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BTL THE Lines™ 5.03.2012

Cover story

4 | Same-sex wedding expo gives gays great ideas

Cover Photo: Andrew Potter

News

6 | Wake-up call for Trevor Thomas
West Michigan native delivers choice to 3rd U.S. Congressional district

7 | Let Dominic speak: Mt. Pleasant school uninvites former student to speak at graduation

7 | LGBT teen suicide to be focus of Farmington 'conversation'

7 | Annual Women's Golf OUTing coming

11 | Michigan health dept. probes possible release of confidential HIV information

11 | Senate OKs renewing Violence Against Women Act

14 | Health care debate: high stakes for those with HIV

Medicaid expansion, pre-existing condition benefits at stake in anticipated Supreme Court ruling

Opinions

8 | Thinking Out Loud
Our Civil Rights paradox

9 | Speak Out
Presidential progress

9 | Creep of the Week
State Rep. Jeremy Faison

10 | S/he Said
North Carolina, diversity, Ellen

10 | Heard on Facebook
Brandon McCarthy

11 | Parting Glances
Pages past tense #8

Life

17 | Hail Sharon
'Drag Race' winner on life after show and upcoming Detroit appearance

20 | A shining Ray of light
Indigo Girl talks new album, band's beginnings and trailblazing

24 | Cool Cities: Ferndale
Affirmations kicks off pride season with 5th annual All-Media Pride Exhibition

25 | The OutField
Texas A&M tackles diversity

27 | 'Little Voice,' big dreams at the Ant

28 | Happenings
Featured: Maria Bamford at the Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase

Rear View

30 | Puzzle

31 | Horoscopes

32 | Classifieds

33 | Deep Inside Hollywood

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Same-sex wedding expo gives gays great ideas

BY CRYSTAL PROXMIRE

LIVONIA - The Courtyard by Marriot in Livonia was overflowing with love on April 29 as over 300 people came out for Between The Lines' second annual Same-Sex Wedding Expo. The event, which was sponsored by Comerica and the Detroit Marriot, gave attendees a chance to meet gay-friendly vendors for every aspect of wedding planning.

There were jewelers, travel agents, bakeries, chocolatiers, bridal shops, tuxedo rental establishments, caterers, photographers, invitation designers and more. There was even a seminar on financial planning and another on the marriage movement by ACLU attorney Jay Kaplan.

Among those who enjoyed meeting the vendors, sampling the wedding cakes and other food, and gathering swag from the tables were Jenay Kightlinger and Lisa Bishop. The Garden City couple has been together "on and off," for 23 years. Kightlinger picked out the perfect ring, and got permission from Bishop's sister before proposing to her at the Canton Pizza Hut, a place they often hung out when they were teens.

The couple is planning on having their ceremony in August, and the Expo helped them ease their minds. "I'm leery of finding a location. I've heard way too many people get three to four weeks out from their wedding only to have the facility back out. It's my biggest worry. I hope as long as you are honest with people it shouldn't be a problem, but it's better knowing up front that some place accepts same-sex ceremonies."

Kightlinger and Bishop said they were really excited to talk to Ivan Harrison at Affairs To Remember, a company that specializes in wedding linens. "She knew a lot about LGBT-friendly venues and other resources, and she was really friendly," Bishop said. The women are planning on having butterflies and Calla Lilies throughout their wedding décor, and they hope to release butterflies as part of the ceremony.

Chris Kitley of AG Chocolates provided the chocolate fountain for the event. The fountains come in multiple sizes and a trained staff person accompanies the fountain to events to help guide guests. Based out of Jackson, Kitley said they do weddings, commitment ceremonies and other events mainly in the Jackson and Ann Arbor areas. In addition to the chocolate fountains, Kitley offers fine chocolates in many styles, including delectable bars that couples can print on their names and/or an image. "It's a real great way to have something customizable to share with guests, something important to them," Kitley said. "Everyone should be able to have their wedding feel like it's theirs."

Couples checked out honeymoon options as well. Laura Wake of Nightline Travel Agents said her agency helps couples get through the mass of information on the internet to get the best rates possible, from someone who knows the business. She also knows the special needs of LGBT couples. "Most cruise lines are LGBT friendly now," she said. "But with destinations some are friendlier than others." She said that places like Jamaica,



Above Rush Lockhart and Jason Tolbert enjoy the chocolates provided by AG Chocolates. Below Kate Opalewski, BTL reporter, tries on a diamond ring from Miner's Den as she models one of the dozens of B. Ella Bridal gowns that were on display Sunday.

Below, Christopher Kelly, Vice President of Comerica Charitable Services Group, gave a presentation about how setting up a charitable trust can be advantageous for people as a way to invest in their future and the future of charities that are important to them. BTL photos: Andrew Potter

"I'm a supporter of the gay community so when I heard about this (wedding expo), I wanted to open my arms and show they are welcome."

- Kathy Mabbutt of Rawlinson Photography





Jenay Kightlinger and Lisa Bishop take a quick break at the Second Annual Same-Sex Wedding Expo. BTL photo: Crystal A. Proxmire

► Expo

Continued from p. 4

Dominican Republic, Haiti and the Cayman Islands have had problems with gay travelers in the past, and that an experienced travel agent can suggest places that are more affirming.

Finding the right people can make all the difference. The professional jewelers at M. Mazzone Jewelry of Farmington talked with dozens of potential brides and grooms about how to decide on the perfect stone and setting. "Working with same-sex couples gives us a chance to suggest settings that work for both partners. Some couples want the same ring, while others like individual rings that might have a similar theme or sensibility," said owner Michael Mazzone. David Schroeter, owner of Schroeter's Flowers in Farmington, presented an array of beautiful flowers and had photos of weddings with amazing variety. In the Marriott's covered entryway, guests got to see the fabulous hot pink Hummer limo on display from Satisfaction Limousines, and two photo booth vendors let guests document themselves being silly and foolish.

After 41 years in the photography business, Kathy Mabbutt of Rawlinson Photography is excited to be actively welcoming LGBT couples. "I've never been against doing same-sex weddings, it's just the opportunity hasn't come up. I'm a supporter of the gay community so when I heard about this (wedding expo), I wanted to open my arms and show they are welcome."

While the expo offered much romantic fun, organizers at Between The Lines also wanted to include an educational and activist component. Jay Kaplan, a staff attorney with the ACLU's LGBT project, spoke about marriage equality and why in Michigan citizens still don't have it.

"Michigan has one of the broadest restrictions against marriage," Kaplan said. He listed the barriers to marriage equality, including the 1996 law that said only opposite sex couples can get married and the 2004 amendment to the State Constitution barring marriage and

any similar union. In the audience, same-sex couples held hands and cuddled closer as Kaplan described legal hit after legal hit endured by LGBT human beings by a significantly better-funded lobbying machine.

"If it even passes the legislature, it would have to go on the ballot and it would take an incredible amount of money to launch a campaign...and those who oppose marriage equality have three times more funding," he said. One way to make a difference, he said, is in voter education. "Find out who is running and look at how they have voted on issues that are important to you. You can't just rely on who has the biggest billboard."

Another important issue to LGBT couples is financial planning. And without access to the right of marriage, same-sex couples in particular have to take care when setting up the management of their estate. Christopher Kelly, Vice President of Comerica Charitable Services Group, gave a presentation about how setting up a charitable trust can be advantageous for people as a way to invest in their future and the future of charities that are important to them.

"No matter where you are on the economic pyramid, your estate is important. What you earned is just as important as Donald Trump. This is your life's work," Kelly said. He gave examples where trusts are set up to receive assets, such as cash, real estate and bonds. This can provide tax breaks and it keeps one's investment in the charities of interest to that individual.

"If you are looking to make the next generation stronger, this can set an example," Kelly said. He also said that planning for a charitable trust can be a motivator for some people, a reason to be successful.

As the second annual Same-Sex Expo came to the end, a round of drawings made the day for several lucky guests, including Meredith Peltonen of Clawson who won dinner for four at The Whitney Restaurant in Midtown Detroit. "I'm so excited," Peltonen said. "I'm not getting married, but my sister is.... Maybe I will let her come to dinner."



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Wake-up call for Trevor Thomas

West Michigan native delivers choice to 3rd U.S. Congressional district

BY JIM LARKIN

GRAND RAPIDS—Read the political blogs and you can sense the intrigue in the Democratic race for the 3rd District Congressional seat.

Can a young gay man (Trevor Thomas) win a U.S. Rep. position in conservative West Michigan?

Can a candidate (Steven Pestka) opposed to granting women the choice to have an abortion, at a time when Rush Limbaugh's "slut" comments rallied women against attacks on them, win a Democratic nomination against a strongly pro-choice opponent?

And that's just part of the many-faceted Democratic race for the seat now held by Republican Justin Amash, a Libertarian-leaning Tea Party darling whose stances have unsettled many in his own party.

There's the age difference: Thomas is 28 and Pestka 60.

There's the support difference: Pestka has attracted the bulk of the established party support while Thomas (who has managed to nab endorsements from former Gov. Jennifer Granholm and former Lt. Gov. John D. Cherry) has been bringing in youthful, energetic and new Democratic supporters.

There's the background difference: Pestka is wealthy and lives in a \$475,000 home with his wife; they have a 20-year-old son. Thomas's parents both worked in a G.M. Diesel Plant; he lives in an apartment with a woman who is a lifelong friend.

There's the campaigning difference: Pestka relies more on established methods while Thomas is following the President Obama model - lighting up the social media, bringing in newcomers to the political process, energizing youth.

If that's not enough to draw the attention of not only those in the 3rd Congressional District but also the nation and, in particular, LGBT groups, Thomas doesn't know what will.

"People need to wake up," said the energetic 28-year-old. "There is something very exciting happening here."

How to help

- You can find out more about Trevor Thomas and either volunteer or donate to his campaign by going to www.trevorforcongress.com.

- You can find out more about Steven Pestka and either volunteer or donate to his campaign by going to www.votepestka.com

Center of excitement

At the center of that excitement, without question, is Thomas. His announcement that he would seek Amash's seat proved to be a lightning rod of sorts - igniting the debate over whether a gay man could win a seat held by Republicans since 1976, prompting some to respond by encouraging Pestka to run.

Yet, you won't hear Thomas talking that



Trevor Thomas points to his fundraising and social media activity as an indication that West Michigan is poised for an upset that will make him the Democratic candidate for the 3rd Congressional District.

much about his being gay, although he won't run from the subject either. His talk, as he works tirelessly along the campaign trail, is more likely to focus on mounting student loan debt and solving that crisis so youth don't mortgage their future. He is a strong defender of veterans, having served as communications director for the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, and the need to better care for those who fought for our freedom. And he blasts Amash for his votes against extending unemployment and the payroll tax extension, and Amash's criticism of the automobile industry bailout.

"He (Thomas) talks about issues that I care about," said Holland Democrat Shannon Garrett, who held a house party fundraiser for Thomas even though his house district does not include Holland. "I like that he pays attention to our veterans, is pro choice and supports LGBT rights and I think it's important, when you find someone who has all the same values that you do, that you support him."

Thomas is far from your stereotypical gay man. He is a NASCAR fan, goes to the Michigan International Speedway, and loves country music, Martina McBride and Reba McEntire. But he has been a fierce defender of some major gay rights issues, having been a national spokesman for the Human Rights Campaign, going on the national True Colors tour to drum up support for a federal hate crime bill, and helped develop the communications plan for the successful repeal

conducting interviews, talking to student groups or other organizations, attending house parties or other fundraisers at night.

A natural story teller, as a broadcast journalism major at Grand Valley State University and former reporter and producer for local station WOOD-TV, other people's stories resonate well with him, said John "Moose" Williamson, 27, one of his campaign workers, and he takes them to heart.

So tears well in Thomas' eyes when he talks about an unemployed man giving "more than he can afford" to his campaign. And he talks about "bawling in a closet" when he heard stories of struggling servicemen while working for the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network.

"I will always keep the letters that I received from some service members," he said.

It's one of the reasons he refers to his campaign as "a campaign for all." Thomas said his supporters include Democrats and Republicans (including former Kent County Republican Chairman Bob Eleveld), gay and straight, from all walks of life. Williamson, in fact, said Thomas is the first gay friend he has had.

"He's an idealist," said Williamson, who is getting involved in politics for the first time. "He wants to dream big but you get the sense he can do it."

Can he do it?

But the question of whether or not Thomas can win remains open for debate.

"It's doubtful," said Bill Ballenger, of Inside Michigan Politics. "He's going to have a problem winning the primary because Steve Pestka is a known commodity over there."

Indeed, Pestka is a former assistant prosecuting attorney, Kent County commissioner, state representative and circuit court judge who has received endorsements from U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, former congressman Mark Schauer, and State Reps. Brandon Dillon, Roy Schmidt and Kate Segal.

"The cornerstone issue," Pestka said, "is putting a congressman in office who is not on the far right."

He said he supports equal rights for everyone and civil unions for LGBT people but not full marriage equality. He wouldn't fully explain his stance on abortion, saying only that his voting record while in office was pro-life and that it would not be an issue in the race. Yet when Pestka and Thomas appeared before Kent County Democrats recently, it was Thomas who

of "Don't Ask Don't Tell."

And he talks unabashedly about his own coming out process, about how his parents weren't accepting at first and threatened to withhold his college funding. While neither he nor his parents like to talk about it now, he says it's all about "owning the truth." The present truth is Thomas is very close to his parents and three siblings and refers to his family often while campaigning.

"They've come a long way," Thomas said. "We went through some hard times but we all came through it. And kids need to hear these things so they know they're not alone."

A tireless worker

Those who know Thomas well describe him as tireless and energetic, willing to work 15-hour days on the campaign trail. His day typically includes making fundraising calls in the morning, urging people to give \$5, \$10, \$20 or whatever they can afford, holding campaign meetings,

► Thomas

Continued from p. 7

was called out for being “pro choice,” indicating it may well be an issue.

And, indeed, it is an issue for Garrett and other women supporters, who believe strongly in their right to make their own decisions about what happens to their bodies and their lives.

If opposing Democrats, some of whom have urged him to drop out of the race, think they can rattle Thomas by such displays of opposition, they obviously don't know the 28-year-old. He is strong minded and deeply committed to the race, strongly tied to his belief that the district needs to return congressional reins to someone with Gerald Ford-like beliefs of pro-equality, pro-choice and pro moving the country forward instead of miring it in unmoving political ideology. And he is strongly rooted in his Catholic faith.

“I believe strongly in God,” he said. “It's what keeps me and the campaign going.”

The numbers

Pestka's campaign stated he raised about \$130,000 from about 425 supporters in the first quarter of 2012 and also chipped in about \$90,000 of his own money.

Thomas reported earning \$100,552 from

749 supporters, clearly enough to show he cannot be taken lightly and is a solid contender.

Thomas likes pointing to the difference in the number of supporters, because reaching as many people as possible is a key element in his campaign.

“We only have to raise enough money to

let people know they have a choice,” Thomas said. “They only have to know Trevor exists.”

One of the ways he is doing that is through a strong social media presence. He points with pride to his social media numbers: 566 Facebook Likes compared to 268 for Pestka; 113 weekly Facebook mentions to 44 for Pestka; 1,106 Trevor for Congress Twitter followers to 86 for Pestka; and 6,904 YouTube views, compared to 60 for Pestka.

