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States In 6th Circuit
Request SCOTUS Review

Schuette Wants State's 300
Same-Sex Marriages Voided

“ There shouldn't be
kids getting kicked out of
their homes just because
of who they are. ”

– Wanda Sykes on
her continued support
of Ruth Ellis, pg. 24



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“I’ve always considered myself a rather uninteresting person. But the people I’ve met are anything but, so these are a lot of little biographies of extraordinary men and women I happened to come into contact with.”

– Felice Picano, page 12



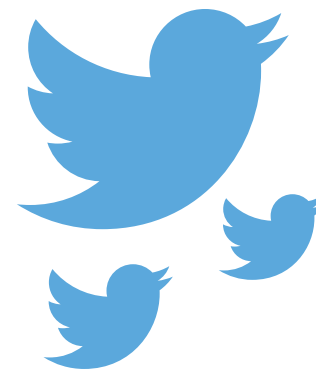
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BTL Facebook Community Reacts To 6th Circuit Ruling

The 6th Circuit ruling on Nov. 6 left Michigan LGBT and allied residents in a state of shock. With emotions ranging from despair to rage, same-sex marriage proponents took to BTL's Facebook to voice their opinions.

“So ashamed of Michigan!”

“Man even Oklahoma legalized same-sex marriages!!!”

“I'm so upset... So unfair... Time to leave Michigan...”

“Completely ashamed to be an LGBT Michigan resident.”

“I do NOT understand how they can do this. They are ruining people's lives. and all of this under the guise of Christianity.”

“All the more reason to move to Massachusetts with my hubby. I am welcome as a gay person there and my marriage is legal too.”

“Rally at the capital.”

“I wonder what this means for those of us that were married on the 22 of March.”

“Why did we have to get stuck with the rednecks...”

“That is it. I can not take it anymore. If this is the case then soon as I can I am leaving Michigan.”

“What the actual ****?”

AG Schuette Wants State's 300 Same-Sex Marriages Voided

BY AJ TRAGER

LANSING — Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette filed a supplemental brief Nov. 14 in the Caspar v Snyder case, claiming that the Nov. 6 decision by the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals renders the 300-plus same-sex marriages performed in March of this year void.

In a 2-1 decision, the 6th Circuit ruled Nov. 6 that same-sex marriage bans do not violate the U.S. Constitution. The circuit court upheld the Michigan Marriage Amendment, a 2004 voter approved same-sex marriage ban. While the plaintiff couple, April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse, have now appealed their case to the Supreme Court of the United States, the 6th Circuit decision, according to Schuette, has rendered the Caspar marriage, and therefore hundreds of other same-sex marriages performed in the state, invalid.

“He may think he has the power to void them. And really that is what our lawsuit is about,” said Keith Orr, co-owner of /aut/Bar in Ann Arbor, who with his partner Martin Contreras is one of the eight couples listed in the Caspar case.

“In my personal opinion, nothing has been voided. This is an overreach on his part. So now we just have to wait and see what Judge Goldsmith has to say and hopefully that will happen shortly.”

Marsha Caspar and Glenna DeJong were the first couple married after the DeBoer decision in March. They, along with seven other couples, are suing for their marriages to be legally recognized under state law. Caspar v Snyder is currently pending a decision from Federal Judge Mark A. Goldsmith, of the Eastern District of Michigan, on whether or not the 300-plus couples are legally married in the state.

“The claim is simple. The merits are clear. The harm is profound,” ACLU of Michigan Cooperating Attorney and



The ACLU of Michigan filed a lawsuit in April, Caspar v Snyder. The eight couples named as plaintiffs in the case appear above. Recently re-elected Attorney General Bill Schuette wants these marriages declared void after the Nov. 6 decision by the 6th Circuit that upheld Michigan's marriage ban. The ACLU says the couples are legally married and the state should recognize these marriages.

University of Michigan Constitutional law professor, Julian Mortenson, said to Judge Goldsmith when he heard arguments in August. “The state cannot mandatorily divorce you.” He is representing eight same-sex couples.

Attorney General Bill Schuette, who was first elected in 2011, wrote towards the invalidation of those couples' legal devotion for one another.

In his brief, Schuette writes, “In fact, Plaintiffs' argument for recognition of their marriages is more tenuous than the arguments set forth in the companion cases to DeBoer because Plaintiffs' marriages were never sanctioned by the public policy of any State. Instead, the marriages occurred when the district court incorrectly invalidated Michigan's public policy.”

“He isn't arguing anything differently than he has argued in the past,” Frank Colasonti, a plaintiff in the Caspar v Snyder case, said. “The language is way stronger in terms of creating a situation where the 300 couples are null and void. I am certainly angry by the big push to do this as is Jim, my husband, and we are going to take the next step.”

Thirty-two states plus the District of Columbia legally support same-sex marriage. With over half of the country validating the love and devotion of same-sex couples with a legal document granting them the full rights of their heterosexual counterparts, many believe it is only a matter of time before the

Supreme Court of the United States determines states' bans on same-sex marriage to be unconstitutional.

Schuette reiterates the state government's opinion that recognition of the 300 marriages would go against Michigan's sovereign interest in the definition of marriage set forth by the Michigan Marriage Amendment, which defines marriage as between one man and one woman. Schuette then goes on to say that the “marriages cannot be recognized for any purposes, and the benefits the plaintiffs seek cannot be provided.”

“This comes with the backdrop of the governor, even after the DeBoer decision of the 6th Appellate, saying that the state doesn't have to recognize them,” Orr said.

Jay Kaplan, LGBT project attorney for the ACLU who is helping represent the plaintiffs in Caspar, said that the DeBoer case should not have any bearing with the Caspar case. They are about two different things: the right to get married and the right to be legally recognized and stay married.

“(In) our case, these people are married, they're legally married in the state of Michigan. That was the law; they have legal marriage certificates,” Kaplan said. “The federal government recognizes their marriages and is (granting) them full benefits, and the state should do the same.”

Learn more about Caspar v Snyder at pridesource.com

www.PrideSource.com

States In 6th Circuit Request SCOTUS Review On Same-Sex Marriage Ban

BY AJ TRAGER

Petitions to the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) have been filed in all four states in the 6th Circuit, which recently issued its ruling on marriage equality for the midwest states.

Michigan plaintiffs April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse, two nurses requesting that the state recognize their right to jointly adopt their children, and therefore legally marry, filed their petition with SCOTUS Nov. 17, just days after Tennessee and Ohio filed on Nov. 14. Kentucky filed their petition just shy of an hour after Michigan.

The states filed their petitions with the high court as a result of the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling Nov. 6, where, in a 2-1 decision, the court upheld marriage bans in Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio, finding that state marriage bans do not violate the U.S. Constitution.

“There is no dispute that the question raised here is of paramount importance,” the Michigan petition states on page five. “Although prior Circuit Court rulings found that laws banning marriage by same-sex couples violate the Fourteenth Amendment, the 6th Circuit disagreed. Gay and lesbian citizens in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee are denied the fundamental freedom and equal right to marry, and their families are deprived of the status, dignity, security and stability that marriage brings.”

Sandi Smith, president of the Jim Toy Community Center, stated that the projected cost to get to the U.S. Supreme Court will be upwards of \$250,000. Everyone is encouraged to support the non-profit Michigan Marriage Challenge as generously as they can.

“A Supreme Court ruling on the issue of marriage equality will mean that families will finally get the equality and protections they need and deserve,” said Michigan For Marriage Coalition Manager, Gina Calcagno. “Discrimination still burdens too many families and with the split in the courts, it’s time for the Supreme Court to take swift action on these cases and bring national resolution once and for all. Michigan families, and families across America, should no longer be forced to fight court by court, state by state, day by day for the freedom and dignity that our Constitution promises.”

The 6th Circuit decision was the first time a federal appeals court ruled against the freedom to marry and created a conflict with four other federal appeals courts that have ruled in similar state marriage bans in recent months, declaring them unconstitutional.

In their request to SCOTUS, the three Tennessee couples argue: “Breaking with the otherwise uniform view of the courts of appeals, a divided panel

of the 6th Circuit upheld Tennessee’s Non-Recognition Laws. The court of appeals’ holding not only denies recognition to petitioners’ own marriages and families, but also establishes a ‘checkerboard’ nation in which same-sex couples’ marriages are dissolved and reestablished as they travel across the country. That is the antithesis of the stability that marriage is supposed to afford.”

Filing the review to SCOTUS will cost the DeBoer legal team \$10,000 for the filing fee and \$10,000 to prepare the material in the manner preferred by the high court.

Sandi Smith, president of the Jim Toy Community Center, stated that the projected cost to get to the Supreme Court will be upwards of \$250,000.

The Michigan Marriage Challenge, a non-profit 501©(3), is asking for financial support in the DeBoer v Snyder case. To get involved or donate money to help the DeBoer legal team get to SCOTUS, visit www.michiganmarriagechallenge.com.



On the eve of the hearings at the 6th Circuit Aug. 6, residents from Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio and Michigan rallied in Cincinnati. BTL file photo.



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SHOP LGBT

New Statewide Campaign For Gender Inclusive Civil Rights Amendment Launches

BY AJ TRAGER

Community and LGBT organizations from across the state have come together to create a new campaign aimed at holding legislators accountable for passage of an all inclusive bill to amend the state's civil-rights amendment.

Before the Michigan legislature are two bills that will amend the state's civil rights act, Elliott-Larsen, to include sexual orientation protections, but one will exclude gender identity protections.

The "five word" bill includes gender identity and sexual orientation protections, and the "two word" bill, introduced on Nov. 11, only includes sexual orientation protections and creates a huge legal loophole in protecting LGBT people.

Activists and LGBT community leaders have come out to fight the passage of the "two word" bill that, in the words of the Executive Director of Equality Michigan Emily Dievendorf, will "leave the transgender community behind."

The campaign, "Dropping The Call," is aimed at the President of AT&T, Jim Murray, who also co-chairs the Competitive Workforce Coalition, a group of business leaders advocating for amending Elliott-Larsen. The campaign uses community involvement to ask Murray to fully support the "five word" bill and not the "two word" bill.

"The cold hard fact is the votes don't exist. I've heard from several legislators – from both sides of the aisle – I can support sexual orientation, but I am just not comfortable with transgender protections," Murray told BTL earlier in the week.

Dropping The Call asks for Michiganders to reach out and speak to Murray and CEO of AT&T Michigan, Mr. Stephenson, to stand for equality and support a fully inclusive Elliott-Larsen amendment.

"Jim Murray is renegeing on that commitment, and he isn't doing it quietly," the campaign website reads. "He's renegeing on AT&T's commitment to full coverage for everyone. But we believe in them."

This is the last week to introduce legislation in the state legislature's lame duck session before the cycle resets after the New Year. And local groups like Equality Michigan, Affirmations, PFLAG Plymouth-Canton, OPCC, GLU, Holland is Ready, The Network, The Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, Transgender Michigan GNA and a few others have come together to fight for the passage of the all inclusive bill.

"To endorse anything less than a whole bill is unacceptable. The LGBT community, the entire LGBT community, deserves legal protections from discrimination," said Jay Maddock, executive director of the KGLRC. "This bill hurts everyone. But we know there are good people in Michigan, and we're calling on you to help us keep Michigan whole."

TAKE ACTION

Dropping The Call Campaign

>> www.droppingthecall.com

The campaign website www.droppingthecall.com houses many resources, from connecting with the state legislators and AT&T to sharing the campaign on social media to getting friends and family up to date and involved on the state's most recent fight for LGBT equality.

Lame Duck: Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Expansion Precarious

BY TODD HEYWOOD

LANSING – The lame-duck machinations to amend the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) continue with two clear sides firming up in the fight.

One group, led by Democrats and state and national LGBT equality organizations, says there will be no amendment without inclusion of gender identity and expression. The other group, led by Speaker of the House Jase Bolger (R-Marshall), says there will be no amendment that includes gender identity and expression.

"Speaker Bolger does not support the bill that adds gender identity to Elliott-Larsen because he believes they already have protection under existing laws and court rulings," said Ari Adler, spokesperson for Bolger. "He will support moving a version that adds sexual orientation to Elliott-Larsen as long as it is balanced with passage of the Michigan Religious Freedom Restoration Act. That strikes the balance the Speaker has been calling for all along – that people should not be discriminated against because of who they are but that people also should not be forced to do something that violates their religious beliefs."

