

MICHIGAN'S LGBT NEWS SOURCE CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

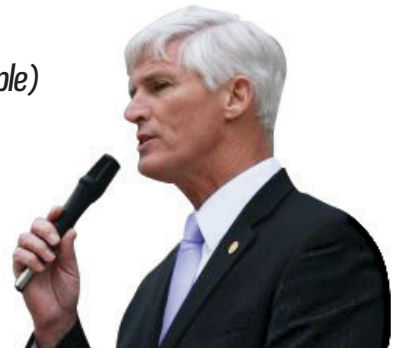


U-M Students Join
In Global Day Of Rage

Your Movie Guide
For Last-Minute Gifts

“Folks, they (gay people)
want free medical because
they're dying between 30
and 44 years old.”

-Dave Agema,
Former State Rep., pg. 5



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COVER

8 A sit-down with Santa

BTL photo: Emell Derra Adolphus



NEWS

- 4 Remembering Ruth Ellis
- 5 Agema slammed for anti-gay screed
- 6 Barney Frank in metro Detroit for key events
- 6 Media analysis on Agema statements
- 7 U-M joins in the global day of rage
- 10 Abrams lost her church, but has found her calling
- 13 Defense bill squabble worries some
- 14 Federal regulations changing post-DOMA

OPINION

- 4 Viewpoint
- 12 Progress and the road ahead
- 14 Creep of the Week
- 15 Parting Glances

LIFE

- 16 Screen Queen
- 18 Back to the D
- 21 Cool Cities: Lansing
- 23 A night of Beckett at the Abreact
- 24 Happenings
- 29 Cool Cities: Royal Oak
- 32 Classifieds
- 34 Puzzle

Those (verses) are not talking about persons who are in loving, committed relationships ... Today we're not in those times anymore. People are in loving same-sex relationships. Jesus never mentioned homosexuality, so **if we are to be followers of Christ we need to be looking at what he felt a need to discuss and address.**

— Bishop Allyson Abrams on verses used to condemn homosexuality, pg. 7



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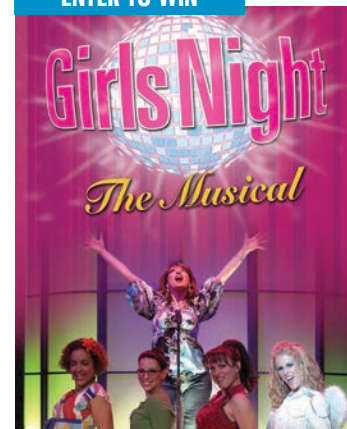
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Viewpoint: A Letter Of Hope And Gratitude

BY GERALD PETERSON



There is something special about this time of year. For many, it offers an opportunity to reflect on the blessings in their lives. Surprise, love, family, friends, laughter and joy most often make the list. And why shouldn't they be first and foremost on our list of all things we are grateful for? It is the impact of the people around us that warm our heart, strengthen our spirit and star in our

most cherished memories.

Early one morning, before anyone else arrived, I wandered through the halls of Ruth Ellis Center admiring the work of the LGBTQ runaway and homeless youth we serve displayed on every wall. I stopped at the family tree mural, designed by several of the youth and painted by volunteers. Each branch holds small leaves with the names of youth, staff, volunteers and friends of the Center. As I scanned each leaf, I realized this year's list of blessings was going to be much longer. I say this because in that moment, it dawned on me that this tree didn't just represent a caring, supportive and courageous community in which I'm thrilled to share, it also represents the growth of Ruth Ellis Center as an organization, and the impact it has had on so many young lives.

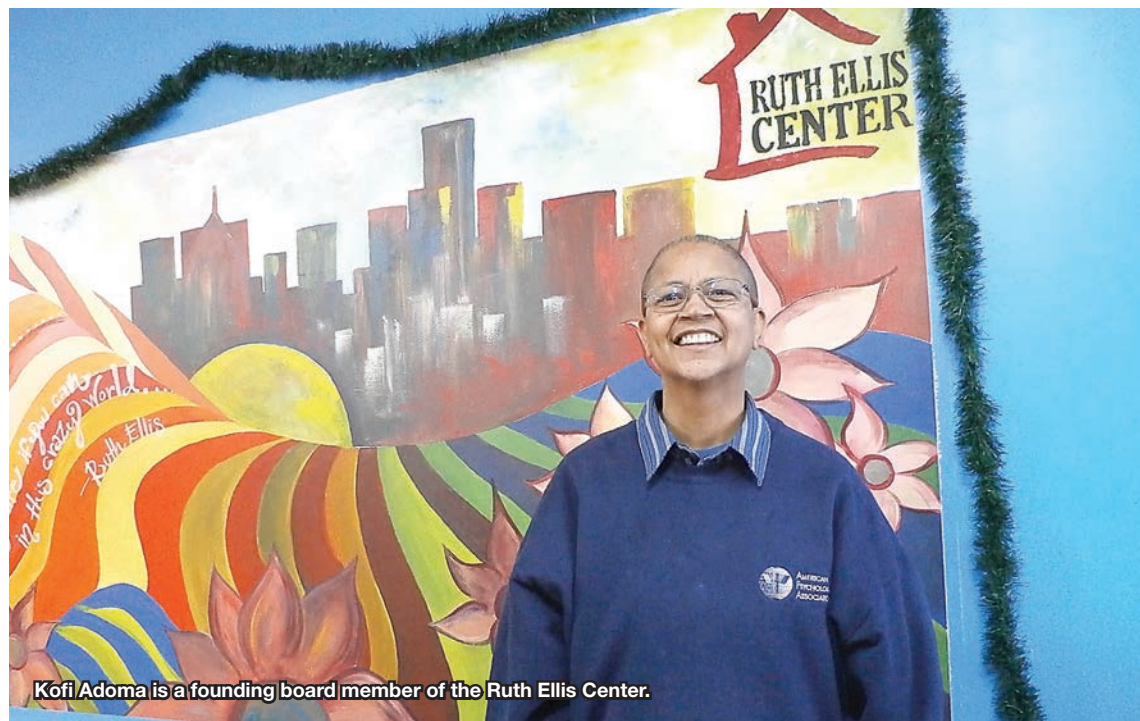
Each leaf on this tree means a young person in our community found a safe place to eat a hot meal, take a shower, find clean clothes, share in the fellowship of peers, and gain access to shelter and mental health services. On a larger scale, this tree represents more than 50 percent of the homeless LGBTQ youth in Metro Detroit, and its empty branches remind us of those we have yet to reach.

Our accomplishments this year are in no way only ours to share. The community both here in Michigan and around the country has supported our efforts through financial contributions, volunteer opportunities and donations of clothing and food. On behalf of the board of directors, staff and youth at Ruth Ellis Center, thank you. We could not do the work we do without your assistance.

Though our commitment is unwavering and our presence has never been more valued, Ruth Ellis Center, like many other grassroots organizations, must contend with budget cuts. This past year we lost significant federal funding, impacting not only our organization, but more importantly, homeless LGBTQ youth in our community. While we are optimistic of Ruth Ellis Center's future, it is nevertheless a critical time for us. As the saying goes, "It takes a village to raise a child." We certainly agree, but instead of a village, let's go with our friends, allies and advocates.

As we move into this New Year, I encourage you to consider the impact Ruth Ellis Center has had in our community. How proud you are to know that right here in Michigan we have a nationally recognized organization dedicated to protecting runaway and homeless LGBTQ youth. Help us move forward into 2014 stronger than ever before. Recurring monthly donations determine the sustainability of our organization, and directly impact the programs and services available to our youth. Become a member of our family today, become a Ruth's Angel and in doing so, you will literally save lives. Donations, both one time and monthly recurring, may be submitted through our website at www.ruthelliscenter.org or by mail at 77 Victor St. Highland Park, MI.

Gerald W. Peterson is the executive director of the Ruth Ellis Center



Kofi Adoma is a founding board member of the Ruth Ellis Center.

Remembering Ruth Ellis

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

DETROIT - The first snow had hit the Detroit area, and the guests at the fundraiser this weekend shivered in the poorly-heated upstairs room of the Ruth Ellis Center as the snow melted off their boots and they debated if they should keep their hats on or not. "For those of you who braved the cold to be here, thank you. When I don't want to come out in weather like this, it reminds me that for many of the youth who use the Ruth Ellis Center, this is what they have to face every day," said Kofi Adoma.

Adoma organized the gathering to raise money for the center and to celebrate the life of the Center's namesake Ruth Ellis. Known to many in the community as "Mother

Ruth," Ellis was considered to be the oldest out lesbian during a time when generations of men and women began coming out of the closet and standing up for their rights.

Saturday's fundraiser featured a film that is over ten years old, but is historically significant for people in the LGBT community and for allies who want to better understand the spirit of the center. The documentary was called *Living With Pride: Ruth C. Ellis @ 100* by Yvonne Welbon, it showed not only an important piece of LGBT history, but also the history of Detroit, and the history of black America.

Ellis was born July 23, 1899. Her father was the first black postal carrier in Springfield, IL. She had three brothers, all of whom served

in World War I. Her mother died while she was a teenager and her father never seemed to notice or mind that she spent more time with girls, than getting herself into trouble with boys.

In 1908, Ellis experienced her first race riot, which resulted in 40 homes burned, black and Jewish owned businesses destroyed, and an 80 year-old black man being lynched after having been married to a white woman for over 30 years. The NAACP grew out of those troubling riots, and they left Ellis with the memory of her father protecting their home by sleeping across the doorway with a sword in hand.

Ellis graduated high school in 1919, a time when only 5 percent of high school graduates were black women. Her brother broke ground by being the first black doctor in Champaign, IL. They lived through years when blacks could not use the same restrooms as whites, and when they had to sit in the back of movie theatres and opera houses.

Ellis courted several ladies in her teens and 20s, but it was Cecilene "Babe" Franklin that ultimately won her heart. The two corresponded for years until Ellis moved to Detroit in 1937 in search of a more prosperous life. Babe met her there and together they bought a house at Oakland and Caniff.

This house became one of the first safe places for black LGBT



Roland Smith, Bill Rauch and Karen Brown, were part of a discussion group called Race Matters in the early 2000s. They were on hand to discuss the film about Ruth Ellis. BTL photos: Crystal Proxmire.

See Ruth Ellis, next page

people in Detroit. From 1941 to 1971 it was known as “the gay spot,” a place where people could be themselves, play piano, sing, play cards, and socialize. Often the women would take in gay people who had nowhere else to go. They even used what little they had to help young people go to college.

Ellis focused on running a printing business out of the home, and though the women’s relationship got rocky and they saw other people, the women lived together and shared the job of making their home a home for the whole community until the home was torn down in 1971 to make room for a freeway. They parted ways as friends and Babe died in 1975.

For Ellis a whole new world opened up when she met a white lady living downstairs from her in her building. Jaye Spiro, a martial arts instructor, piqued Ellis’ curiosity because of the way she was dressed, thinking that she was “dressed like a lesbian,” even though she had never met a white lesbian before.

The two became instant friends, and Spiro began making sure “Mother Ruth” was part of the growing LGBT movement. Ellis enjoyed trips to the Women’s Music Festival, taking part in rallies for various causes, and mentoring dozens of women. She remained active and alert and lived to be 101 years old. Just before her passing she learned that that the Ruth Ellis Center would be opened and named in her honor.

Since that time, The Ruth Ellis Center has grown into a safe haven for runaway, homeless and at-risk youth. It is one of only four programs in the country that provides housing for LGBT youth, and it serves over 500 youth a year with social services including their Drop In Center and residential facility. They provide life skills education, support and educational groups, mental health services for youth and their families, clothing and care items, community-building activities and a place to be safe and accepted.

For the fundraiser, Adoma gathered members of a discussion group that was active in the late 90s and early 2000s called Race Matters. They led a discussion about the film and shared their memories of “Mother Ruth.”

“I met Ruth at a dance, and she was just a jewel of a person,” said Roland Smith. “She was a person that wanted to impact change. She saw the differences in the way people were treated and she tried to be inclusive. In being herself she drew people to her.”

Bill Rauch also remembered Ellis. “A lot of things she did weren’t because she had some fierce political agenda, she just did things because they seemed right,” Rauch said.

Adoma, who was interviewed in the film, said it is important that people continue to remember Ellis and her spirit. “When the kids are in here dancing and voguing, I tell them they’re honoring Ruth because she loved to dance.”

She also brought up two other points about the film, stating that “the movie brought up issues of how we treat our elders,” and that “just like Ruth Ellis was a role model to us, we are role models to the youth today.”

For more information on Ruth Ellis Center, visit <http://www.ruthelliscenter.org/>.

Agema Slammed For Anti-Gay Screed

Snyder, MDCH, Speaker Bolger, American Airlines Respond

BY TODD HEYWOOD

LANSING - Politicians from both parties, Agema’s former employer, wasted no time slamming Republican National Committeemen from Michigan Dave Agema’s latest antigay comments. Politicians were responding to a national action call by Equality Michigan which demanded politicians - particularly Republicans - condemn Agema’s statements and require him to resign his national post.

“What I’d say, plainly and simply, is that the Governor believes Mr. Agema’s remarks are wrong, extreme and discriminatory. We shouldn’t tolerate discrimination of any kind. There shouldn’t be room for that in any political party. Period,” said Sara Wurfel, a spokesperson for Republican Governor Rick Snyder in an email to BTL.

Agema made national headlines Nov. 26 when his comments at a Berrien County Republican event over the weekend made the local newspaper.



Former State Rep. Dave Agema speaking during an anti-immigration rally last year. Agema went on an anti-gay tirade Dec. 5 garnering national attention. BTL photo: Todd Heywood.