While Ballenger considers it doubtful that Thomas can win, he does not rule out the possibility - especially, he said, if he gets strong LGBT financial support. Such support, especially early, is likely to be critical given that Pestka has established money, and his own, behind him.

Garrett, who heads SMG Strategies, a political consulting and training firm, also said it's possible if Thomas makes all the right moves.

“It will definitely require Trevor to get ahead of the issues so that everyone can see that Trevor stands for so much more than just gay issues,” Gilbert said. “He's going to have to raise his profile and get to know the voters. But Grand Rapids has changed a lot. There's a growing youth and more diverse population.

“It's going to be interesting to see how it plays out.”



Steven Pestka is seeking the Democratic nod. He stands by his pro-life record.

Let Dominic speak: Mt. Pleasant school un-invites former student to speak at graduation

BY CRYSTAL PROXIMIRE

MT. PLEASANT – Dominic Sheehan-Stahl and his family are “shocked” after learning that Sheehan-Stahl has been un-invited from giving the speech at his younger brother's graduation from Sacred Heart Academy in Mt. Pleasant. The reason? School officials found out on Facebook that Sheehan-Stahl is gay.

The 32-year-old actor lives in New York, but had been looking forward to a visit home able to see his youngest brother graduate from the Catholic school that three generations of his family had attended.

The phone call reportedly came just one day after students at the school heard a speech about bullying. According to a video made by Sheehan-Stahl and posted on YouTube, he had been invited to speak at his brother's graduation, but on April 25 his mother received a call from the school stating that he would not be able to speak because he is openly homosexual.

“I am an open and out gay man, and I have been for 14 years, and I have recently got engaged so I have my engagement photos on there,” Sheehan-Stahl said in the video.

Those interested can subscribe to updates at www.facebook.com/dominic.sheehanstahl. Students from Sacred Heart have also made a YouTube video to show their support.

But his speech had nothing to do with being gay. “If you go through it there's not one inkling of the word gay, of me talking about manipulating people to be gay or anything like that. My speech is all about fear...and how fear can stop you from making a difference a lot. I've realized this whole reaction is from fear.”

He said that his mother had been afraid of him “putting it out there” on Facebook, but that he wouldn't be afraid and hide who he was.

“I came from a family that is very accepting. My mom, I'm so grateful to have her, and my grandmother and my grandfather and all my aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters. My mom especially taught me to love unconditionally. ... This is the first time in my life I've actually been discriminated upon. I am very lucky because there are some people every day who get discriminated against.”

He said he forgives the school, and calls it a bad decision. He also said he's not going to be quiet about it. Sheehan-Stahl said he still plans to give his speech at a different location. On May 20 after the SHS graduation he will be speaking at Warriner Hall on the campus of Central Michigan University at 1 p.m.

On Tuesday, the Midland Daily News reported that Sacred Heart Academy principal Denny Starnes had taken a three-day paid leave of absence. It was not clear if the leave was voluntary, but at a press conference on Friday



Actor Dominic Sheehan-Stahl, left, was uninvited as commencement speaker at the May 20 Sacred Heart Academy in Mt. Pleasant. He plans to give the speech the same day after SHS graduation at Central Michigan University at 1 p.m.

Starnes made comments in which he said he did not agree with the decision to cancel Sheehan-Stahl's speech but he respected the church.

LGBT teen suicide to be focus of Farmington 'conversation'

FARMINGTON HILLS - In response to an alarming increase in Oakland County teen suicides, the Farmington Area Suicide Prevention Task Force is hosting a community conversation on suicide prevention in LGBT youth May 23. The event is targeted at parents, youth (ages 12 to 18), teachers, the faith community, service club members, and others who have regular contact with young people.

Featured speakers will include Affirmations Executive Director Dave Garcia, Mike Neubecker of PFLAG Downriver, psychologist Fran Brown and Naomi Khalil, director of instructional equity for Farmington Public Schools.

Suicides have increased by 21 percent in Oakland County since 2008, and Farmington Hills had 10 suicides in 2011, according to Police Chief Chuck Nebus. With a theme of “Let's Talk About It,” the Farmington Area Suicide Prevention Task Force is bringing community leaders together to reach out to troubled youth and counteract alarming trends in suicide and suicide attempts.

Farmington Hills City Councilman Dr. Ken Massey has spearheaded efforts to remove the stigma of suicide. “We want to bring the topics of depression and suicide out into the open so that all people will seek the help they need,” said Dr. Massey, who lost his son, Graham E. Smith, to suicide last year.

The meeting will be at Farmington Hills City Hall from 7 to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call the City Manager's Office at 248-871-2500.

Annual Women's Golf OUTing coming

The 2012 Annual Women's Golf OUTing will be held June 9 in Plymouth. Join more than one hundred golfers competing for terrific prizes. Organizers want you to “oooooh and ahhhhh” while golfers challenge each other for the prizes that are awarded for Longest Drive, Longest Putt and other games of skill and chance. The only real skill necessary to play however, is the ability to have a good time. Shake it all up at the morning Bloody Mary Bar sponsored by our friends at Cork and enjoy the tasty hand-crafted baked goods donated by the artists of Avalon Bakery. Sign-up online and come swing with your clubs at St. John's Golf Course while supporting two essential community organizations: the Ruth Ellis Center and Equality Michigan.

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Thinking Out Loud



Our Civil Rights paradox

Why we have to have political power to prove that we don't have political power

BY ABBY DEES

I've often thought I should write a column called, "Weird Things Lawyers Do," to explain to normal people why attorneys, like me, spend so much time arguing about meaningless points. If you read any of the Prop 8 federal trial transcripts you may have noticed that a lot of that trial was spent arguing about whether LGBT people had political power. It was a classic case of lawyers bringing everything to a standstill to fight like feral cats about something totally off topic.

But that question does, in fact, matter a lot.

The reason why the issue of LGBT political power is so important in any LGBT discrimination case is this: Discrimination lawsuits are usually the remedy of last resort, so the courts want to make sure that there's a very good reason for them to step in. One of the ways they look at this is by asking how much political power the targeted group has to fight for its rights on its own.

When you have a majority of people voting for something like Prop 8 based on their firmly held (if completely delusional) beliefs, the court doesn't want to up-end the voter's will without first finding out if that's really the only way for the targeted group to adequately defend itself. Think back to high school civics and all that stuff about checks and balances. The court is supposed to check the overreach of legislators or even voters, but they can't go overboard and thereby undermine the democratic process. Therefore, to challenge the tyranny of the majority in court, we have to prove we're politically powerless first.

We're in an odd situation now. We've made so much progress that we have HRC schmoozing with the president, gay marriage in maybe eight states by next year, a gay cable channel and "girlfriend" jeans for men. Can we really say that we have no political power? Isn't that the point of all this awareness work, to increase our clout as a community?

The campaign against Prop 8 generated millions of dollars and we had people like George Clooney and Brad Pitt on our side. On either side, it was perhaps the largest ballot initiative campaign in any state ever. So it makes me cringe a little that we have to act all victim-y in court to fight for our civil rights. And yet we do.

I struggled watching this play out, knowing as an attorney that there were good reasons to claim this powerlessness, but still feeling like

some important fact was missing. It didn't make sense to me that as we got closer to equality as a community, the courts would be less inclined to support our equality.

I finally figured it out this month at a conference of LGBT law and policy wonks who came together just to look at this issue. First of all, if you haven't already noticed, the other side really likes to turn the oppression narrative around on us. As I discussed in my last column, they are spending big money to disseminate the idea that we are bullying them into silence. Poor homophobes are suffering no less than full PTSD from retaliation by very mean and powerful gay people. A panelist at the conference I attended read examples of this harassment from witness declarations: Gay people gave Prop 8 supporters dirty looks at the local country club, sons wrote disapproving letters to parents expressing sadness at their support for the measure. Hair-curling stuff.

I'd like to call bulls*&t on this silly rhetoric and remind people, again, what kind of damage homophobia still does to our community, especially or young members, despite any political gains we've made.

Second, as law professor Kenji Yashino explained, this whole "political power" thing is a catch-22. Courts won't give you the time

of day if you're truly politically powerless. Off the top of my head, I would guess that homeless people haven't exactly hit pay dirt in court, for example. In other words, to win, you have to have enough political power to hire the people and the consultants to demonstrate that you don't have enough political power to do that. Yep, lawyers are weird.

First of all, if you haven't already noticed, the other side really likes to turn the oppression narrative around on us. As I discussed in my last column, they are spending big money to disseminate the idea that we are bullying them into silence. Poor homophobes are suffering no less than full PTSD from retaliation by very mean and powerful gay people.





Speak Out

Presidential progress

BY ERIC W. RADER

In his three years as president, Barack Obama has taken a number of actions to advance LGBT equality in the United States. Only one other chief executive, Bill Clinton, made any real effort to push for equal rights for our community while in office. President Obama, meanwhile, has made a number of decisions that have moved our community a giant step forward toward greater legal equality in our country. The two most significant pro-gay laws signed by the current president include the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Act, and the repeal of the military's "Don't ask, don't tell" policy. The president has also used his executive powers to reduce discrimination. In 2009, President Obama ended a travel ban that had prevented HIV-positive foreigners from entering the United States. In another executive action, he ordered all U.S. hospitals that accept federal money to grant visitation rights to the same-sex partners of patients. Last year, the Obama Administration announced that it would no longer defend the highly discriminatory "Defense of Marriage Act" in federal court. The president has also appointed a host of openly gay women and men to high-level executive positions in government, and has met regularly with leaders of the LGBT community at the White House.

While the president clearly believes in the inherent worth, dignity, and right to equality of all LGBT Americans, there are some areas where Obama has been slow to act. The most obvious place where the president lags is in his position on equal marriage rights. Earlier in his political career, Obama favored the right of same-sex couples to marry. Since he became active in national politics, the president has changed his position on marriage equality; he is against federal efforts to ban gay marriage, but does not currently favor allowing gay couples

to have full marriage rights. However, in 2011 Obama said his position on this issue is "evolving," and there is a strong hope that the president will eventually endorse the right of same-sex couples to marry.

Another area where LGBTs often suffer discrimination is in the workplace. Currently, a Clinton-era executive order prohibits discrimination based on sexual

While the president has not been perfect on issues of LGBT equality, it is important not to make the perfect the enemy of the good. The truth is that President Obama has been quite good on LGBT equality.

orientation in federal employment. This order does not apply outside the federal government, and Congress has shown no willingness to pass the Employment Nondiscrimination Act (ENDA), legislation that would ban workplace discrimination in the private sector. Many people had been hopeful that President Obama would sign an executive order extending the nondiscrimination policy to federal contractors; his Administration has said that such an order is not forthcoming.

While the president has not been perfect on issues of LGBT equality, it is important not to make the perfect the enemy of the good. The truth is that President Obama has been quite good on LGBT equality. In contrast to the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, the president is far superior on equal rights for our community. The former Massachusetts governor was once in favor of some legal protections for gays, but can no

longer hold such positions and still gain the nomination of the modern-day Republican Party. Hostility to equal rights for marginalized groups is now the norm for the GOP, and any candidate who dares to speak out on behalf of these groups incurs the wrath of the far right fringe that controls the Republican Party.

It's important to remember how much President Obama has done for our community, despite falling short on a few issues. While the president may not agree with us on everything, he does understand that discrimination against people because of sexual orientation and gender identity is wrong and has worked to end it. Romney, on the other hand, is willing to cater to the bigoted demands of the far right fringe of his political party. We need only recall how divisive the last Republican president, George W. Bush, was in using gay rights as a wedge issue in his reelection campaign in 2004. Republicans have moved even further to the right in the years since Bush's second term, and a President Romney, in combination with a Republican Congress, would make Bush look like a moderate on social issues. All of us must recognize the stakes in this election and not get caught up in the trap of political purity. President Obama is a friend to our community with a few flaws, while Romney is certainly not our friend and is almost completely flawed on the issues that matter most to us. LGBT voters need to look at the candidates' records when voting this year - there is a clear difference between the two candidates for president that should not be ignored.

Learn more online:

White House web page on President Obama and the LGBT Community:

www.whitehouse.gov/lgbt

Creep of the Week

State Rep. Jeremy Faison

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Suicide is one of those things with no positives. I mean, no one kills him or herself because things are going well. Even assisted suicide, intended to have the positive outcome of allowing someone to die with dignity, is proceeded by some of the worst life has to offer.

So I don't fear offending anyone when I say that suicide is really fucking horrible no matter what age the person is. But there's something especially sad about young people taking their own lives. Feeling like, "Hey, 15 (or 13 or 10 or, my god, even younger than that) years is enough of this cruel world and I don't see anything worth sticking around for."

And everybody asks, "Why? Why did this child do this terrible thing?" We want there to be a reason. Something solid we can point at and say, "This."

For all too many LGBT kids the reason we turn to is bullying. Being called a faggot or a dyke or getting physically assaulted day in and day out while school authority figures look on (and all too often they do) can be a little much for a kid to handle.

Which is why anti-bullying legislation is such a hot topic these days. I mean, no one wants kids to be bullied in school. But these bills face strong opposition because they often include explicit protections for LGBT youth. This, of course, acknowledges a couple of things that make some people uncomfortable: that gay kids exist and that other kids - even straight, Christian ones - are making their lives a living hell.

Enter State Rep. Jeremy Faison speaking out against cyber bullying legislation in Tennessee.

"We can't continue to legislate everything. We've had some horrible things happen in America and in our state, and there's children that have actually committed suicide, but I will submit to you today that they did not commit suicide because of somebody bullying them," he said.

According to the Tennessean, the "horrible things" that happened

in "our state" he's referring to are probably the January, 2012 suicide of 14-year-old Phillip Parker and the December, 2011 suicide of 18-year-old Jacob Rogers. Both boys killed themselves following prolonged anti-gay harassment.

So, if bullying didn't cause these suicides, what did cause them, Faison?

"They committed suicide because they were not instilled the proper principles of where their self-esteem came from at home," he said.

Ah. Of course. Had their parents only done a better job teaching them

Ah. Of course. Had their parents only done a better job teaching them to hold their heads high while people called them "faggot" and told them they were going to hell...

to hold their heads high while people called them "faggot" and told them they were going to hell and nobody at their schools seemed to do much to protect them. Because, as we all know, teenagers are definitely emotionally stable and confident and not at all influenced by their peers.

So, yeah, according to Faison, your kid killing him or herself isn't something that has anything to do with him. It's just a big Parenting FAIL.

Keep in mind that Tennessee is a state where Senate Republicans want to change "the state's anti-bullying law to exempt condemnations of homosexuality based on religion," according to the Huffington Post.

But don't worry, Faison apologized.

"After reviewing my comments on the House Floor today, I regret what was a poor choice of words," he said. "My true intent was to protect children from becoming criminals. Suicide has touched my family, and I would never want a parent or family member to feel they were responsible for such an unimaginable tragedy."

Unless, of course, your kid is gay. Because that's totally your fault.



Jeremy Faison

Heard on Facebook

Oakland A's pitcher Brandon McCarthy blasted baseball stadium's "kiss cams" for selecting two men to spark laughter as immature and homophobic. What do you think? Homophobic, or all in good fun?

