that three throats are better than one.

The plot is silken but gossamer thin. Not to worry; "From My Hometown" is all about the music, and it doesn't disappoint. It consists of over 30 R&B songs, most of them classics by such writers as Berry Gordy and Otis Redding, but there are also several new ones. These frequently form an envelope to contain a medley of hits. Conceived by Lee Summers, "From My Hometown" was written by Lee Summers, Ty Stephens and Herbert Rawlings, Jr.

But it is no coincidence that the name our city-named heroes would perform under is "Unity." The combination of

perfect close harmony and razor-sharp choreography (conceived by Jennifer Consiglio) make the performers a triple-threat trio. Each has a chance to shine in solos but, particularly in a capella, the blend of voices is a knock-out.

"From My Hometown" is directed by MBT artistic director Travis W. Walter, who once again demonstrates not only an uncanny sense of how to please an audience but the skill to achieve it. Jen Price Fick's scenic design takes advantage of the depth of the Meadow Brook stage to produce a gritty city set, largely towering scaffolding with walls where no one has observed the stenciled notice, "Post No Bills."

The four piece combo is led by music director Daniel Feyer on the keyboards, with Alissa Hetzner taking over in May. Although the band is off-stage for most of the play, once again, the "unity" is marvelous.

For music lovers who miss lush melodic line, rich poetry and close harmony, "From My Hometown" is a delight. If "everything old is new again," we've waited long enough!

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The Ark Johnny Winter, American blues guitarist, singer, and producer. Best known for his late 1960s and 1970s high-energy blues-rock albums and live performances, Winter also produced three Grammy Award-winning albums for blues legend Muddy Waters. Tickets: \$40. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. April 25. 734-761-1818. Theark.org

The Ypsilanti Symphony Orchestra, The Henry Ford and the Sphinx Organization "Tchaikovsky's D major Violin Concerto" Violin virtuoso and Sphinx Laureate Gareth Johnson will perform Tchaikovsky's D major Violin Concerto. Tickets: \$14 general, \$7.50 students, \$9 group rate. Pease Auditorium, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti. 3:30 p.m. April 29. 734-487-5386. YpsilantiSymphony.org

FESTIVALS

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 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

OTHER

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

Zumba Fitness with Chandra Floyd "Zumba Fitness in Midtown Detroit" De-stress and party yourself into shape with this calorie scorching, exhilarating, and easy to follow workout with Latin and international music. Admission: \$8 per class. International Institute, 111 E. Kirby, Detroit. April 25 - Sep. 26. 313-587-6203. Facebook.com/ZumbaWithChandraMI

THEATER

CIVIC/COMMUNITY THEATER

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

A Little Work \$10-12. SRO Productions at The Burgh, 26060 Berg Road, Southfield. May 4 - 20. 248-796-4645. SROTheater.org

Copenhagen \$10-12. Riverwalk Theatre, 228 Museum Dr., Lansing. May 4 - 13. 517-482-5700. Riverwalktheatre.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. Through April 29. 517-482-5700. CityofEastLansing.com/Allofus

The Producers \$18. The Players Guild of Dearborn at 21730 Madison, Dearborn. April 27 - May 20. 313-561-TKTS. PlayersGuildofDearborn.org

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

PROFESSIONAL

Blue Man Group \$39-89. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. May 1 - 13. 313-872-1000. BroadwayInDetroit.com

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

Elyne Chaplik-Aleskow This reading is intended for an adult audience, subject matter inappropriate for children under 18. \$10. The Acorn Theater, 107 Generations Dr., Three Oaks. 3 p.m. April 29. 269-756-3879. acorntheater.com

Endgame By donation. The Abreact Performance Space, 1301 W. Lafayette #113, Detroit. Through May 5. 313-454-1542. theabreact.com

From My Hometown \$30-39. Meadow Brook Theatre, 2200 N. Squirrel Road, Rochester. Through May 13. 248-370-3302. mbtheatre.com