"When it comes to legal protections for marginalized and targeted groups of people, we cannot compromise," State Rep. Tim Greimel (D-Auburn Hills) said. He is the leader for the House Democratic caucus. "No Michigander deserves to be denied employment or housing because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered, and the civil rights of all of them must be protected. We can't support any bill that falls short of that. Justice demands that we stand up for the rights and equality of all people, not just some of them."

Late Friday, MIRS, a subscription only newsletter covering the Capitol and politics, reported that Jim Murray, president of AT&T Michigan and co-chair of the Competitive Workforce Coalition, was stepping away from the initiative. ACLU officials said Monday they had no information to support that report.

"He hasn't said anything to us," Shelli Weisberg, ACLU of Michigan's legislative point person, said in a phone interview Monday morning.

Murray had become a touchstone in the fight in recent weeks as the openly gay executive advocated for legislation

that only included sexual orientation. That flew in the face of both the coalition he led and his own employer. Friday afternoon, AT&T national released a statement saying it would only support a fully inclusive measure.

Weisberg says if Murray has departed, it won't impact the coalition's strategy to pass a fully inclusive bill.

"Ever since he went off to the other side, we have been developing our strategy," she told BTL in a phone interview on Monday about Murray's reported "disengagement."

She says a "solid grassroots effort" and "field organizer effort" is going into effect. She said the organizations in the coalition – which includes Gill Foundation, Equality Michigan, ACLU of Michigan, HRC and more – are "putting a lot of pressure on the governor" to come out in support of a fully inclusive bill.

Snyder's office last week refused to answer questions as to whether the re-elected Republican governor supported inclusion of gender identity and expression in Elliott-Larsen. His spokesman would not even discuss if the governor believed that transgender persons were victims of discrimination. All his office would say is that "the governor believes discrimination is

wrong, period."

Bolger and his supporters argue that gender identity and expression is already legally protected by court decisions and a federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission decision. But LGBT leaders say that is inaccurate, noting that the EEOC decision is not legally binding. They also note that the determinations do not cover public accommodations or housing, as Elliott-Larsen does.

In addition to pushing the non-inclusive bill – which he called a "two-word solution" because it extends protections based on sexual orientation – Bolger says the legislature has to pass a state version of the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act, RFRA. He says the two bills create balance; however, he is unwilling to tie success for one bill to the other. That's a legislative move called "tie-barring." Under that move, if one bill fails and the other passes, both bills fail.

Political observers believe a sexual orientation only bill for Elliott-Larsen will fail, but that the state RFRA will pass in this lame duck session.

But ACLU's Weisberg is optimistic. "I think there is a chance of getting a fully inclusive bill," she said. "Michiganders are way ahead of legislators on this one."

AT&T National Supports Only A Fully Inclusive Civil Rights Bill

Despite public statements by its leader in Michigan, AT&T says it will only support a fully inclusive bill that protects based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

"ATT will only support a fully inclusive bill," said Matthew Resch in an email to BTL. Resch also released a statement from Paul La Schiazza, AT&T Midwest Region President. "AT&T always has and always will support civil rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression," the statement reads. "We applaud Jim Murray for his efforts to expand the Elliot-Larsen Act to be fully inclusive, and recognize that without his leadership, these initiatives would not have moved forward. We pride ourselves on our commitment to promoting LGBT issues, and will support only a bill that is fully inclusive."

This statement varies significantly from what many players involved in the battle to bring an amendment to Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act have said in relation to Murray's activity in lobbying for an amendment. Murray himself has conceded in previous interviews with other news outlets that he would be satisfied with a half measure which did not include gender identity and or expression. He used the example of a hungry person ordering a pizza, noting they would be satisfied with "half a pizza."

Murray also took to Facebook on Sept. 10 posting the lyrics to the song "You Can't Always Get What You Want" after quoting a story in the subscription newsletter MIRS. In that story, Murray was quoted as saying that gender identity might have to be split from sexual orientation, noting, "We have a window of opportunity and I'm going to advocate for something that has 56 'yes' votes in the House and 20 'yes' votes in the Senate."

Activists and lawmakers have told BTL in background interviews that Murray has been advocating a so-called "two-word" solution for the civil rights act since this spring. Resch would not explain the apparent difference in philosophy on the bills, saying only, "However the legislature decides to move forward, ATT will only support a fully inclusive bill."



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Federal Court Rules 2011 Law Prohibiting Domestic Partner Benefits Unconstitutional

BY TODD HEYWOOD

LANSING – A law signed in December 2011 to prohibit local units of government from providing health benefits for unmarried partners has been struck down by a federal court because it “unlawfully discriminates against same-sex couples.”

The ruling, from Judge David Lawson of the Eastern District Court of Michigan, says the law was the result of animus towards same-sex couples and had no rational basis. Lawson’s ruling prohibits the state from enforcing the law, called Public Act 287 of 2011.

“The Public Employee Domestic Partner Benefit Restriction Act, Public Act 297 (2011), violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution because it unlawfully discriminates against the same-sex partners of public employees without a

legitimate basis for doing so,” Lawson wrote in his opinion, released Nov. 5.

The law was signed by Republican Gov. Rick Snyder Dec. 22, 2011 and went into immediate effect.

Lawson ruled that there was plenty of evidence the law was based in animus toward the LGBT community.

The legislation was a response by conservative Republicans to a move by the Michigan Civil Service Commission decision to extend other eligible individuals (OEI) with health insurance under state employee benefit packages. OEI programs, the state Supreme Court had ruled, did not violate the state’s prohibition on recognizing same-sex marriages or relationships.

The legislation was pushed by Rep. Pete Lund, a Macomb Republican,

and Rep. Dave Agema, a Republican from Greenville. Agema has a long, proven history of animus towards the LGBT community, including posting an anti-gay screed to his Facebook page

which used information from a white nationalist. Agema’s anti-gay antics earned him a mild rebuke in the 2014 State of the State address from Gov. Rick Snyder and calls from prominent GOP leaders for his resignation from his position as a GOP National Committeeman.

Lawson ruled that there was plenty of evidence the law was based in animus

See Partner Benefits, page 16

Post-Election Post Mortem



VIEWPOINT

BY MARK LACHEY

As many of you know, I am the chair of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Allies (LGBT&A) Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party, having been elected in February 2013. As formulated by myself and the Caucus’ three vice chairs at that time (Dave Coulter, Jan Stevenson and Garnet Lewis), our purpose is three-fold: to provide Michigan’s LGBT&A Community with

an enhanced presence and voice in the all aspects of the decision-making process of the Michigan Democratic Party; (2) to increase our community’s participation in the electoral and party process at all levels, including the recruitment and election of openly LGBT and allied candidates; and (3) with the ultimate goal of enriching and bettering the lives of LGBT&A Michiganders generally and specifically in terms of full legal equality.

Although we are all well aware of the recent election’s outcome, this Caucus and our community have not been without its share of successes during these past two years.

First and foremost, there were no less than 11 openly-LGBT candidates who ran for office this year in Michigan (two for Congress, five for the legislature and four for county-level seats). Of those, three were successful including Jeremy Moss and Jon Hoadley who will be sworn in as members of the Michigan House of Representatives in January. We’ve only had one LGBT legislator

(thank you, Chris Kolb) previously who was term-limited in 2006. All of this is unprecedented, but the significance of these hard-fought and won achievements by Moss and Hoadley (and their myriad of LGB&A supporters) should not be lost in the dross of the overall results from Nov. 4.

It is additionally noteworthy that there has never been this number of LGBT Democrats serving in the MDP’s governing and policy-making bodies: its State Central Committee (including Michigan’s first transgender member), Executive Committee as well as at its informal but highly influential “stakeholders’ table.” You may well ask “so what?,” but so long as Michigan and our nation continue to be dominated by two political parties of which only one puts its pro-equality policies and beliefs front and center, it is of vital importance to have our eyes, ears and voices in those rooms when the prioritization of issues

See LaChey: Post Election, page 16

All Or Nothing When It Comes To Civil Rights



VIEWPOINT

BY JAY KAPLAN

Last week, a Republican-sponsored bill was introduced that would amend our state's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to prohibit discrimination against some members of the LGBT community. The proposed bill covers sexual orientation — but leaves out gender identity and expression.

The response from the LGBT community and Michigan's business community was pretty much unanimous: No deal. We won't support a bill that protects some of our community yet singles out transgender people for discrimination.

There are some, including state House Speaker Jase Bolger, who have suggested that transgender people don't need state protection from discrimination because there are legal rulings that protect them. Let's take a closer look at that assertion.

It is true that some federal courts, including the 6th Circuit that covers Michigan, have held that discrimination against transgender people in factual situations involving gender stereotypes (not conforming to "traditional" notions of how someone born biologically male or female should behave) may constitute sex discrimination in violation of Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act. However, there is not uniform consensus on that theory within the federal courts. The United States Supreme Court, which has final legal authority on this issue, has yet to address it.

It should also be noted that the Title VII sex discrimination theory applies only to employers with 15 or more employees. This leaves out the remaining 85 percent of the American workforce that is employed by smaller businesses. Furthermore, a Title VII claim is only available for employment claims, leaving transgender persons unprotected from discrimination in public accommodations and housing. Michigan courts have never addressed the issue of whether transgender discrimination is actionable under Elliott-Larsen, as is sex discrimination.

Finally, gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals who are not transgender are often subjected to unfair treatment based on their failure to conform to traditional gender stereotypes. Omitting gender identity and expression creates a loophole for discrimination against LGBT people. Including gender identity and expression in the bill helps to ensure that people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are protected from discrimination based on expectations of what a person "should" look or act like.

From my experience as staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan's LGBT Project, I can state that the largest number of discrimination complaints we receive come from the transgender community. This is consistent with national statistics. According to a survey conducted by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for

Omitting gender identity and expression creates a loophole for discrimination against LGBT people. Including gender identity and expression in the bill helps to ensure that people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are protected from discrimination based on expectations of what a person "should" look or act like.

Transgender Equality, 90 percent of transgender people report experiencing harassment, mistreatment or discrimination on the job. Forty-seven percent report an adverse job outcome, such as being fired, not hired or being denied a promotion because of their gender identity and expression. Twenty percent report having been refused a home or apartment, and 11 percent report being evicted. Fifty-three percent report being harassed or disrespected in a place of public accommodation including hotels, restaurants, buses, airports and government agencies.

Clearly, Michigan needs a law that addresses this kind of pervasive discrimination.

Some ask, "Why fight over the issue of gender identity?" Just settle for including sexual orientation, they argue, because something is better than nothing. However, if Michigan is serious about treating the LGBT people fairly, how we can

leave out an integral part of our community? How can we say that some members of our community deserve protections, while others can be discriminated against?

In truth, that "something" would mean nothing.

The majority of states and Michigan communities with non-discrimination laws protecting LGBT people include gender identity — and so do most companies that have non-discrimination policies. Because it demonstrates a full commitment to the idea that our community is to be treated with fairness and dignity. Because it is the only acceptable language for an LGBT-inclusive civil rights law.

Because it is the right thing to do.

Jay Kaplan is staff attorney of the LGBT Project at the ACLU of Michigan. He can be reached at kaplan@aclumich.org



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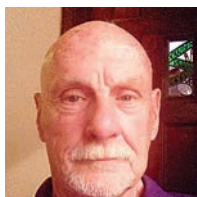
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Fundies! Go Fly Ben's Kite!



Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

If one person single-handedly pushed this country into a War of Independence from England, it is patriot and pamphleteer Thomas Paine (1737 - 1809). His book "Common Sense" is a clarion call to open rebellion. Today's Religious Right hates and ignores him with an unholy passion.

When "Common Sense" appeared in January 1776 it sold 50,000 copies. One copy for every eight citizens. Its stirring prose and cogent reasoning motivated Americans to defy King George III. The rest is glorious, 13 stars-and-stripes history. Don't tread on me!

Tom Paine's second book "The Age of Reason" – a well-crafted Bible sandblasting – terrifies Christian fundamentalists who, in their misguided zeal, would have us believe America's founding fathers were gung-ho for making this a Christian Nation. And to hell with separation of church and state.

(Scary too for Bible Belters are seldom publicized religious background checks of George Washington, John Quincy Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and a majority of the original signers of the United States Constitution.)

The main reason Paine's name is foam on the parched and cracked lips of the biblical boob-ocrats is because Paine was a caustic skeptic.