Brandon McCarthy proves that attitudes in the United States are moving in the right direction.
-Keith Hewitt

I go to a lot of baseball games and never liked the "kiss cam." Gay can be funny at times with good writing and understanding, but this always felt like a stupid middle school "let's act gay to get a cheap easy laugh." It should stop.

-Antonio David Garcia

I'm glad he stood up. It's funny if it wasn't treated as being wrong, but it is.

-Stefany Specht

Do people at the game applaud when the two men kiss?

-Mark Sartor

I take my boyfriend with me to games all the time. If they showed us on the "kiss cam," I wouldn't think twice about kissing him. I'm sure we'd get booed but so what? I don't need their approval anyway.

-David Hintze

Nice to hear Brandon is joining the fight against homophobia. But, I have to say, that's one guy I wouldn't mind kissing on camera!

-Patrick Wallace

Comments may be edited for grammar and length.



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President Obama

"While the president does not weigh in on every single ballot measure in every state, the record is clear that the President has long opposed divisive and discriminatory efforts to deny rights and benefits to same sex couples. That's what the North Carolina ballot initiative would do - it would single out and discriminate against committed gay and lesbian couples - and that's why the President does not support it."

-Cameron French, President Obama's North Carolina campaign spokesman, in a statement about NC's Amendment One, the ballot proposal that would add an amendment to the state constitution that would ban same-sex marriage in NC and any other type of "domestic legal union" such as civil unions and domestic partnerships, but also bar unmarried heterosexual couples from many benefits, including protection of laws involving domestic violence between and domestic-partner insurance coverage, Charlotte Observer, www.Charlotteobserver.com, Mar. 17.



Rev. Dr. William J. Barber

"Whether you agree or disagree with same-sex marriage, that is a personal and religious choice. You should disagree with anybody who is writing hatred and discrimination into the constitution. You should vote against this amendment that strips some North Carolina families of their human rights."

-Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, president, North Carolina NAACP, about NC's Amendment One, Winston-Salem Journal www2.Journalnow.com, Apr. 18.



Gary Gates

"A new analysis of 2010 U.S. Census data has found that same-sex couples are more likely to be interracial or inter-ethnic compared to their heterosexual counterparts... 20.6 percent, or more than one in five same-sex couples, were interracial or inter-ethnic, compared with 18.3 percent of straight unmarried couples, and 9.5 percent of straight married couples. Among the study's other interesting findings: those

same-sex couples which included a racial or ethnic minority were also more likely to be raising children, and the number of same-sex couple-led households increased at a faster rate between 2000 and 2010 compared to that of married or unmarried heterosexual households."

-Gary Gates, Williams Distinguished Scholar at UCLA School of Law's Williams Institute, in his report titled "Same-Sex Couples In Census 2010: Race And Ethnicity," finding that same-sex couples are most likely to be interracial or interethnic, <http://Williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu>, Apr. 26.



Ellen DeGeneres

"Fifteen years ago today, Ellen DeGeneres's character Ellen Morgan came out of the closet while 42 million Americans watched. During the fourth season of 'Ellen' in 1997, DeGeneres came out publicly as a lesbian in an appearance on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show.' Shortly afterwards on the April 30, 1997, episode of 'Ellen' titled 'The Puppy Episode,' her character

Ellen Morgan also came out to a therapist played by Winfrey, and the series went on to explore various LGBT issues including the coming out process. Thank you Ellen for an inspirational fifteen years."

-JoeBlow, blogger, on his blog site titled "The Closet Professor," in his posting titled "The Puppy Episode," Closetprofessor.blogspot.com, Apr. 30.

Parting Glances



Pages past tense #8

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Fifty years ago Detroit's Washington Boulevard was busy setting for exclusive shops, upscale restaurants, elegant bistros, stretching sedately from Grand Circus Park's popular Statler Hotel to Michigan Avenue's prestigious Sheraton Cadillac.

Both hotel bars catered to a discrete, well-heeled, happy-hour gay clientele. Good manners expected. No camping it up. No untoward touching. No two-shots-and-a-beer, buddy-buddying. No Mary this! No Mary That!

At the Statler, offenders were handed a terse note: "Your patronage is not wanted here!"

For those engaging in the covert pastime of dalliance in sensual stalls of solicitation, the nearby Tuller Hotel was notorious, as were the Telenews theater balcony, Brass Rail Bar (where 50's pop star Johnny Ray was arrested - twice by the same cop!), several park underground, tap-tap loos.

As a teenager all was terra incognita, but I learned the lay of the land from "experienced" trowelers who had navigated the watering spots first hand. I did venture cautiously into the Greyhound Bus Depot on Washington Boulevard to check out noondays comings and goings. (So to speak.)

I was cautious. And warned. "Miss Tillie (vice cop) goes there all the time. Mind your business. If you have to pee, just pee. Don't look anybody straight in the eye!" Stories of arrests for merely peeking at a vice officer were many. "It's your word against theirs. Case closed."

Behind the Greyhound was another gay teenagers hangout called Mama's, one diner star rating over Hub Grill's none. Mama's was owned by the mom of thirty-something, Butch Jimmy ("BJ"), who had his share of impressionable teenagers. Myself included.

Mama - short, roly-poly faced - was of some slavish heritage. She wore her hair in a tight bun and dressed in basic black (no pearls). She got her sense of humor by osmosis, greeting regulars with a hearty hand flutter, loudly announcing, "Kud-de-vahs! Kud-de-vahs!" ("Whores! Whores!")

Mama employed Frank, a cadaverous looking cook, who, while abusing hamburgers and squinting menacingly at fries, would tell anyone who'd listen that he had made his funeral arrangements and knew exactly where, and in what pastel satin-lined casket, he'd be buried. (R.I.P.!)

During many visits to Mama's I became friends with my Hub Grill idol, Rich. A Polish blond, Rich Suess liked dark-haired, swarthy types. Italians. Spaniards. Mood Indigos. (I was just a tepid Anglo-Saxon, dishwasher, Brillo-pad brunet.)

For me it was important to act straight. I didn't like hanging around with flamers. I knew that my day-to-day survival in this fairy-fag-hating world depended upon passing, looking like your average Elvis Presley, duck-tailed, occasionally hip-gyrating, pegged pants, Zoot suit groupie.

Rich looked straight as a 10-inch, no-nonsense nun's ruler (until decades later when returning as a New York hair dresser, with a "FAB-you-luss!" ersatz Brooklyn accent). Just weeks into our newly formed alliance, Rich suggested hitting Toledo Ohio's Scenic Bar. "Hey, Al! It's brand new turf. Fun and games. Drinking age 18. You'll love it."

So I did (except for gawdawful 50-cent Zing! 3.2 beer). It was a gas. Not to be passed up. (Or down.)

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

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

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Michigan health dept. probes possible release of confidential HIV information

BY TODD HEYWOOD

The Michigan Department of Community Health is investigating whether private health information pertaining to thousands of HIV-positive residents and their partners was improperly released, documents obtained by The American Independent show. According to a spokesperson, the department does not currently believe an “unauthorized disclosure of health information” occurred, but the investigation is ongoing.

“While we cannot comment on the specifics of the current internal investigation, at this point in time we do not believe there has been an unauthorized disclosure of health information. However, if we thought there had been an unauthorized disclosure, we would have immediately started taking steps to notify any potentially affected individuals,” wrote Angela Minicucci, spokesperson for MDCH in an April 20 email to The American Independent. “At this time that’s all I can share with you without delving into further specifics and potentially comprising the investigation.”

Minicucci reiterated this information is a second email on April 20.

“I do want you to keep in mind what I mentioned earlier and to understand that the investigation is not complete,” Minicucci wrote. “That said, at the point we are currently at, we do not believe that an unauthorized disclosure has taken place.”

Michigan maintains confidential records in its HIV Event System, which permanently stores information about people who have tested positive for HIV, including names, other identifying information, and demographic information.

The documents describing the investigation, released in response to a Michigan Freedom of Information Act request, show the department

has been looking into a series of incidents in which thousands of emails were allegedly forwarded from department accounts to outside email addresses.

One document indicates that a database containing “protected health information on approximately 3,800 people with HIV and 2,100 partners” may have been released. According to that document, however, the database did not contain any names.

The documents do not make clear what exactly was contained in that database. In a phone interview with TAI, Minicucci said the department is certain the database did not contain names, dates of birth, or Social Security Numbers. Those three items, she said, were “key private health information identifiers.”

TAI asked Lance Gable, a professor at Wayne State University Law School who specializes in health issues, to review the documents.

“Whether the database in question contained sufficient information to violate [federal health information privacy laws] HIPAA [and] HITECH, and state laws related to preventing unauthorized disclosure of HIV information will depend on what information is actually in the database,” Gable told TAI. “Removal of names does not necessarily mean that the data have been de-identified. A person may be identified through other data. However, until there is more information, I do not feel comfortable assessing whether the MDCH conclusion is reasonable or not.”

Documents show the department’s investigation, which is being conducted in conjunction with the state Attorney General’s office, could result in criminal charges. Michigan law has a strict confidentiality provision related to HIV information. The law, MCL 333.5131, specifically outlines when and where such information can be revealed. Revealing

that information in violation of the act is a misdemeanor, with punishments of up to one year in jail and/or a \$5,000 fine. That law is repeatedly referenced in the documents describing the investigation.

The department declined to release some documents to TAI, saying that releasing them

One document indicates that a database containing “protected health information on approximately 3,800 people with HIV and 2,100 partners” may have been released.

would interfere with the investigation into the “alleged wrong disclosure” of information protected by state law. Some documents were withheld because they were considered to be subject to attorney-client privilege.

In addition, investigators are reviewing possible violations of the confidentiality agreements employees of MDCH sign. Those agreements read, in part:

“The misuse or removal of confidential information from the premises of DHWDC [Division of Health, Wellness and Disease Control] by an employee or staff member, except with prior written authorization of the Division Director and as necessary in the performance of a duty related to the services of DHWDC shall be grounds for immediate discharge.”

A March 12 email from Mikelle Robinson, a department employee, summed up the results of a report provided by Kerie Hughes, the technical services manager for the Michigan Public Health Institute, a state contractor. That report was the

result of a review of thousands of emails to determine what if any private health information was released. The Robinson email references information contained in the emails relating to the case of a Grand Rapids-area man who has been charged with failing to disclose his HIV status to two sex partners. The man allegedly admitted to police that he had attempted to infect hundreds of people through unprotected sex and needle sharing. Robinson states that the suspect’s information was included, but correctly notes that the information had already been shared in the media.

The email then referenced the database described as containing “protected health information.”

“The only other issue was the database that had protected health information on approximately 3,800 people with HIV and 2,100 partners,” Robinson wrote to Jean Chabut, deputy director for MDCH’s Public Health Administration, and Matthew Rick, director of the MDCH Office of Legal Affairs. “However there were no names used. Codes were utilized for each person and there was no key. One of the things she [Hughes] said though is that there is physician information and locations listed. Do you think that this would be a breach of protected information if there are no names in the database?”

According to Minicucci, the investigation into the potential release of private information is part of a larger internal investigation being conducted within MDCH.

TAI requested the documents after being informed on March 28 of an “on-going internal investigation” at the department. At the time, Minicucci cited the investigation as the reason MDCH was unable to answer questions about the department’s decision to cut and then restore funding to an AIDS services organization in Flint.

Senate OKs renewing Violence Against Women Act

BY LAURIE KELLMAN

WASHINGTON (AP) – The Senate overcame election-year gender politics April 26 to pass a bill renewing the government’s main domestic violence program.

The 68-31 vote marked the first time since the Violence Against Women Act first passed in 1994 that its renewal has drawn opposition in the Senate, reflecting the increasing polarization of the chamber and hair-trigger political sensitivities over women’s issues in this presidential and congressional election year.

“In 2012, we should be beyond questioning the need for the Violence Against Women Act,” Vice President Joe Biden said in a statement. He urged the House to act quickly so President

Barack Obama can sign the renewal into law.

But the path there could be equally tricky. Majority Republicans are writing their own version, which is likely to resemble a GOP alternative widely rejected by the Senate.

Twice renewed without opposition in the Senate, the bill of programs to prevent domestic violence and sexual abuse ran headlong into the partisan warfare that has shut or slowed legislative business since the 2010 elections. Not helping smooth the way: the broader political fight for pivotal female voters and the Democrats’ election-year narrative that accuses Republicans of waging a “war on women.”

The bill would reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act for five years with funding of \$659.3 million a year, down \$136.5 million

annually from the last act, which has expired. The money pays for such programs as legal assistance for victims, enforcement of protection orders, transitional housing and youth prevention programs.

Democrats sought to expand the law by adding protections certain to draw conservative opposition. One would explicitly name gays, lesbians and transgender people to the group of those protected under the law. Another would raise the cap on visas granted to abused legal and illegal immigrants from 10,000 to 15,000. A third would expand the authority of Native American officials to handle cases of abuse of Indian women by non-Indians.

The bill drew 61 co-sponsors, more than enough to block filibusters and set up a political

dare to Republicans: Vote no, and you’re waging a “war against women.”

The strategy raised hackles among Republicans, who insisted they had women’s interests at heart, too. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., said the narrative was a distraction from issues Democrats would rather not discuss, such as the economy and gas prices.

“We face an abundance of hard choices,” said McCain, the GOP’s 2008 presidential nominee and a leading supporter of Republican hopeful Mitt Romney this year. “Divisive slogans and declaring of phony wars are intended to avoid those hard choices and to escape paying a political price for doing so.”

Lesbian Scout leader ousted in Ohio; parents upset

BY JOHN SEEWER

The first-graders in Ohio Pack 109's Tiger Scouts didn't know or care their den mother was a lesbian - at least not until the Boy Scouts of America threw her out over the organization's ban on gays.

Now, parents who were aware of Jennifer Tyrrell's sexual orientation well before she took the boys on campouts and helped them carve cars for the annual Pinewood Derby have rallied to her defense in a case that has re-ignited the debate over the Scouts' policy.

"I teach my children to judge people on their actions," said Rob Dunn, a father in Bridgeport, a village of about 2,000 across the Ohio River from Wheeling, W.Va. "Whether you agree with their lifestyle or not."

The Boy Scouts of America, whose oath calls for members to be "morally straight," maintains that as a private organization it has the right to exclude gays and atheists from its ranks.

That stance was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2000 but has led many state and local governments to deny support for the Scouts.

Male scout leaders who are gay have long been barred, but instances of women being excluded are not well-documented and probably rare. A lesbian couple in Vermont were told two years ago that they could no longer be involved with their son's Scout troop.

Because of the policy, Tyrrell said she only reluctantly allowed her 7-year-old son to join up in Bridgeport, where she lives with her partner and their four children. Told, she said, by the local cub master that it didn't matter that she is a lesbian, she was drafted to lead the pack in September.

Tyrrell told parents at their first meeting about her sexual orientation. Some already knew her because she had coached youth baseball and volunteered at school, organizing class parties and reading to children.

"She wasn't trying to hide anything," said Dunn, whose son is among the dozen or so members of the boys-only pack. "Nobody I know



Ousted lesbian Tiger Scout Den Mother Jennifer Tyrrell seen her with her son. AP photo.

of has ever made a single complaint against her."