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

Jamie 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

M. Butterfly \$36-43. The Jewish Ensemble Theatre Company at Aaron DeRoy Theatre, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield. May 6 - 27. 248-788-2900. JETTheatre.org

Madea 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

May Festival of Readings \$7 for most readings; "8" is free, \$15 for "A Connemara Ceili.". Flint Youth Theatre, 1220 E. Kearsley St., Flint. May 1 - 29. 810-237-1530. FlintYouthTheatre.org

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 \$22-41. Performance Network Theatre, 120 E. Huron St., Ann Arbor. Through May 26. 734-663-0681. PerformanceNetwork.org

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

The Altruists \$15-18. Magenta Giraffe Theatre Company at Furniture Factory, 4126 Third St., Detroit. May 4 - 26. 313-408-7269. Magentagiraffe.org

The Cricket in Times Square \$10-15. Wild Swan Theater at Towsley Auditorium, Morris Lawrence Building, Washtenaw Community College. May 3 - 6. 734-995-0530. WildSwanTheater.org

The Pirates of Penzance \$19-39. The Whiting, 1241 E. Kearsley St., Flint. 8 p.m. April 27. 810-237-8689. TheWhiting.com

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

Turtle Island \$10 adult, \$5 children. PuppetART, Detroit Puppet Theater, 25 E. Grand River, Detroit. Through April 28. 313-961-7777. Puppetart.org

ART 'N' AROUND

Epiphany Glass Studio "Epiphany Glass Spring Open Studio" Spring open studio with live glassblowing demonstrations by master glassblower April Wagner. Looking for a Mother's Day gift - make a glass flower for Mom with the artist for \$50. Epiphany Glass Studio, 770 Orchard Lake Road, Pontiac. 12 p.m. May 5. 248-745-3786. Epiphanyglass.com

Fandangles of Flushing "Mixed Media exhibit" Carol Fabrizio and Matt Malott's exhibit The Marketplace. A wonderful opportunity to come and meet the artists and view their latest work. Fandangles of Flushing, The Marketplace at Flushing, 6429 West Pierson Road, Flushing. 2 p.m. April 29. 810-659-2700. Fandanglesmi.com

Flint Institute of Arts "Abstract Expressionism" The first specifically American art movement to achieve international influence and put New York City as the new center of the western art world. Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley, Flint. May 5 - Aug. 19. 810-234-1695. Flintarts.org

Flint Institute of Arts "The Golden Age of Painting, 1600-1800 from the Speed Art Museum" Paintings that illustrate the popular subjects of that age, such as: landscapes, portraits, still lifes, religious paintings, interpretations of classical antiquity and scenes from every day life. 1120 E. Kearsley, Flint. May 5 - Aug. 19. 810-234-1695. Flintarts.org

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

Detroit Area Art Deco Society "Michigan Modernism Exposition" One of the top shows of its kind in the country featuring 20th century design. Fifty of the nations most prominent Modernism merchants will offer pieces of the Art Deco, Art Nouveau, Prairie School, Arts and Crafts, Surrealistic and Neo-Classical schools of design. Admission: \$8 with any of our ads or listings, \$10 regular admission. The Southfield Municipal Complex Pavilion, 26000 Evergreen Road, Southfield. 10 a.m. April 28. 586-465-0441. MichiganModernism.com

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Fluxus and the Essential Questions of Life" Fluxus emerged in the early 1960s as a loose, international network of artists, composers, and designers "led" by Lithuanian-born American artist George Maciunas (1931-1978) that was noted for blurring the boundaries between art and life. This exhibition was organized by the Hood Museum of Art and was generously supported by Constance and Walter Burke, Dartmouth College Class of 1944, the Marie-Louise and Samuel R. Rosenthal Fund, and the Ray Winfield Smith 1918 Fund. University of Michigan Museum of Art, 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. Feb. 25 - May 20. 734-764-0395. Umma.umich.edu