The Michigan Department of Community Health said in a statement to BTL that Agema’s age and death claim does not reflect Michigan’s HIV reality.

“Folks, they (gay people) want free medical because they’re dying (when they’re) between 30 and 44 years old,” the Herald Palladium reported Agema said. “To me, it’s a moral issue. It’s a Biblical issue. Traditional marriage is where it should be and it’s in our platform. Those in our party who oppose traditional marriage are wrong.”

The Michigan Department of Community Health said in a statement to BTL that Agema’s age and death claim does not reflect Michigan’s HIV reality.

“In terms of Michigan data, these comments are not reflective of what our data shows,” wrote Angela Minicuci, spokesperson for the department.

Minicuci said deaths associated with HIV/AIDS have “dramatically” decreased

since the advent of antiretroviral drugs in 1995. For instances, there were 921 deaths of people living with HIV in 1995, compared to 121 in 2012. For those living with AIDS, there were 852 deaths in 1995 compared to 107 in 2012.

BTL inquired of MDCH as to whether Agema’s comments helped or hurt the state’s efforts in addressing the HIV crisis.

“Any time there is misinformation about any illness or disease being spread, it hinders the public’s ability to protect themselves and make informed decisions,” Minicuci responded in an email. “With every disease, our overall concern and goal is to make sure that Michigan residents know the facts so that they can get tested, protect themselves, and receive treatment.”

Snyder was not alone in issuing a statement.

“Speaker Bolger is understanding when someone speaks about their faith, but he is disgusted when someone demonizes another person for any reason,” said Ari Adler, spokesperson for Bolger in an email. “I assure you, Mr. Agema does not speak for this office or for where the Speaker stands on the issue of trying to find a reasonable balance between personal liberties and religious freedom.”

State Democrats joined the growing chorus challenging Agema. Four Democratic state representatives from Wastenaw County issued a joint press release condemning the comments, but

stopped short of calling for Agema’s resignation from the Republican National Committee.

“When a leader of a state party makes comments like this it sends a terrible message to the rest of the world,” Rep. Gretchen Driskell (D-Saline) said. “Michigan would do better at attracting jobs and supporting our diverse workforce if outdated and ignorant statements like this were not made.”

Ann Arbor Rep. Jeff Irwin when a step further.

“Dave Agema continues to use pseudo-science and outright lies to advance a hateful, bigoted agenda,” Irwin said. “It says a lot about the Republican Party that they chose Dave Agema for a leadership role. I’m sure there are Republicans who are as disgusted as I am by his behavior, but his views reflect their party’s official position.”

Agema’s Claim American Airlines Forced By San Francisco To Provide Benefits To Gay Couples Not True

Within the same diatribe Nov. 26, Agema, claimed the city of San Francisco forced American Airlines (his former employer) to provide domestic partner benefits.

CREEP OF WEEK
 BTL picks Agema as Creep of Week
 >> See page 14

See Agema, page 6



Barney Frank In Metro Detroit For Key Events

Holocaust Exhibit Opening

A nationally acclaimed exhibit “Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals 1933-1945,” on tour from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, opens Jan. 5 at the Holocaust Memorial Center. Former U.S. Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass.) will give the keynote address at the opening reception at 4:30 p.m. Frank is considered the most prominent gay politician in the U.S., He served as a U.S. Congressman from Massachusetts from 1981 to 2013 and is known for his advocacy for LGBT rights.

Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazi German regime promoted racial health policies that sought to eliminate all sources of biological corruption to its dominant “Aryan” race. Among the groups persecuted as threats to the national health were Germany’s homosexual men. Believing them to be carriers of a “degeneracy” that weakened society and hindered population growth, the Nazi state arrested and incarcerated in prisons and concentration camps tens of thousands of German men as a means of terrorizing them into social conformity.

Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals 1933–1945 examines the Nazi regime’s attempt to eradicate homosexuality, which left thousands dead and shattered the lives of many more.

The exhibit will be on display through May 2 at the Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus, 27123 Orchard Lake Rd., Farmington Hills. Tickets to the Jan. 5 opening reception are \$18 for non-members, \$10 for museum members and are available by calling 248-553-2400 ext. 24.

Gary Peters Event

Congressman Peters, who is running as a candidate for U.S. Senate, will have a reception at the home of Michael “Chet” Chetcuti and Kyle Evans at 827 E. Fourth St., Royal Oak. Congressman Barney Frank will be a guest at a reception honoring Congressman Gary Peters.

Those interested in attending can RSVP to Elisa Malile at 248-318-5421 or event@petersformichigan.com. The reception runs from 2 - 4 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 5. Tickets for the event range from \$250 to \$2,600.

To find out more on the events listed in this article, go to BTL’s Calendar at www.pridesource.com/calendar.

Media Analysis On Agema Statements

BY TODD HEYWOOD

The latest controversy involving Dave Agema was treated like a virtual he said/they said tennis match, but the veracity of Agema’s claims were mentioned by only one writer – aside from Between The Lines – Brian Dickerson at the Detroit Free Press.

And Agema’s claims were not accurate or true. He claimed that gay men were dying young, that they wanted free medical care as a result, that they had participated in insurance fraud to achieve that goal through American Airlines and that American Airlines had been forced by San Francisco to offer the benefits.

The Michigan Department of Community Health said Agema’s claims on HIV did not reflect Michigan’s reality and hindered public health activities. American Airlines called his claims “baseless” and BTL proved that a federal court in 1998 exempted airlines from the domestic partner law in San Francisco. Months later, American announced it would offer the benefits as a business decision.

“As the Agema case illustrates, one of the biggest challenges facing modern American journalism is finding the time, resources and will to go beyond episodic reporting of the statements made by sources,” says Bonnie Bucqueroux, a journalism professor at Michigan State University. “If an environmental group says Company X is polluting the river, good reporting requires doing more than simply reporting the statements made by the two sides. In addition to gathering those quotes, a good reporter

goes to the river and takes a look. The reporter should also pursue finding other credible sources, in this case government agencies that monitor our waters. If it’s a big enough story, good reporting requires urging your sources to suggest other folks to interview.”

Later in her email to BTL, Bucqueroux added, “Traditional news outlets today tend to cover the tennis match, as

“As the Agema case illustrates, one of the biggest challenges facing modern American journalism is finding the time, resources and will to go beyond episodic reporting of the statements made by sources,” says Bonnie Bucqueroux, a journalism professor at Michigan State University.

both sides volley with sound bites, outsourcing their function as fact-checkers and analysts to outside groups like Politifacts. The problem, of course, is that state and local reporting rarely inspires or supports this independent function, and we now need a system to fact-check the fact-checkers.”

One solution she proposed was activist organizations directly impacted, doing the research and providing the facts to reporters. But she wondered if those organizations had the capacity to do so.

BTL contacted the heads of several AIDS Service Organizations and asked if any news outlets had reached out to

them in covering the Agema story. All of them said there had been no contact from the media.

Asked why they had not put out their own press releases out and aggressively attempt to address the misinformation pushed by Agema, all the organizations concurred that they did not have the capacity, financially, to pay an employee to monitor the news and respond to erroneous reports about the epidemic.

“From LAAN’s vantage point, and perhaps for all of us, we are struggling to define our position in the new HIV landscape with the new Affordable Care Act and the uncertainties relative to the Ryan White Care Act,” wrote Jake Distel, executive director of the Lansing Area AIDS Network.

For Kyle Murphy, assistant director for communications at the National Minority AIDS Council, ASOs have an obligation to try to reach out when the epidemic is making news.

And the Agema case offers a perfect opportunity for the community to respond, he said.

“At their core, Agema’s comments were both offensive and absurd. But they do provide an opportunity to educate the public. First, for those who have access to health care, HIV has become a manageable, chronic condition,” Murphy wrote in an email to BTL. “Average life expectancies for people on treatment are nearly equivalent to those of HIV-negative individuals. Second, homophobia and stigma play a significant role in perpetuating the spread of HIV. In states that have passed marriage equality, we have actually seen a drop in new HIV infections. We seek recognition of our relationships, because as humans and citizens, we deserve to be treated equally.”

► Agema

Continued from p. 5

“I know what happened to American Airlines when San Francisco said we could not land in San Francisco and do business with American Airlines unless we paid same sex unmarried benefits,” said Agema.

The problem? Agema’s claim does not match the facts provided by history.

The City of San Francisco passed an ordinance requiring all contractors to the city to provide domestic partner benefits in 1996 and 1997. Among those contractors were airlines, including United and American. United, which had a larger presence in the city’s airport, challenged the ordinance in federal court. The airlines were represented by their

industry interest groups, Air Transport Association of America and Airline Industrial Relations Conference. The Federal Express Corporation also joined the suit as a plaintiff.

The federal court sided with the airline industry in 1998, ruling the city had overstepped its bounds under federal law.

An American Airlines spokesperson has called the National Republican Committeemen’s comments “baseless.”

“While it is our company policy not to discuss comments made by former employees, we find these statements to be baseless. We have long-term policies of inclusion, fairness and equality. Because of this commitment, this week, for the 12th consecutive year, American earned a perfect 100-percent score on the HRC Corporate Equality Index. Our policies speak for themselves,” a

spokesperson for the company wrote in a statement provided exclusively to Between The Lines.

In months later, in August of 1998, American Airlines announced it would offer domestic partner benefits to same-sex partners.

“The airline made the decision after receiving several requests from its single employees. The airline, which is based in Fort Worth, Texas, has 107,000 employees worldwide, including 10,000 who work for American Eagle. We just feel that the time was right to do it,” said Tim Kincaid, a spokesman for American Airlines in 1998.

“A lot of other companies have had good experiences with it,” he said. “It’s in the best interests of our employees and our company.”

U-M Students Join In The Global Day Of Rage

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

University of Michigan PhD student Rebecca Grapevine was in India as a Fulbright Scholar in 2009 when the High Court in Delhi struck down Section 377 of India's code barring homosexuality. And in reaction to the recent Indian Supreme Court ruling that reinstated the ban, Grapevine was part of a group of students here who participated in a global Day of Rage protest against the decision.

"Before 2009 I think it was a very systemic form of discrimination," Grapevine said. "One of the major arguments in the 2009 decision was that discrimination has a chilling effect

part of the British Empire, this provision is replicated in over thirty countries, often with the same code number. Among them are countries in Asia and Africa, including Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

"India's really been at the forefront of change. The 2009 decision is a really inspiring document. It set out a really bold agenda in moving away from a colonial area. It drew on evidence and legal developments from around the world, and it set an example for the other nations with similar codes," Grapevine said. "The Supreme Court went backwards."

The decision puts many Indians in a precarious position, as many people came out of the closet after the 2009 ruling.

The Ann Arbor students showed solidarity by chanting and holding signs. "We've entered a period where we can't just define these discussions to nations. Decisions are made on a global level. ... I think people in Michigan should care because it's part of a global struggle. There are no boundaries. This global day of solidarity shows we don't want national boundaries to confine how we think."

The U-M protest joined over 35 others taking place around the world, including several in India.



Ann Arbor comes out in support of Global Day of Rage over India's reinstatement of a code banning homosexuality.



New Delhi protests

on the people. It has been used to harass people who the state perceives as troublemakers and it cast a shadow over the rights and freedom of people to be themselves."

The protest at U-M law school brought together over 25 people from many backgrounds and walks of life in solidarity for the Indian people. Danish Sheikh, an attorney studying in Michigan for a year from India, organized the protest locally. He sent word out on Facebook about the injustice, calling people to meet and make signs.

"We set up at the law school and we gathered together to make posters. Danish spoke for a short period about how important the 2009 decision had been for him and how difficult it had been to come out before that," said Grapevine.

Section 377 is a 150 year-old provision that punishes "carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal" with imprisonment up to life. Because India was



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A Sit-Down With Santa

The Yuletide Is Gayer Because Of This Royal Oak Resident – And Not Because He’s Gay

BY EMELL DERRA ADOLPHUS

A mother is God in the eyes of a child, as the popular phrase goes – but in December, she could only hope to be a close second to Kris Kringle. And it is this noel notoriety that has hooked Royal Oak resident Seamus O’Neill to his role as a mall Santa Claus for five years.

“The thing is, all of a sudden a little child has got their eyes, their eyes are big and wide and open, and they are looking at me almost like I am a really super important person,” says O’Neill, 63. “And I know that they really think that (I am) Santa Claus. They’re so full of love.”

In his role as Santa, he hears more prayers than the pope – with children requesting Malibu Barbies, happier families and the occasional AK-47. “I kind of scolded him about it,” O’Neill says, recalling the 10-year-old wise guy who inquired the firearm.

On this particular day in mid November, O’Neill isn’t feeling the holiday spirit just yet. He has a roofing job to finish in Ferndale before he catches a flight to California where he’ll be Santa at a mall north of San Francisco. When he’s not making toys in the North Pole, he remodels homes, he explains. And that red suit? He doesn’t need it to be recognized.

A wiry white beard that he maintains with bleach and long silver hair still gets the attention of children during his off season. He admits that he doesn’t



Royal Oak resident Seamus O’Neill has been a mall Santa Claus for five years. BTL photo: Emell Derra Adolphus

cover his receding hairline. One hand’s knuckles bare faint tattoos, as he reveals army type tattoos on his arm. With a potbelly, Santa could have easily been a trucker, O’Neill jokes.

“I never knew Santa Claus. Never. I grew up a very poor boy on the streets,” says O’Neill.

“I didn’t have a father, my mother was always working. And I ran the streets. So I never had any guidance in anything. Santa Claus, Easter Bunny, right from wrong. I had none of that.”

In 1969, O’Neill was kicked out of the military for being gay.

Decades later, he still questions Santa’s ability to infiltrate rigid religious houses, but not sexual orientation.