Tyrrell said she was removed in April, right after she was asked to take over as treasurer of the local Boy Scout troop - which oversees Tiger Scouts, Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts - and she raised questions about the finances.

She said the Boy Scout Council for the region told her she had to resign because she is gay.

"In this case, the policy was understood by her and her fellow

volunteers but not followed," said Deron Smith, a spokesman for the Boy Scouts of America at its headquarters in Irving, Texas. "When a fellow pack leader made a complaint about it, to a local Scouting professional, they followed the policy."

The organization said it believes Scouting is not the right place for youngsters to be exposed to issues of sexual orientation.

Tyrrell said she is not certain who complained, but she felt betrayed.

So did parents, who organized a protest last week outside the church where the pack held its meetings. They demanded Tyrrell be reinstated.

Crystal Sabinsky said: "My son asked me last night, 'Why did Jen leave? Why is she in trouble?' He doesn't understand."

"The only people who were hurt were the kids," Dunn said "They're asking questions they shouldn't have to ask at this point."

Parents of the Tiger Scouts, a program for first-grade boys before they become Cub Scouts, said they never heard Tyrrell mention her sexuality to the children. Club rules require a parent or other adult to accompany each child to every meeting.

"I had no clue she was a lesbian. It doesn't really make a difference to me," said Don Thomas, whose grandson is in the pack. "She did a fantastic job, and the kids loved her. You couldn't ask for a better den leader."

Gay rights groups have taken up Tyrrell's cause, starting an online petition to get the Scouts to change their policy.

"The extent that people care is amazing," Tyrrell said. "We're a perfectly normal family. We're not dangerous. We're not predators. We're just normal, everyday people."

overwhelmingly. And in the end, even its sponsor, Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas - and McCain - were among the 15 Republicans who voted for the final Democratic bill.

The 31 Republicans who voted no said they support the spirit of the act but had problems with the Democratic rewrite up for consideration.

Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., for example, said he opposed the bill in part because he believes abused women

are best served by state and local governments.

And Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., said he voted 'no' because he believes the tribal provisions in the bill would be unconstitutional. Under the measure, Native American officials would be allowed to arrest, prosecute and imprison non-Indians, who cannot vote in tribal elections or have a say in crafting laws that could be used against him, Kyl said.

Toledo mayor to propose domestic partner benefits

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) - The mayor of Toledo wants to extend health care and other benefits to the gay and unmarried partners of city employees.

The Blade reports that Toledo Mayor Mike Bell plans to introduce legislation this week to extend benefits to the domestic partners of city employees, provided they have certified their status with Toledo's Domestic Partner Registry.

Cleveland and Columbus already offer domestic partner benefits, along with Lucas County and the University of Toledo.

The newspaper reports that Bell's announcement was met with some skepticism from Toledo city councilmen. One expressed both financial and moral concerns about the proposal.

Bell says he doesn't expect the cost of providing the additional benefits to be high. He estimates about 2 percent of the city's workforce would sign up for the benefits.

Senate approves Colo. civil unions

DENVER (AP) - The Senate approved a proposal to grant Colorado gay couples legal rights similar to marriage after two days of emotional debate.

The bill now faces its biggest challenge in the GOP-led House, which rejected the same proposal last year. Three Republicans joined all Democrats in approving the civil unions legislation on a 23-12 vote Thursday.

Democrats spent months trying to persuade a House Republican to carry the bill but were unsuccessful. That doesn't bode well for the bill's chances.

Supporters delivered impassioned speeches, saying gay couples lack important legal benefits. Some Republicans argued the measure undermines marriage.

Republicans showed stacks of cards from constituents urging them to vote no. Democratic Sen. Pat Steadman, the bill sponsor, said the postcards are outweighed by constitutional rights.

Online: Colorado Senate Bill 2: <http://goo.gl/Fuofn>

Pitt student group files complaint against school

PITTSBURGH (AP) - A student group at the University of Pittsburgh has filed a complaint over the school's treatment of transgender students.

The Rainbow Alliance filed the complaint on April 26 with the city's Commission on Human Relations.

The group represents gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people at the school.

It says the Pitt policy requiring transgender students to use bathrooms, locker rooms and other facilities that match the sex listed on their birth certificate is "extremely regressive" and unsafe, putting such students at increased risk of violence and harassment.

Pitt spokesman Robert Hill says the school does not comment on litigation, but does not discriminate based on gender identity and expression.

City officials say the complaint could take six to nine months to investigate.

► Violence

Continued from p. 12

To prove it, Republicans offered alternatives that would delete the references to gays, lesbians and transgender people, keep the cap on visas at its current level and allow tribal authorities to go to federal court for protective orders on behalf of abused Native American women.

But the Senate rejected the options

Health care debate: high stakes for those with HIV

Medicaid expansion, pre-existing condition benefits at stake in anticipated Supreme Court ruling

BY DAVID CRARY

NEW YORK (AP) – For many HIV-positive Americans, and those who advocate on their behalf, these are days of anxious waiting as the Supreme Court ponders President Barack Obama’s health care overhaul.

This loose-knit community – made up of activists, health professionals and an estimated 1.2 million people living with HIV – has invested high hopes in the Affordable Care Act, anticipating that it could dramatically improve access to lifesaving care and treatment. The act is now in limbo as the high court deliberates on its constitutionality, notably its requirement that most Americans obtain health insurance. A ruling could come in June.

“The HIV treatment community sees the act as a critical step in our fight against the AIDS epidemic,” said Scott Schoettes of Lambda Legal, a national gay-rights advocacy group. “People have been counting on it, making plans based on its implementation, so for it to be pulled out from under their feet at this point would be a tremendous loss.”

Among its many provisions, the health care law has two major benefits for HIV-positive people: It expands Medicaid so that those with low incomes can get earlier access to treatment, and it eliminates limits on pre-existing conditions that have prevented many people with HIV from obtaining private insurance.

Under current policies, low-income HIV-positive people often do not qualify for Medicaid if they are not yet sick enough to be classified as disabled.

In the view of advocacy groups, this creates a cruel Catch 22 – at a stage when they are still active and productive, these people can’t afford the antiretroviral treatments that could help them stay that way. Only when their condition worsens are they able to qualify for Medicaid and get treatment that might have prevented the deterioration.

The health care act would remove the disability requirement and makes Medicaid

available to a broader range of low-income adults.

“It will prolong life potentially by decades for literally hundreds of thousands of persons,” said the National Minority AIDS Council in its Supreme Court brief. “Individuals can continue to work and

allowed to deny coverage to anyone with HIV/AIDS or impose annual limits on coverage.

Schoettes, who is Lambda Legal’s HIV Project director and is HIV-positive himself, says this part of the law would curtail harmful insurance practices.

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“For the first time in 30 years, thanks to advances in HIV prevention and treatment research, we can realistically envision the end of the greatest pandemic of our time. To reach this goal, we cannot afford to take any steps backward.”

- Dr. Judith Aberg of the New York University School of Medicine, recently pleaded for the health care law to be upheld.

go about their daily lives as productive members of society.”

According to the Department of Health and Human Services, only about 13 percent of people with HIV have private health insurance and about 24 percent have no coverage at all. As a group, HHS says, these people “have been particularly vulnerable to insurance industry abuses” and face barriers to obtaining care from qualified providers.

Under the new law, insurers cannot rescind existing coverage to adults unless there’s evidence of fraud. As if 2014, when the law is scheduled for full implementation, insurers will not be

“Most private insurers have refused to provide affordable coverage to those with HIV,” he and other Lambda Legal lawyers wrote in a brief submitted to the Supreme Court in March.

“This market failure has caused serious consequences both for individuals with HIV – who suffer unnecessary illness and premature death – and for society generally in higher overall health care costs and lost productivity,” the lawyers wrote. “Virtually all this suffering is avoidable: medical care is available that can turn HIV into a chronic, manageable condition.”

Among its many provisions, the health care law has two major benefits for HIV-positive people: It expands Medicaid so that those with low incomes can get earlier access to treatment, and it eliminates limits on pre-existing conditions that have prevented many people with HIV from obtaining private insurance.

► Health care

Continued from p. 14

America's Health Insurance Plans, which represents major private health insurers, opposed Obama's health care law. The trade group says it supports expanding coverage to most Americans but believes key provisions in the law are poorly designed and will raise costs and cause disruptions.

The organization's spokesman, Robert Zirkelbach, acknowledged that under the current system, individuals with HIV or AIDS do find it hard to obtain private coverage if they already had the disease. "If people wait until after they're sick, they're often not able to get it," he said.

However, he said health plans were active in trying to improve treatment and care for HIV-positive Americans, both their own clients and others. He said insurers did sometimes rescind coverage on grounds that a patient had not fully disclosed required information, but that such instances were rare.

Among HIV-positive people without private insurance, many rely on public programs such as Medicaid and Medicare, but others are not eligible. As a last resort, if they meet the low-income criteria, they can seek financial assistance through the federal Ryan White Care Act.

However, advocates say the result is often patchwork health care – or no care at all. Many uninsured people don't get tested, don't know their HIV status and unwittingly transmit the infection to others.

Antiretroviral treatment is expensive – often more than \$18,000 per year. But advocacy groups say treatment is cost-effective, enabling more people to be self-sufficient and reducing later spending on acute care and stays at hospices.

Advocacy groups also contend that the positive effects of the federal health care act can be foretold by the experience of Massachusetts, which adopted similar legislation in 2006. According to a study last year by Harvard Law School's Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation, new HIV infections dropped by 37 percent in Massachusetts from 2005 to 2008, while rising by 8 percent in the rest of U.S.

By federal estimate, about 50,000 new cases of HIV infection occur annually in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control's latest figures show that gay and bisexual men account for about 60 percent of the new infections; blacks also are affected disproportionately, accounting for about 13 percent of the population and about 44 percent of new HIV infections.

The CDC also says the HIV infection rate in poor urban areas is far higher than for the rest of the U.S. – and is on par with the rate in such AIDS-devastated countries as Haiti and Angola.

"HIV is a disease of poverty," said Dr. Michael Saag, an HIV physician and researcher at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. "That's why the health care law is critically important."

In Alabama, he said, funding to provide HIV treatment for low-income people has not risen to meet growing demand, and clinics lack adequate staff and resources.

"Once on treatment, transmission of HIV is cut to almost zero – but where do these people get treatment?" Saag asked. "The question to people who are against the Affordable Care Act is, 'What are we going to do instead?'"

Saag is a past chairman of the HIV Medicine Association, representing more than 4,800 health care professionals and researchers. The current chair, Dr. Judith Aberg of the New York

University School of Medicine, recently pleaded for the health care law to be upheld.

"For the first time in 30 years, thanks to advances in HIV prevention and treatment research, we can realistically envision the end of the greatest pandemic of our time," she said. "To reach this goal, we cannot afford to take any steps backward."

Online:

Health and Human Services fact sheet: <http://1.usa.gov/snPcYA>

Lambda Legal's Supreme Court brief: <http://bit.ly/zOyeER>



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HAIL SHARON

'Drag Race' winner on life after show and upcoming Detroit appearance

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

In a drag world of pretty feather boas, bedazzled attire, full-face makeup and voluptuous body shapers, Sharon Needles is embracing her scary side as the controversial Queen of Darkness. This earned her the title of "America's Next Drag Superstar" on season four of Logo's crossover hit reality show, RuPaul's Drag Race, hosted by none other than RuPaul Charles. Needles will headline the network's drag tour and receive \$100,000 plus cosmetics and other pretty prizes.

RuPaul kept fans hanging on during Monday night's reunion episode as he teased whether Chad Michaels, Phi Phi O'Hara or Sharon Needles would be taking the queen crown. Then he shocked everyone when he said the fate of these queens lies in the viewers'

hands. For the first time in Drag Race history, the winner was chosen in front of a live audience.

Self-described as beautiful, spooky and stupid, the horror drag queen introduced millions of television viewers to something way outside the box on season four of Logo's crossover hit reality show, "RuPaul's Drag Race," hosted by RuPaul Charles. In competition with 12 other queens for the title of "America's Next Drag Superstar," Needles has earned her reputation as the gothiest character the show has ever seen.

"It's so bizarre to be on your own favorite TV show," says Needles, a 29-year-old from Pittsburgh, Penn., who grew up performing in the dive bars of Des Moines, Iowa. "You know, if I ever have a chance to

See Sharon Needles, page 18



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► Sharon Needles

Continued from p. 17

sit down and reflect on it, I'd probably combust with overwhelmment. It's almost numbing. It's overnight success. It's going from punk-rock brat to someone who holds a lot of responsibility and merit. One of these days it's all gonna hit me."

The people of Metro Detroit will have the opportunity to experience her outrageous, offensive, but wildly entertaining act on May 5 at Reunion Nightclub in Pontiac.

"I love Detroit. Me and Detroit are a lot alike: dirty, broke and underappreciated. I've been thinking about buying a house there. I heard they're like \$52," says Needles.

Donning size-12 high heels and her Marilyn Manson contact lenses, the 6-foot-tall queen is pulling out all the stops to further shock her audience. "I will pop out of coffins, there will be ridiculous costume changes and anything that can hide the fact that I have absolutely no beauty or talent. Expect to see me embarrassing myself live on stage for everyone else's amusement," she says.

Cracking jokes has always been Needles way of protecting herself as she was bullied at a young age. "It's hard to punch someone that makes you laugh. All drag queens have a machine gun. Jiggly Caliente used her sense of hood rat and sexuality as her machine gun. We need protection and we've needed it since we were kids," she says. "My wit and my humor and just my sense of pop culture references, those are my weapons and I use them really fucking well. I have more wit than Phi Phi O'Hara has eye makeup!"

But there were things she had to live without during the shoots, which often ran for 16 hours a day, six days a week. "They take away your nicotine and they don't give you any fucking alcohol," says Needles. "What I really wanted to do when Phi Phi would yell at me was laugh because it was funny, but she did get on my last nerve every once in a while.

"The reason I would retaliate against her is because I didn't want my fans to see me take it like some of the other funny, campier girls from past seasons – who will go unnamed – who allowed themselves to be abused and roughed up by the cool girls or the pretty girls. I just needed to make sure my fans knew that no, no, no, we don't take this shit, not anymore, not from you. And why are you calling me weird? You're a man in a dress!"

Needles likes to wear what she calls "Goth Couture" and puts her personal New York nightlife club twist on it. "I don't really have fashion. That's why I did so well on the main stage, because I didn't dress like me, I dressed like the occasion. As long as it meets the criteria and stands out from the rest," she says.

But Needles found herself in the bottom two during episode eight and was almost asked to "Sashay, away" when she had to lip-sync for her life to "It's Raining Men – The Sequel" by Martha Wash and RuPaul.

"I didn't suspect that my chances were good going into that lip-sync and figured I would lose. Out of any of the songs, that was the one I really didn't want, but I was standing there and realized I've been here for so long and why am I treating lip-syncing like a punishment when that's always something really fun, so let's have fun and treat this like a prize. It wasn't, lip-sync for my life. It was,

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lip-sync to the fucking death. Goddamn Willam taking away my victory! Isn't she great?" says Needles, adding that she's the kind of person that tends to believe everything about the show no matter what anyone tells her now that the process is over. "It just makes it better. On the last day of filming, I didn't know there were cameras behind the makeup mirrors. I live in a constant state of ignorance."