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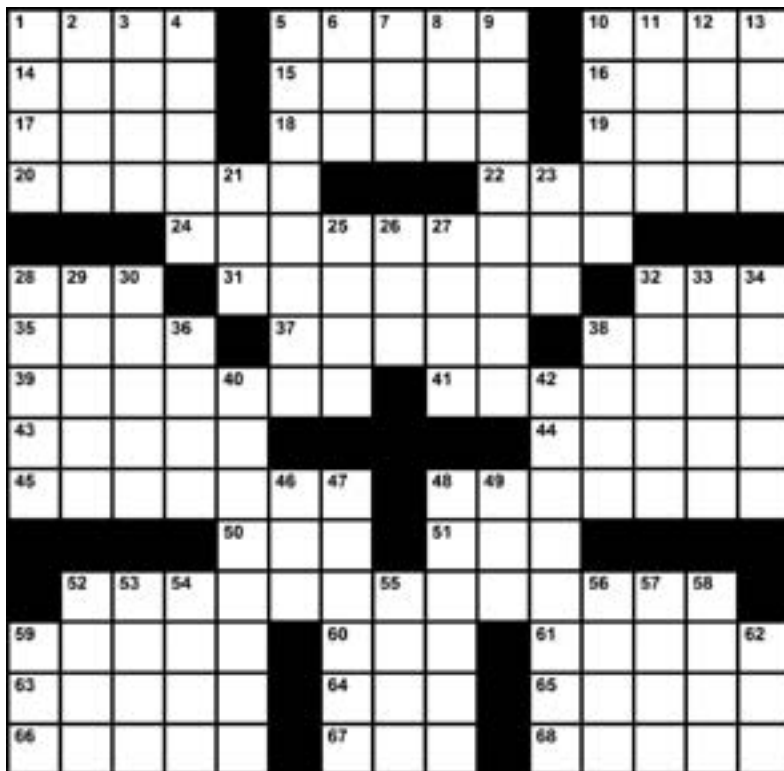


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What's He Doing with Her?



Across

- 1 With 5- and 10-Across, Andrew's mom on "Desperate Housewives"
- 5 See 1-Across
- 10 See 1-Across
- 14 NG: Feels poorly
- 15 "The Remains of the Day" director James
- 16 NG: Petri dish medium
- 17 Wraps around drag queens
- 18 Poet Vivien
- 19 NG: Wear down
- 20 Not straight
- 22 Uses one's head
- 24 Start of the objection of 1-Across when Andrew got engaged to a woman
- 28 NG: Trifling amount
- 31 Cult members that drop trou?
- 32 Great serve from Navratilova
- 35 NG: Marine eagle
- 37 NG: Used brooms
- 38 NG: Stuck-up sort
- 39 Old coins of Lorca's land
- 41 Stick in a rubber?
- 43 More of the objection
- 44 More of the objection
- 45 Willa Cather character
- 48 "___ It Be Lovely"
- 50 NG: Tiny bit

- 51 Giant quarterback Manning
- 52 End of the objection
- 59 Ballet bends
- 60 NG: Hosp. worker
- 61 NG: "Otherwise ..."
- 63 Female lead in "The Rocky Horror Picture Show"
- 64 Randy's skating partner
- 65 Be a ham in "Hamlet"
- 66 Moves the ball between your legs
- 67 NG: U-turn from NNW
- 68 NG: Be aware of

Down

- 1 NG: Small rum cake
- 2 Rivera's rivers
- 3 Carrier to Tel Aviv
- 4 "A Room of One's Own," e.g.
- 5 NG: Whiz
- 6 NG: "Ciao, Caesar"
- 7 No to Rimbaud
- 8 Eminem's mentor Dr. ___
- 9 NG: Some canines
- 10 Holmes of Wonder Boys
- 11 Opposed to, to Jethrene Bodine
- 12 NG: Letter from the teacher
- 13 NG: LBJ or JFK
- 21 NG: Name in Nantes