“They talk about Christmas being the birth of Jesus. So why would they need a Santa Claus? I don’t get it. I don’t think sexuality has anything to do with being a Santa Claus. But I think there’s still

a lot of people (who think differently) and that’s why I was hesitant to do this (interview),” says O’Neill.

“We just want to (be able to) say there’s a gay guy that’s a Santa Claus and it’s OK for your kids to sit on his lap.”

And not just kids – kids at heart, too. “Oh, I have had some grown men sitting on my lap too,” he says, laughing. “I would really like a mix. Males and females, the grown-up ones. I don’t discriminate. I like them all.”

On average he sits with about 16,000 kids each year for photos. And he has no preparation for the season other than a few slices of cake to add to his jolly figure. O’Neill lets out a “ho ho ho.”

“I can tell you this: After Christmas,” he says, “I can’t eat another Christmas cookie or hear another Christmas song or I’ll puke.”

Even Santa can only stand so much yuletide gayness.

In 1969, O’Neill was kicked out of the military for being gay. Decades later, he still questions Santa’s ability to infiltrate rigid religious houses, but not sexual orientation.

understand the appeal to children, but there’s a sense of power when he slips into the red suit.

“I kind of felt a little special,” he says about the first time he put on the suit. “It’s a little different from what I usually wear,” which typically includes socks with sandals and a baseball cap to

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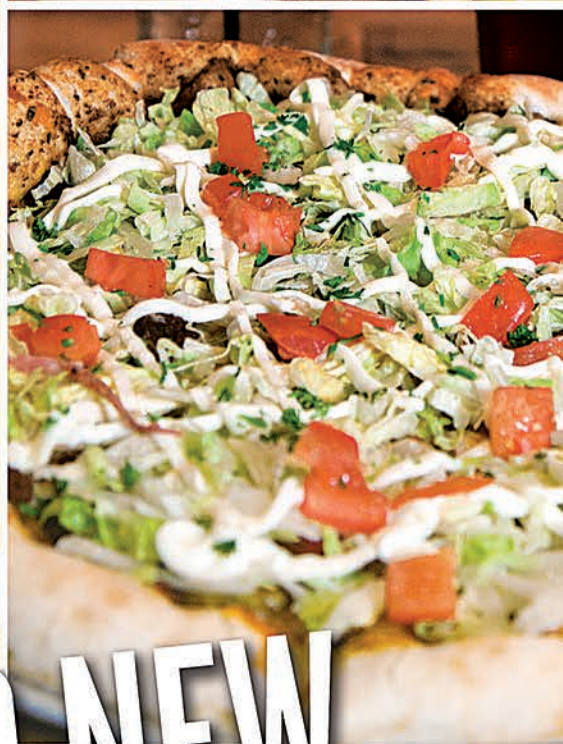
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Abrams Lost Her Church, But Has Found Her Calling

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Her story made national headlines. Bishop Allyson Abrams stepped down from her church, Zion Progress Baptist Church in downtown Detroit, in October after announcing that she had married a woman. A well respected member of Detroit's faith community, Abrams also resigned her positions as secretary of the powerful Detroit Council of Baptist Pastors and co-editor of the magazine of the Progressive National Baptist Convention.

Citing a desire not to split her church, and set member against member, Abrams elected to walk away. But a mere two months later, Abrams, who is currently living with her wife in Maryland, reached out to Between The Lines to let us know that she was still standing, and looking forward to continuing in ministry.

Abrams first felt the call when she was only eight.

"My mother was a preacher in the church," she said. "They called them 'speakers' back then because in the black church, women during those years – the 60s, 70s, 80s – were not allowed to be preachers. But my mother was one who spoke across the city at women's day events and all those special days when they would have women speak."

Though she felt the call early, she wouldn't embrace it right away. An Alabama native, Abrams moved to Washington, D.C., and studied mechanical engineering at Howard University. Then, when she was 26, she relocated to Dayton, Ohio to study divinity at United Theological Seminary where she earned both a master's and a doctorate degree.

After serving at a few churches, she became the first female pastor of Zion, and her ministry grew rapidly. Then, when by chance her ministry crossed paths with that of Bishop Emeritus Diana Williams of the Imani Temple of the African-American Catholic Congregation in Washington, D.C., a special friendship began; one that caused her to reconsider her past beliefs about same-sex relationships and even her own sexual orientation.

"It has been a process for me to work through all of this because of what I had always been taught as a Baptist and then to begin to understand biblical truths on an entirely different level," Abrams said. "I had to go back and do some reading and some studying and some praying and that helped me to become open and change some of my views and change some of the ways that I was

taught to think."

The couple married in Iowa, where same-sex marriage is legal, in March 2013.

"My plan was to, at some point, talk about what it means to be welcoming and affirming and to prayerfully bring the congregation, the members [of Zion], to the point where they would want to be a welcoming church," said Abrams. "You have to teach on scripture. You have to talk about it. You have to let people know that a lot of the teachings of old are not biblical truths. They're simply not."

Abrams said that the verses most commonly



Bishop Allyson Abrams

used to condemn gays in the Bible are misrepresented.

"Those are not talking about persons who are in loving, committed relationships," she said. "Those were talking about the time when there was lots of prostitution going on. Today we're not in those times anymore. People are in loving same-sex relationships. Jesus never mentioned homosexuality, so if we are to be followers of Christ we need to be looking at what he felt a need to discuss and address.

"Basically, I'm suggesting we're supposed to be red letter Christians today," Abrams continued. "Just so you know that this is the son of God and what he said. We're supposed to be red letter Christians as opposed to being Paulinian. Most people are Paulinian today."

Obviously, her plan did not unfold as she had intended. Rumors of her marriage began to make its way through the church before she had been able to lay the proper groundwork to allow for the church to accept it. So she did the only thing she felt she could do. She

See next page

► Bishop

Continued from p. 10

stepped down.

"I know that God uses whomever God pleases to lead God's people, and one of the things that really bothers me is the level of discrimination against clergy who are same gender loving," she said. "That has really gotten under my skin because it's an open discrimination. ... The African-American community, especially the religious community, is quite homophobic. It's disturbing. Because there are so many people of color who are same gender loving, who are identifying as LGBT, so how is it that we're still this homophobic?"

Abrams has been taking a crash course on LGBT politics since being thrust into the spotlight, and she says she's been surprised by what she's found out.

"I've just been looking at the state that I lived in since 1999, and Michigan looks like it's not a state for equality and for the protection of all rights for all people," said Abrams. "I

Somewhere in the next 60-90 days I will be pastoring another church and that church will be welcoming and affirming.

was very shocked to look at the things that Michigan does not have. And I must say saddened as well as shocked. Why would anybody want to remain in the state of Michigan if they cannot have laws that protect them? That has really been on my mind and I'm asking how can I be an advocate for some of those things? I've done social justice things. I was an elected official. I was a school board trustee in Oak Park. So this is now the season to advocate for equality for our LGBT sisters and brothers."

Abrams said it's also the time for her to resume her ministry.

"The United Church of Christ reached out to me and I have submitted paperwork to them," she said. "I have been in conversation with Metropolitan Community Churches and I'm also considering just being on my own, being non-denominational. Somewhere in the next 60-90 days I will be pastoring another church and that church will be welcoming and affirming."

But Abrams promises it will be more than just that, it was also be liberating.

"One of the things I have observed is that oftentimes people in our community, in the LGBT community, go to churches that say they are welcoming and affirming," said Abrams. "But often times these churches allow the LGBT community to come to the door but they are not necessarily always liberated from all of the hurtful words that they have heard from other churches throughout the years. So there needs to be some healing brought to the LGBT community as far as churches and as far as the Bible. So that is my reason for saying that liberation theology must undergird the message. People must know that God loves them, made them in his own image and wonderfully made them to be who they are."

He made LGBT clergy members to be who they are, too. And if she's advocating for anyone, it's for them.

"I wholeheartedly believe that same gender loving clergy are excellent leaders, excellent preachers, teachers, and are very qualified when you talk about leading a church," she said. "I believe that God is very pleased with our work when we honor him in all that we do."

To keep up with the latest on Bishop Abrams, visit www.bishopallysonabrams.com

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“What I'd say, plainly and simply, is that the Governor believes Mr. Agema's remarks are wrong, extreme and discriminatory. We shouldn't tolerate discrimination of any kind. There shouldn't be room for that in any political party. Period.”

- Sara Wurfel, a spokesperson for Republican Governor Rick Snyder in an email to BTL. No censure took place over this past weekend when the state Republicans gathered.

Heard On Facebook

Your Reactions To Dave Agema

John D. Tonkovich: AIDS is not a gay disease. Look at the statistics. Wait a minute...I forgot. Republicans for the most part don't believe in statistics! Snyder and the Republicans in Lansing make my blood boil... Actually the people who believe the Republican lies do too.

Don Martin: It didn't go anywhere. All Snyder's mouthpiece said is what everyone (except the state GOP) already knows.

Randy Woods: Still didn't go far enough

Chris Turek: They are disavowing his comments but has he been censured or disciplined in any way? They are only worried about the political fallout.

Patrick Irish: Ok Snyder's mouthpiece said the Governor is opposed to this type of rhetoric, but until the Michigan GOP cuts the head off this serpent it means nothing...

Bill Tanner: Let them keep talking...This is why the repukes can't win elections these days...or as I like to call them the "Rape is a gift from God Party"



Viewpoint

BY ERIC RADER

The fight for LGBT equality has gained a lot of positive momentum recently, and we can be guardedly optimistic as we look to the future. In just the last year, 10 states have legalized same-sex marriage, raising the total number of states with marriage equality to 16, plus Washington, D.C. In June of this year, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down part of the discriminatory "Defense of Marriage Act" (DOMA), ruling that the law's prohibition on federal recognition of same-sex unions was unconstitutional. This decision paved the way for lesbian and gay married couples to file joint tax returns and receive the federal benefits that straight couples have long enjoyed.

While this has been a time of LGBT progress, change has not happened quickly enough in other areas. For almost 20 years, the Employment Nondiscrimination Act (ENDA) has languished in successive sessions of Congress. LGBT workers can be, and too often are, fired because of their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Polls show that overwhelming majorities of Americans, including people who don't support equal marriage rights, are in favor of workplace protections for LGBT workers. The Senate has now passed ENDA, but the House so far refuses to take action on this important piece of legislation. Groups that oppose extending workplace protections to LGBT workers often argue that such a law would infringe on the religious beliefs of some employers. In fact, the legislation includes religious exemptions and would limit the religious freedoms of no organization.

Though the Supreme Court's decision on DOMA this year was welcome news to LGBTs and our allies, equal marriage rights are still limited to about one third of the country. Michigan and a number of other states have constitutional prohibitions against recognizing legally-married same-sex couples. April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse of Washtenaw County have brought a federal civil rights lawsuit challenging the state ban on gay marriages in our state. Last month, U.S. District Judge Bernard Friedman was expected to rule on their challenge, but instead ordered a trial, to begin Feb. 25, 2014. This case has the potential to legalize same sex marriages in our state, and if it reaches the U.S. Supreme Court, the entire nation. While the Supreme Court punted last year on a California

case that challenged that state's constitutional ban on same-sex marriage, the court will have no choice but to decide the issue in the next year or two. As increasing numbers of Americans come to support equal marriage rights, and as the federal government provides tax and inheritance benefits to legally married same-sex couples, it becomes more obvious than ever that LGBT couples deserve equal marriage rights, and the legal right to adopt children, in every state.

Movement on issues of equality can often be frustrating and slow, and patience can be very difficult to maintain. African Americans endured 250 years of slavery and 100 years of Jim Crow before the Supreme Court and the elected branches of government finally recognized their right to genuine equality under the law. Even with this progress, there are still societal barriers to equality for racial and ethnic minorities, as well as women. Just as the historic election of the first African American president in 2008 did not mean that our society was suddenly equal with regard to race, the passage of marriage equality in 16 states and the District of Columbia is only one important one step in the march toward full equality for LGBTs. Indeed, marriage is only one of a number of areas where LGBT Americans are denied equal and fair treatment. When LGBTs can be bullied in school, fired because of sexual orientation and gender identity, and prohibited from giving a loving home to children who desperately want security, then we still haven't achieved equality.

LGBT Americans and our allies have much to celebrate in light of the successes of recent years. At the same time, future advances in equality will require diligence and hard work. This means that all of us need to stay

Many progressive voters stayed away from the polls in 2010, and the result was a chief executive and state legislature that are hostile to the equal rights of LGBTs in Michigan, and a reactionary, Tea-Party-dominated U.S. House of Representatives.

involved in the political arena. In 2014, voters in Michigan will be choosing a governor, lieutenant governor, and other statewide offices, and the Michigan Legislature. Voters nationwide, including here in Michigan, will be determining the composition of Congress for the final two years of President Obama's term in office. Many progressive voters stayed away from the polls in 2010, and the result was a chief executive and state legislature that are hostile to the equal rights of LGBTs in Michigan, and a reactionary, Tea-Party-dominated U.S. House of Representatives. Increasing majorities of Michiganders support genuine equality for LGBTs, and we must ensure that a hostile minority does not continue to block the march to equal rights for all people in this state and across the country.

HRC info on ENDA passage by the U.S. Senate: www.hrc.org/campaigns/employment-non-discrimination-act. Contact your House member and urge him/her to push for a vote on ENDA: www.house.gov



Defense Bill Squabble Worries Some

BY LISA KEEN

Leaders of the U.S. Senate and House Armed Services committees announced Dec. 9 that they have reached an agreement on the defense authorization bill for the coming year, including some provisions LGBT activists have opposed.