Being from the Steel City, Needles has never had a taste of Hollywood until the show. "It was so surreal. It was like being in one of the most intense dreams you've ever had where it's so real, but it possibly couldn't be. The first time that door opened and you hear, 'Hello, hello, hello, my 13 dolls!' – it's just phenomenal and RuPaul has such a motherly, warm way that within a day it just felt like you were hanging out with a really good friend."

And for those who are wondering, the queens' accommodations were taken care of. "They made sure we were fed. They want to fatten you up. The food is something they give you for comfort," says Needles, adding that during the show she missed her famous boyfriend Alaska Thunderfuck. "I'm a vegetarian and they have really bad vegetarian crap in Hollywood, I have to say. So, I just ate bread and toilet paper."

As a token, Needles stole 20 pairs of Pit Crew Underwear, five wigs by Risque Wigs, and four pairs of RuPaul's Drag Race Shoes by Iron Fist. "I don't mind saying this, but on our last day, if there was something in the studio prettier than something you already owned, we would toss what we owned and stuff our bags full of stuff."

When asked where she is keeping all the goods, Needles said she bought a new apartment now that the show has ended. "It's called an airport. I moved in a couple months ago and don't plan on leaving for some time. I gave up my favorite drug. It's called sleep. I'm basically touring America, letting every city have the opportunity to watch me embarrass myself late at night. I recommend you get drunk. I get prettier after every beer."

After 13 episodes, complete with 42 minutes of laughter, tears and cat fights, Needles shares a few last words. "I really appreciate that I'm as popular and successful as I've been on the show, but I just don't know where they're getting it. There must be something about my essence that reminds them of what they're going through. I can be a reminder to just tough it out and do whatever the fuck you want to do and don't bend for anyone. I've said it before, I'll say it again: For all you bad drag queens, beginner drag queens, and all you 'booger-down' drag queens, I love you. Bad drag is more inspiring and interesting to watch than any polished queen. And remember, being booed off stage is just applause from ghosts. Happy Halloween and Hail Satan."

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A shining Ray of light

Indigo Girl talks new album, band's beginnings and trailblazing

BY ANDREA POTEET

On her sixth solo album, “Lung of Love,” Amy Ray takes listeners to church with confessional lyrics about faith, life and love in her honest, soulful voice.

But Ray, half of iconic lesbian folk-pop duo The Indigo Girls, would rather be taking them to the dance floor.

“I think I just have this fantasy of making a 10- or 15-song record, like a Ramones record, where every song’s two-and-a-half minutes and you can dance to every single one of them,” Ray rasps from a van headed through Connecticut on a recent day off touring behind “Lung of Love.” “I always wanted to make a record that’s just like that, but it never happens because I’m always writing other kinds of stuff and I just end up wanting to put that on there too.”

The album, which Ray released on her own Daemon Records and will support with a stop on May 10 at Ann Arbor’s Blind Pig, is a departure for Ray, who for the first time worked with a co-writer. Producer Greg Griffith took a break from playing bass and guitar on the record to assist with songwriting duties. Ray and Indigo Girl Emily Saliers usually write separately then arrange and record together.

“I was kind of hitting a wall so I asked him to work on a chorus or a bridge or a melody for this or that and it became really easy for us to work together on that kind of stuff,” Ray says. “It just helped me to have someone kind of step in when I hit a wall, especially with melody and where a song goes, how to get a certain narrative in a musical way.”

Griffith brought more than just songwriting to the album. His North Carolina warehouse studio, which also houses several churches, served as inspiration during the Sunday morning recording of “The Rock is My Foundation,” the album’s Appalachian Gospel stomp. For Ray, the song is a nod to her Christian upbringing in suburban Georgia.

“It’s whatever your cultural references are that make you feel like you have a center sometimes. For me, it’s

my upbringing, being raised on Jesus,” she says with a laugh. “No matter how pagan I become or how far away I might drift from where I started, I’m still going to have those cultural references. I think it’s part of my language and I just let it happen.”

Where it started for Ray was with a love of music. As a girl, she idolized glam rockers like David Bowie and Elton John for their powerful voices and male perspectives without ever connecting it to her own sexuality.

“I didn’t even know what it meant to be gay until I had fallen in love with a woman at age 17,” says Ray, 48. “I had no idea who was gay and who wasn’t iconically.”

In 1980, she began recording with childhood friend Saliers. The pair, who have never dated, were out to their families, but struggled with the decision to come out publicly for the next 10 years.

“We were scared, that’s the bottom line,” Ray says. “I wanted to talk about it, and she really didn’t and we would wax and wane between the two of us on either side of the equation. It just felt disingenuous not to address it. We didn’t lie or run away from it in a really bold way, but I think we definitely sidestepped it sometimes.”

Though Ray and Saliers were among the first openly gay bands to have Top-40 success and a loyal cult following, she says she doesn’t consider herself a pioneer for out performers.

“I don’t think of things in those terms because I feel so wrapped up in a community that has so many different



Photo: John David Raper.

Amy Ray

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levels of mentoring,” Ray says. “I’m being mentored by kids in high school that are doing great activism and opening doors for me about how to articulate gender politics. And at the same time, there may be people who come to me and say, ‘How would you handle this situation: coming out or not coming out?’ There (are) a lot of people doing things that open those doors.”

She said young gay musicians may still face backlash and “ghettoization,” but she’s glad that didn’t deter her from speaking publicly about her sexuality, despite record executives and publicists who disagreed.

“The bottom line is you just gotta be honest about who you are and where it goes, you just don’t have any control over. You just have to do your music.”

And for Ray, that means going wherever her songwriting takes her, from folk, punk and country influences to the constant attempt at the illusive perfect pop album.

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Affirmations kicks off pride season with 5th annual All-Media Pride Exhibition

Affirmations is kicking off the start of pride season with their 5th annual All-Media Pride Exhibition this May in the community center's Pittman-Puckett Art Gallery.

The All-Media Pride Exhibition is an opportunity for LGBT and allied artists showcase their artwork which celebrates the LGBT community. This year the exhibition is comprised of artwork from 17 artists.

"As an artist who works in all media, I am excited to participate in Affirmations All media Pride Exhibition" says Karianna Spens-Hanna, a local artist and recent College for Creative Studies graduate. "This is a great opportunity for artists to showcase their work supporting the LGBTQ community and be a catalyst for dialogue."

Other well-known artists such as Mino Watanabe, the Poor Man's Art Collective, and Charzette Torrence will be showcasing artwork for the All-Media Pride Exhibition. Exhibit curator and longtime Between The Lines contributor Charles Alexander will be showcasing his artwork as well. In addition to the artwork on display, dancer and Artistic Director, Kristi Faulker, will open the exhibition with a solo dance performance piece.

The exhibit opens May 3rd with a reception held from 6:30-9 p.m., giving viewers the opportunity to meet many of the artists and discuss the exhibition. Light refreshments will be served. For more information, call 248-398-7105 or go to www.GoAffirmations.org



Artwork by Karianna Spens-Henna (top left and bottom) and Charles Alexander (top right)

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The OutField

Texas A&M tackles diversity

BY DAN WOOG

A school on the list of America's 10 least inclusive colleges for LGBT students would seem an unlikely host for a conference called "Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Sport." But that's exactly what took place over two days earlier this month.

Some of the leading academic researchers and activists in the gay sports field traveled to Texas A&M University for panel discussions and meetings. Topics included the experiences of LGBT athletes and coaches; the intersection of LGBT athletes and the media; strategies for inclusiveness, and even transgender issues in sport.

I was one of the panelists. But even though I've spent my professional

life in and around gay athletes, I learned plenty. So, I'm sure, did the 13 other invitees, and the students and professors who packed the meeting room.

I learned that Texas A&M is a paradoxical place. It hosted this conference on an important type of diversity, but it is a fairly non-diverse place. I saw very few blacks, Hispanics or Asians. The LGBT presence on campus appeared to be quite small.

Yet our group spent a wonderful afternoon at the ranch of the A&M provost. She and her partner seem to be a well-accepted, much-loved part of the university community. They are proud of their work there.

Much work remains to be done. In her opening remarks, a school administrator admitted there is "not much tolerance" for sexuality differences on campus. But speaking words like that out loud – to an audience of students, some of whom attended solely to gain extra credit in class – is an important step toward achieving that tolerance.

Keynote speaker Pat Griffin – a former coach, emeritus professor of social justice at the University of Massachusetts and director of the "Changing the Game" sports project – described her own self-loathing as a lesbian athlete at the University of Maryland. She noted the gains that have been made since then – including the embrace of straight male allies – but worried about the absence of straight female allies. "You don't need to be a lesbian to feel what it's like to be called one," she said, tying the denigration of one group to that of all others.

The transgender panel offered glimmers of hope. Karen Morrison, who works on diversity issues for the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), noted that the powerful governing organization is doggedly addressing questions like banned substance (testosterone) use.

At younger age levels, trans policies are already in place. The Washington State high school federation is very inclusive, and the US Soccer Federation quickly moved to adopt trans-positive policies as soon as the issue was raised.

My own panel – on the experiences of LGBT athletes and coaches – discussed the many ways in which homophobia affects, defines and limits everyone in sports, including straight people. For example, the fear of being called a lesbian prevents some women from playing sports they would love to pursue.



Pat Griffin

Our panel also featured a controversial presentation. Eric Anderson, a former California high school track coach now conducting gay sports research at the University of Winchester, presented findings on the changing attitudes of teenage males in England. He called the increasing prevalence of cuddling, bed-sharing, even kissing among straight friends a harbinger of things to come in the U.S., adding that young athletes are driving this paradigm shift.

The panel addressing LGBT sports and the media offered further hope.

Outsports.com's Cyd Ziegler said that a tipping point has been reached: The media now treats homophobic athletes and coaches much harsher than gay ones. Athletes and fans, he said, are nowhere near as homophobic as stereotypes would have us believe. In fact, journalists' perception that gay issues are no longer "a story" may be the biggest obstacle to more coverage.

The final session examined inclusiveness. Sue Rankin, an associate professor of education and former softball coach at Penn State University, said that a campus climate – institutional, and within the athletic department and individual teams – goes a long way toward determining the success of each team and every athlete. Climate is determined by many factors, but straight allies play a powerful role, she said.

The last speaker, former NFL player Wade Davis surveyed the room, which had emptied out of students as the day wore on. He cited the reason: Most straight people don't care about LGBT issues – especially hearing about them from people they really don't relate to, like those of us on the panel. The way to get straight people involved, he said, is to reach them through people they know and care about: their gay teammates and gay coaches.

It was a sobering message, but it was one that needed to be delivered. And that it was delivered in College Station, at Texas A&M University, was most impressive of all.

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

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'Little Voice,' big dreams at the Ant

BY DONALD V. CALAMIA

Back in the 1990s, one of Metro Detroit's most highly regarded directors had a dream – a dream to stage "The Rise and Fall of Little Voice" by Jim Cartwright. Life-altering experiences, however, caused Annette Madias to change directions, thus putting the project on hold – possibly forever. Flash forward to 2011 – and guess what script Planet Ant Theatre is planning for its 2011-12 season? And what director's name comes up for the project – thanks to a long-time friend and colleague?

For those of us old enough to remember Madias' work, the news of her pending return to the director's chair became one of the most anticipated events of the season. And coupled with the gossip that began circulating once rehearsals began, one could only wonder if the production would live up to the hype that quickly circulated throughout the community.

So on opening night – surrounded by a packed house filled with many familiar faces from throughout the Ant's history – Madias sat and watched her dreams unfold. The rest of us were treated to one of the most memorable nights of theater I've had so far this season.

Madias, celebrated for her in-depth character work, has plenty to work with here – thanks to both the playwright and the talented cast and crew who accompanied her on this journey.

Cartwright's story addresses a universal theme – the search for love – and does so through a mother and daughter (and associated friends and newcomers) who are as opposite as opposite can be. Set in northern England in the 1980s, Mari (Linda Ramsay) is an aging, faded beauty whose hunt for a man knows no limits. Desperate to be taken care of, Mari will hook up with pretty much anyone with male genitalia, hoping he'll be "the one" – and not just "the one for tonight." (But in the meantime, that'll do.) Her latest pursuit is Ray Say (Joel Mitchell), a small time talent agent – about half of whose clients are strippers. Arriving at Mari's home and about to get to know each other in a rather intimate way, Ray hears a voice coming from upstairs. It belongs to Mari's daughter, nicknamed LV (Inga R. Wilson) for "Little Voice," who spends hours listening to and mimicking the stack of LPs (long playing albums, for those too young to remember) that belonged to her deceased and loving father. A recluse, LV rarely speaks – and when she does, it's barely above a whisper and with as few words as possible. Stunned by her amazing voice, Ray sees a meal ticket. So too does Mari – but their tickets are on two different tracks heading in opposite directions. A plan is hatched – and LV begrudgingly makes her public singing debut at a local club. And as you might expect, the show is called "The Rise and Fall of Little Voice" for a reason.

Cartwright's blueprint offers Madias



Amy Probst, Joel Mitchell, and Inga Wilson in "The Rise and Fall of Little Voice" at Planet Ant Theatre. Photo: Kirstin Bianchi

REVIEW

The Rise and Fall of Little Voice

Planet Ant Theatre, 2357 Caniff St., Hamtramck. Fri-Saturday through May 19, plus Sunday, May 5 & 12 and Tuesday, May 8. 138 minutes. \$20. 313-365-4948. www.PlanetAnt.com

seven opportunities to build interesting and colorful characters. Madias goes far beyond that, however, with seven actors who dig deep into their roles and discover quirky, yet thoroughly identifiable human beings who are all searching for what everyone seeks: acceptance and love by those around them.

That's especially true of Sadie, a meek soul and Mari's best friend – despite the outbursts of verbal abuse thrust upon her by her often-soused neighbor. Amy Probst's performance is not only sweet and heartwarming, it's also a master class on how a single word – in this case, "OK" – can be delivered multiple ways and mean different things. Add to that her character-defining facial expressions and physical movements, and the result is a fully realized performance that will stick with you long after the show ends.

Similarly, Sean McGettigan plays Billy, a young phone company installer who's almost as shy and quiet as LV – and as equally fascinated with lights as she is with her records. McGettigan excels at telegraphing Billy's feelings with only the slightest of expression changes. And watch his eyes: They tell the rest of the story.

Rounding out the cast are Musical Director Mikey Brown, who plays Scottish club owner Mr. Boo. Whatever you do, don't be late: Mr. Boo opens the show performing in his club – and I doubt you'll ever hear classics such as "Hot Child in the City" and "Message in the Bottle" performed quite like this ever again. Assisting him on bongos in the second act opening is Dave Davies, who

also plays the phone installer in the first act.

It's the triumvirate of Ramsay, Wilson and Mitchell that steals the show, however.

Mitchell, who could earn an acting nomination pretty much every time he walks onto a stage, is once again a force to be reckoned with as the sleazy agent. The second-act comeuppance he gives Mari is especially powerful – and a scene in LV's bedroom makes you wonder just how far Ray would go to get the girl to do as he asks. (He had me guessing the whole time.)