Tom Paine's second book "The Age of Reason" – a well-crafted Bible sandblasting – terrifies Christian fundamentalists who, in their misguided zeal, would have us believe America's founding fathers were gung-ho for making this a Christian Nation. And to hell with separation of church and state.

"Every national Church or religion has established itself by pretending some special mission from God," he wrote in "The Age of Reason" (1794). "Each accuses the other of unbelief; and for my own part, I disbelieve them all."

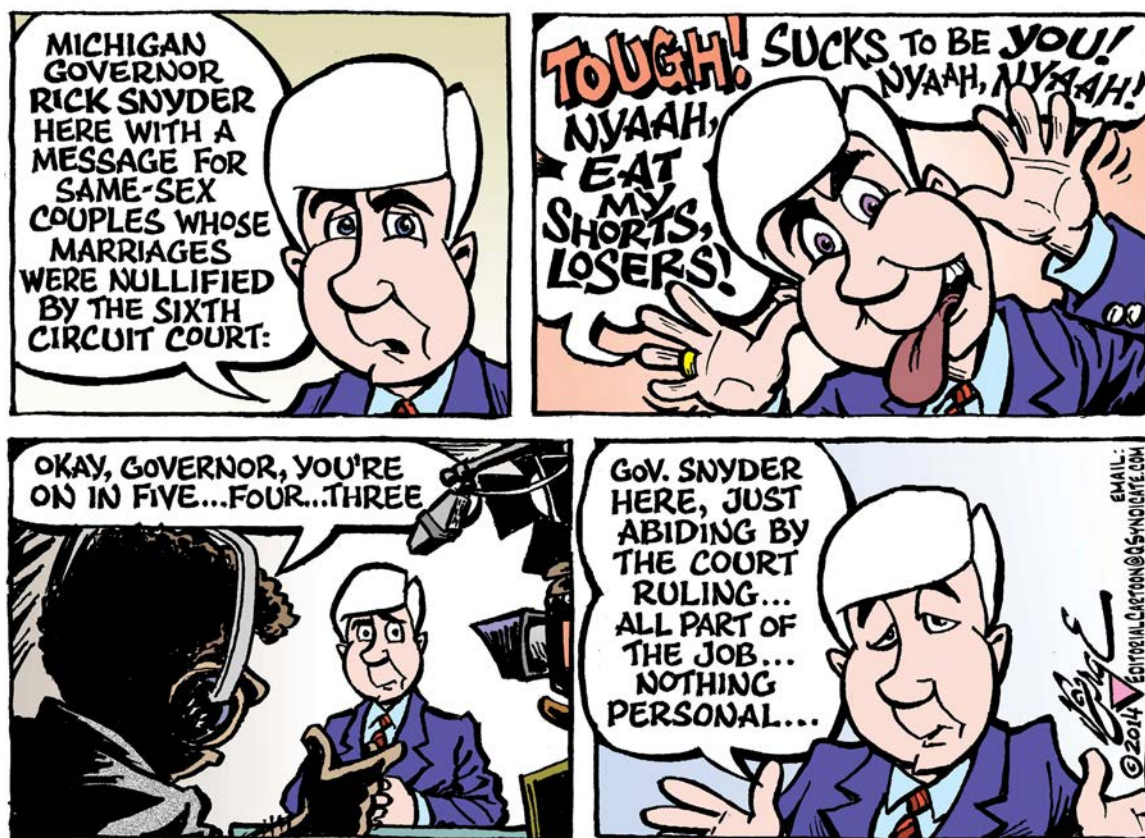
Paine said that, "If someone claimed to hear the voice of God, it is a revelation to that person only. When he tells it to a second person it becomes hearsay; and consequently no one is obligated to believe it."

He questioned important and key Christian religious doctrine: "It appears that Doubting Thomas did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, and would not believe without ocular and manual demonstration himself. So neither will I: and the reason is equally good for me and every other person as for Thomas."

Paine called himself a Deist. He found that God was revealed in Nature. That Jesus was human, not God. That both Old and New Testaments are replete with myths and errors. He gave hundreds of examples to prove it. Reason, rather than blind faith and revelation, is mankind's greatest gift from the Creator, Paine maintained.

Other important American patriots challenged Christianity. John Adams was a Unitarian (and we all know what they're like) as was his son, John Quincy. Thomas Jefferson put together his own version of the New Testament, editing out mythology and dogma in favor of ethical content. Jefferson urged his nephew to, "Question with boldness even

See ALEXANDER: Fundies, next page



The fact is, without gender identity and expression covered in Michigan's Elliott-Larsen, the entire LGBT community loses. And it is our trans brothers and sisters who will suffer the most with a "two word solution." That exclusion will kill people and cause irreparable harm.

Bolger And Murray On The Wrong Side Of History

BTL EDITORIAL

Out-going Speaker of the House Jase Bolger (R-Marshall) and openly gay President of AT&T Michigan Jim Murray have been pushing for an exclusionary amendment to Michigan's civil rights law – the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. The duo want to pass a bill that protects based on sexual orientation, but not gender identity and expression. Bolger says inclusion of the transgender community is unnecessary. Murray has surrendered to the ugly group-think of least resistance governance. He believes that because he can get a majority to support the so-called "two word" solution, we should all settle for a half measure. "A half pizza looks pretty good," he told MLive.

Unless, of course, you are transgender. There is no pizza for you in a half measure. There is only the status quo, some of which we highlight below:

- One in five transgender people have been refused housing because of their gender identity, The National Center for Transgender Equality reports.
- One in 10 transgender people have been evicted because of their gender identity, the NCTE reports
- Transwomen are 49 times more likely than any

other people to be infected with HIV worldwide, according to a March 2013 study published in the Lancet Infectious Disease journal.

- Transgender people were more than four times more likely to live in extreme poverty – with an annual income of under \$10,000 – according to a 2011 study and report from the National LGBTQ Task Force.
- 78 percent of K-12 age transgender and gender nonconforming persons reported harassment at school, according to that Task Force report.
- One-sixth of those K-12 students reporting the harassment and violence was so severe they left school as a result.
- 35 percent reported assault, and 12 percent reported sexual violence.
- The unemployment rate for transgender and gender nonconforming persons is twice the national average.
- 90 percent reported experiencing workplace harassment or discrimination or being forced to hide their identity in the workplace.
- 26 percent report being fired for their gender identity or expression.

See BTL: Wrong Side, next page

An Open Letter To Married People Who Oppose Marriage Equality

BY JENNIFER MIRACLE-BEST



To Those Who Have Concerned Themselves with Other People's Right to Marry:

I'm a fairly reasonable person. In fact, I would imagine that most of the people who are close to me

would say that I might be one of the most diplomatic people they know. As such, I've done a lot of thinking and soul-searching, trying to understand exactly what your hang up is with other people having the opportunity to experience the same joy, companionship, peace of mind, security and federal protections that you experience as a married person.

After all, allowing other people to marry the person they love and wish to spend their life with will, in no way, prohibit you from continuing to be married to the person you love and have committed to spend your life with. It doesn't prevent you from believing – erroneously or not – that your faith says

it's wrong. Unfortunately, it doesn't even prevent you from filling your children's minds and hearts with the same misinformation and hurtful prejudices that you yourself have acquired. All marriage equality does is provide the opportunity for ANY person to marry ANY other person that they love and wish to spend THEIR life with. That's it. So, what the fuck is the problem?

I also find myself wondering why you can't seem to understand how incredibly hurtful it is to withhold the right to marry from people. I mean, surely, you don't understand because any human who understood that kind of pain would do whatever they could to relieve it... wouldn't they? I have to believe that you truly just don't understand, because the alternative is that you simply don't give a shit, and well... that's a reality I'm just not willing to deal with at this point. So, allow me to take my best shot at helping you to understand the kind of heartache that you're inflicting on your fellow humans – some of them even your close family members – by withholding from them the same rights and protections that you enjoy everyday with your spouse for no good reason, other than you can. Admittedly,

See Open Letter, page 13

► BTL: Wrong Side of History

Continued from p. 10

• 16 percent report they were forced to turn to the underground economy in order to survive.

This is why the Michigan House Democratic Caucus has taken a stand to oppose any legislation that does not include gender identity and expression in amending Elliott-Larsen. This is why ACLU of Michigan, Equality Michigan and the Unity partners have said if a bill isn't inclusive, it must die.

And this is why Murray "disengaged" from the fight to amend Elliott-Larsen. He was focused on a narrow win; a win his own employer AT&T national said it didn't

support. Now Bolger and his allies in the GOP controlled House would like you to think opposition to the sexual orientation-only Elliott-Larsen – the so-called "two word solution" – is because of bullying from the left.

That's not the case. The fact is, without gender identity and expression covered in Michigan's Elliott-Larsen, the entire LGBT community loses. And it is our trans brothers and sisters who will suffer the most with a "two word solution." That exclusion will kill people and cause irreparable harm.

Murray and Bolger are simply on the wrong side of history. They are standing up for a very dangerous status quo, as demonstrated by the outrageous statistics related to how differently the transgender community is treated in our state and in our country.

he spoke of the importance of religion in the life of the newly independent nation. Our first president was also a Mason, as were some 26 signers of the U.S. Constitution.

Come to think of it, instead of being a Christian Nation, as political right-wingers like to pretend, we are actually a Masonic Nation, with not six, but 32 degrees of separation. I belong to the Fraternal Order of Moose myself. Or, is it the Odd Fellows? Or D.A.R.?

Charles@pridesource.com

Creep of the Week

Jase Bolger

OPINION BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

In Michigan, where I live, it is perfectly legal to fire someone for being gay. Or for being lesbian, bisexual or transgender, for that matter. For years, LGBT people and



Jase Bolger

allies have been trying to amend the state's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity, which would protect LGBT people from discrimination in areas like hiring and housing. Alas, it hasn't come to pass.

Then a funny thing happened earlier this month: Democrats stupidly stayed home and Republicans won just about everything (except for Terri Lynn Land, who deserves some major props for being such an embarrassment that not even Michigan's Republicans would vote for her). And now, all of a sudden, Republicans are interested in – gasp! – amending the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to make it inclusive.

But not too inclusive, mind you. L? G? B? Step right this way. T? Not so fast. Michigan would like to continue to legally discriminate against you.

This is, of course, unacceptable. Granted, some argue that getting something is better than nothing. But transgender folks face a hell of a lot of discrimination, which is evidenced in their intentional absence from the possible Civil Rights Act update. You show me a trans man or woman that has not faced discrimination in his or her life, and I'll show you a photo of Michigan's Speaker of the House Jase Bolger (R-Marshall) wearing a ball gag at a bondage club. (Note: to the best of my knowledge, said photo does not exist, which is my point. However, should someone possess such a photo, I beseech you to Instagram that shit and I will gladly replace the above hypothetical example with something else).

Speaking of Bolger, he supports the T-minus amendment and he says he'll vote for it so long as he gets his so-called "religious freedom" act, too.

And I know some folks might say, "Well, religious freedom doesn't sound so bad. That's one of this country's founding principles, isn't it?" To which I say, "Ha." Because in Republican-speak, "religious freedom" is code for "freedom to

Bolger is all, "Oh, sure, let's include sexual orientation in our Civil Rights Act so long as we provide a loophole for people who think homos are going to hell."

discriminate against LGBT people."

That's right. Bolger is all, "Oh, sure, let's include sexual orientation in our Civil Rights Act so long as we provide a loophole for people who think homos are going to hell."

In other words, if you're a photographer and a gay couple wants to hire you to document their wedding and you think that would make Jesus cry, Bolger wants to protect your right to discriminate. The gay couple's right not to be discriminated against? Not so much.

"I don't want to create a license to discriminate," he told The Detroit News, apparently without irony.

"I am passionate that we don't judge each other on both sides," he also told The News. "That we do try to achieve a society that's live and let live."

This is coming from the guy who was all for taking domestic partner benefits away from gay and lesbian public employees, claiming that the state was spending millions "to provide health care benefits for roommates of state employees."

Thankfully the benefits ban was just declared unconstitutional by a federal judge who said it existed solely to "harm same-sex couples" and was motivated by "an irrational prejudice."

Alas, Michigan's Republican lawmakers are still very much interested in harming same-sex couples, and trans men and women to boot. And they're still operating under an irrational prejudice, or as Bolger would call it in the Bizarro World he apparently inhabits, "Live and let live."

D'Anne Witkowski has been gay for pay since 2003. She's a freelance writer and poet (believe it!). When she's not taking on the creeps of the world, she reviews rock and roll shows in Detroit with her twin sister and teaches writing at the University of Michigan.