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) proposal calls for authorizing the Defense Department to spend \$625.5 billion in Fiscal Year 2014. Later, an appropriations bill will approve the specific amount of money to be turned over to the department for FY 14 spending. This year's NDAA has been bogged down in debates over efforts to address the growing number of sexual assaults against service members, particularly female service members.

But there were also some amendments offered that LGBT activists opposed. For instance, the House passed its version of NDAA with an amendment from Rep. John Fleming (R-La.) that would require DOD accommodate the religious beliefs, actions, and speech of service members. Some believed that amendment was intended to

allow service members to express their hatred of gays. Fleming's amendment also required that DOD have no limit on such activities unless it could prove the activities would "actually harm" military order and discipline. President Obama promised to veto a bill with this language.

In a press release Dec. 9, the House-Senate leadership said the new bill "requires the accommodation of individual expressions of moral and religious beliefs by service members unless such expressions of belief could have an adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, and good order and discipline."

Human Rights Campaign Government Affairs Director David Stacy said HRC opposed adoption of the Fleming Amendment by the House Armed Services Committee.

He said HRC also opposed an amendment in the Senate Armed Services Committee by Senator Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) before it

was modified. The original Cruz amendment sought to provide service members with the "rights of conscience" to "express their religious faith" and to have the DOD Inspector General to investigate religious discrimination and "any undue influence" by outside groups in creating DOD policy regarding

religious matters. It also called for a survey of military chaplains to determine whether Defense policies forced them to violate their conscience.

The House-Senate leadership said the new bill "requires the accommodation of individual expressions of moral and religious beliefs by service members unless such expressions of belief could have an adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, and good order and discipline."

The NDAA proposal released Monday "requires the DOD IG to assess and report on compliance with regulations for the protection of rights of conscience of service members." It also "Requires the Secretary of Defense to conduct a survey of military chaplains to assess whether restrictions placed on prayers offered in public or non-religious settings have prevented the military chaplains from exercising the tenets of their faith as prescribed by their endorsing faith group or have had an adverse impact on their ability to minister to service members and their families."

On a positive note, the NDAA proposal finally removes from the Uniform Code of Military Justice a long-standing law prohibiting consensual sodomy. It also "Requires the Secretary of Defense to report on DOD personnel policies regarding members of the armed forces with human immunodeficiency virus or Hepatitis B and assess whether the policies reflect a medically accurate understanding of how these conditions are contracted, how they can be transmitted to others, and the risk of transmission."

Russia To Have 'Protest Zone' During Olympics

BY LISA KEEN

The International Olympic Committee announced Tuesday that Russian authorities "plan to set up a protest zone in the city of Sochi."

Concern about protests at the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia, in February have been building for months since the Russian government and President Vladimir Putin enacted laws to prohibit virtually any form of positive expression about "non-traditional" sexual orientations. Activists have pushed athletes, corporate sponsors, and others to express their opposition to the anti-gay laws. The Russian government has promised to both abide by the Olympic Principle 6, which prohibits discrimination of any kind, and to enforce its anti-gay laws. In August, Putin even issued a special decree banning political protests during the Olympics in Sochi.

In a press release Dec. 10, IOC President Thomas Bach said he welcomes the plan for the protest zone "and the fact that people will now have an opportunity to express their views and freely demonstrate their opinions

In August, Putin even issued a special decree banning political protests during the Olympics in Sochi.

in Sochi."

Bach told reporters that the idea had been "under discussion with the IOC for quite some time," though no mention of the possibility had been mentioned previously.

The news came just one day after the IOC announced that it would, during a Dec. 10 IOC executive board meeting in Lausanne, approve a letter to athletes reminding them that Rule 50 of the IOC Charter states that "No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas."

The press release indicated that the executive board did discuss Rule 50, as well as Rule 40, related to drug testing.

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Creep of the Week

Dave Agema

OPINION BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Have you heard the news? American Airlines gives away free health insurance! Now, I know what you're thinking: "This sounds too good to be true. Where's the catch?"



There isn't one! You just have to get AIDS and find a guy who works for American Airlines who'll pretend to be your gay lover. It's as easy as stealing candy from a baby, where in this case candy is health care and a baby is a major airline in the United States.

This sweet deal was apparently on the down low until Republican National Committeeman and former Michigan representative Dave Agema got all loose-lipped on Dec. 5 at the Berrien County Republican Party Holiday Reception (a.k.a. the Berrien Birth of Jesus

Banger).

Agema, who used to be an American Airlines pilot, did a little role-playing to explain how gays are gaming the health care system there.

"I'm a flight attendant," Agema said. "You have AIDS. You come to me and say, 'Hey, tell them I'm your lover for the last six months.' You get on our health care," Agema said. "American Airlines spends \$400,000 before you die of AIDS."

Ah, there's the catch. To get the free health care you have to pretend that Dave Agema is your boyfriend. All of a sudden this plan seems a lot less enticing.

And wait, where does that \$400,000 figure come from? Who cares! That's a lot of money! It's like winning the lottery, though in this case you are dying of AIDS. Oh, well. Nothing's perfect!

Agema continues, "And he goes on to the next, and the next, and that's what was happening."

By "he" does Agema mean the guy with AIDS who asked Big Dave to be his pretend boyfriend? Didn't that guy die in this scenario? So how does he go on to scam the next fake boyfriend? And the next one after that? I am very confused. Unless this guy is only pretending to have AIDS and keeps faking his death so that he can be treated for a disease he doesn't actually have over and over again at the airline's expense.

Honestly, that explanation makes as much sense as anything Agema has said.

And what on earth prompted Agema to launch into this diatribe to begin with? Why, he was simply defending traditional marriage, of course.

"I stand for traditional marriage, no homosexual ones," he told the partygoers.

Unfortunately for Agema, there was a journalist in the audience who found his anti-gay rant newsworthy. And once word got out some noteworthy Republicans rebuked him, including Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder had a spokesperson call out Agema's comments as "extreme and discriminatory." This coming from a governor who has, along with his attorney general, come out swinging at a lesbian couple who dare sue for both marriage and adoption rights in the state.

Even American Airlines released a statement saying, essentially, that Agema was full of shit.

But don't worry, Agema isn't apologizing. Far from it.

"I was simply making a point about my opposition to same sex benefits and for traditional marriage," he said. "I stand by my words as I said them despite efforts by others to twist the meaning of those words."

I stand by his words, too. That is, if I can just change "twist" to "report" and "the meaning of those words" to "the fact that I said such hateful things."

Equality Michigan wants to see Agema take a hike. You can help at www.equalitymi.org.



Federal Regulations Changing Post-DOMA

BY LISA KEEN

Keen News Service

There was a flurry of activity among federal agencies this month to issue regulations concerning how they are complying with the U.S. Supreme Court decision striking down the key provision of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). All of them were aimed at making sure same-sex marriage couples were treated equally, but not all of them resulted in a positive gain.

On Monday, the U.S. Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service issued a notice that governs how employees with same-sex spouses may sign up their spouses for health coverage and avoid paying taxes on the benefit, as straight married couples have been able to do. Previously, under DOMA, employers could not allow employees with same-sex spouses to elect coverage for that spouse on a "pre-tax basis."

Also on Monday, the U.S. Social Security Administration announced it is now processing and paying claims for benefits of "some" surviving spouses' of same-sex marriages.

"In addition," said SSA Acting Commissioner Carolyn Colvin, "we are able to pay some one-time lump sum death benefit claims to surviving same-sex spouses."

According to SSA spokesman William Jarrett, a widow or widower may receive reduced survivors' benefits as early as age 60, and full survivors' benefits once they reach the "full retirement age." Full retirement age for people born between 1945 and 1956 is currently 66. Over time, however, that will increase. The full retirement age for people born in 1962 or later will be 67.

"If you're surviving spouse is disabled, benefits can begin as early as age 50," said Jarrett. "Your widow or widower can receive benefits at any age if she or he takes care of your child who is receiving Social Security benefits and younger than age 16 or disabled."

Interestingly, a SSA press release quoted Commissioner Colvin as urging, "If you believe you may be eligible for Social Security, I encourage you to apply now to protect against the loss of any potential

benefits."

Asked what might cause a "loss of any potential benefits," Jarrett said, "We don't want an individual to delay filing an application because he or she is uncertain of the rules. A person is typically protected back to the date the application is originally filed." SSA's press release said it is developing "additional policy and processing instructions" in the coming weeks.

"If you are in a same-sex marriage or other legal same-sex relationship, even if you live in a state that prohibits same-sex marriage," says the SSA website, "we encourage you to apply right away."

Student Loans

But not all compliance changes in the post-DOMA aftermath improve circumstances for same-sex couples. For instance, the U.S. Department of Education on Friday announced a new policy related to eligibility for federal student loans. Under DOMA, the Department of Education could not seek information about a student's same-sex spouse and what income that person might contribute to the student's financial picture. Nor could they look at the contribution of a non-biological parent either married to or living with the student's biological parent. In many cases, that probably helped a student seeking federal needs-based student aid.

A Dec. 13 press release from the DOE says it will now consider a student loan applicant married if he or she "was legally married in any jurisdiction that recognizes the marriage, regardless of whether the marriage is between a couple of the same sex or opposite sex, and regardless of where the student or couple lives or the student is attending school."

Students who need financial aid for their college education can apply through the Free Applications for Federal Student Assistance, or FAFSA, under the Department of Education. The program gives out over \$150 billion each year in grants, loans, and work-study funds to help pay for college education for more than 15 million students. In fact,

“If you believe you may be eligible for Social Security, I encourage you to apply now to protect against the loss of any potential benefits.”

- SSA Commissioner Colvin

it is the largest provider of student financial aid in the country. About 22 million students apply each year.

Information provided on the FAFSA form is used to determine how much a student and his or her family can be expected to contribute to school costs and how much he or she might be eligible to receive from the federal needs-based student aid.

Where, under DOMA, the FAFSA would not collect data on same-sex spouses or parents in same-sex marriages, now it will. And this is the part of the post-DOMA change DOE's press release focused on.

"We must continue to ensure that every single American is treated equally in the eyes of the law, and this important guidance for students is another step forward in that effort," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in the press release. "As students fill out their FAFSA this coming year, I'm thrilled they'll be able to do so in a way that is more fair and just."

The new FAFSA forms will be gay friendlier. They refer to parents not as "Mother" and "Father," but as "Parent 1" and "Parent 2." They provide an option for applicants to describe their parents' relationship status as "unmarried and both parents living together."

A Star is born . . .!



Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

There are paths that by chance occasionally mix up in time, space, thought and crazy activation. Some factual. Some fantasy.

And so it happened, once upon a near-but-distant whimsical time – in a universe that was hoodwinked by twinkling many light years away – that two paths – five companions on one; three, on the other – switched direction, and stood up destination.

For our first group of travelers – names familiar to young and old alike – Dorothy and Toto, Tinman, Scarecrow, Cowardly Lion – they were sharing the Yellow Brick Road to Oz, when the unexpected crisscrossing occurred.

Quite suddenly they were sideswiped by a brilliant light that seemed to nudge them through winter's gloom. Giddy – very, very young – exuberantly naive at heart – they forgot all about Oz, which is not an easy thing to do. Ask any grown up.

(Our second regal sojourners – Gaspar, Balthasar, Melchior – bearing gifts for someone of high estate – were baffled to find themselves in a poppy-infested countryside, traveling only to God knows to where. The sign pointed to MGM.)

Along the way Dorothy and her rerouted companions found themselves waded at by shepherds keeping their flocks by night. “It seems we’re celebrities,” giggled Scarecrow, as Toto and Cowardly Lion busied themselves – bravely to be sure – chasing off wolves howling too close for comfort.

Yea, verily, readers, the night was clear. The light indeed got brighter. “No doubt!” ventured Scarecrow, with newfound mental acumen, “This star is of 31.50 magnitude. A biggie.”

Inspired by the dreamlike mood they found themselves in, Dorothy, who had palatial lyric gifts – she hoped someday to perform in movies – began to sing. And, out of the blue, she sang lyrics she had never heard before, but somehow knew by heart, with Tinman, Cowardly Lion, Scarecrow crooning in.

How quickly the miles reeled by. And before they could finish the last chorus of “Meet Me in St. Louis, Louie” they found themselves among a small crowd gathered in front of a tiny, makeshift manger.

There were shepherds, seven dwarfs, a newly awakened princess and her adoring prince, and, in the center of it all, a mom, a carpenter dad, a small baby wrapped in hand-me-down clothes. And ...

... most probably because there was an awe-inspired, opening-night crowd applauding, the little guy began to cry. Not too loudly. But authoritatively audible nonetheless. And – in a moment of exquisite improv – Scarecrow pulled straw from his thump-thump-thumping heart and blushing gave it to cradle the baby's head.

Dorothy, with perfect on-stage presence, sang another lullaby that again popped unasked into her head. “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” she sang. The crying baby hushed, smiled, and gave the tinniest of, so I'm told, technicolored laughs. (His own over-the-rainbow-time would come another day.)

Alas! Alas! In the twinkling of an eye, Dorothy, Tinman, Scarecrow, Cowardly Lion, Toto, were suddenly whisked away. 1939! “Well, I wonder what Auntie Em would say?” sighed Dorothy, shaking her head from side to side.

“And why in heaven's name would a shepherd be wearing Ruby Red slippers and clicking his heels? Is he funny that way?” camped the Cowardly Lion, with a wink.