In total contrast is Wilson's LV, whose sadness will chill you to the bone. She also has the difficult task of recreating the unique vocal qualities of some of the most famous female singers of the 20th century – and she does it exceptionally well. Her most revealing moment comes at the conclusion of LV's second club performance – with a reaction that needs no words to convey her inner thoughts.

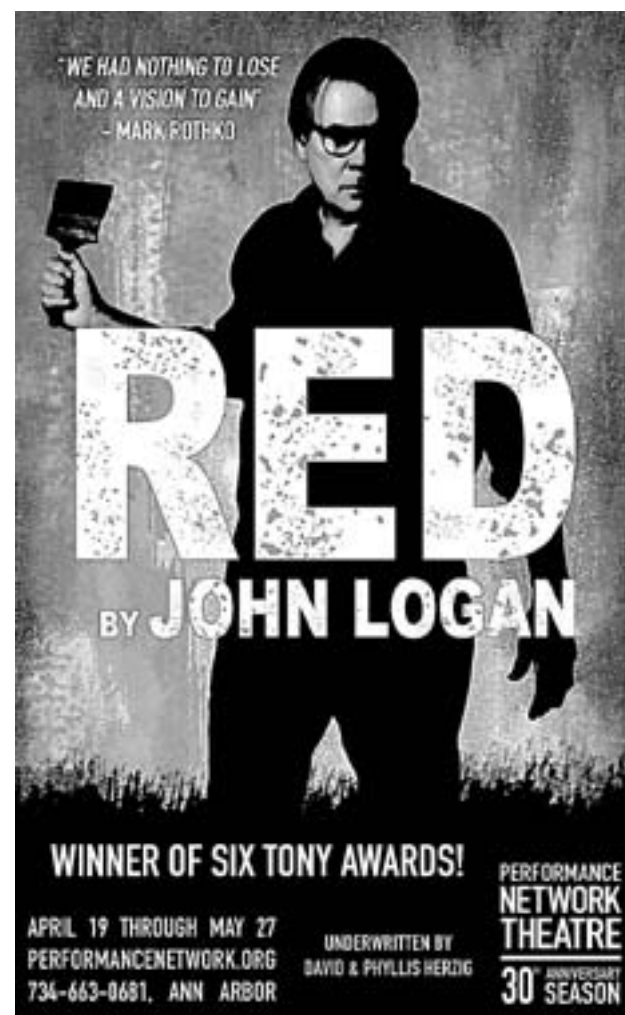
If there's a standout performance, though, it belongs to Ramsay. With a perfect accent that never wavers, Ramsey mines every nuance possible from Cartwright's complicated character – and the result is a performance that's as close to perfection as we could possibly expect.

The show's technical elements are generally well done – particularly Kirstin L. Bianchi's costumes that place the show firmly in the tacky '80s and Kate Peckham's sound design.

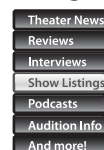
The production is not without flaws, however.

A few scenes end a bit too abruptly, thereby not allowing us to fully absorb the impact of what we just witnessed before the lights go down. Also, the creative use of a flashlight needs to be worked on a bit, or risk generating more unintended chuckles as it did on opening night. And decisions made regarding how to create a pivotal effect in act two are saved only by Peckham's sound choice.

But all in all, Madias' return to the director's chair is something to be celebrated. And what a fine return it is!



The show closed WHEN?



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Editor's Picks

Music & More

"My therapist said I was afraid of success, which may in fact be true, because I have a feeling that fulfilling my potential would really cut into my sittin' around time."

Comedian Maria Bamford started her performing arts career in Duluth, Minnesota at the age of 11 where she starred in the Chester Park Elementary production of "How the West Was Really Won!" A short 24 years of self-discovery and secretarial work later and just look at her now: one of the country's most hilarious and unique comedians.

Bamford has starred in the Comedy Central series "The Comedians of Comedy," and made multiple late-night appearances on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson, Late Night with Conan O'Brien and Jimmy Kimmel Live. She also is the first female comic to have two half-hour Comedy Central Presents specials. Her quirky palette of personas and voices has given her a legendary reputation for absurdity and hilarity.

Maria Bamford performs five shows May 10-12 at the Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase, 314 E. Liberty St. Ann Arbor. For more information, go to www.AAComedies.com or call 734-996-9080.



Art 'N Around



This month, the Lawrence Street Gallery will feature a sweeping retrospective exhibition of member artist Nora Chapa Mendoza, entitled "My Life Through My Paintings". Nora Mendoza is a former recipient of the "Michigan Governor's Arts Award" which named her artist of the year in 1999. She was also the recipient of the Wayne County Cultural Council Award in 2011.

Mendoza studied at the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit and is well known for her art relating to women, landscapes, and abstract hidden forms.

She finds her inspiration in human rights as well as the world around her. Her work is part of many important collections across the United States, including the main office of Ble Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan, the General Motors corporate offices, the Ford offices in Rocker Plaza, New York, and the collection of Gilberto Cardenas, the second largest collector of Chicano art.

Mendoza's art will be on display May 2-26 at the Lawrence Street Gallery, 22620 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. For more information, go to www.LawrenceStreetGallery.com.

Theater

The Ann Arbor Civic Theatre continues its 2011-12 season with "Leaving Iowa" by Tom Clue and Spike Manton. A loving ode to the great American road trip, "Leaving Iowa" finds middle-aged writer Don Browning on a quest to take his father's ashes to Don's childhood home. Upon finding the family's home has become a grocery store, Don traverses Iowa in search of a place for the ashes. Along the way he attempts to reconcile his past with the present. A2CT's production brings "Leaving Iowa" back home to Michigan, where it received its world premiere at The Purple Rose Theatre in Chelsea.

Performances are at 8 p.m. May 3-5 and 2 p.m. May 6 at the Arthur Miller Theatre at the Walgreen Drama Center, 1226 Murfin, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$8-\$22. For more information, call 734-971-2229.



OUTINGS

Thursday, May 3

Michigan International Women's Show 10 a.m. Get inspired, feel refreshed and uncover the secrets to living well, feeling healthy and having fun at the 17th annual Michigan International Women's Show with shopping, make-up tips, fashion shows, cooking classes and entertainment. Come and see the Royal Dresses of Diana, The People's Princess! Get inspired and learn new creative craft ideas with the CHA Craft Pavilion. Admission: \$10 at the door, \$9 online. International Women's Show, 4610 Grand River Ave., Novi. 800-849-0248. InternationalWomenShow.com

GLBT Professionals Network Happy Hour 6 p.m. Socialize and beverages with other GLBT & Allied Professionals from the Kalamazoo area. KGLRC, 629 Pioneer St., Kalamazoo. 269-349-4234. Kglrc.org

Kalamazoo LGBT Professionals Network 6 p.m. Join the Kalamazoo LGBT Professionals Network at Zazios on the Patio, with have light appetizers; drink specials, with great friends and conversation. Kalamazoo LGBT Professionals Network, 100 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo. Kalamazooglbtnetwork.com/events/

Jewish Gay Network Family & Friends 7 p.m. JGN Family & Friends group meets the first Thursday of every month. Topics vary from month to month. This is a gathering of people who have family or friends who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity. Offering support, sharing experiences, and learning about the issues impacting the LGBTQ and allied community. Jewish Gay Network, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield. 248-432-5661. Jgnmi.org

Friday, May 4

3rd Annual Wine Tasting Fundraiser 6:30 p.m. Join Health Emergency Lifeline Programs (HELP) in celebrating its 3rd Annual Wine Tasting Fundraiser. Proceeds benefit HIV/AIDS services in southeast Michigan. Tickets: \$50 purchasable by email or phone. Health Emergency Lifeline Programs, 222 Sherman Dr., Royal Oak. 313-832-3300 ext. 16. HELPOffice.org

Womyn's Film Night 7 p.m. Film: "Kate Clinton" Self-professed feminist comedienne Kate Clinton takes on a heap of controversial issues in this classic live performance, touching on lesbianism, sex, politics and more. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

S.P.I.C.E. 7:30 p.m. S.P.I.C.E. works to empower and enhance the lives of women of color in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Questioning community in Metropolitan Detroit, by eradicating the health, social and educational barriers facing them. Meetings are on the first Friday of every month. S.P.I.C.E., 290 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Saturday, May 5

Pastafest Fundraiser 5 p.m. Detroit Together Men's Chorus' annual Pasta fundraiser. Tickets: \$15 per person, children under eight free. Fundraiser includes chorus performances at 6, 7 and 8 p.m. and a silent auction. Detroit Together Men's Chorus, 143 Albany, Ferndale. 248-544-3872. Dtmc.org

Lesbian Euchre 6 p.m. No partner needed. For beginners to experienced. Come join the fun and meet new friends. Affirmations, 290 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 586-303-5977. lsbndanii@aol.com

Sunday, May 6

Pride Olympics 3 p.m. Join Kalamazoo Pride in Underwear 500, Drag race and pie/hot dog eating contests. Tickets: \$5. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 411 N Westnedge Ave., Kalamazoo. Kglrc.org/pride

GOAL Book Club 4 p.m. Get Out and Live's LGBT Book Club. Meets the first Sunday of every month at Five15 in Royal Oak. Get Out And Live!, 515 S Washington, Royal Oak. 248-515-2551. GetOutAndLive.me

Conversation Station 6 p.m. LGBTQI and allies 25 and over. Join GOAL each week for discussion, food and fun. New topic each week. This week's topic: What has been your greatest challenge in life? Get Out And Live!, 714 S. Washington St., Royal Oak. 248-981-4227. MarciWilliams@yahoo.com GetOutAndLive.me

Transgender Lansing Group Meeting 6 p.m. Lansing chapter of Transgender Michigan meets the first Sunday of every month from 6-9 p.m. Transgender Lansing, 469 N. Hagadorn, East Lansing. Facebook. com/groups/56386266994/

Monday, May 7

PFLAG Richland 7 p.m. Meets the first Monday of every month, except Labor Day. PFLAG, 9400 East D Ave., Richland. 269-377-9401. RichlandPFLAG@gmail.com

Wednesday, May 9

Foster Care & Adoption Informational/Orientation Meeting 9 a.m. Family Service & Children's Aid invites you to come and learn more about foster care and/or adoption. Informational/Orientation meetings are held the second Wednesday of every month. Family Service and Children's Aid, 330 W. Michigan Ave., Jackson. 517-787-7920 ext. 54. Facebook.com/FamilyServiceChildrensAid

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

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

17th Annual Dining for Dollars 6 p.m. Over one hundred supporters from around the community attend this highly anticipated event, which includes a silent auction, strolling raffle, and fabulous dinner prepared by none other than Chef Alex Young winner of Best Chef in the Great Lakes Region from the James Beard Foundation. Tickets: \$100-300. HIV/AIDS Resource Center, 2501 Jackson Ave., Ann Arbor. 800-578-2300. HivAidsResource.org

TransCend 6:30 p.m. Open to persons 18 and older. Younger are welcome with parent or guardian permission. Kalamazoo Gay Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer Street, Kalamazoo. 269-349-4234. Tracy@kglrc.org kglrc.org

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

Thursday, May 10

Statewide Preservation Conference 9 a.m. Each spring, the Network sponsors the states largest annual statewide preservation conference to provide training and networking opportunities

geared to both beginners and seasoned preservationists. In addition to offering sessions crammed with the latest news and information from around the state, the conference is known for its keynote speakers, festive evening activities, and annual auction of Michigan items ranging from overnights at historic bed-and-breakfasts, to antiques, books, and gourmet delights. Michigan Historic Preservation Network, 755 S. Saginaw St., Flint. Mhpn.org/annualconference.html

Legal Referral Services 4 p.m. Weekly advocacy program and referral services provided by AJ Skillman. AJ Skillman P.C., 290 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

KGLRC Youth Group 7 p.m. The Resource Center Youth Group helps young people, ages 13 to 18, who are trying to come to terms with their sexuality in a sometimes-unaccepting society. Meets every Thursday from 7-9 p.m. at a confidential location. To attend, call or e-mail the resource center. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer, Kalamazoo. 269-349-4234. Kglrc.org

Friday, May 11

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

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

Womyn's Film Night 7 p.m. Film: "Ghosted" A mysterious love story between Hamburg and Taipei. The unsolved murder of her young Taiwanese lover Ai-ling leaves the Hamburg artist Sophie Schmitt completely disoriented. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

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

Saturday, May 12

Multi-Party LGBT Garage Sale Fundraiser 9 a.m. Sponsored by Trillium Real Estate, Jim Toy Center, and Wild Wednesdays Youth. "Gently used items" may be donated to benefit the Jim Toy Center (no TVs or computer components, please). Drop off hours are 9 a.m.- 5p.m. May 5 and 6. Donations also accepted during open hours at Common Language Books. Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Ct., Ann Arbor. 734-678-2478. Jimtoycenter.org

Spring Into Health Festival 10 a.m. A safe and fun event for our community with all the proceeds going to American Cancer Society via Relay for Life. Relay for Life, 641 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-298-3100. Claddaghchiropractic.com

Crossroads 6 p.m. The Detroit areas premier social group for the transgendered and their friends will hold its monthly gathering. Program will be announced online. Crossroads, 290 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 586-738-4660. CrossroadsMI.com

Motor City Bears 7 p.m. Monthly meeting for on every second Saturday. Motor City

Bears, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Gay Pride Cosmo Bowl 8:30 p.m. Flint Gay Pride hosts a bowling fundraiser at B's. Tickets cost \$20 for games, shoes and pizza. Wellness AIDS Services Inc., 750 S. Center Road, Flint. 810-232-0888 ext. 20. Djackson@wellnessaids.org Facebook.com/events/325827780814764/

Sunday, May 13

Agape Spirit Life Ministry Service 1 p.m. Potluck style event. Bring "The 12 steps of Forgiveness by Paul Ferrini" and a Bible to worship in a diverse, welcoming community. Participants will use various books along with the Bible to gain practical tools for daily living as we worship. Every second and fourth Sunday. Agape Spirit Life Ministries, 290 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

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

Rainbow Book Club 4:30 p.m. Book club dedicated to reading and discussing classic and contemporary lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer literature. Meeting since before 1998, every second Sunday of the month. Rainbow Book Club, 319 Braun Court, Ann Arbor. 734-678-2478. Catherine.herne@gmail.com

Conversation Station 6 p.m. LGBTQI (and allies) 25 and over, join GOAL each week for discussion, food and fun. This week's topic: If you could be invisible for a day, what would you do? Get Out And Live!, 714 S. Washington St., Royal Oak. 248-981-4227. MarciWilliams@yahoo.com GetOutAndLive.me

MUSIC & MORE

CLASSICAL

Detroit Chamber Wind & Strings "Voices of the Baroque" The concert will feature DCWS string musicians as well as guest artists soprano Jennifer Ellis Kampani, Kiri Tollaksen on cornetto, and Glenn Miller on harpsichord. Kirk in the Hills Presbyterian Church, 1340 West Long Lake Road, Bloomfield Hills. 7:30 p.m. May 12. 248-559-2095. DetroitChamberWinds.org