Renowned Gay Writers To Visit Ann Arbor

Pay It Forward This Holiday Season

BY AJ TRAGER

Though the holiday season is usually associated with hot chocolate, Santa and other festivities, many families in metro Detroit are unable to celebrate because of overwhelming medical bills, damages from the summer floods and job losses. As a result, non-profits and community organizations from all over the state are dedicating their time and resources towards assisting the LGBT community in this time of need. LGBTQ and allies are asked to take a few dollars out of their weekly budgets or an hour of their leisure time and donate to charities and LGBT projects across the state. "You don't pay back love, you pay it forward," Lily Hardy Hammond said in 1916, years before Detroit became the metropolis it is today with a community focused on helping one another.

The Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) will celebrate their fourth year teaming up with Volunteers of America in choosing four to 10 families that will benefit from community giving. "Elf" Laurie Amalfitano and "Elf" Larry Iddins will facilitate the Giving Tree project ensuring that coats, hats, blankets, food, turkeys and more are provided to families in need. In the past, MCC has hosted a caroling event for elected families, but this year festivities have moved to MCC for the evening of Dec. 17 for a gift wrapping and "Santa Stack" creating extravaganza. To celebrate or attend the gift gifting event, call Amalfitano at 586-202-6682. MCC will be accepting monetary and gift donations during weekly office hours throughout the holiday season. Gifts can also be dropped off at 2441 Pinecrest Dr., Ferndale.

Alternatives for Girls is a center focused on helping homeless and high-risk girls and young women avoid violence, teen pregnancy and exploitation, and help them to explore and access the support, resources and opportunities necessary to be safe, to grow strong and to make positive choices in their lives. From now until Jan. 31, every donation given to the center will be matched dollar-for-dollar by The Rush Group, a Michigan-based automotive supply and trucking company, and the group's CEO Andra Rush. Rush believes in the power of giving back and wants to "transform the lives of those who are often forgotten." President Obama recognized the work and dedication of Rush – employing 600 Detroit residents – during his 2014 State of the Union address. To make a donation today, visit <https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=alts4girls&id=2> or contact Pamela Martin Turner at Alt. for Girls at 313-361-4000 ext. 273. She can also be emailed at pturner@alternativesforgirls.org.

There are many LGBT groups in the state that could use a donation to not only keep their doors open but also to further their work in helping the community. The Jim Toy Community Center in Ann Arbor, KICK: the Agency for LGBT African-Americans in Detroit, Transgender Michigan, Ozone House Youth and Family Services in Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor, the Ruth Ellis Center and many other groups such as AIDS Partnership Michigan, CARES Michigan and the Alzheimer's Association-Michigan Chapter all need monetary help and support.

Affirmations has also launched a new program called the "We Are All One Family" project, designed to assist low income LGBT and allied families and provides many ways to get involved. More information on the project can be found in next week's BTL.

Giving back to the community feels good and will bring joy that extends beyond a new Xbox or a bargain Barbie doll. Check out the full list of non-profit organizations in the BTL Yellow Pages at www.pridesource.com/directory.html.

Extended briefs are available online at:

>> www.PrideSource.com

BY KEITH ORR

In 1980 and 1981, seven gay writers met in New York. They were as much a support group as a writing "school." They were attempting to write serious fiction, but no one was taking them seriously. The prevailing view of publishers was that the only gay male fiction was porn. The group was known as the Violet Quill, and collectively they formed the birth of contemporary post-Stonewall gay literature. The characteristic trait of the group was that their literature accepted gay characters as simply being. No explanations were made nor needed as to how they came to be. Their writing was "of gay, by gay and for gay." The group was heralded in SoHo Weekly News in November 1980 in an article titled "Fag Lit's New Royalty," subtitled "A Moveable Brunch – A Fag Lit Mafia."

Only three survive: Andrew Holleran, Edmund White and Felice Picano. They remain close. Of the three, Felice Picano is the most prolific and certainly the one who has published in more genres than any of the others. Most recently he has been producing a variety of autobiographies and memoirs.

He is currently on a Midwest tour with Carlos T. Mock. Picano has two new works, "True Stories, Too" and "Nights at Rizzolli." Puerto Rican born author Mock is joining him with his recent collection of memories and anecdotes titled "Historias." They will be reading from them at Common Language Bookstore at 4 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 22.

I spoke with Picano recently about his tour and his new works. He said, "I've reached an age – I'll be 71 next February – when I can actually begin to look back objectively and see patterns in my life."

His works have included fiction, non-fiction, plays and criticism. His work as a publisher and editor has started the careers of scores of younger gay writers. And now he says, "The gay icon and actress Mae West once said, 'Keep a diary when you are young, and when you are old, it will keep you.' I'm testing out that theory with these recent books of true stories and memoirs."

"True Stories, Too" chronicles his own past as well as a sense of place in time: New York, San Francisco, L.A. and more. He writes for the first time of his dysfunctional family. He notably explores the still unsolved mystery of the murder of his uncle at the age of 9 in 1923 in rural Rhode Island.

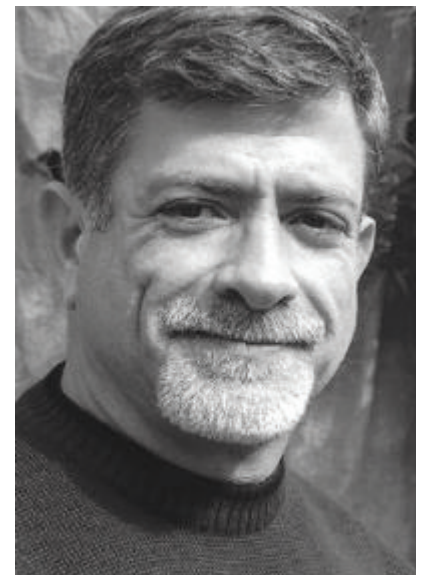
One of Picano's early jobs was at the legendary Rizzolli bookshop in Manhattan. The store was frequented



Author Felice Picano

“I’ve reached an age – I’ll be 71 next February – when I can actually begin to look back objectively and see patterns in my life.”

- Felice Picano



Author Carlos T. Mock

by artists, writers, musicians and poets. He met many of them. Picano told me, "I've always considered myself a rather

uninteresting person. But the people I've met are anything but, so these are a lot of little biographies of extraordinary men and women I happened to come into contact with."

Picano lucked into a job at Rizzolli in 1971 through a friend. "Nights at Rizzolli" is the story of his life at the bookshop as a near-starving young writer. He tells of the romance and drama at the store, the cultural milieu which frequented it and of the after-hours nightlife of a burgeoning underground gay New York City.

This is the writer's second visit to Common Language. His previous visit included the only staged reading of his epistolary novella, "Ingoldsby." Hearing and meeting this legend in LGBT writing and publishing is a unique opportunity.

APPEARING

Common Language Bookstore

317 Braun Court, Ann Arbor

Saturday, Nov. 22, 4 p.m.

Authors Felice Picano and Carlos T. Mock will be reading from their new works.

>> <http://lgbtbooks.com>

► **Open Letter**

Continued from p. 11

this is going to be a stretch for you, but I'm begging you please, to seriously try to envision yourself in this situation and to truly imagine how it would make you feel... and consider a change of heart.

Imagine that tomorrow, Congress passes a federal amendment to the US Constitution prohibiting marriage between people of the opposite gender, thereby nullifying your marriage with your current spouse as far as the government is concerned. If you have any children, only one parent will be given parental rights to each child. You can no longer share the same family name and the children will have to take the name of the parent that will be their legal guardian. You will no longer have access to your former spouse's health insurance benefits and again, the children will only be eligible for health insurance benefits under the plan of the parent who becomes their legal guardian. You will no longer be eligible to file joint income tax returns. If your current living situation is in a place that is zoned for "families only," your landlord or community will have the right to force you to find another living situation. Additionally, if your spouse was not a US citizen prior to your marriage, they will need to either return to their country of origin or pursue another route to obtaining

their citizenship, perhaps through a same-gender spouse.

Should your partner become ill, and you are the primary caregiver, you will not be eligible for family leave time to care for them. This might not be too much of an issue, because in the event that you're even allowed to visit your beloved partner in the hospital, you will no longer have the authority to make medical decisions for them in the event that they are unable to do that for themselves, anyway. If, heaven-forbid, your partner should pass away, you will have no right to their wages, workman's comp, retirement, nor their estate.

You lose all of these rights simply because, presumably, one of you happens to have a vagina and the other a penis, and the government doesn't like that. There's nothing you can do about it, because your fellow citizens have made their wishes about your relationship the law of the land. Sounds absurd, doesn't it? Exactly.

Jennifer Miracle-Best is a speaker, educator and co-host of Michigan's Premier LGBT Internet Radio Show, The C Spot on www.caveradiobroadcasting.com. Tune in from 8-10 p.m. on Sunday nights and follow her at www.facebook.com/jennifermiracle or @jennifermiracle.



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Ask Lambda Legal Veteran's Marriage Benefits

BY SUSAN SOMMER

Dear Ask Lambda Legal: I'm a married U.S. Army veteran and living in Arkansas. We're wondering about spousal benefits for same-sex partners. I thought my partner wasn't eligible but have heard that things are changing; is that true?

In June of 2013, the Supreme Court of the United States struck down section 3 of the so-called Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), providing federal recognition and benefits to same-sex couples that get married in states that have the freedom to marry. Veterans have unfortunately been denied these new rights when it comes to spousal benefits, even if they are legally married, if they live in a state that still has a discriminatory marriage ban in place. Arkansas (for now) is still one of those states with a ban on marriage for same-sex couples.

Veteran's spousal benefits are critical to a military family's stability and peace of mind. These benefits include spousal disability compensation, death pension benefits, home loan guarantees and the right to be buried together in national cemeteries. The fact that a veteran in Oklahoma can access these benefits while just across the border in Arkansas a similarly situated veteran cannot is clearly unfair and unconstitutional under the equal protection clause. By telling veterans that if they want spousal benefits for their legal spouses, they must uproot their lives and move, the government is placing an unfair burden on these couples and families.

The U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) is the federal agency that oversees these benefits. Many federal agencies have already acted on the Windsor ruling by using a place-of-celebration standard rather than a place-of-domicile standard to determine marital status. In other words, if a same-sex couple gets married in a state where such marriage is legal, then they are married for purposes of federal benefits. Unfortunately, the VA uses the place-of-domicile standard, which penalizes legally married same-sex couples simply because of where they live.

Lambda Legal is working to change this. In August of 2014, we filed suit against the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on behalf of the American Military Partner Association (AMPA) arguing that this denial of benefits to same-sex spouses of veterans is in violation of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision striking down DOMA. The decision in Windsor specifically flagged the deprivation of veterans benefits to same-sex spouses as unconstitutional. The VA should not rely on discriminatory state marriage bans, which have been declared unconstitutional by federal courts far and wide throughout the country, as the basis to deny these spousal benefits now. Having weathered the federal government's past, longstanding discrimination against them, lesbian and gay veterans should not be deprived of equal rights and earned benefits by the government they served and the nation for which they sacrificed.

Susan Sommer is the Director of Constitutional Litigation for Lambda Legal. If you have any questions, or feel you have been discriminated against because of your sexual orientation or gender identity, contact Lambda Legal's Help Desk 866-542-8336 or www.lambdalegal.org/help

Study Suggests Genetic Link For Male Homosexuality

BY LINDSEY TANNER

CHICAGO (AP) – A large study of gay brothers adds to evidence that genes influence men's chances of being homosexual, but the results aren't strong enough to prove it.

Some scientists believe several genes might affect sexual orientation. Researchers who led the new study of nearly 800 gay brothers say their results bolster previous evidence pointing to genes on the X chromosome.

They also found evidence of influence from a gene or genes on a different chromosome. But the study doesn't identify which of hundreds of genes located in either place might be involved.

Smaller studies seeking genetic links to homosexuality have had mixed results.

The new evidence "is not proof but it's a pretty good indication" that genes on the two chromosomes have some influence over sexual orientation, said Dr. Alan Sanders,

the lead author. He studies behavioral genetics at NorthShore University HealthSystem Research Institute in Evanston, Illinois.

Experts not involved in the study were more skeptical.

Neil Risch, a genetics expert at the University of California, San Francisco, said the data are statistically too weak to demonstrate any genetic link. Risch was involved in a smaller study that found no link between male homosexuality and chromosome X.