- 23 NG: Lots of mins.
- 25 NG: Spreadsheet lines
- 26 NG: Hydrocarbon ending
- 27 RuPaul swings them
- 28 "So long!"
- 29 Husband of 1-Across
- 30 NG: Not edited for TV
- 32 Paid for a hand
- 33 NG: "Suzanne" composer Leonard
- 34 NG: Reviewer Roger
- 36 Current currency of Sitges and Ibiza
- 38 NG: Israel's first king
- 40 They're down in the mouth
- 42 They may be sold in a bear market
- 46 NG: "How Dry ___"
- 47 NG: Grownups
- 48 Member, in slang
- 49 "Arsenic and ___ Lace"
- 52 NG: Alda of "The West Wing"
- 53 NG: Actress Foch
- 54 Bottomless
- 55 Where women might sweat together
- 56 "All ___" (1984 Tomlin film)
- 57 Party to
- 58 NG: Rug rats
- 59 Duds in the bedroom
- 62 Where drivers go swinging

Solution on page 43



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Horoscopes

Hold your ground, Leo!

BY JACK FERTIG

Mars and Neptune are finally moving out of opposition, but not before the Sun aspects them, offering some clarity and lessons to pull out of the recent confusion and fury. Clarifying rules for relationships is a challenge to reconcile new ideas with solid values.

ARIES (March 20 – April 19): As your sense of direction is getting clearer, you may realize a bit late that you've been overly emphatic about petty issues with your partner. The biggest problem is disagreeing on the real problem. Listen more; argue less.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20): Your financial luck is getting a brief uptick that will require a bit of effort, but a little initiative can go a long way. Ask for that raise, put out some résumés. When to buy lottery tickets? Check with your astrologer!

GEMINI (May 21- June 20): Expectations exploding into arguments can trigger a sharp reassessment of who your friends really are – who you can count on in a pinch or for a pinch. "Friends with benefits" are likeliest to get problematic.

CANCER (June 21- July 22): As the future is looking a little rosier than usual find ways to invest your time and energy in things that matter. Financial investments are less reliable, but with a shrewd, critical eye you may find something worth the risk.

LEO (July 23 – August 22): For your own sake and those you love set some rules and limits. Some people will be shocked, but they'll manage. Hold your ground. There may be a cost, but demanding some basic respect will increase your confidence and your authority.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22): Playing tough is OK if everyone is on the same wavelength. It's all good fun until someone gets hurt. If it's consensual that could be when the real fun begins. Challenging your own creative efforts can open a good catharsis.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22): A little flirting can lead to some eye-opening adventures. A hot fling can offer new insights; it probably won't

last, but enjoy and learn what you can. Your age is an asset, not an obstacle.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21): If you see as an argument as an opportunity to learn rather than an exercise in intellectual bulldozing, what you learn can open job opportunities and help you start or deepen an important relationship. Ask hard questions and accept hard answers.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 20): Every partnership needs a bit of work. Dealing with problems now should yield happy results. That could lead to exuberant fun and risk-taking. Go for the fun. Pass on the risks. Think ahead and use good sense.

CAPRICORN (December 21 – January 19): Winning the battle at home can cost you the war. Be open to changing your mind and even yourself. It's called "growth." Openness and adaptability are the keys to success. Taking on the hard challenges will pay off quickly.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18): You need a good intellectual challenge. Don't settle for a mere argument. Talk with a sibling offers can terrific insight on your family and how you carry those patterns into your relationships.

PISCES (February 19 – March 19): Every relationship hits bumps and needs work. Problems with your partner gain clarity but still need some work. Some expert advice could help. Having a little fun and affirming your commitment can also do wonders.

Jack Fertig, a professional astrologer since 1977, is available for personal and business consultations online. He can be reached at 415-864-8302, through his website at www.starjack.com.