Fort Street Chorale and Chamber Orchestra "Antonin Dvorak's Stabat Mater" The Fort Street Chorale and Chamber Orchestra will present Antonin Dvorak's Stabat Mater. The performance will be conducted by Richard Householder and will feature soloists Peggy Dwyer, soprano Dorothy Duensing, alto Pablo Bustos, tenor and Steven Henrikson, bass. Dvorak's Stabat Mater, based on an ancient Roman Catholic devotional poem relating Mary's grief as she stands at the foot of the cross, is considered the most symphonic of the Stabat Mater performed today. Fort Street Presbyterian Church, 631 W. Fort St., Detroit. 2 p.m. May 6. 313-961-4533. Fortstreet.org

Kerrytown Concert House "Etienne Charles Quintet" For his Jazz Standard debut as a leader, Etienne Charles will spotlight the music of his latest album Kaiso, which features guest appearances by pianist Monty Alexander and calypso legend Lord Superior. Tickets: \$10-30. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. May 4. 734-769-2999. Kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Kerrytown Concert House "Cambridge Piano Quartet" An evening of music

presented by the Cambridge Piano Quartet, currently in residence at the Cambridge International String Academy. Tickets: \$5-25. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. May 7. 734-769-2999. Kerrytownconcerthouse.com

COMEDY

Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase "Maria Bamford" What comedian starred in the Comedy Central series, "The Comedians of Comedy Tour" is in Variety's top ten comics to watch, has been the talk of Montreal, Edinburgh, Aspen, Kilkenny and Melbourne Comedy Festivals and was voted by Comedy Central viewers as one of their Top Ten Favorite Comics? Maria Bamford. Tickets: \$15-20. Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase, 314 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. May 10-May 12. 734-996-9080. AnnArborComedyShowcase.com

Royal Oak Music Theatre "Aziz Ansari" Live performance from comedian of NBC's "Parks and Recreation" at the Royal Oak Music Theatre. Tickets: \$35 advance, \$40 door. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. 6 p.m. May 5. 248-399-2980. Royaloakmusictheatre.com

CONCERTS

Alison Lewis, Audra Kubat, Katie Grace, Ellen Keyt and Kelly Zullo "Detroit Women in Music: an Acoustic Showcase" Alison Lewis (String of Ponies) presents a talent-packed showcase featuring fellow Detroit artists Audra Kubat, Katie Grace, Ellen Keyt and guest touring artist Kelly Zullo. No cover however donations appreciated. St. Ceces Whiskey Bar, 1426 Bagley St., Detroit. 9 p.m. May 4.

Ellen Keyt "Ellen Keyt's Detroit Meadows CD Release show" Detroit acoustic singer-songwriter Ellen Keyt celebrates the release of Detroit Meadows, her first CD in over ten years at the Corner Brewery Lounge in Ypsilanti. \$12 cover. Corner Brewery, 720 Norris St., Ypsilanti. 2:30 p.m. May 6. 734-480-2739. Brownpapertickets.com/event/238553

Fox Theatre "Kid Rock & The Detroit Symphony" Detroit Symphony Orchestra performs with Kid Rock in a unique concert sure to sell out. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 7 p.m. May 12. 313-471-6611. Dso.org

Kerrytown Concert House "Dave Sharp's Secret Seven" After taking a musical journey to Africa on the KCH stage in the fall, Dave Sharp and the Secret Seven return to explore the music of the Middle East. Dave Sharp's Secret Seven is world jazz for the jazz world, transcending musical, national and ethnic boundaries by re-interpreting, not fusing, influences from Africa, Asia, the Latin world, Blue Note Jazz and that other planet, New Orleans. Tickets: \$5-25. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. May 11. 734-769-2999. Kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Kerrytown Concert House "Michael Feinstein Great American Songbook Competition" Promising high school vocalists from around the region will perform songs from Broadway, Hollywood musicals and the Tin Pan Alley era, competing for a chance to sing in NYC with Michael Feinstein himself. Ten finalists will be announced at the end of the evening. Tickets: \$10-30. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. 7 p.m. May 12. 734-769-2999. Kerrytownconcerthouse.com

Lansing Symphony Orchestra "MasterWorks 6: Fantasies and Fairy Tales" Ravel wrote his Mother Goose Suite as a piano duet and later set the work for strings, winds, and percussion. Stravinsky's Petrouchka is also a fairy tale but of the Russian variety. Originally a ballet, this piece colorfully tells the story of a puppet that comes to life. Wharton

Center for the Performing Arts at Michigan State University, Michigan State University, East Lansing. 8 p.m. May 10. 517-353-1982 ext. 14. Lansingssymphony.org

Olympia Entertainment "An Evening with Jeffrey Osborne" Tickets: \$39-41. Sound Board Theater, 2901 Grand River Ave, Detroit. 8 p.m. May 10. 866-752-9622. Olympiaentertainment.com

The Acorn Theater "Hitsville Revue" This "Las Vegas style show" will bring back the nostalgic music of the '60s & '70s. This live Motown spectacular is a tribute to your favorite groups and will include classic hits by The Temptations, The Supremes, Smokey Robinson, The Four Tops, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Martha and the Vandellas, Tina Turner, The Marvelettes and many more. Tickets: \$25-30. The Acorn Theater, 107 Generations Dr., Three Oaks. 8 p.m. May 4. 269-756-3879. Acorntheater.com

The Acorn Theater "Carolina Chocolate Drops" In 2005 three young black musicians, Dom Flemons, Rhiannon Giddens, and Justin Robinson, made the commitment to travel to Mebane, NC every Thursday night to sit in the home of old-time fiddler Joe Thompson, for a musical jam session. Robinson was in his '80s, a black fiddler with a short bowing style that he inherited from generations of family musicians; he had learned to play a wide range of tunes while sitting on his back porch with other players after a day of fieldwork. Now he was passing these same lessons on to a new generation of musicians. Tickets: \$30. The Acorn Theater, 107 Generations Dr., Three Oaks. 8 p.m. May 7. 269-756-3879. Acorntheater.com

The Ark "Sarah Jarosz" Tickets: \$15. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. May 12. 734-761-1818. theark.org

The Ark "Steppin' In It" Tickets: \$15. The Ark, 316 S. Main, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. May 8. 734-761-1800. Theark.org

The Ark "David Olney with Sergio Webb" Tickets: \$15. The Ark, 316 S. Main, Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. May 7. 734-761-1800. TheArk.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

Penn Theatre "Pillow Talk" 1959 film for Penn Theatre's May classics. Tickets: \$3. Penn Theatre, 760 Pennington Ave., Plymouth. 6:30 p.m. May 3. 734-453-0870. PennTheatre.com

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. www.Kazoocivic.com

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

Assassins \$10-18. Great Escape Stage Company, 155 W. Michigan Ave., Marshall. Through May 6. 269-781-2700. www.GreatEscapeStageCompany.com

Copenhagen \$10-12. Riverwalk Theatre, 228 Museum Dr., Lansing. May 4 - 13. 517-482-5700. www.Riverwalktheatre.com

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels \$12-19. Kalamazoo Civic Theatre at Civic Auditorium, 329 S. Park St., Kalamazoo. May 11 - 27. 69-343-1313. www.Kazoocivic.com

Leaving Iowa \$8-\$22. Ann Arbor Civic Theatre at Arthur Miller Theatre at the Walgreen Drama Center, 1226 Murfin, Ann Arbor. May 3 - 6. 734-971-2229. www.a2ct.org

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

Palmer Park A 2nd Stage production. \$14-\$16. Stagecrafters at Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette, Royal Oak. May 11 - 20. 248-541-6430. www.stagecrafters.org

Ruined \$15. Peppermint Creek Theatre Company at Curry Street Theatre, 6025 Curry Lane, Lansing. Through May 6. 517-372-0945. www.PeppermintCreek.org

The Odd Couple \$23; \$12 show only. Thebes Players at Larkin's, 301 W. Main St., Lowell. Through May 12. 616-897-8545. www.lowellartscouncil.org

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

The Red Velvet Cake War Dinner served one-hour before showtime. \$20-33. Starlight Dinner Theatre at Waverly East Cafetorium, 3131 W. Michigan Ave., Lansing. May 11 - 19. 517-243-6040. www.starlightdinnertheatre.com

The Secret Garden \$19. Village Players, 34660 Woodward Ave., Birmingham. May 11 - 27. 248-644-2075. www.birminghamvillageplayers.com

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

PROFESSIONAL

A Few Good Men \$20. What A Do Theatre, 4071 W. Dickman Road, Springfield. May 4 - 19. 269-282-1953. www.WhatADo.org

Avenue Q \$25. The Box Theater, 51 N. Walnut, Mount Clemens. May 4 - 19. 586-954-2311. www.theboxtheater.com

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

Boogie Stomp! \$25. Stormfield Theatre, 201 Morgan Lane, Lansing. May 10 - 20. 517-351-6555. www.stormfieldtheatre.org

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

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

Ernie \$20-25. City Theatre, 2301 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Through July 29. 1-800-745-3000. www.olympiaentertainment.com

From My Hometown \$30-39. Meadow Brook Theatre, 2200 N. Squirrel Road, Rochester. Through May 13. 248-370-3300. www.mbttheatre.com

God of Carnage \$23-27. Farmers Alley

Theatre, 221 Farmers Alley, Kalamazoo. Through May 6. 269-343-2727. www.farmersalleytheatre.com

I Pagliacci \$29-121. Michigan Opera Theatre at Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St., Detroit. May 12 - 20. 313-237-SING. www.michiganopera.org

M. Butterfly Previews May 2, 3 5. \$36-43. The Jewish Ensemble Theatre Company at Aaron DeRoy Theatre, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield. May 2 - 27. 248-788-2900. www.JETTtheatre.org

Mahogany Dreams \$15. Mahogany Dreams, Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, 315 E. Warren Ave., Detroit. May 10 - 12. 202-480-9469. Mahoganydreamstageplay.eventbrite.com

Major Barbara \$12-30. Hilberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. Through May 5. 313-577-2972. www.hilberry.com

May Festival of Readings Every Tuesday evening. \$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. www.FlintYouthTheatre.org

Merman's Apprentice \$25. The Acorn Theater, 107 Generations Dr., Three Oaks. May 11 - 13. 269-756-3879. www.acorntheater.com

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

Now That I Can Dance - Motown 1962 \$20. Mosaic Youth Theatre at Detroit Film Theatre, 5200 Woodward Ave. (John R. entrance), Detroit. May 11 - 20. 313-872-6910. www.mosaicdetroit.org

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

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

Spring Awakening \$15. The AKT Theatre Project at The Wyandotte Arts Center, 81 Chestnut Road, Wyandotte. Through May 5. 734-258-8370. www.AKTtheatre.com

The 4th Annual Kalamazoo Improv Festival \$25. Crawlspace Theatre Productions at Farmers Alley Theatre, 221 Farmers Alley, Kalamazoo. May 10 - 12. 269-599-7390. www.crawlspacetheatre.com

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

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

The Tempest Project \$10-15. The New Theatre Project, Mix Studio Theater, 130 W. Michigan Ave., Ypsilanti. May 8 - 27. 734-645-9776. www.thenewtheatreproject.org

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

ART 'N' AROUND

Ann Arbor Art Center "the PRINT" The Ann Arbor Art Center's annual exhibition the Print invites artists to showcase experimental print techniques encompassing those of contemporary standards as well as those of time honored tradition. Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 W. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. April 1-June 10. 734-995-8004. Annarborartcenter.org

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

Flint Institute of Arts "Abstract Expressionism" Abstract expressionism was the first specifically American art movement to achieve international influence and put New York City as the new center of the western art world. Drawing on works from the FlA's permanent collection, along with important loans from regional museums, the exhibition surveys the art movement from its origins in the post World War II period to the latest developments in the 21st century. Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley, Flint. May 5-Aug. 19. 810-234-1695. Flintarts.org

Greenfield Village "Day Out with Thomas: Mystery on the Rails Tour 2012" Help Thomas the Tank Engine find the clues and solve the mystery! Our favorite No. 1 engine is set to roll into Greenfield Village for the Day Out with Thomas: Mystery On The Rails Tour 2012. All little engineers and their families are invited to take a ride on Thomas and participate in fun Thomas-themed activities. Admission: \$11.75. Greenfield Village, 20900 Oakwood Blvd., Dearborn. April 28-May 13. 800-835-5237. TheHenryFord.org

Lawrence Street Gallery "Nora Mendoza-My Life Through My Paintings" A sweeping retrospective exhibition of member artist Nora Chapa Mendoza, former recipient of the "Michigan Governor's Arts Award" which named her artist of the year in 1999. Lawrence Street Gallery, 22620 Woodward Ave., Suite A, Ferndale. May 2-May 26. 248-544-0394. Lawrencestreetgallery.com

The Detroit Institute of Arts "Once Upon a Time: Prints and Drawings that Tell Stories" Telling stories through prints and drawings. Includes selections from familiar series, portfolios and books, as well as several examples that have rarely or never been seen. Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward, Detroit. Dec. 18-May 13. 313-833-7900. Dia.org

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Peter Campus: Kiva" Pioneer of video art who experimented with the medium in the 1970s alongside other notable artists Bill Viola, Bruce Nauman, and Joan Jonas. Campus created both large-scale projections and a series of little-seen installation works that employ live video feeds, of which Kiva (1971) is one. University Of Michigan Museum Of Art, 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. May 5-Aug. 12. 734-763-4186. Umma.umich.edu

Add your events to next week's issue!

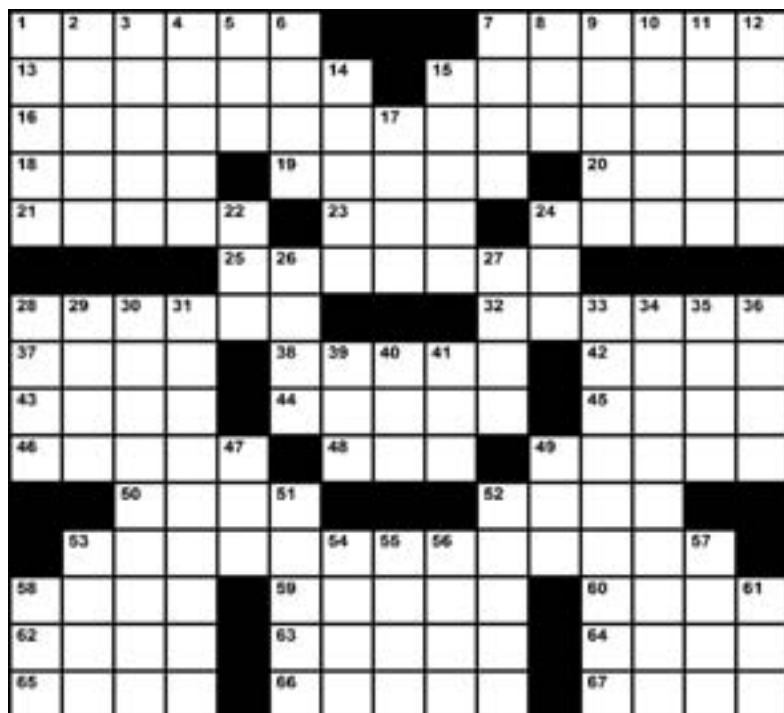
http://www.pridesource.com/calendar.html

Pride Source's Event Calendar is on Facebook and Twitter!