Dr. Robert Green, a medical geneticist at Harvard Medical School, called the new study "intriguing but not in any way conclusive."

The work was published Monday by the journal *Psychological Medicine*. The National Institutes of Health paid for the research.

The researchers say they found potential links to male homosexuality in a portion of chromosome X and on chromosome 8, based on an analysis of genetic material in blood or saliva samples from participants.

Chromosome X is one of two human sex chromosomes; the other is chromosome Y, present only in men.

The study authors note that animal research suggests a gene located in one region of chromosome X may contribute to some sexual behavior; it's one of the same regions cited in the new study.

Specific causes of homosexuality are unknown. Some scientists think social, cultural, family and biological factors are involved, while some religious groups consider it an immoral choice.

Study participant Dr. Chad Zawitz, a Chicago physician, called the research "a giant step forward" toward answering scientific questions about homosexuality and helping reduce the stigma gays often face.

Being gay "is sort of like having certain eye color or skin color -- it's just who you are," Zawitz said. "Most heterosexuals I know didn't choose to be heterosexual. It's puzzling to me why people don't understand."

Pope Reinforces Traditional Family Values

BY NICOLE WINFIELD

VATICAN CITY (AP) – Pope Francis said Monday that children have the right to grow up with a mother and a father, emphasizing traditional family values as he opened an interreligious conference on the "complementarity" of men and women in marriage.

The three-day conference opened just weeks after Francis presided over a divisive meeting of the world's bishops who split on issues such as gay unions and divorced and remarried Catholics.

It was organized by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, whose conservative prefect, Cardinal Gerhard Mueller, helped lead the opposition to

Francis' radical agenda at the synod.

During the two-week meeting, progressive bishops sought a much broader, welcoming tone of acceptance and welcome to gays and remarried Catholics, whereas conservatives like Mueller sought to reinforce church teaching on the indissolubility of marriage between man and woman.

Conference organizers and Vatican officials have stressed that the three-day conference was in no way a response to the synod. But the timing couldn't have been better to reinforce the conservative backlash against proposals for the Catholic Church to be more welcoming to gays.

During his remarks, Francis also

confirmed that he would travel to the U.S. next year to participate in a rally for families in Philadelphia.

"I wish to confirm according to the wishes of the Lord, that in September of 2015, I will go to Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families," he told the crowd, which erupted in applause.

During his first visit to the U.S. as pope, Francis is also expected to address Congress and deliver a speech to the United Nations to mark its 70th anniversary.

The Vatican stressed that the other legs of the trip haven't yet been confirmed.

Shelter in Kansas City Won't House Gay Couples

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) – The City Union Mission in Kansas City says it will not allow legally married same-sex couples who are homeless to stay at the shelter.

Executive director Dan Doty says shelter officials believe that the Bible prohibits same-sex marriage. He says married same-sex couples will be

referred to other shelters.

The Kansas City Star reports the mission is a private nonprofit that receives no governmental funding, meaning it is not bound by anti-discrimination rules. Officials at the Topeka Rescue Mission say they haven't decided if the couples will be allowed to stay.

But other Kansas City-area shelters say same-sex married couples already are welcome to stay. That includes Salvation Army shelters in Kansas and Missouri, Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph shelters and the Lawrence Community Shelter.

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Same-Sex Marriage Issue Now Linked To Ohio Senator

BY DAN SEWELL

LEBANON, Ohio (AP) – For better or for worse, Ohio Sen. Rob Portman’s political future has become tied to same-sex marriage.

The Republican who was on Mitt Romney’s running mate short list two years ago is considering his own 2016 presidential run. But such a plan could be complicated by the fallout from Portman’s newfound support for same-sex marriage – the reversal upset some conservatives who oppose it. Some of them have pledged to oppose his next candidacy, too – whether for re-election to the Senate or for the presidency.

The dramatic change added a new dimension to Portman’s persona, often described as bland. It made him the first Republican senator to support gay marriage, a position that he said followed some family soul-searching. Portman’s then-college-aged son Will, had revealed to his parents that he is gay.

Add the personal decision to Portman’s resume – congressman, U.S. trade representative, White House budget chief and senator from electorally important Ohio – and what emerges is a unique potential candidacy in the wide-open field of GOP presidential hopefuls.

Portman says he gets questioned about his support for gay marriage a lot and is not hesitant about discussing it.

“Every week, sometimes every day, somebody will talk to me about it,” Portman said in a recent AP interview, wife Jane at his side.

“I feel very comfortable in taking a position of respecting people for who they are,” he added, “which is what I think ultimately same-sex marriage is about.”

Nationally, it’s not clear whether Portman’s support for gay marriage would be an obstacle for his presidential ambitions.

A Gallup poll this year found support for legal recognition of same-sex marriages at a record high, with 55 percent in favor of it. Republicans remain broadly opposed, with just 30 percent favoring legal recognition for marriages between same-sex couples, but support has increased greatly over the last few decades. At the same time, Gallup’s data show that 78 percent of Americans under the age of 30 support legal gay marriages, suggesting that support will continue to grow.

A CBS News poll in February of this year found that 47 percent of Republicans said they would not ever vote for a candidate



Ohio Sen. Rob Portman

who did not share their views on same-sex marriage, suggesting the issue carries less weight with GOP voters than immigration or abortion.

Some conservatives suggest Portman’s position is meant to give him more moderate appeal for a general election.

While there’s even been talk about a primary opponent for Senate, his electoral experience and fundraising ability seem to make that unlikely.

Phil Burress, who heads the Citizens for Community Values in the Cincinnati suburb of Sharonville, stated on the group’s website that “Portman should step down before the 2016 election so that conservatives can support a pro-life, pro-natural marriage candidate.” Portman says he remains anti-abortion.

Meanwhile, the National Organization for Marriage has said it will actively seek to defeat Portman in 2016, whether for re-election or for president.

A majority of Ohio voters in the midterm elections still oppose same-sex marriage, according to an exit poll conducted for the AP and the television networks. Just over half the voters indicated they were against the idea, while about 40 percent were supportive.

“That’s OK,” Portman said, speaking of those who oppose him because of gay marriage. But Portman said he thinks the economy, jobs and national security will be more dominant issues in the next election.

Doug Gross, a former chief of staff for Republican Gov. Terry Branstad of Iowa, said Portman’s marriage position “would be problematic” for a segment of caucus voters when Iowa begins its first-in-the-nation presidential nominating process, but not so much to prevent him from doing well there.

The Republican National Committee’s national committeeman in New Hampshire, Steve Duprey, said Portman is the kind of little-known candidate with solid credentials, particularly on fiscal issues, that could emerge in his early primary state.

► Partner Benefits

Continued from p. 8

toward the LGBT community.

Despite the ruling’s findings that the law was motivated by anti-gay animus, Gov. Rick Snyder’s office issued a statement claiming the governor continues to “believe all discrimination is wrong, period.” The Republican governor’s office declined to explain how this statement could be accurate in light of the court’s findings. Snyder’s office declined to comment on the ruling while lawyers review it for possible appeal.

But spokesperson Dave Murray says the legislation was “about ensuring fiscal responsibility and stewardship.”

That claims was thoroughly debunked in Lawson’s 35 page ruling.

“As noted earlier, the State did not have to be correct in its estimate that Act 297 would save it money, if indeed it held that view at the time,” Lawson wrote. “But the lack of substance behind this stated justification does little to dispel the ‘suspicion that bigotry rather than legitimate policy is afoot.’”

Lawson noted that the majority of local governments providing same-sex domestic

► LaChey: Post Election

Continued from p. 8

and prospective candidates are discussed. In this regard, I am unaware of a single Democratic candidate for federal, statewide or legislative office running in Michigan this year who was not publicly pro-equality. That simply wasn’t the case in 2012 or previously, and this is why our participation was and continues to be vitally important.

Of course, many of the Democratic candidates we supported with our dollars, time and hearts (because they were outspoken champions of our issues) were ultimately unsuccessful in their election efforts and that sucks. Big time. But the financial and time commitment of Michigan’s LGBT Community greatly exceeded that of any previous election cycle of which I am aware. We must be proud of that, and those actions by our community have not gone unnoticed and will not go unrewarded.

What’s the game plan going forward? From the MDP’s standpoint, I can’t yet say. With respect to our community, I suggest that it’s in our best interest to focus on supporting Hillary or whomever is the Democratic candidate for president and also continue to identify and support openly-LGBT and other pro-equality Democrats running for state house seats (the statewide and senate elections won’t occur until 2018). However, there will be numerous opportunities across our state in two years due to the substantial number of current representatives who will then be term-limited. Plus the clock is already ticking on Hoadley

partner benefits were doing so out of federal monies or local tax revenues. He further noted that the law would not result in any savings from state revenue sharing to local governments. And finally, Lawson noted that the move could actually cost the state money in both lost tax revenues, since such benefits were taxed as income, and in increased state provided health care services and costs.

Jay Kaplan, of the LGBT Project of the ACLU, says he hopes the governor will not appeal the ruling. He said such a ruling would be “a waste of money,” and called the law “shameful.”

Jay Kaplan, of the LGBT Project of the ACLU, says he hopes the governor will not appeal the ruling. He said such a ruling would be “a waste of money,” and called the law “shameful.”

and Moss’s tenure in the state house, so we must work to build the influence that they have there and to start a continuum of LGBT representation in Lansing. So if you or anyone you know is considering a run for public office, contact me. I am more than happy to discuss this with anyone, and there are many resources available.

A final note: membership in the Michigan Democratic Party is free. And even if you don’t identify as a Democrat, you can still join our Caucus and help us to have a political impact going forward. Simply email me at mwlachey@comcast.net and “like” our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/TheLGBTACaucusoftheMDP.

The 2016 election starts now.

What’s the game plan going forward? From the MDP’s standpoint, I can’t yet say. With respect to our community, I suggest that it’s in our best interest to focus on supporting Hillary or whomever is the Democratic candidate for president and also continue to identify and support openly-LGBT and other pro-equality Democrats running for state house seats

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- Celebrating 10 Years in 2014 -

The ULTIMATE Guide To Gay GIFT GIVING

BY MIKEY ROX

What do you get a gay who has everything? Take your pick from these ideas, perfect for LGBT foodies, techies, explorers and more.

Zoop Adult Onesies

Lazy winter weekends are meant for lounging around the house, stuffing your face with your favorite junk foods, and binge watching whatever TV marathon du jour strikes your fancy. Now you can dress the part of a casual-cum-comfortable loafer with fleece jumpsuits from Zoop, hooded, footless adult onesies that feature two side-zipped pockets and a front zipper that

spans from head to crotch. A cross between your favorite pair of sweats and the iconic union suit (sadly without the butt flap), these onesies come in an array of fun styles, including American Flag, licensed collegiate teams, and a clever “Hangover Tux.” \$169-\$249; zoopitup.com

Biedermeier Tumblers

Have someone on your list with seriously expensive taste? You may want to rethink that relationship to stay in the black, but if you’re committed to spending a pretty penny to make him or her happy, the Biedermeier Tumblers from Stillfried Wien are a formidable gift option. These fine hand-painted, enamel-technique glasses feature scenes of high society townsfolk from 1800s Vienna as they wander about in the elaborate dress of the day. Eight variations are currently available with additional

pieces forthcoming to create a collection. \$209 per piece; stillfried.com

Yellow Leaf Hammocks

It’s never too early to start thinking spring, and a gift from Yellow Leaf Hammock has relaxation written all over it. Not literally of course, but you can show your true colors with the rainbow-colored, hand-woven hammock that’s sure to bring all the boys to the yard. Gift includes the “Hammocking 101 Guide for Easy Hanging” and a signature tote. \$179; yellowleafhammocks.com

The Bacon Jams

If there’s a little piggy on your list this year, surprise him with The Bacon Jams spreadable bacon three-pack sampler, which includes All Original, Black Pepper and Red Chile & Garlic flavors. These sweet-and-savory condiments are a fantastic finishing touch to dishes like seared scallops and baked chicken, or create complete appetizers like the Bacon Jam Gorgonzola Flatbread, the recipe for which arrives with the gift. \$39.99; thebaconjams.com