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Solution to puzzle from page 42

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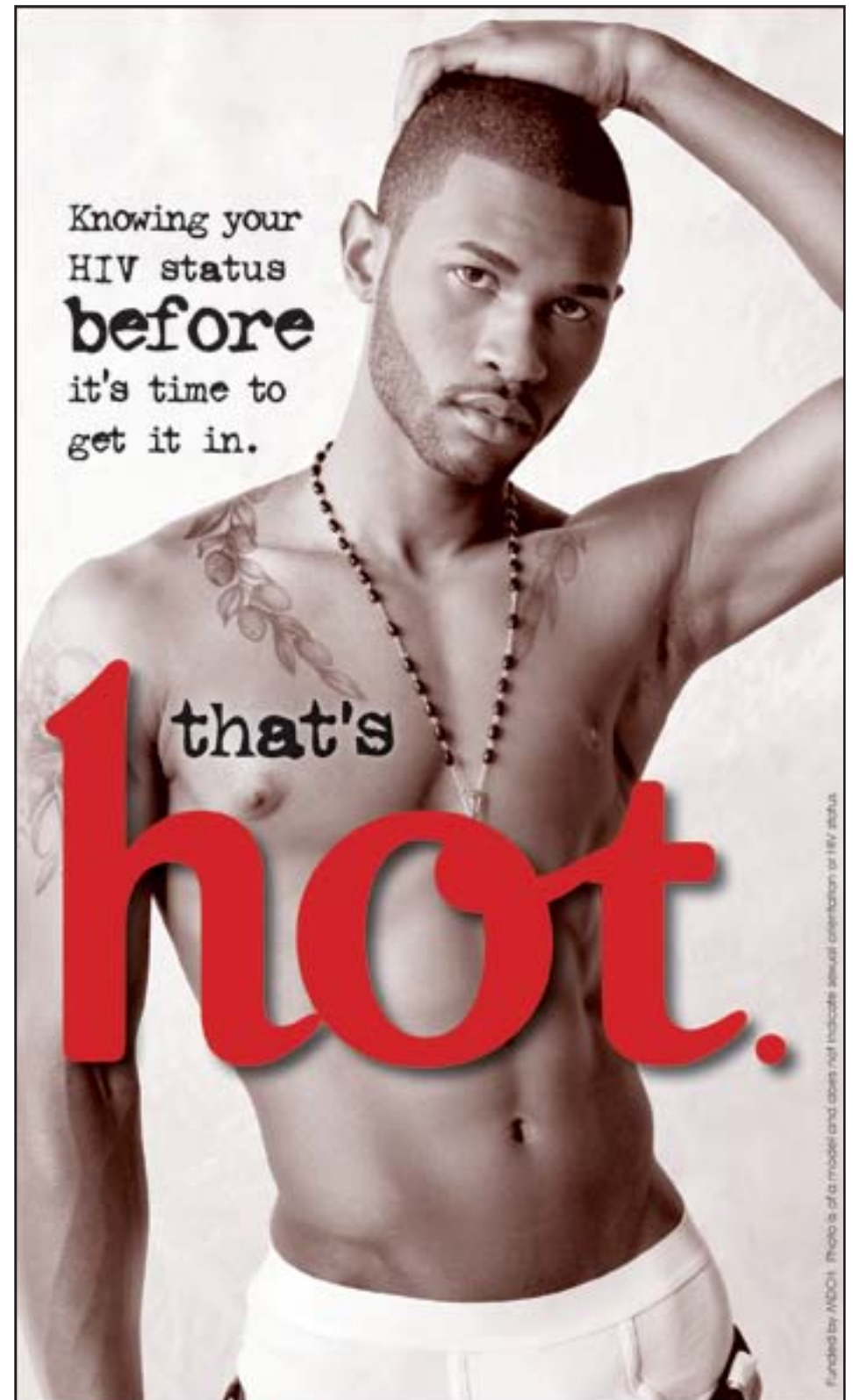
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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE