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Screen Queen

The Gift Guide

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

COMEDY QUEENS



The Heat

As a disorderly Boston police detective with a mouth dirtier than the bottom of a garbage truck, Melissa McCarthy plays a seemingly lesbian-inspired toughie, and

Sandra Bullock her conservative foil, in Paul Feig's arrestingly funny follow-up to "Bridesmaids." So of course there's estrogen, but also the hilarity – and raunch, and even sweetness – of seeing these two beat the crap out of some criminals. Bullock and the scene-stealing ridiculousness of McCarthy, as, respectively, crime busters Ashburn and Mullins, dole out dick jokes, razz endlessly on each other (Ashburn's business attire bears the brunt of it), and engage in a scandalous night of shots and Luther Vandross-influenced slow dancing. And you gotta hand it to Sandy, Oscar bound for "Gravity" and still letting improv comics, who star as Mullins' dysfunctional family, have at her manly looks in the movie. Like some kind of ambiguously lesbian duo, "The Heat" is one of the funniest films of the year because of the on-fire pairing of Bullock and McCarthy. All the special features – cut scenes, a making-of, commentaries, so many gag reels – will keep you locked up for hours.



The World's End

The bar hop that never was has Gary King (English comic Simon Pegg) feeling nostalgic. To resolve unfinished binge-drinking business, that time when he and his

buddies got too drunk to conquer an enterprising crawl, Gary tracks down his buddies 20 years after they first gave it a go. Old friends, good times, lots of beer ... and robots that bleed blue blood? Considering this is a Pegg production, it makes total ridiculous sense. In this weirdly endearing comic/sci-fi hybrid, where Pegg, Edgar

Wright and Nick Frost once again unite for more goofy shenanigans (see also: "Hot Fuzz," "Shaun of the Dead"), themes of second chances, growing up and maybe not being an alcoholic play out during all the absurd alien action. Is it a "Shaun of the Dead" slap-your-knee rollick? Not quite. But at the end, ask yourself this: How many times have I cried during an alien drinking comedy? Extras go all out, with a cast commentary, behind-the-scenes features and rehearsal footage.

FOR THE MATERIAL GIRL



MDNA World Tour

That tour where Madonna slyly slips into Lady Gaga's "Born This Way" to make light of its sonic relationship to her own "Express Yourself"? This is the one. And that moment,

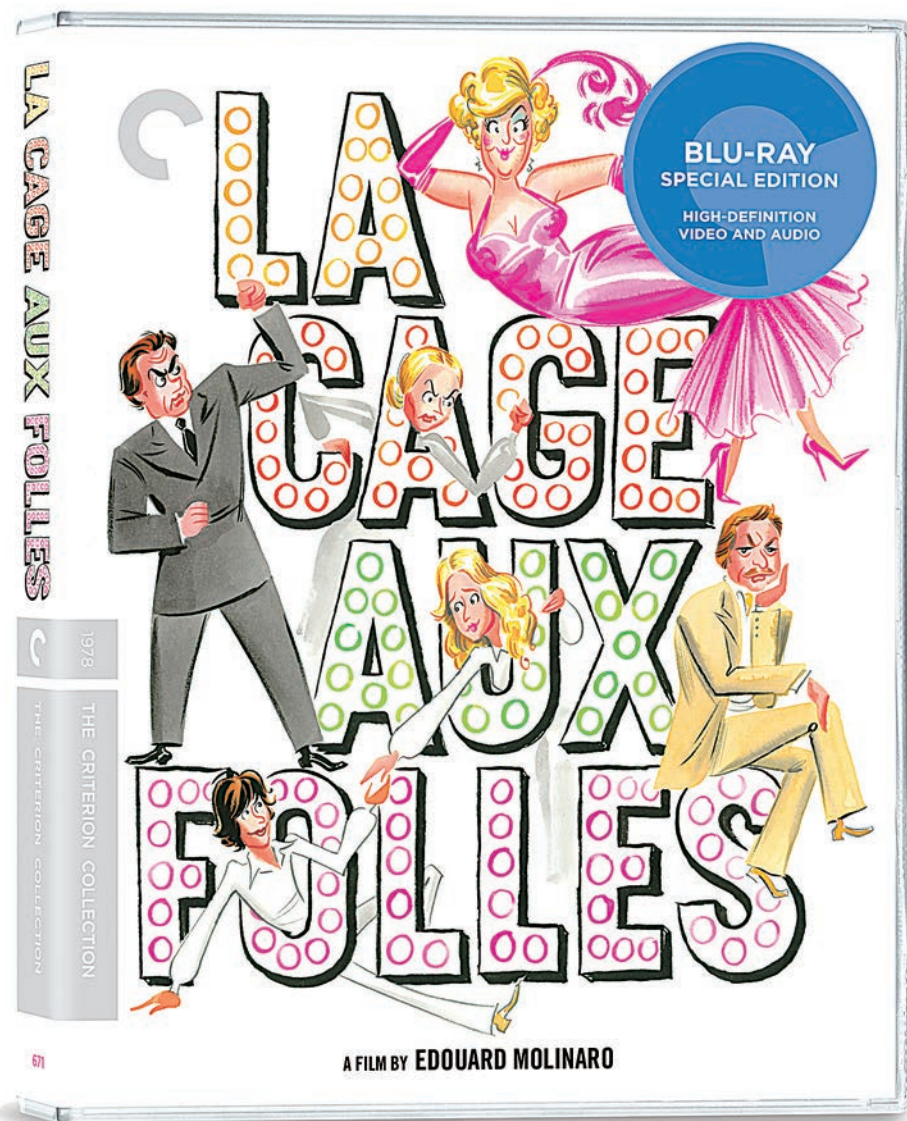
it's awesomely bitchy. The icon isn't ready to cease her throne, and the highly stylized film that came of "MDNA" – the tour responsible for recently landing the diva atop Forbes' 2013 list of highest-paid musicians – has the queen still wearing her crown, showing girls half her 55 years how it's done. "Gang Bang," from the show's namesake album, has the cinematic feel of a Quentin Tarantino bloodbath, and hits – from "Papa Don't Preach" to "Open Your Heart" and, on piano, a waltz-y version of "Like a Virgin" – are made anew. Because this is Madonna, it's also not without its social commentaries: During "Nobody Knows Me," she pays tribute to gay teens gone too soon, while dancers simulate suicide. Behind the scenes, during a 20-minute special feature, Madonna requests the boys dance in pumps. And they do, of course.

ART-FILM FANATICS



Frances Ha

She's not a girl, not yet a woman. In fact, Frances Ha won't even call herself a real person. She's on her way, though. In what



can loosely be seen as an extension of Lena Dunham's "Girls" phenomenon – because Frances Ha is an aimless, socially awkward NYC twentysomething, and because Adam Driver co-stars ("Frances Ha" is boob-less, however) – director Noah Baumbach's thoughtful, black-and-white observation on self-discovery and the bridge to adulthood is an offbeat and humorous representation of the post-teen zeitgeist. It's the role indie darling Greta Gerwig, the endearing heroine, was made for; Frances is pitiful and sad and lost, meaning she's you and everyone else at some point – and when she dance-runs through the streets, Frances totally endears her pathetic self to you. Gerwig, who co-wrote "Frances Ha," chats in an exclusive Criterion interview with filmmaker Sarah Polley. A snazzy illustrated booklet is also included.



Before Midnight

The third entry in Richard Linklater's

relationship saga – where two lovers, Jesse (Ethan Hawke) and Céline (Julie Delpy), meet, separate, meet again, and now, 18 years after a chance encounter in Vienna, are raising a family – shatters all perceptions of that fairy-tale life Disney promised you. For some time off from the kids, the couple goes on a Greece getaway to spend time with friends. There, they talk about life and love: Jesse is juggling a son from a previous marriage along with twin girls he's raising with new wife Céline, who has bigger aspirations than just being a mother. This leads to problems, which lead to bickering, which leads to a final blowout that's sad and dream-crushing. This isn't a relationship rom-com for Katherine Heigl fans. Because even though it charms with jokey banter, it's also thoughtful, poignant and real. Hawke, Delpy and Linklater discuss real-life influences and the previous films during a commentary, and "Revisiting Jesse & Céline" takes us back to the beginning.

THE CLASSICS

James Dean: Ultimate Collector's Edition

Even after a half century, James Dean, with his looks *and* talent, is still the holy grail of Hollywood. The hunky cultural icon didn't just exude star power – Dean was, before his untimely death, a heralded acting ace on a hot streak. And so he deserves quite the tribute. Warner Home Video serves that up, and then some, with “James Dean: Ultimate Collector's Edition,” a set featuring three of his most celebrated films on Blu-ray: his turn as a disobedient teen alongside Natalie Wood in the 1955 noir “Rebel Without a Cause”; biblical allegory “East of Eden,” released the same year; and the socially conscious Oscar winner “Giant” with Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson. Also included in this impressive package: corresponding supplements for each release, a feature-length overview of Dean (“Forever Young”), a surprisingly hefty 40-page book of photos and career context, and repros of posters from all three films, behind-the-scenes prints and production memos.

La Cage aux Folles

Before “The Birdcage,” there was “La Cage aux Folles,” the original musical-turned-movie romp, released in 1978, where two lovers go back in the closet to impress their son's conservative in-laws. Naturally, outrageousness ensues during the climatic dinner party scene, when one of the men surprises in mom drag. The classic three-time Oscar-nominated comedy, a crucial and rare piece of gay art-house cinema with an important social message, is farcically stereotypical, especially now, over 30 years after its initial release: gay men are flamboyant, black people are sassy. But this little French gem was just as charming, funny and flamboyant as the Robin Williams and Nathan Lane remake it inspired nearly two decades later. Criterion's impressively restored Blu-ray debut is all done up: There's an essay insert; archival footage of actor Michel Serrault and Jean Poiret, writer and star of the original stage production; and a candid new interview with director Edouard Molinaro who reveals some interesting set secrets.



The Little Mermaid: Diamond Edition

Ariel wants to be where the people are, and you know you wanna be where she is. Now, with its 3D Blu-ray debut this year, you can, like never before, be a part of her world. The story of a sea diva who falls in love with a hot human against her father's will – forbidden love is so gay – and then sacrifices her voice to be with him, giving it to the meanest drag queen you've ever met, is one of Disney's crowning achievements. Visually striking and musically infectious (the Broadway-ish ballad “Part of Your World” is pretty much everything to every gay man), “The Little Mermaid” demonstrates that everything really is better down where it's wetter. So many ... what do you call 'em? ... oh, extras: Carly Rae Jepsen's music video for her newly recorded version of “Part of Your World”; storyboards of Harold the Merman, the movie's lost character; and “Howard's Lecture,” an intro to unsung hero Howard Ashman, a gay writer and lyricist who died in the early '90s from AIDS complications.

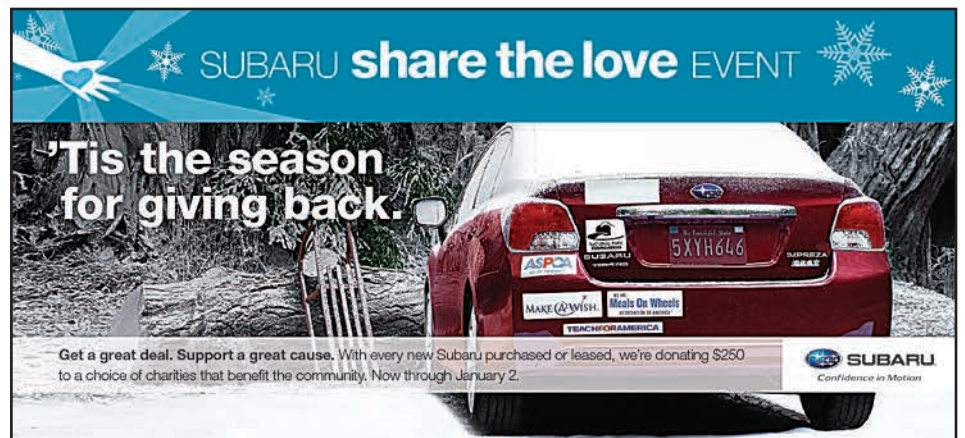
SO YOUR FRIEND THINKS HENRY CAVILL IS HOT



Man of Steel

There's a scene in the new Superman reboot where Henry Cavill, the man of steely abs himself, walks around shirtless, showing off his rugged, Greek god-like physique. You can't forget it. But the rest of this Christopher Nolan-produced action hero CGI fest? It's up, up and away. This fine-but-forgettable modernized update, revamped for a post-9/11 world, is queered up with coming-out subtext, but it's not the Terrence Malick take on big “S” that the trailers teased. With so little character development (Amy Adams, as Lois Lane, deserves better) and too little of the tenderness its previews promised (most of it involves Superman's parents, played by Diane Lane and Kevin Costner), “Man of Steel” just

See Screen Queen, page 20



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Back To The D

Author Finds The Spirit Of Detroit While Completing Trilogy

BY BRIDGETTE M. REDMAN

"The Spirit of Detroit" was not the book that Frank Anthony Polito intended to write.

The author of "Band Fags" and "Drama Queers," Polito didn't really plan for the books to be a trilogy. Instead, he wanted to write the book that Michael Chabon's "The Mysteries of Pittsburgh" had inspired in him. What he got instead was a cross between the two.

"Twenty years ago this summer, I read this book called 'The Mysteries of Pittsburgh' by Michael Chabon," Polito says. "It was the first book I'd ever read that had a gay character that was not a trashy romance novel. It was just a basic story, and it was about this guy who was graduating college and he met this other guy who was gay and they had a love affair. I was like, 'Wow, there are books with people like me that aren't meant to be trashy or negative.'"

Since that time he's wanted to write his version of "The Mysteries of Pittsburgh," one set in Detroit and at Wayne State University where he had gone to school. But while he had always intended to write that story, he hadn't expected to use Bradley Dayton, a character from "Band Fags" and "Drama Queers."

In "The Spirit of Detroit," Bradley Dayton is heading to Wayne State University as a theater major in the early 1990s. He meets other theater majors and ends up in several different sorts of relationships as he navigates his way through life at the downtown college. Amid Bradley's classes, rehearsals and love affairs, Polito peppers the book with the history of Detroit and details of its dilapidated landscape.