Tom of Finland Cologne

Based on the Finnish artist renowned for his stylized

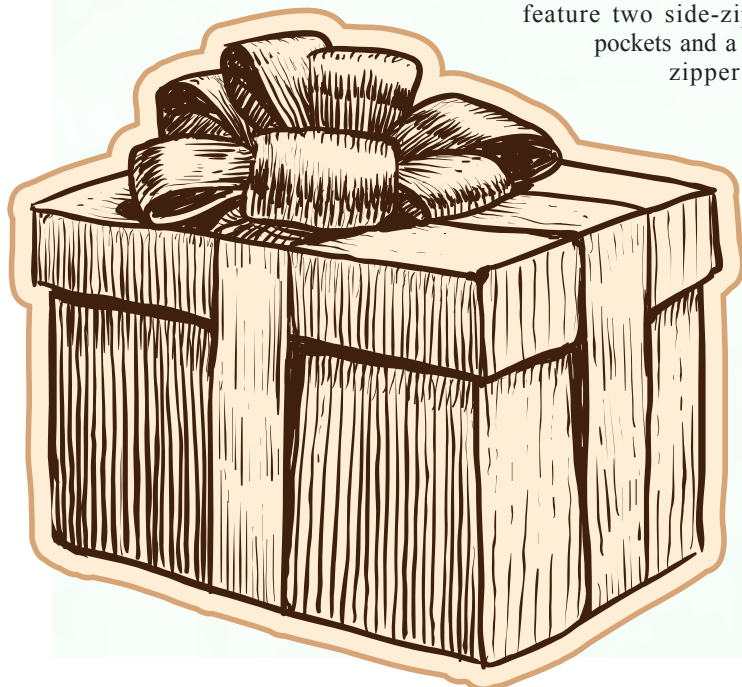
homoerotic fetish art and the indelible mark he left on late 20th-century gay culture, Tom of Finland Etat Libre d’Orange (a fancy phrase for cologne) layers masculine notes like pine, pepper and cypress between more predominant notes of lemon, suede and musk. A fragrance that transcends sexuality while serving as an ode to the male body, it swings more our way than the other. \$90; min.com



MSC Skin Care + Home Gift Set

Well-groomed gentlemen will enjoy the soul-soothing gift sets from MSC Skin Care + Home, which include an all-natural hand-cut artisan soap, soy candle in a reusable glass jar, and a fragrant reed diffuser to spread the

See Holiday Gift Guide, page 20





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► Holiday Gift Guide

Continued from p. 18

holiday cheer all over the house. Available in several sophisticated scents – like spicy Orange, Clove and Cinnamon; seasonal Rosemary and Spearmint; and the warm-and-cozy Bourbon Vanilla and Oak (which also happens to be an award winner) – each and every MSC product is made by hand in Brooklyn, New York. \$68; mskskincare.com

In Blue Handmade Leather Goods

Niche men's accessories are sort of having a moment, and In Blue Handmade is at the forefront of the movement. This No. 1 handmade leather-goods company on Etsy specializes in stylish travel journals, wallets, belts, flask covers, guitar straps, tote bags and other accessories – and each and every piece is made by 30-year-old Lynn Schroeder, In Blue Handmade's founder. These 100 percent cowhide products are great as stand-alone gifts while others are ideal as stocking stuffers. \$14-\$45; inbluehandmade.com



Fantastic Fitted Tees

There were two apparel companies I discovered this season that I subsequently fell in love with, so it's only fair that I give them both proper billing as a gift pick. Skip N' Whistle has an expansive selection of tees (\$24.50) featuring

statement icons or phrases

along with a bevy of other products like messenger bags and ugly Christmas sweaters. Beardsome, on the other hand, has based its business on a signature style of T-shirt (\$25) that features the faceless silhouettes of famous dudes' beards – and they're pretty effin' rad. skipnwhistle.com; ruggedlybeardsome.com

Viking Kitchenware

The everyday Bobby Flay in your life will appreciate Viking's new line of professional cookware, cutlery and bakeware, which is 100 percent manufactured in the United States. From stainless steel cookware with a unique multi-ply construction to bakeware coated with a ceramic finish to contemporary cutlery handcrafted from German steel, this trio of culinary staples has the potential to help turn the diner-dining experience you're used to into five-star cuisine fit for a Nordic king. vikingculinaryproducts.com

YouBeam

Cut the cable this Christmas with YouBeam, a WiFi-connected device that allows users to plug into their TV and beam free Internet content directly to the set via the YouBeam video browser. Users can surf the Web just

See Holiday Gift Guide, page 22



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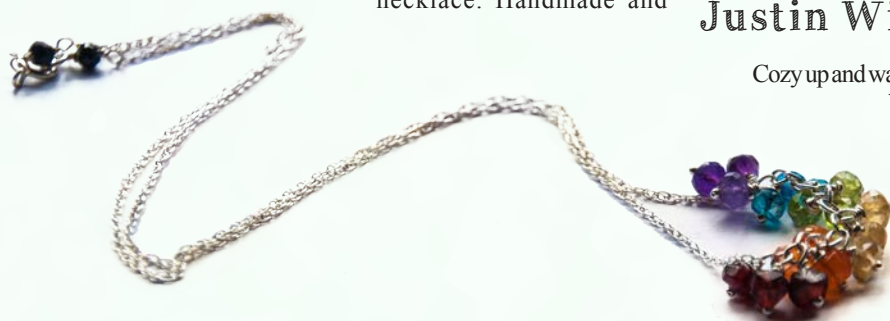
► **Holiday Gift Guide**

Continued from p. 20

like any other browser or type what they're looking for into the YouBeam search bar. When a user finds the video they want (and as long as it's compatible; that may or may not include those dirty videos you like, by the way), the "Beam" button changes from red to green. Press the button and the video starts automatically. Ain't the future grand? \$49.95 + \$3.99 monthly subscription; youbeam.com

Chakra Necklace Rainbow

Show off your pride and your sense of style with the Chakra Necklace Rainbow, a mix of colored stones wire-wrapped to create a free-form dangle charm necklace. Handmade and



featuring a sterling silver or 14K gold-filled 18.5-inch chain, this fun accessory is available in a spectrum of gemstones or chakras, depending on your partner's preference. Items can be gift boxed upon request. \$54; etsy.com/shop/maggiesjewelry

Droll Doormats

Your Millennial friends will marvel at the witty doormats from Reed Wilson Design that feature urban slang like "Sup," "Howdy" and "Holla." Inscribed in flock lettering on a coconut-fiber feet wiper, these spontaneous and upbeat greetings are suitable for indoor and outdoor areas. \$50; purehome.com

Holiday Spirits
Justin Wines

Cozy up and warm your cockles with Justin Vineyard and Winery's 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, a medium-bodied red flush with notes of dark fruit, black cherry,

and vanilla. Serve with grilled meats for a complementary pairing, or savor it by itself with someone special. \$25; justinwine.com



Partida Tequila

Partida Tequila – available in Blanco, Anejo, Extra Anejo, and Reposado – is the gift that keeps on giving this holiday season. Turn up the maracas at your shindig with compact 375mL bottles (available in Partida Blanco) to make a signature cocktail that drinks like a dessert. partidatequila.com

Recipe: Chocolate Peppermint Cookie

Ingredients:
3/4 oz. Partida Blanco Tequila
1 oz. Peppermint Schnapps

See Holiday Gift Guide, page 24

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► Holiday Gift Guide

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3/4 oz. Godiva Liqueur
1-1/2 oz. Cream

Rim martini glass with chocolate syrup and crushed candy canes. Shake ingredients in a shaker with ice and strain into martini glass.

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shop. Each month, recipients receive surprise selections handpicked by a team of wine experts with a focus on organic, natural and biodynamic vinos. Oenophiles also can rate the wines online to facilitate an even more personal experience. \$35-\$100/month; glassful.com

JP Chenet Ice Edition

Ice is back with a brand new edition! JP Chenet, the best-selling French wine in the world, bring its effervescence to America with a well-balance sparkling wine that's jolly enough for jingle-bell time. \$20; jpchenet.com

Recipe: New Beginnings

Ingredients:

1/2 oz. fresh-squeezed lime juice (approximately 1/2 lime)
1/2 oz. pomegranate juice
1/2 oz. simple syrup
4 oz. JP Chenet Ice Edition
Pomegranate seeds (approximately 15-20) for garnish

In a large-bowled wine glass or goblet, blend lime juice, pomegranate juice and simple syrup. Add ice and top with JP Chenet Ice Edition. Add pomegranate seeds and gently stir to swirl seeds into the drink.



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Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and blogger whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world, including CNN.com, The Huffington Post, The Advocate, Instinct magazine, and Out.com, among many others. He lives in Manhattan with his husband and their cuddle-buddy furbaby. Connect with Mikey on Twitter @mikeyrox.




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Screen Queen

The Gift Guide

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

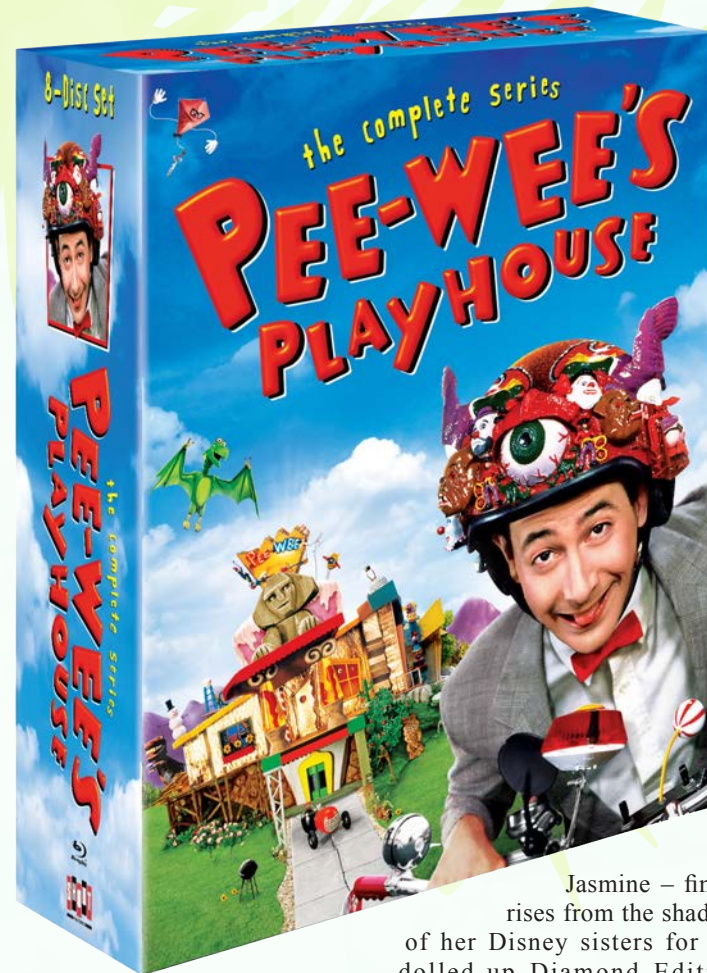
FOR THE NOSTALGIA

Pee-wee's Playhouse: The Complete Series

For queers of every kind, Pee-wee's Playhouse was a place to hang without feeling weird about being weird. Subverting heteronormativity with its groundbreaking portrayal of a wildly cartoonish man-boy in a bow tie, actor Paul Reubens' iconic '80s character smiled and winked at gay culture (Pee-wee once "married" a fruit bowl), and he had a diverse cast of friends who made every kid feel like they fit in. There was Tito, his buff, shirtless, hot-pants-wearing "Playhouse Lifeguard," and Jambi the Genie – because everyone knows a gossip queen. Beyond the characters, kids tuned in for the "secret word," the catchphrases ("I know you are, but what am I?!"), the zippy Cyndi Lauper-sung opening, and that inimitable Pee-wee giggle. Before Reubens brings his alter ego back to the big screen, as he recently announced, the entire Emmy-winning series – all five seasons of "Pee-wee's Playhouse," spanning eight discs – lands on Blu-ray with over four hours of wonderfully wacky features. Explore the production design, delight in "Playhouse" fandom, and get reacquainted with the "Pee-wee" performers who would forever change childhood.

Sleeping Beauty: Diamond Edition

Elsa may be able to turn nothingness into



fabulous ice castles with the fling of a finger, but Sleeping Beauty... she... she... yeah, so maybe Sleeping Beauty got the short end of the fairies' sticks.

But now, Aurora is getting some much-deserved respect as Disney awakens her from the vault. One of Walt's oft-overlooked underdogs – Aurora was always second to Snow White and Cinderella and Ariel and Belle and

Jasmine – finally rises from the shadows of her Disney sisters for this dolled-up Diamond Edition, which includes deleted scenes and the bonus "The Art of Evil: Generations of Disney Villains." Yup, sorry, girls; she woke up like this.