Olympia Dukakis. Photo: Michael Gibson

Oscar-winning lesbians make a break for Canada

Olympia Dukakis won hers for "Moonstruck," while U.K. actress Brenda Fricker won hers for "My Left Foot." Those wins would be Academy Awards, by the way, and the lauded ladies are now going to star side-by-side in the latest film from gay Canadian director Thom Fitzgerald ("Beefcake," "Three Needles"). Dukakis and Fricker will star as an older lesbian couple, with Fricker finding herself placed in a nursing home by her adult children. But when those same family members decide to shut out Dukakis from the home the women have built together, the pair decide to break out and run off to be married in Canada. No one seems to bother telling them that Canadian laws don't hold in the U.S., but that doesn't stop them from taking one last stab at freedom. Think Thelma and Louise only with two women who have kissed more than once, and then catch it when it comes to a local film festival or independent cinema near you.

'Glee' and 'Twilight' stars leap to 'White Frog'

Somebody must have once given indie filmmaker Quentin Lee good business advice about keeping his overhead low and never giving up. Because while most of the world wasn't looking, the gay director has racked up five well-regarded indie features, including "The People I've Slept With," "Drift" and "Shopping For Fangs," a couple of documentaries and several short films. Are they busting down box offices? No, but they get made and they get seen on screens at film fests and arthouse theaters. Ask anybody in the film business and they'll tell you that that equals success. And for Lee's next project, the high profile stars are coming out to play. The film is called "White Frog" and it stars Booboo Stewart (part of the "Twilight" wolf pack) as a young man with Asperger's syndrome who brings about change in his family. It features "Glee"'s Harry Shum Jr. in a pivotal role, "Teen Wolf"'s Tyler Posey, "Law and Order SVU" star BD Wong and "Twin Peaks" alum Joan Chen. Be on the lookout for it to start making the film festival rounds this summer. Then buy a ticket and support small films. It's the least you can do after paying money to see "Battleship."

'Actividad Paranormal'

It's not a sequel or a reboot, but it is a marketing decision, make no mistake. That's the only way to describe the next project from the "Paranormal Activity" production team of Jason Blum, Oren Peli and gay writer-director Christopher Landon (son of Michael). They're hard at work developing a "Paranormal Activity"-style film with a Latino cast and a plot involving Catholic concepts of evil and the paranormal. Landon will write and direct this one (he's already written "PA2" and "PA3," so he's ready) and production on the English-language film starts soon. And why? Well, with the United States Latino population growing faster than any other ethnic group, it stands to reason that there'll be more Latino-themed cultural product coming along, and what better, more opportunistic plan is there than a tiny-budgeted horror film that grabs all its cash back and more on opening weekend? Meanwhile, as long as it doesn't turn into a tacky Virgin Mary vs. La Llorona cage match, who's to say there's anything wrong with that?

'Corpus Christi': The Documentary

"Corpus Christi," the play by Terrence McNally that retells the New Testament gospels from the perspective of Jesus and his disciples as a group of gay men living in modern day Texas, is probably the most argued-over American play to come along in the past 15 years. From its 1998 Broadway debut to regional productions, the play is frequently the target of protests, attempts to ban or cancel it, death threats and bomb scares. So you know it's got to be good. And now the story of the play's reception is a big screen documentary, "Corpus Christi: Playing With Redemption," from filmmakers Nic Arzen and James Brandon. The film follows the play as it cuts its controversial path across the country, including a production in Corpus Christi, Texas. Premiering at San Francisco's Castro Theater on April 29 before its eventual cable/DVD/download future, it's an important contribution to the dialogue over artistic freedom, the First Amendment and United States citizens who don't really like either one.

Romeo San Vicente doesn't walk on water; it just seems that way. He can be reached care of this publication or at DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.