Polito said several of his readers had been asking him when he'd be turning his books into a trilogy and furthering the adventures of those earlier characters. He decided to create the third book in the trilogy by revising his concept of the other book he wanted to write and pulling on his own experiences in college.

"When I was at Wayne State I met this girl and dated her briefly, and then

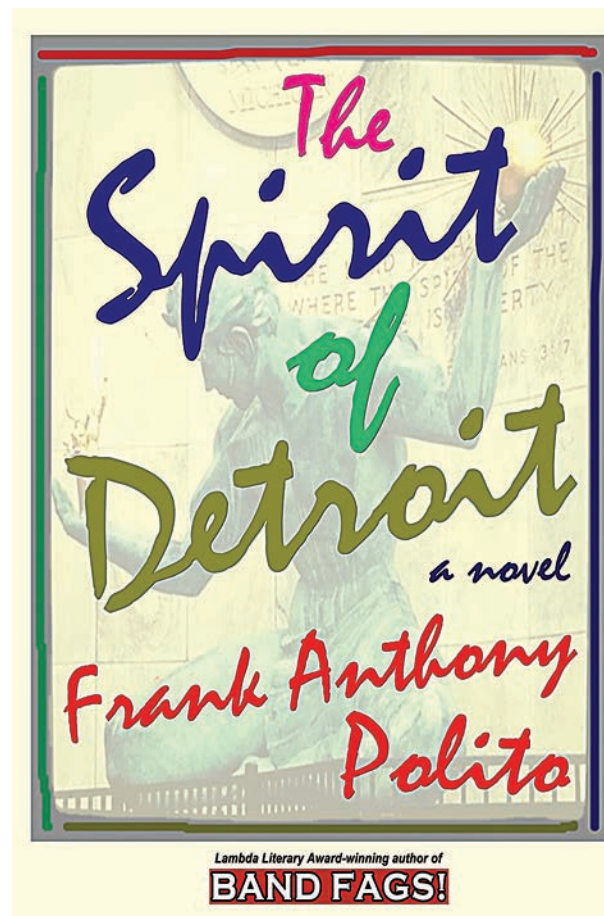
met this guy who ended up being my partner of 24 years," Polito says. "I was a gay guy who had a thing with a woman and then had a thing with a guy. I always wanted to write that story, but I never intended it to be Bradley Dayton from 'Band Fags.'"

He also took inspiration from another of Chabon's books, "The Adventures of Kavalier & Clay," when he began filling the book with historical details both real and fictional about the city of Detroit. Polito himself grew up near Detroit and recently moved back. He recalled how there was always a "Michigan Week" in school where they learned the history of the state, but never one where they delved into the rich history of the city of Detroit.

"The Spirit of Detroit" is not a light-hearted read. Its drug use, violence and sex does not take place behind closed doors, though Polito said he is careful to not write anything he wouldn't let his mother read.

"It is darker than my first two, and intentionally so," Polito said. "Going to Wayne State, especially 20 years ago, it was very much a commuter college. Everyone had their reasons why they went there, and I tried to give that to my characters in the book."

While Polito had branched out after his first two books with a young adult novel set in the '90s aimed at a more general audience, this book represents a return



"The Spirit of Detroit" by Frank Anthony Polito, published by Woodward Avenue Books, is now available.

to his original readers.

"I was definitely writing it for the people who have read my other books. I want them to read this one because it sort of completes the journey of that character," Polito says. "I wanted to write for people who grew up during the time so they can have a little bit of a nostalgia trip, but also for those who did not, so they can experience it."

Polito wrote these three books while he was living in New York, but it proved to be geographically life-changing for him.

"When I started writing the first book seven years ago, I still had this mentality that I would never move back to Michigan," Polito says. "Writing the stories, as cliché as it is, made me want to come back. Why live in New York and write about Detroit when I could be in Detroit?"

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► Screen Queen

Continued from p. 17

doesn't rise above being another big, overblown blockbuster. Seriously, how do you go wrong with Henry Cavill and all this man-on-man action? "Strong Characters, Legendary Roles" looks at the amended Superman, and another feature — "Journey of Discovery: Creating 'Man of Steel'" — is the full film with interview/background footnotes.

A GOOD CRY



The Way Way Back

It's hard enough being a kid, but having a d-bag version of Steve Carell as your dad? No fun, it turns out. Fourteen-year-old Duncan (Liam James, who plays the sympathetic youngin) is dealing with post-divorce sadness and a stepdad, Trent (an against-type Carell), whose put-downs are wearing on him. Now, along with mom (Toni Collette), he's miserably stuck as they head to a beach house in upstate New York. It's there, where he steps out on his own and stumbles upon a summer job at a water park, that the teen comes into himself, befriend his hip and hilarious boss, park manager Owen (Sam Rockwell, in one of the finest performances of this year), and growing balls big enough to stand up for himself. Very funny, especially with Rockwell's beaming presence, "The Way, Way Back" is a charming and quietly wistful dramedy with big laughs and an even bigger heart. Extras include cast interviews and deleted scenes.



Bridegroom

Oprah TV-premiered the film on her OWN station, it won Best Documentary at the Tribeca Film Festival, and nobody can stop talking about it. But the best thing about "Bridegroom"? It's one of the most powerful arguments for equal rights. The heart-wrenching film, directed by Linda Bloodworth-Thomason ("Designing Women") and about a man who's faced with familial drama and no legal protections after his partner suddenly dies, chronicles co-producer Shane Crone Bitney's experience — both the rosy beginning and the tragic end of his relationship to Tom Bridegroom — through personal video footage, photos and revealing interviews with friends and family. Now on DVD, "Bridegroom" doesn't just demonstrate a sweet and tragic tale of the promise of a life together and the devastating end, but also the importance of acceptance and equality.

SOMETHING SCARY



The Conjuring

Just when you think you can't be scared anymore, here comes "The Conjuring," a true events-inspired creeper that gets under your skin and stays there. When the Perrons move into an isolated farmhouse that looks like a place where bad things happen, bad things happen (will people ever learn?). Paranormal investigators Lorraine and Ed Warren (Vera Farmiga and Patrick Wilson; maybe the hottest pair of paranormal investigators) step in to help shake the dark spirits, and what transpires is a whole lot of freaky "Amityville Horror"-like spooks involving a nightmarish doll, handclaps and a music box. One of the creepiest horror flicks in some time, "The Conjuring" is so good it doesn't even need a gratuitous backside shot of Patrick Wilson. The bad news: With just a couple of short pieces on the real-life Perrons and dish from director James Wan, it's scarce on special features.

'Beauty And The Beast' Returns To Wharton

Disney's "Beauty and the Beast," the award-winning worldwide smash hit Broadway musical, is returning to Wharton Center as part of the MSU Federal Credit Union Broadway at Wharton Center Series. Produced by NETworks Presentations, this elaborate theatrical production comes to life on stage Feb. 18-23, 2014. Tickets are available online at whartoncenter.com, at the Auto-Owners Ticket Office at Wharton Center, or by calling 1-800-WHARTON.



Darick Pead as Beast and Hilary Maiberger as Belle in Disney's "Beauty and the Beast." Photo: Amy Boyle

"Beauty and the Beast" features the animated film's Academy Award-winning score with music by Alan Menken and lyrics by the late Howard Ashman, with additional songs composed by Alan Menken and lyrics by Tim Rice. The book is written by Linda Woolverton.

The original creators of the Broadway production are together again for this new touring production. The play is directed by Rob Roth and choreographed by Matt West, with costume design by Ann Hould-Ward (Tony Award winner for her work on Disney's "Beauty and the Beast"), lighting design by Natasha Katz (three-time Tony Award winner), scenic design by Stanley A. Meyer, sound design by John Petrafesa Jr.

and music supervision by Michael Kosarin.

"Beauty and the Beast" has become an international sensation that has played to over 35 million people worldwide in 22 countries and has been translated into nine different languages. This production launched in February 2010 and has been seen by over two million people while playing over 1,000 performances in all 50 United States and six Canadian Provinces.

Wharton Center performances run Tuesday, Feb. 18 through Sunday, Feb., 23, 2014. Group discounts are available for groups of 10 or more by calling 1-800-WHARTON. For additional information, visit www.BeautyAndTheBeastOnTour.com.

East Lansing Organization Combines Spartan And LGBT Pride

BY SHELBY CLARK

With Michigan State University heading to the Rose Bowl on New Year's Day, all eyes are turning to East Lansing. Former GLBT Spartans can take the chance to see what else the school has to offer them beyond football.

The MSU GLBT Alumni Association is a group for all GLBT Spartans who have graduated. Since 2005, the organization has built its mission around four principles: building and maintaining positive relationships between the school and GLBT alumni, aiding current GLBT students at MSU, providing networking for its members and working with other MSU organizations to promote positive change at the school and in the area.

The alumni group works alone and with other groups to provide resources like

scholarships, tutoring and mentoring to both current and former students. Events are held throughout the year, including the annual MSU GLBT Homecoming Party every fall.

Current members of the alumni group have gone on to run for state seats, work on TV news stations, become CEOs and more. Popular YouTube vlogger, Tyler Oakley, has been a well-known GLBT alumni of the school, as well.

To contact the GLBT Alumni of MSU, e-mail glbtalum@msu.edu or send mail to P.O. Box 4505, East Lansing, MI, 48826. The group keeps a confidential list of all members.

Visit www.msu.edu/~glbtalum for more information.

To find out more about other GLBT organizations in the Lansing and East Lansing areas, go to BTL's Yellow Pages at www.pridesource.com/directory

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Absurdly Delightful: A Night Of Beckett At The Abreact

BY JOHN QUINN

In his curtain speech, Charles Reynolds, artistic director of The Abreact, referred to the company's last production as a "starter course" in Theater of the Absurd. And indeed, Albee's "The Play about the Baby" adheres close enough to theatrical conventions that it seems tame. The theater's second offering of its absurd season, four fragments by master of the genre Samuel Beckett, will have one remarking – like Alice – "curiouser and curiouser!"

Theater of the Absurd is a tough sell. Art is communication, but one must understand the language. It's more than likely the arsonist(s) systematically burning down the Heidelberg Project have closed eyes and ears to what Tyree Guyton is expressing. Similarly, it is easy to miss the nuances of absurdist narrative since its intent is rather subversive. It frustrates intellect, ignores emotion and dives deep to communicate with a far more primal entity, perception. Thus a perceptive audience can return to reality with a new world view.

The four playlets selected for this evening of Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) are drawn from his works of the late '50s to early '80s and performed in an ascending order of abstraction. It's not like Beckett is ever realistic. But director Lance Alan's steps, sense to nonsense, draw the audience into the playwright's themes of isolation and entrapment. The order gives us the ability to absorb a radically different style of theater.

In an otherwise empty world, a blind beggar (Dennis Kleinsmith) and an amputee (Mike McGettigan) in a "wheeled chair" (he tortuously poles himself along with a cane) team up to exchange sight for motility. "Rough for Theatre I" speaks of futility, since neither "cripple" can extend himself far enough to let the partnership work. This piece is remarkable for the raw poetry of the dialogue – even more so since it was originally written in French and translated later by the playwright himself. It's also a striking piece in that it is played by two formidable actors who understand the power of voice.

"Footfalls," first performed in 1976, wraps time in a bubble, doing away with past, present and future. Jaclyn Strez paces a darkened stage; nine steps right, nine steps left. She holds conversation



Michael McGettigan and Heather Hudson in the playlet "Catastrophe," one of four short plays by Samuel Beckett on stage at The Abreact. Photo: Karen Nemeth

REVIEW

4 Plays by Beckett

The Abreact, 1301 W. Lafayette #113, Detroit. 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday through Jan. 11. 90 minutes (with intermission).

Pay-what-you-can; reservations suggested. 313-454-1542.

www.theabreact.com

with her bed-ridden mother, played by Linda Rabin Hammell. But is it Mom or is it memory? Even in her brief appearance on stage, Hammell is a ghostly figure and Strez is alone even in her presence. This eerie and provocative piece is another example of Beckett's mastery of language, and the poetry is only enhanced by the vulnerability the artists bring to the characters.

"Catastrophe" finds Kleinsmith as a performer in the hands of a self-centered stage director (McGettigan again) who only acts through an Assistant, Heather Hudson. The play is a tough nut to crack; study Wikipedia and one finds that "Catastrophe" is Beckett's homage to his fellow playwright, Czech dissident Vaclav Havel. Mute and

without gesture, Kleinsmith delivers a powerful affirmation of human will in the face of despotism.

"Play," an early '60s piece, is the most "out there" of the evening's offerings. Here Hudson, McGettigan and Strez are confined to giant urns, with only their heads exposed. Similarity to Egyptian canopic jars is not accidental. Husband, wife and mistress, a menage a trois, repetitively recount their empty affairs, only able to speak when their spotlight is on. Their quick reactions, their breathless presentation and their complete disengagement with their stories define an exercise in alienation; after the second iteration of the same story, all amusement is gone. The audience finds the excuses as tawdry as the affair.

The artist who can eloquently speak to a wide audience is a treasure. Beckett, enmeshed in a fatalism that is stereotypically expected of anyone who shares his Irish heritage, is not for everybody. But for the individual who believes he or she will benefit from sharing life's follies with a master playwright, the experience is a logical next step in enlightenment.



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Happenings

OUTINGS

Thursday, Dec. 19

Santa is Coming 4 p.m. Prizes. Presents for kids. Ed Schmid Ford, 21600 Woodward, **Ferndale**. 248-399-1000.