MERRY... HALLOWEEN?

Halloween: The Complete Collection (Deluxe Edition)

The "Halloween" franchise has had so many reincarnations – and John Carpenter's original is such timeless cinema – it's hard to remember when the bludgeoning began. It was

36 years ago when the classic slasher saga first introduced the freakiness that is Michael Myers and made a star out of Jamie Lee Curtis, who played the resilient Myers' sister, Laurie Strode, and put up a good fight all the way through 2002's "Resurrection" (the film was a hot mess and starred Busta Rhymes, so she probably didn't fight *that* hard). Other people didn't stand a chance against the masked maniac (RIP Joseph Gordon-Levitt and your pretty face). Over the years, from 1978 to 2009, nine films – and the bizarrely Michael-less "Season of the Witch" – have emancipated the unburnable, unstabable, unshootable, unstoppable Myers to work his knife on Tyra Banks, Michelle Williams, even comedy king Paul Rudd, who'd probably like to forget "Halloween 6: The Curse of Michael Myers" as much as the rest of us. Undeniably fierce, however, is Curtis' comeback in "H2O," a reliably creepy anniversary affair that's arguably the best of the sequels. From Starz/Anchor Bay, the 10-film franchise, including



Rob Zombie's divisive reboots, is together at last on 14 Blu-ray discs (one DVD) with a spate of whatnots: endless hours of special features, a new commentary track with Curtis on "H2O" and the never-before-released producer's cut of "Halloween 6."

(BOOB) TUBE FAVES

True Blood: The Complete Series

After leaving the funeral business behind and burying "Six Feet Under" well, six feet under, creator Alan Ball was desperate to sink his teeth into something less grave. "True Blood" was a breather for Ball. He would use the show as a platform for timely cultural commentary on the LGBT landscape, equal rights, violence



against gays and the quest for identity and build those issues into an insatiable glut of blood, boobs and butts. You couldn't turn away, and you likely didn't – the show, which launched in 2008, lasted for seven sexy seasons. So, as if that nude standoff between Eric and Alcide – or the shower fantasy, or the time Eric seduced Talbot, or every shirtless Joe Manganiello scene – isn't already preserved in all the horny fibers of your head, you now have the power to deploy freeze-frame on 33 discs of vamp camp, Blu-ray beefcake (hi-def abs!) and ample extras. Supplements are season-centric, with faux commercials and episode-specific commentaries. If you make it all the way through the final season's candid, 15-minute long farewell feature, "True Death: The Final Days On Set," you'll know more than you ever cared to about one of TV's bloodiest, boobiest shows.

See Screen Queen, page 28



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► **Screen Queen**

Continued from p. 26

The Sopranos: The Complete Series

Look at just about any legit “TV That Changed Our Lives” list and there’s “The Sopranos,” HBO’s celebrated series that has become so part of the pop-culture zeitgeist you can’t say you haven’t seen it without hanging your head in shame. Because even those who’ve been sleeping since 1999, when the show premiered to overwhelming and enduring praise, know this gritty crime drama is about an Italian-American family of mobsters, and that the great, late James Gandolfini created a TV icon. Effortlessly transcending his fictional role, Gandolfini was Tony Soprano. As head of the Soprano household, and in addition to his complicated relationship with his wife (a terrifically memorable Edie Falco), he finds himself at odds trying to maintain dual roles as family man and ass-kicker. “The Sopranos” had a successful 86-episode run through 2007, fetching gobs of awards, rebranding HBO as a destination for original, cutting-edge drama and, years later, still carrying a legacy indicative of its cultural influence. And, for all its alpha-male machismo, it was queer-inclusive: In season 2, we meet Vito Spatafore, a gay gangster. This boxed set marks the Blu-ray debut of

“The Sopranos,” and commemorating this hi-def experience is “Defining a Television Landmark,” a new in-depth featurette on the show’s transformative effect on TV.

CLASSICS

The Audrey Hepburn Collection

Screen legend Audrey Hepburn was spirited, charming and beautiful, and every scene moment – particularly during the height of her film career in the mid-20th century – brought infinite joy to all those hopeless romantics basking in her glow. That divinity (and smile) radiates through these three romantic gems culled for a special Blu-ray set: “Sabrina,” a warmhearted, Cinderella-hued romance where two men pine for the titular character, played by Hepburn; “Breakfast at Tiffany’s,” the winsome classic that inspired generations of college women to turn their dorms into NYC-inspired, ’60s-centric pads; and “Funny Face,” the posh 1957 musical that delightfully pairs the actress with Fred Astaire. Even if there are no new extras – they’re carryovers from a previous DVD release – the films look as ravishing as Hepburn herself.

Eraserhead

The fear-triggered horrors of fatherhood

See Screen Queen, page 30



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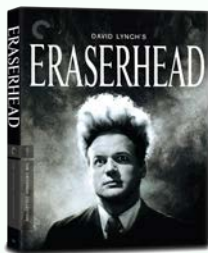
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► **Screen Queen**

Continued from p. 28



have never quite seen anything like “Eraserhead,” birthed from the freakish sensibilities of David Lynch and popular among midnight-movie crowds. Turning heads within the

cult circuit since 1977, the “Mulholland Drive” surrealist’s full-length debut feature descends into the twisted mind of a young man, Henry (Jack Nance), suddenly faced with not just any child but one that appears to have fought its way out of Sigourney Weaver’s stomach. Are we hanging in Henry’s subconscious the whole time? That ugly baby can’t be real, right? Who knows. This is Lynch doing what he does best: working your mind and haunting your thoughts. Finally, “Eraserhead” is resurrected on Blu-ray thanks to Criterion Collection’s meticulous rendering of the film’s striking black-

and-white aesthetics. Included among the extensive extras are new restorations of six shorts directed by Lynch, an illustrated booklet, and archival interviews and footage dating back to the film’s original release.

FOR A LAUGH

22 Jump Street

Next “Jump Street,” Jonah Hill and Channing Tatum will inevitably tie the knot, adopt babies and inspire a whole world of bros to become LGBT activists. How could they not? “22 Jump Street” is so gay the only thing gayer would be if they made their penises kiss. In this sequel to the original reboot, doofus duo Schmidt (Hill) and Jenko (Tatum) are college-bound and facing the challenges of bromance, sassy roommates (please cast Jillian Bell in everything) and words (Jenko confuses “carte blanche” for “Cate Blanchett” – easy mistake). With a seriously funny couple’s-therapy session, a Harvey Milk namedrop and Tatum teaching gay lingo,



“22 Jump Street” is just two cowboy hats away from being the gayest movie of 2014.

Their love affair sustains throughout the special features, which, among them, are a fun, irreverent commentary; the film’s “Dramatic Interpretation”; and “Janning and Chonah,” a look at the actors’ bromantic chemistry.

Neighbors

Here’s an early Christmas gift, and it’s already unwrapped: Zac Efron’s ripped, frequently shirtless



body in “Neighbors,” a comedy about a frat (led by Efron and a butt-baring Dave Franco) whose hard-party shenanigans drive their quiet neighbors to react in ridiculous ways. The married couple – Seth Rogen and Rose Byrne – go to awkwardly desperate measures to coax the raucous brats into curbing the noise so they can put their baby boy down. Buffoonery unravels. Robotic boners happen. And stay through

see said tot emulate each cast member, some in drag (the kid does an impressive Lisa Kudrow). Fun with prosthetic penises – based on Efron’s “real cast molding,” according to Christopher Mintz-Plasse – can be found on the bonus feature “On the Set With...”

Obvious Child

Suddenly single, Donna Stern (Jenny Slate) is just your average dumpee, self-medicating with wine and casual sex. But when a drunken night of hanky-panky leads to bigger breasts, which leads to a check-up at Planned Parenthood, she finds herself preppers. It’s not your everyday setup for a rom-com, even though it is one (a very cute one, at that), but therein lies its allure: It’s a refreshing spin on a tried-and-true formula. With former “SNL”-er Slate taking lead (this needs to be a thing more often, FYI), even a pro-lifer couldn’t resist the adorable, empathy-inducing candor she brings to Donna. But, also, who doesn’t like a good vagina joke? The 2009 short film that inspired the full-length, a commentary and a making-of are among the extras.



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Wanda Sykes Still Kicking Butt

Comedian On Ruth Ellis, 'Pootie Tang' Potheads & The Republican Takeover

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Wanda Sykes isn't letting the recent Republican takeover get her down. In fact, considering all the funny fodder it will undoubtedly inspire over the next couple of years, she's all right with the right. "It's bad for the middle class and the poor," the comic says, "but it's great for comedy!"

Known for her wry political commentary – along with memorable roles in "Monster-in-Law," "Curb Your Enthusiasm," CBS's "The New Adventures of Old Christine" and 2001's "Pootie Tang," one of her earliest films – Sykes will headline a gig at 8 p.m. Nov. 21 at The Whiting in Flint.

The funny-woman holds a special place in the hearts of metro Detroiters. She's a public supporter of the Ruth Ellis Center, a local social service agency that helps at-risk kids, including LGBT youth. In fact, in 2012 she headlined its second annual benefit and made a surprise \$15,000 donation.

Would you mind sharing one of your fondest memories at Ruth Ellis?

There's so much talent there, it's crazy. These kids use writing, music and art to deal with things, and that's a great outlet. I go there for a visit and I always get a little talent show. One or two of the kids will get up and sing or rap, or I'll read something one of them has written.

How have your visits to the center inspired you?

It makes me wanna do more, and to speak out more on their behalf. And hope that we solve this problem! There shouldn't be kids getting kicked out of their homes just because of who they are. It just makes me wanna keep the conversation going and talk to parents and be there for the kids. I'm in touch with the administrators and, of course, always giving my support financially.

How has the thrill of doing stand-up changed for you since the late '80s, when you launched your comedy career?

Wow – I don't think the thrill of it has changed any. The more you do it, the more confident you get, I guess. It's really more about my life, because I'm always talking about what's going in my life. If I'm in an exciting part of my life, and things are great and all that, it's fun to get on stage and talk about it. And even when it's not, it's fun to get on stage and gripe about it! (Laughs)

Having done stand-up for as long as you have, though, does it start to feel like work?

You know, it's the travel that feels like work to me. It's not really the show. It's just the getting there, like, "Oh, man, I could really use a nap right now,

but gotta get going, gotta get to the airport.” That part is work, but the shows themselves are usually fun, and I guess that’s why I love it and why I continue to do it. It’s always new; it’s always different.

I miss seeing you on the big screen, and on TV. Have you been looking at any film or television scripts lately?

I have. It’s not like I’m intentionally avoiding film and TV; I’ve just been really busy with touring, and I started a production company with Page Hurwitz, a good friend who’s my producing partner. We’ve been busy with “Last Comic Standing.” We already started doing showcases and picking the comics for this upcoming season. I kind of go with the flow, that’s the fun part of what I do. I am reading scripts now for TV shows and movies, so that will probably be the next project I do in 2015.

Any that stand out to you?

Yeah, quite a few things, but I don’t think I can talk about them yet. We’ll see.

Comedy or something dramatic?

It’s mainly comedy, but one of my agents did send me a small part in a drama that he thinks I should take a stab at. I just fear I’ll ruin a good drama by everyone waiting for me to be funny!

A friend of mine wants to know: When was the last time you danced like Biggie Shorty in “Pootie Tang”?

(Laughs) I get called Biggie Shorty probably every other time I’m in an airport. Somebody yells it! I always get a Biggie Shorty call! Usually when people mention “Pootie Tang” they’re pretty much telling me they smoke weed.

Well, like I said, a friend of mine wanted to know.

Oh, it’s your “friend” then? Mmm. OK. (Laughs)

When you look back at “Pootie Tang,” what goes through your mind? That skirt wasn’t exactly covering a whole lot.

Yeah, but I was a crime fighter! (Laughs) I threw a good party, but I also kicked a little butt – all for the kids, all for the kids! Actually, I look back and go, “Wow, I was in pretty good shape back then.”

Will you let your kids watch “Pootie Tang”?

When they get older. The guy who played “Pootie Tang,” Lance Crouther, is one of my closest friends. He’s pretty much like my

INFO

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brother. My kids call him Uncle Lance, so I know that they’d get a kick out of watching the two of us. They’d probably look at us thinking we’re ancient. But all those crazy clothes and dancing around – I’m sure they’ll get a kick out of it.