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Costanza on Lesbians



Across

- 1 Change positions, in volleyball
- 7 Shakespeare's Ariel, for one
- 13 What "bottom's up" is to "pub's motto"
- 15 "The Double Man" author
- 16 Start of an explanation
- 18 Betty of cartoons
- 19 In a tough spot
- 20 If that fails
- 21 Atlas blow-up
- 23 Minn. neighbor
- 24 Brian of figure skating
- 25 Carpenter's tool
- 28 More of the explanation
- 32 Costanza, who explained why lesbians fascinate straight guys
- 37 Sheltered on the sea
- 38 More of the explanation
- 42 Vichyssoise veggie
- 43 Gay horror writer Michael
- 44 Birds at sea
- 45 Hump on the beach
- 46 Italian sauce
- 48 More of the explanation
- 49 Boneheads
- 50 "___ off to see the wizard"
- 52 A word from Pilate

- 53 End of the explanation
- 58 She danced with Whoopi in "Ghost"
- 59 Jewish scripture
- 60 Penetrating reed
- 62 Neighbor of Pakistan
- 63 Top
- 64 Spread it on your muffin
- 65 Place to walk, for short
- 66 Lord of La Mancha
- 67 Diminished by

Down

- 1 Steven Greenberg, for one
- 2 There's a single runner
- 3 Meat-filled treats
- 4 With a wide-open mouth
- 5 Broadway bio
- 6 Right on a map
- 7 Where you stack wood or spank
- 8 Friday's check
- 9 Less polite
- 10 Clay Aiken and others
- 11 In need of a backrub
- 12 Return key on a PC
- 14 Producer Neil
- 15 Puts an edge on
- 17 Mind the bar
- 22 Day before Fri.

- 24 Be in the hole
- 26 "... long ___ both shall live?"
- 27 Is unlike Dorian Gray
- 28 Not remain straight
- 29 Skin moisturizer
- 30 Rachel Maddow, for one
- 31 About to go down, perhaps
- 33 Opposite of avant-garde
- 34 Not for one time only (var.)
- 35 Cause of homosexuality, according to some
- 36 Just makes, with "out"
- 39 WWW address ending
- 40 Game with "Skip" cards
- 41 Col. Grethe Cammermeyer, today
- 47 Rough stuff underground
- 49 Thespians do it
- 51 Rob of "Melrose Place"
- 52 Anesthesia of old
- 53 Hatcher of "Desperate Housewives"
- 54 Top or bottom of the world
- 55 St. Patrick's land
- 56 Caesar opponent
- 57 Lower digits
- 58 Proust's ten
- 61 Shooter in Bruce Weber's field

Solution on page 32



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Horoscopes

Get wild and crazy, Capricorn!

BY JACK FERTIG

Mercury conjoining Eris triggers battles of wits and verbal one-upmanship. That can easily lead to silly arguments. Fortunately, Venus is in Gemini sextile to both, bringing charm and affection to help keep it to playful banter.

ARIES (March 20 – April 19): Mercury in your sign may have you convinced that you're a silver-tongued wit, but he's likelier making you a motor-mouthed annoyance. Write down what you have to say and think about it carefully before you say it.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20): Yes, darling, you are truly fabulous, but true fabulosity speaks for itself. Pushing it too hard is easy to do and only reveals your own doubts. That nagging voice inside your head may be pointing you to something you need to check out.

GEMINI (May 21- June 20): Trying to be the shining light among your friends may generate more heat than light. Give it a rest and just be your own sweet self. Your partner's criticism is worth listening to. If you must argue, at least listen!

CANCER (June 21- July 22): Sharp awareness of the financial future can too easily degenerate into useless worries. Real as your problems may be, it's too easy to imagine them as worse than they are. If you can't take positive steps at least focus on constructive ideas.

LEO (July 23 – August 22): Normally you love attention, but now you are feeling conspicuous and a bit disconnected. Feeling unsettled can make you argumentative. Relax. Do what you do best and let your work speak for itself.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22): Talking filth with your sweetie could get you slapped, but is it a good slap or a bad one? Getting kinky can invigorate a relationship, but be very clear on limits, safety and clear communications. Harder and heavier does not always equal better.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22): If you're wondering if a doctor should look at that the answer is yes.

Building a real partnership includes hard work and hard conversations. If your mate is coming off as too competitive ask yourself what you're doing to provoke that.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21): Those problems you see at work probably don't need your solutions. Discuss them gently, inquiringly with others concerned. Don't insist. If your baby's best attribute is sexiness you need to grow up and move on, but not necessarily today.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 20): Collaborative efforts will shine, but they do require effort. Share your best ideas gently and credit enthusiastically. Promoting your own creative efforts is OK, too, but better if your partner does that for you.

CAPRICORN (December 21 – January 19): Get wild and crazy. You need a release. Focusing that energy into a creative project is best, but don't let that hang you up. Not a good time to take up an extreme sport, but that leaves a lot of room.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18): Your wicked mouth is like a super-power. Will you use it for self-indulgent entertainment or for the public good? Bitchy acerbic wit needs a victim, but that's the one thing that politicians are always good for.

PISCES (February 19 – March 19): Don't let financial news throw you into a tizzy. Calm, discipline and cooperation will help you find solutions. Know who's on your side and who you can confide in. Sudden inspirations aren't reliable, but can point you to ideas that are.

Jack Fertig, can be reached at 415-864-8302, through his website at www.starjack.com, and by email at QScopes@qsyndicate.com.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Deep Inside Hollywood



Dolly Parton. Photo: Van Redin

Conservative 'Butler': Jane Fonda

Jane Fonda has spent her entire life working for liberal causes when she wasn't busy building a career as one of our most acclaimed actresses. And if you're old enough to remember the era when she was disparagingly referred to as "Hanoi Jane," you'll know that she wasn't afraid to court controversy and right-wing scorn in the process. Now, in her eighth decade, she's going to court a little more by playing Nancy Reagan in gay director Lee Daniels' ("Precious") new film "The Butler." A biopic of White House butler Eugene Allen, who worked for a string of Presidents from 1952 to 1986,

Daniels is currently in talks with Forest Whitaker to take on the title role. And with an African-American filmmaker in charge of a production about a black man in a domestic service position, here's hoping the finished product can avoid the kind of negative press that followed last year's "The Help." Of course, no matter how the movie turns out, Fox News is going to get a lot of mileage out of it.

Brittany S. Pierce meets Harmony Korine

Indie filmmaker Harmony Korine is no stranger to the weird. He's built an outsider-cool reputation thanks to his early script for the '90s drama "Kids" and his later increasingly bizarre films

"Gummo" (about trailer park Americana), "Mister Lonely" (about a commune populated by celebrity impersonators who live each day as their chosen alter ego) and "Trash Humpers" (about... well, the title explains it). So what's next for the daring director? How about a spring break action-comedy featuring America's favorite teenage lesbian cheerleader? "Glee"'s Heather Morris has joined the cast of Korine's "Spring Breakers," a head-scratching detour about four college girls who rob a restaurant to fund their spring break vacation, only to fall in with a gang of drug and arms dealers who want them to work full time on the opposite side of the law. And Morris isn't the only stunt-casting move here. Rounding out the cast is James Franco, Vanessa Hudgens, Selena Gomez and "Pretty Little Liars" regular Ashley Benson. Get ready, tweens, Harmony Korine is coming to corrupt you.

'Steel Magnolias': the TV movie

If you never saw the original 1989 film version of "Steel Magnolias" with Dolly Parton and Julia Roberts then you've got a little catching up to do on the subjects of Southern idiosyncrasy, female bonding, the trouble with men, the fragility of life and the importance of a good hairstyle (it's all centered around a beauty salon). A huge hit and an enduring touchstone of gay culture, it was, therefore, a no-brainer that Lifetime would want to get behind a small-screen remake. Even smarter? Executive producer Queen Latifah (still not an official lesbian, for the record) has assembled an all-black cast filled with beloved names like Phylicia Rashad, Jill Scott, Latifah herself and newcomers

like lesbian indie film "Pariah"'s breakout star Adepero Oduye. Talk about crossing demographic boundaries. This is probably going to call for a girls night in when it finally hits the airwaves.

Let's start the boycott of 'Ender's Game' now

Sci-fi author Orson Scott Card hates gays. That's the first thing you should know. Like, he "really" hates gays. Just Google some of the things he's said about us. It's Santorum-level stuff. He actively fights civil rights laws. He's on the board of the anti-gay group, the National Organization for Marriage. And that's why it's more than a little disconcerting to report that his most famous novel, "Ender's Game," a modern sci-fi classic, is about to get the big-budget, big screen treatment from "X-Men Origins: Wolverine" director Gavin Hood. It will star "Hugo"'s Asa Butterfield as Ender, Harrison Ford, Viola Davis, Abigail Breslin, Hailee Steinfeld and Sir Ben Kingsley. Expect hardcore sci-fi fans to geek out and look the other way, gay sci-fi fans to feel conflicted, Card apologists to lecture you on how to separate the art from the artist and Hollywood to pretend like they haven't just bankrolled Maggie Gallagher a little more. Coming soon to a multiplex near you.

Romeo San Vicente likes science fiction best when its creators respect science. He can be reached care of this publication or at DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.

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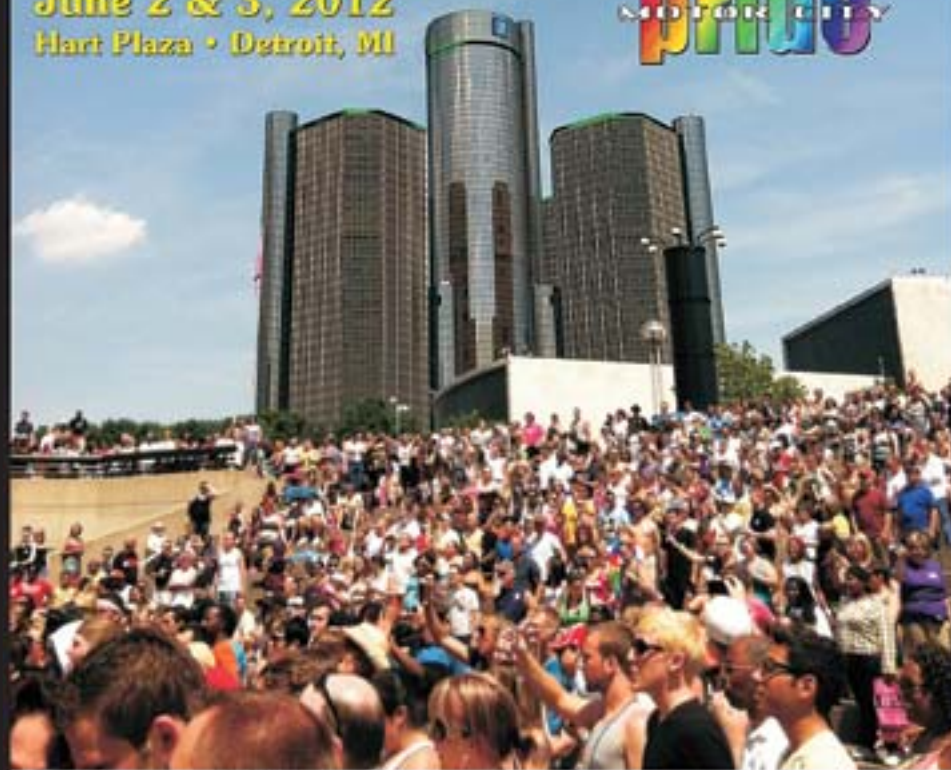
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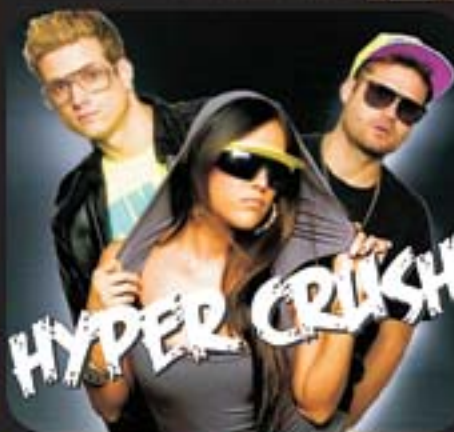
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AIDS Partnership Michigan.... 35

ATTORNEYS

Attorney Pierce 19
Gittleman, Steven 31
Marc Shefman 11
Rasor Law Firm 19

AUTO/COLLISION

Autometric Body Shops..... 24

AUTO/DEALER

LaFontaine Hyundai 2
Hodges Imported Cars 23

BAKERIES

Avalon International Breads .. 21

BANKS

Fifth Third Bank 36

BAR/CLUBS/DISCOS

aut Bar 26

BARBER SHOP

Steven B's Barber Shop 22

CARPET CLEANERS

Hagopian Cleaning Services.. 14

CHIROPRACTORS

Ferndale Chiropractic Center.. 24

COUNSELING

Cantrell, Christine, Ph.D.,LLC .. 20
Joe Kort and Associates..... 19
Joseph, Denise Ph.D. 14
Jozwiak, Rosemary,
MA, LPC, CCBT, DVCE 31

DENTISTS

Williamson, Ron T., DDS 3

EDUCATION

College for Creative Studies.. 15

ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS

Paff - The Electric Company.. 11

EQUIPMENT RENTAL

Button's Rent-It..... 24

EROTICA

Blue Moon Video/DVD 32
Just 4 Us 25
Uptown Bookstores..... 33

EVENTS AND FUNDRAISERS

Canning Communications 16
Dog Wash for Cancer 22
Equality Michigan 34

FLOORING

Modern Floors Carpet One 3

GROCERS

University Foods 26

HEAD SHOP

3 Doors Down Head Shop 32

HEATING & COOLING

Air-Master Heating & Cooling.. 2

INTRODUCTION SERVICES

Mega Mates..... 32

JEWELERS

Miner's Den 16

LANDSCAPING/NURSERIES

Barson's Greenhouses 20
Green Thumb Garden Center.. 22
Rock Shoppe 21

MASSAGE

Rosenberg, David..... 31

MATTRESSES

American Mattress Gallery ... 19

MUSEUM

The Detroit Institute of Arts 5

OPERA COMPANY

Michigan Opera Theatre.. 18, 21

PET SERVICES - VETERINARIAN

Patterson Dog & Cat Hospital .. 27

PHARMACY

Crown Pharmacy 16
Direct Rx..... 21
MedCart..... 23

PHYSICIANS

Dr. Paul Benson, D.O. 23
Partridge Creek OB Gyn 26

REAL ESTATE

Bruhn, Marsha 26

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RELIGIOUS & SPIRITUAL

Dignity Detroit..... 31
Divine Peace Metropolitan
Community Church 11
Metropolitan Community
Church of Detroit 24
Whosoever Ministry 31

RESEARCH

Jackson, Sydney..... 11

RESTAURANTS

Honest John's..... 11
The French Laundry/CRUST .. 16

THEATRES

Fisher Theatre..... 16
Jewish Ensemble Theatre 14
Performance Network..... 27
Purple Rose Theatre Co. 19

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