Connections 6 p.m. Open to all LGBTQ and Ally youth from 13-18. Join us to meet other LGBTQ and Ally teens and socialize in a safe space. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. Kglrc.org

The Parent Network 6 p.m. This group aims to assist parents in understanding their child's identity, while also giving parents the opportunity to socialize with other adults who have LGBT children Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. Kglrc.org

Whole Lives, Healthy Lives Adult Support Group 7 p.m. This one-of-a-kind program in Berrien County helps attendees support each other in healthy ways through active listening and caring feedback. OutCenter, 132 Water St., **Benton Harbor**. 269-925-8330. Outcenter.org

Pagan Chat Nights 7:30 p.m. Come socialize with FOCAS members and other area pagans! Michigan Pagans, 21700 West Road, **Woodhaven**. Meetup.com/michiganpagans

Friday, Dec. 20

Solstice Celebration in Southfield 6:45 p.m. Northwest Unitarian Universalist Church, 23925 Northwestern Highway, **Southfield**. 248-354-4488. office@northwestuu.org Northwestuu.org

Womyn's Film Night 7 p.m. Film: Lost and Delirious. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Bright & Gay Cabaret 8 p.m. Winter Cabaret Concert. Tickets: \$12-15. Sistrum, 215 N. Capital Ave., **Lansing**. Sistrum.org

Saturday, Dec. 21

Men's Discussion Group 6 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Youth Holiday Movie Night 6 p.m. Open to all ages 13-20. Light refreshments provided. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Open Meditation Saturdays 9 p.m. A communal, non-hierarchical meditation space open to all. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Sunday, Dec. 22

Holiday Services 10 a.m. Advent Masses, Christmas Eve, and Christmastide Sunday services. Divine Peace Metropolitan Community Church, 1400 Scott Lake Road, Suite H, **Waterford**. 248-332-1186. Dpmcc.net

Tashmoo Biergarten 12 p.m. Pop-up European style beer garden with Detroit sensibility. Food, beer, games, and more. Location often varies. Tashmoo Biergarten, 1420 Van Dyke, **Detroit**. guten-tag@tashmoodetroit.com Tashmoodetroit.com

Soulful Sunday Brunch 12:30 p.m. Tickets: \$14.95. Black and White Men Together-Detroit, 29508 Northwestern

Hwy., **Southfield**. 248-219-0772. bwmtdetroit@sbcglobal.net

Monday, Dec. 23

Fun Run & Walk Program 6:30 p.m. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. Kglrc.org

Nest Bible Study 6:30 p.m. Monthly Bible study focusing on LGBTQ issues. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 508 Denner St., **Kalamazoo**. Kglrc.org

Mad Hatter's Writing Group 7 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Movement with Kristi Faulkner Dance 7 p.m. Tickets: \$5. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Writing Group 7 p.m. Different focus for each meeting. 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Tuesday, Dec. 24

Christmas Eve Carols 7:30 a.m. Westminster Church of Detroit, 17567 Hubbell, **Detroit**. 313-341-2697 x 200. Wcodetroit.org

Christmas Eve Service 2 p.m. First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, 1669 W. Maple Road, **Birmingham**. 248-644-2040. Fpcbirmingham.org

Christmas Eve Service 4:30 p.m. First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, 4001 Ann Arbor-Saline Road, **Ann Arbor**. 734-665-6158. Uuaa.org

Christmas Eve Service 5 p.m. First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor, 1001



The Ruth Ellis Center is located at 77 Victor St., Highland Park. The Chinese restaurant will be selected closer to the date; dinner is planned for 5 p.m. For more information on JGN's Christmas Day plans, call 248-432-5467 or visit www.jgnmi.org.

Editor's Pick

Don't have plans this Christmas? The Jewish Gay Network (JGN) will be hosting various activities on Dec. 25 for those looking to fill the holiday with fun, from charity work to their annual dinner out.

The JGN plans to volunteer at the Ruth Ellis Center. Volunteers will prepare a holiday dinner, decorate cookies, make gingerbread houses and provide gifts for the residents. Following a day of spreading holiday cheer, all friends and family of JGN are invited to go out for Chinese food.

The Ruth Ellis Center is located at 77 Victor St., Highland Park. The Chinese restaurant will be selected closer to the date; dinner is planned for 5 p.m. For more information on JGN's Christmas Day plans, call 248-432-5467 or visit www.jgnmi.org.

Green Road, **Ann Arbor**. 734-662-4536. Fumc-a2.org

Christmas Eve Service 5 p.m. First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor, 120 S. State St., **Ann Arbor**. 734-662-4536. Fumc-a2.org

Holiday Services 7 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship. Zion Lutheran Church ELCA, 143 Albany St., **Ferndale**. 248-398-5510. Fernzion.org

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service 10 p.m. Metropolitan Community Church of Detroit, 2441 Pinerest Lane, **Ferndale**. 248-399-7741. Mccdetroit.org

Holiday Services 10:30 p.m. Nine Lessons and Carols Mass and Christmas Eve Masses. The Cathedral Church of St. Paul, 4800 Woodward, **Detroit**. 313-831-5000. detroitchurch.org

Wednesday, Dec. 25
Volunteering at Ruth Ellis House

Preparing a holiday dinner, decorating cookies, making gingerbread houses, and providing gifts for the residents. Jewish Gay Network, **Detroit**. Jgnmi.org

Chinese Food 5:30 p.m. Annual event. JGN friends and family will go out for Chinese. Jewish Gay Network, **TBD**. 248-432-5467. tagranove@jccdet.org Jgnmi.org

MUSIC & MORE

Detroit Institute of Arts "Glenn Tucker Quintet's Jazz Nativity." Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. Dec. 20-Dec. 20. 313-833-7900. Dia.org

Detroit Opera House "Too Hot to Handel" Tickets: \$20+. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St., **Detroit**. 7:30 p.m. Dec. 21. 313-237-SING. Michiganopera.org

Detroit Symphony Orchestra "Home for the Holidays." Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. Dec. 20-Dec. 22.

313-576-5111. Dso.org

Olympia Entertainment "Kem: What Christmas Means Holiday Tour" Tickets: \$29-99. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. 8 p.m. Dec. 20. 313-471-6611. Olympiaentertainment.com

Royal Oak Music Theatre "Steel Panther" With Artificial Agent & Beggars. 21+. Tickets: \$10. 11+. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., **Royal Oak**. 8 p.m. Dec. 21. 248-399-2980. Royaloakmusictheatre.com

The Ark "Finvarra's Wren Winter Solstice" Tickets: \$15. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., **Ann Arbor**. 8 p.m. Dec. 19. 734-761-1800. Theark.org

Wharton Center "Michael McDonald" This Christmas-An Evening of Holiday and Hits. Tickets: \$35-65. Wharton Center for the Performing Arts, Michigan State University, 750 E. Shaw Lane, **East Lansing**. 8 p.m. Dec. 21. 800-WHARTON. Whartoncenter.com


See Happenings, page 31

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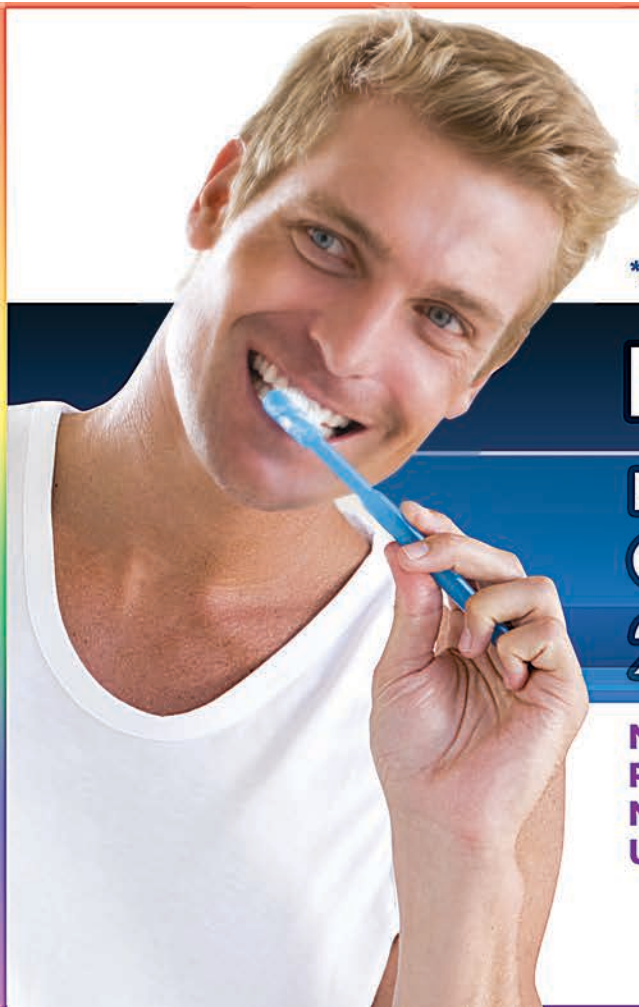
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Royal Oak Rings In 2014 With New Year's Eve Events

BY SHELBY CLARK

To ring in 2014, Royal Oak will play host to a variety of New Year's Eve events on Tuesday, Dec. 31.

Lavendar Ladies North will be throwing a New Year's Eve party to ring in the new year for local lesbians. Royal Oak's Emagine Theater will host the party, with valet parking available. Fittingly, popcorn will be present throughout the event.

The night will include a variety of activities, including dancing and a dinner composed of four food stations at the theater's Sky Box Lounge. A DJ will

be spinning music throughout the night. Pizza and a champagne toast at midnight will help celebrate the arrival of 2014.

The New Year's Dance begins at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 31 and lasts until 12:30 a.m. that night. Emagine Theater is located at W. 11 Mile Road and Main Street in Royal Oak. Tickets are \$50. Contact Linda at 248-943-2411 for more information.

Open to all, Stay & Play Social Club is hosting a New Year's Eve party at Royal Oak Music Theatre. Revolution: NYE 2014 will involve drinking and dancing, with special guest Big Will & The 360 Degrees filling the night with a variety

of genres. The metro Detroit-based band has been voted "Top 5 Bands" by Click on Detroit's "Vote for the Best" for two years in a row.

Revolution: NYE 2014 starts at 8:30 p.m. Dec. 31 at Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., in Royal Oak. Tickets are \$55 through Dec. 20, and \$75 after. Tickets to the event include four drink tickets, party favors and a champagne toast. The event is for ages 21 and over. For more information, call 248-399-2980 or visit www.royaloakmusictheatre.com.

For any other New Year's Eve or New Year's Day events, check out BTL's Calendar at www.pridesource.com/calendar.

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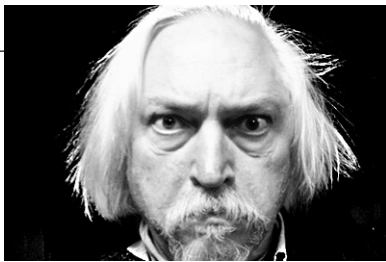
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Editor's Pick

Emergent Arts will present "Christmasville," a holiday vaudeville with master of ceremonies Khurum Sheikh, at The Mix Studio Theatre, 8 N. Washington St., in Ypsilanti.

"Christmasville" will feature a variety of comics, singers, bad jugglers, acrobats (well, sort of) and other holiday eccentrics, as well as the premiere of

the playlet "No Room At The Big Sleep Inn." Many of the best comics from past shows at The Mix will make one or more appearances, including Marty Smith, Larry Donnelly, Germaine Gebhard, Washboard Floyd, James Boyd, as well as The Flying Zucchini Brothers, Polyethylena from The Ballet Plastique, Pope Tamers Rodrigo and Bert, and Doctor Thuddersplatt the International Orator and Geritologist.

The show runs Dec. 18-21 at 8 p.m., with 2 p.m. matinees on Dec. 21 and 22. Tickets are \$12 general admission and \$10 for seniors and students with ID. Phone 734-985-0875 for tickets or more information.

Happenings

Continued from p. 24

THEATER

CIVIC/COMMUNITY THEATER

Annie \$16-18. Farmington Players, 32332 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. Through Dec. 29. 248-473-1856. Farmingtonplayers.org

Christmasville \$10-12. Emergent Arts at The Mix Studio Theatre, 8 N. Washington St., Ypsilanti. Through Dec. 22. 734-985-0875. emergentarts.com

Irving Berlin's White Christmas \$15-35. The Crosswell, 129 E. Maumee St., Adrian. Through Dec. 22. 517-264-SHOW. crosswell.org

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever \$7-15. The Twin City Players, 600 W. Glenlord Road, St. Joseph. Through Dec. 22. 269-429-0400. twincityplayers.org

The Fantasticks \$18. Stagecrafters, Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette Ave., Royal Oak. Through Dec. 22. 248-541-6430. Stagecrafters.org

PROFESSIONAL

'Twas the Night Before Christmas \$10-25. Two Muses Theatre at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 6800 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield. Through Dec. 22. 248-850-9919. twomusetheatre.org

4 Plays by Beckett Pay-what-you-can. The Abreact, 1301 W. Lafayette #113, Detroit. Through Jan. 11. 313-454-1542. theabreact.com

A Christmas Carol \$18-41. Meadow Brook Theatre, 2200 N. Squirrel Road, Rochester. Through Dec. 22. 248-377-3300. mbtheatre.com

A Facility for Living \$17-20. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. Through Dec. 29. 313-868-1347. detroitreptheatre.com

Christmas at the Acorn: A Christmas Extravaganza \$20. The Acorn Theater, 107 Generations Dr., Three Oaks. 8 p.m. Dec. 21. 269-756-3879. acorntheater.com

Christmas Belles \$15-18. Broadway Onstage Live Theatre, 21517 Kelly Road, Eastpointe. Through Dec. 21. 586-771-6333. broadwayonstage.com

Ebenezer \$29-32. Tipping Point Theatre, 361 E. Cady St., Northville. Through Dec. 31. 248-347-0003. tippingpointtheatre.com

Every Christmas Story Ever Told (And Then Some!) \$10-25. Two Muses Theatre at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 6800 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield. Through Dec.