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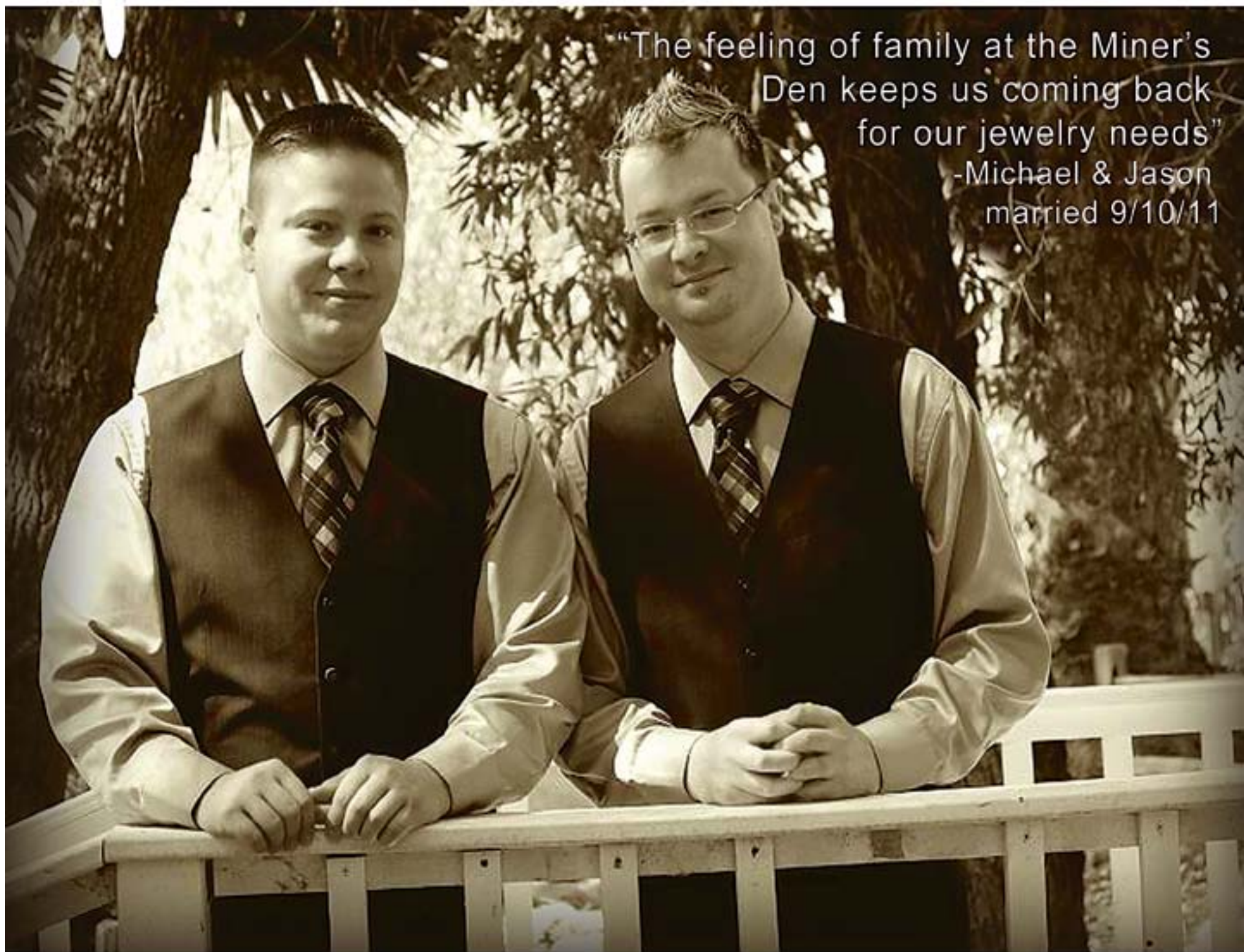
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