22. 248-850-9919. twomusetheatre.org

Fridays and Saturdays at Go Comedy! Go Comedy! Improv Theater, 261 E. Nine Mile Rd., Ferndale. 248-327-0575. gocomedy.net

Home for the Holidays \$32-39; includes dinner, non-alcoholic beverage, dessert & show. The Dio-Dining and Entertainment, 135 E. Main St., Pinckney. Through Dec. 23. 517-672-6009. diotheatre.com

I Love a Piano \$33-35. Farmers Alley Theatre, 221 Farmers Alley, Kalamazoo. Through Jan. 5. 269-343-2727. farmersalleytheatre.com

Improv Mondays \$5 at the door. Planet Art Theatre, 2357 Caniff, Hamtramck. 313-365-4948. planetant.com

Irving Berlin's White Christmas \$15-28. The Encore Musical Theatre, 3126 Broad St., Dexter. Through Dec. 22. 734-268-6200. theencoretheatre.org

Jeff Daniels' Onstage & Unplugged \$75-85. The Purple Rose Theatre Company, Purple Rose Theatre, 137 Park St., Chelsea. Dec. 20-31. 734-433-7673. purplerosetheatre.org

Oh, Ananse \$5-10. PuppetART at Detroit Puppet Theater, 25 E. Grand River Ave., Detroit. Dec. 27-29. 313-961-7777. puppetart.org

Over the River and Through the Woods \$15-25. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam St., Williamston. Through Dec. 29. 517-655-SHOW. williamstontheatre.org

The Loves Me \$20. The Snug Theatre, 160 S. Water St., Marine City. Through Dec. 21. 810-278-1749. thesnugtheatre.com

Sister's Christmas Catechism: The Mystery of the Magi's Gold \$.35. Miller on the Road at Tibbits Opera House, 14 S. Hanchett St., Coldwater. 8 p.m. Dec. 20. 269-387-2300. millerauditorium.com

Sister's Christmas Catechism: The Mystery of the Magi's Gold \$.35. Miller on the Road at W.K. Kellogg Auditorium, 50 W. Van Buren St., Battle Creek. Dec. 21. 269-387-2300. millerauditorium.com

Snow Queen \$5-10. PuppetART at Detroit Puppet Theater, 25 E. Grand River Ave., Detroit. Dec. 14-21. 313-961-7777. puppetart.org

Super Happy Funtime Burlesque \$25-30. The Acorn Theater, 107 Generations Dr., Three Oaks. 9 p.m. Dec. 31. 269-756-3879. acorntheater.com

The SantaLand Diaries & Season's Greetings \$10-20. The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Dec. 19-23. 248-545-5545. Theringwald.com

The Scullery Maid \$41-48. The Jewish Ensemble Theatre Company, Aaron DeRoy Theatre on the campus of the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple Road,

West Bloomfield. Dec. 18-Jan. 12. 248-788-2900. jetttheatre.org

The Wizard of Oz \$12-18. Flint Youth Theatre, 1220 E. Kearsley St., Flint. Through Dec. 22. 810-237-1530. flintyouththeatre.org

Two Guys and a Christmas Tree \$40 with turkey dinner; \$35 show-only. Cornwell's Dinner Theatre, 18935 15 1/2 Mile Rd., Marshall. Through Dec. 21. 269-781-4293. turkeyville.com

War Horse \$30+. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. Dec. 17-Jan. 5. 313-872-1000. broadwayindetroit.com

ART'N'AROUND

Dancing Dog Gallery "Making a Splash-Intense, Gestural Art by Sophie Grillet" Free. 302 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. Dec. 6-Jan. 11. 734-531-6565. dancingdoggallery.biz

Detroit Institute of Arts "Meet Me at the DIA" 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Aug. 17-Feb. 15. 313-833-7900. dia.org

Detroit Institute of Arts "Francis of Assisi in Ecstasy" 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Oct. 1-Jan. 13. 313-833-7900. Dia.org

Flint Institute of Arts "Free Saturdays" 1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint. Sep. 14-Feb. 22. 810-234-1695. flintarts.org

Grand Rapids Art Museum "Friday Night Conversations" 101 Monroe Center, Grand Rapids. Aug. 9-Feb. 28. 616-831-1000. artmuseumgr.org

Krasl Art Center "Sketches to Sculptures, Rendered Reality: Sixty Years With Marshall M. Fredericks" 707 Lake Blvd., St. Joseph. Nov. 8-Jan. 12. 269-983-0271. Krasl.org

Michigan State University Museum "An Extraordinary Document of Our World and Detroit Resurgent" 409 W. Circle Drive, East Lansing. Sep. 8-Jan. 12. 517-355-7474. museum.msu.edu

MOCAD "The Past is Present" 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Sep. 6-Jan. 5. 313-832-6622. Mocadetroit.org

Pewabic Pottery "Made by Hand: Detroit's Ceramic Legacy." 5401 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Oct. 19-Jan. 12. 313-833-1805. Pewabic.org

Saugatuck Center for the Arts "The Uncanny Life and Legacy of Harry Brorby" 400 Culver St., Saugatuck. Dec. 13-Jan. 31. 269-857-2399. Sc4a.org

The Scarab Club "Emerging Artist Series" 217 Farnsworth, Detroit. Aug. 15-Dec. 19. 313-831-1250. Scarabclub.org

UMMA "Fragments from the Past: Islamic Art from the Collection of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology." 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. Nov. 30-March 31. 734-763-4186. Umma.umich.edu

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

Bloomfield Hills-Sunday / Tuesday / Thursday

8:00 pm, North Woodward Equality, Birmingham Unitarian Church, 38651 Woodward, Bloomfield Hills, lower level classroom - enter first walkway off Woodward entrance. Big Book/12 & 12 Meeting.

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-Saturday

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

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

Livonia-Friday

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

Warren-Monday

7:30 p.m., Eastside Serenity Gay AA, Odd Fellow's Hall, 830 S Monroe St Closed/Discussion.

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Solution to puzzle from page 34

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T	H	A	T	T	H	R	E	A	L	E	X						
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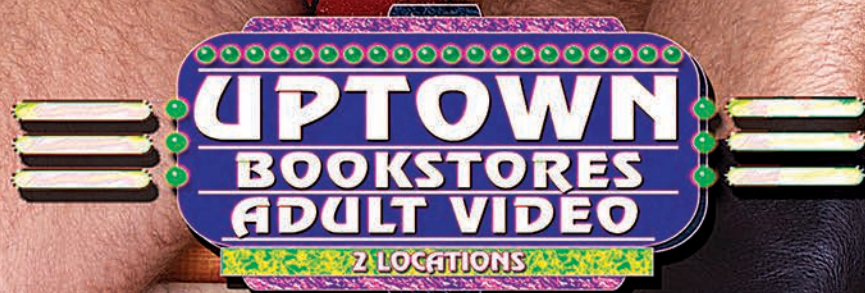
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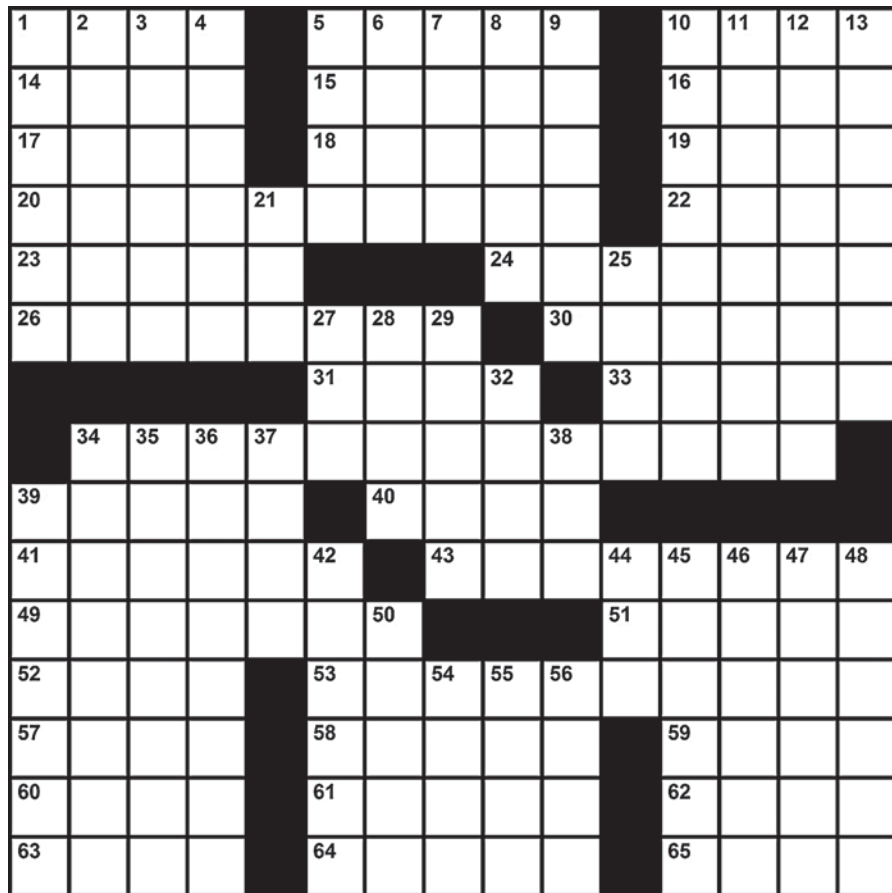
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- 5 Path through leaves of grass
- 10 In need of a massage
- 14 Just one of those things
- 15 Eagle on a par five
- 16 TV's Trebek
- 17 "South Park" composer Shaiman
- 18 Lubricated
- 19 One who says, "Let us prey"
- 20 With 34-Across, where sister Liz is
- 22 ___ Hari of espionage
- 23 Part of an IRS return
- 24 Type of fluid
- 26 "Love Songs" poet Sara
- 30 Bounce on the knee
- 31 Stroke the ball gently
- 33 Rods' partners
- 34 See 20-Across
- 39 Error or erection
- 40 Short term employee
- 41 Susie Bright, to erotica
- 43 Game in which you bend over
- 49 Provides a seat for
- 51 What Garbo "vanted" to be
- 52 Bahrain biggie
- 53 Source of the quote

- 57 One with flaming pants?
- 58 Hurricanes of sports
- 59 Targets of men who make passes
- 60 Suffix with sermon
- 61 Banish from a flat
- 62 Buster Brown's dog
- 63 A Scout may do a good one
- 64 Piddle around
- 65 Sucker's start?

- 29 Merman of Broadway fame
- 32 What cons do
- 34 Anal type?
- 35 New member
- 36 Put off
- 37 Boy who shoots off arrows
- 38 Sweaty place
- 39 Cut at a slope
- 42 Just missed, on the green
- 44 "Poppycock!"
- 45 Commands of admirals
- 46 Bush predecessor's nickname
- 47 Liable to blow
- 48 Yellowstone sight
- 50 Easily screwed
- 54 Train track
- 55 Village People hit
- 56 Place for Maupin's tales

Down

- 1 Tops
- 2 Monopoly square
- 3 Style expert Stewart
- 4 Emulates Paul Cadmus
- 5 Unload loads
- 6 Spin like a top
- 7 Alice's Restaurant patron
- 8 Andrew Van de Camp, and others
- 9 Avoided commitment
- 10 "Giant" actor
- 11 Poisonous bush
- 12 How an a**hole behaves?
- 13 Blows out
- 21 Leno's announcer Hall
- 25 Shopping area
- 27 Letters on love letters to GIs
- 28 Judy's daughter Lorna

Solution on pg. 32

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<p>2014 GMC SIERRA 4WD DOUBLE CAB SLE</p>  <p>Stk. #GE0190</p> <p>W/TARGET COMPETITIVE LEASE \$117 mo. W/LEASE LOYALTY \$191 mo. 24 MO. LEASE!</p>	<p>2014 BUICK REGAL</p>  <p>Stk. #BE0071</p> <p>W/TARGET COMPETITIVE LEASE \$97 mo. W/LEASE LOYALTY \$199 mo. 24 MO. LEASE!</p>	<p>2014 GMC TERRAIN</p>  <p>Stk. #GE0178</p> <p>W/TARGET COMPETITIVE LEASE \$43 mo. W/LEASE LOYALTY \$135 mo. 24 MO. LEASE!</p>	
<p>2014 BUICK ENCORE</p>  <p>Stk. #BE0109</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convenience group Sunroof <p>W/TARGET COMPETITIVE LEASE \$135 mo. W/LEASE LOYALTY \$231 mo. 24 MO. LEASE!</p>	<p>2014 BUICK ENCLAVE</p>  <p>Stk. #BE0008</p> <p>W/TARGET COMPETITIVE LEASE \$180 mo. W/LEASE LOYALTY \$268 mo. 24 MO. LEASE!</p>	<p>2014 YUKON DENALI</p>  <p>Stk. #GD0016</p> <p>0% FOR 72 MONTHS!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sunroof • Trailer Package 4 Wheel Drive • 20" Wheels <p>W/TARGET COMPETITIVE LEASE \$539 mo. W/LEASE LOYALTY \$599 mo. 39 MO. LEASE!</p>	<p>2013 GMC YUKON DENALI</p>  <p>Stk. #GD0341</p> <p>0% FOR 72 MONTHS!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rear Entertainment AWD, NAV • Sunroof <p>NOW \$48,843* 8 AT SIMILAR SAVINGS!</p>

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