You’ve been such a pillar in the gay community since you came out in 2008. Before your coming out, do you recall a situation where, as a public figure, you had to conceal your sexuality?

Not that I can recall. My friends who are my friends all knew, and the people I work with knew. I was never walking along with a girlfriend and somebody showed up and I had to, like,

push her in a ditch to hide her. That would’ve been hilarious, though! (Laughs)

Why do you think some celebrities in 2014 are still hesitant to come out?

Unless you do it and you experience it, it’s pretty scary. And you don’t wanna be identified as just one thing – that shouldn’t make up who you are.

How are you feeling about the recent election and the Republican takeover?

I’m torn. It’s bad for the middle class and the poor – but it’s great for comedy! The funniest material comes from Republicans in office, so yeah, I look at it both ways – bad for the country; great for comedy!

The Sixth District Court recently upheld the ban on gay marriage in Michigan and in several other states. How are you feeling about that, and also the progress, or lack thereof, of the gay rights movement?

There’s a higher court, but, really, it’s unconstitutional. I still feel good about (the gay rights movement), and I think we’ve made tremendous strides. It’s gonna continue in the right direction, and I also think that’s how the Republicans are gonna shoot themselves in the foot – by trying to go backwards. If they start rolling back, it’s really gonna just unravel what little game they think they have.

“The funniest material comes from Republicans in office, so yeah, I look at it both ways – bad for the country; great for comedy!”

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Hear Me Out

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

'Whitney Houston Live: Her Greatest Performances'



If anyone epitomized a “moment in time,” it was Whitney Houston. At her peak, she unleashed her unmistakable, hit-making voice to seize each one, each song, like it was her last. And then sadly, in 2012 with an impromptu “Jesus Loves Me,” one last song did come, as her storied decline led to her shocking death.

Preserving just the surface of her iconic pop culture heritage is Legacy Recordings’ “Whitney Houston Live: Her Greatest Performances,” a bittersweet remembrance of a voice that inspired generations, and a showcase for the unbelievable power it possessed on stage. These are the five greatest “moments” of Whitney’s “Greatest Performances,” her first-ever live album:

5. I Will Always Love You

There are better versions of Whitney’s chart behemoth from “The Bodyguard” – she’s less pristine and strays from the song’s biggest challenges – but you can still feel every note of this

take from 1994’s “The Concert for a New South Africa.” Here, her booming belt and unprecedented passion work the sea of people into a frenzy. Despite some vocal compromises, her authenticity is unmatched. Yes, the legendary key-change climax, though still overwhelming, is powered down from the soundtrack cut (she was more on point earlier that same year at a performance in Chile). But her ability to deliver a performance that left a piece of her heart in your hands was a rare quality that would prove as valuable to her career as the voice that delivered it.

4. Greatest Love of All

Whitney never walked in anyone’s shadows but her own. And when she performed this, the fourth single from her 1985 self-titled debut, unleashing a towering display of vocal pyrotechnics during that last set of runs, everyone else would have to follow in *hers*. Live from 1990’s “That’s What Friends

Are For: Arista Records 15th Anniversary Concert,” Whitney’s self-love manifesto remains true to the studio recording even though Houston embellished on the showstopper’s original framework. When the chorus comes in, though, she takes you to a familiar place. A life-affirming place. A place only she could.

3. The Star-Spangled Banner

Sweat-drenched and feverish, Houston would turn “The Star-Spangled Banner” into a historical and much-celebrated bench marker. No performer has yet to rival what she did with the anthem during Super Bowl XXV, when she lifted her voice to unmatched, chill-inducing heights, erupting into a volcano of supreme vocality. That day in January 1991, it didn’t matter which team scored the first, or even the last, touchdown – the event had already taken place.

2. A Song For You

In 1991, Whitney took on Leon Russell’s classic and turned it into a spectacle. With the clarity, control and soul of a singer in her prime, Houston launched with a crawl, let her voice run to the rafters, and then gently eased her way back to the ground. “A Song For You” wasn’t technically a song of *hers*, but it might as well have been. She owned every note of it, and not just because of that impressive range – Whitney the Interpreter, for all her vocal prowess, also had a way with words.

1. One Moment in Time

Foreshadowing the “rise and fall” of Whitney’s personal and professional life, “One Moment in Time” captured the singer’s early-career essence. Though, along with her increasingly inconsistent voice, her passion for performing eventually diminished – the puzzling presence of “I Didn’t Know My Own Strength” in 2009 on “Oprah” demonstrates this sad fact – this was Whitney at her most triumphant. “I will be free,” she belted at the 31st Grammy Awards in 1989, giving angel wings to the *carpe diem* message she so earnestly felt. And then, too soon, free she was.

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Traveling Exhibit Shares Transgender Stories

BY SHELBY CLARK PETKUS

A museum-quality traveling exhibit on transgender experiences dubbed “Pioneering Voices: Portraits of Transgender People” has found a temporary home at Congregational Church of Birmingham this month. Through first-person accounts, interviews and positive images, the stories and pictures of transgender people are shared to challenge damaging myths and stereotypes. In light of the recent exclusions of “gender identity” from the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights act amendment, it’s more important than ever to help the Michigan community get a full understanding of those who identify as “T” in LGBT.

Consisting of 15 “ready-to-hang” framed photographs with accompanying text panels detailing the stories and interviews of those present in the exhibit, “Pioneering Voices” was created by Jack Pierson and Peggy Gillespie of Family Diversity Projects. Pierson, who took the photographs and interviewed the transgender individuals, was a Smith College intern who decided to create the exhibition. Gillespie, editor-in-chief of Family

Diversity Projects, collaborated with Pierson.

“Pioneering Voices” presents a myriad of stories, celebrating a range of views, opinions and experiences. Used in schools, colleges, churches and community centers, the traveling exhibit has helped to foster safer environments for trans persons by nurturing empathy in students, teachers, staff members and other peers. So far, the exhibit has been hosted by thousands of venues worldwide.

Family Diversity Projects continues to foster inclusion, affirmation and, of course, diversity with its varying touring exhibits. Leslea Newman, author of “Heather Has Two Mommies,” notes, “When I first wrote ‘Heather Has Two Mommies,’ the first children’s book to portray a happy loving family of a little girl with two lesbian moms, I had no idea how many families my book would touch and support. In a similar way, Family Diversity Projects touches people young and old with their ground-breaking exhibitions and books. Like ‘Heather Has Two Mommies,’ their exhibits have both caused controversy and educated thousands of people about the moral

equality of LGBT people and their families.

“These marvelous exhibits travel throughout the world to schools, colleges, libraries, community centers, houses of worship, workplaces, statehouses and conferences. Wherever they are displayed, the FDP exhibits help to reduce discrimination and bullying of all people who are perceived to be ‘different,’ leading to safer environments for LGBT children and adults. Simply put, the exhibits are unique tools in the fight to dismantle homophobia and transphobia.”

The exhibit, which runs until Nov. 30, had its opening reception and “grand welcome” on Sunday. Exhibition times are 1 to 5 p.m. on Sundays, 5 to 8 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 12 to 3 p.m. on Tuesdays and by appointment on Thursdays and Saturdays.

The exhibit can be viewed in the Sanctuary of Congregational Church of Birmingham, 1000 Cranbrook Road. For more information, email Steve Olson at solson4899@aol.com or visit www.ccbucc.org. For more information on Family Diversity Projects, check out www.familydiv.org.



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Happenings

OUTINGS

Thursday, Nov. 20

Free HIV Testing 2 p.m. Free anonymous HIV testing in-store at S3 every Thursday 2-8. Call to make an appointment, or walk-ins welcome. S3 Safe Sex Store and HARC, 1209 S. University, **Ann Arbor**. 734-741-1434. info@bak-inc.com S3safesexstore.com

Michigan Round Table and ACLU Community Conversation 4 p.m. Michigan Round Table and ACLU, 1669 W. Maple Road, **Birmingham**. 248-644-2040. Miroundtable.org/lgbtfaith.html

Relationship Skills Class 6 p.m. A series for LGBTQ people and their friends and loved ones. Topics include: exploring personal and cultural relationships, values, arguments and making agreements, accountability and building community connections. Tickets: \$5-35. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

HIV/AIDS Resource Center (HARC) 11th Annual Wine Cellar 6:30 p.m. Join HARC for an evening of live jazz, a tasting of the seasons best holiday wine courtesy of Everyday Wines, delicious hearty appetizers by Bona Sera and hand-crafted chocolates and confections by Sweet Gem Confections. At the heart of the event is a raffle of over 100 bottles of wine donated by celebrities, wine collectors, bon vivants, sports figures and chefs. Over 50 bottles of wine go to one lucky winner--an instant wine cellar! Tickets: \$50-60. HIV/AIDS Resource Center (HARC), 2275 Platt Road, **Ann Arbor**. 7345729355. hdecker@hivaidresource.org

Polyamory Network 7 p.m. Open and inclusive community of people living polyamorously, people interested in polyamory and people of, friendly to and curious about polyamory. Welcomes diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity. Meets the third Thursday of every month. Polyamory Network, 319 Braun Ct., **Ann Arbor**. 734-995-9867. jimtoycenter.org

Friday, Nov. 21

Daybreak, Friday Nights 6 p.m. Woodside Church, 1509 E. Court St., **Flint**. 810-767-4911. Woodsidechurch.net

Weekend Starts 6:15 p.m. Gay Professionals Social Group, 241 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. Meetup.com/Gay-Professionals-Social-Group-MI/events/

Friday Night Vibe @ The AFF Cafe, Store & More 7 p.m. The Friday Night Vibe is your original open mic night in downtown

Ferndale, whether your singing, acting, dancing or showcasing your talent. DJACE will be here playing the hottest club hits. Free. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. TylerBeltz@aol.com Goaffirmations.org

Pink Ribbon and Blue Tie Benefit 7 p.m. Wear pink or blue in honor of breast cancer and prostate cancer awareness. Cocktails, dancing, music and vendors.

a.m. Free. The ACLU of Michigan LGBT Project, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. Kglrc.org

Fall Tea Party 3 p.m. KICK, 6426 Woodward, **Detroit**. E-kick.org

Sunday, Nov. 23

Regardless Of (Narcotics Anonymous Meeting) 7 p.m. This is a closed meeting for addicts or those who think they

Detroit. <https://facebook.com/inuendo.nightclub?rf=118209121607517>

Monday, Nov. 24

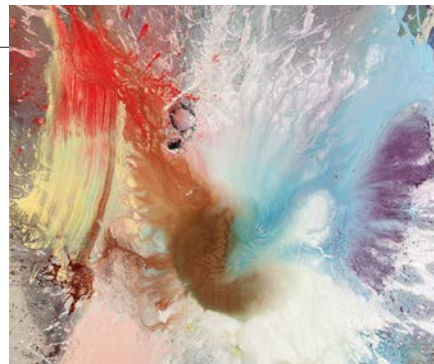
Center Open - Drop In 7 p.m. Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Court, **Ann Arbor**. 734-995-9867. Jimtoycenter.org

Faith Alliance Movie Night 7 p.m. Light refreshments (popcorn and soft drinks). Free. Affirmations Faith Alliance, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. jlewis@goaffirmations.org Goaffirmations.org

Tuesday, Nov. 25

Aff Action Night 6 p.m. Educating

Editor's Pick



The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD) and Ingrid LaFleur of Wanderlust Art Tours offer the opportunity to attend "Prospect.3: Notes For Now" this month. The event gives participants an insider look at New Orleans' international contemporary art biennial.

"P.3" features the work of 58 artists selected by Artistic Director Franklin Sirmans in 18 venues throughout the Louisiana city.

During the five-day tour, cultural tourists will directly participate in helping the city to continue to recover from Hurricane Katrina, while also engaging in exhibitions, food and fun.

The "Prospect.3: Notes For Now" exhibit will be held Dec. 10-14 in New Orleans. For more information on the tour or to purchase tickets, call 313-832-6622 or visit www.mocadetroit.org. MOCAD is located at 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit.

Tickets: \$35-50. The Greenbliss Group, 1010 Antietam, **Detroit**. 313-575-8614. INFO.GREENBLISS@GMAIL.COM

Womyn's Film Night 7 p.m. Film: Elysium - In this dystopian thriller set in 2159, the wealthiest humans move to a fabulous private space station, while life on Earth grows ever more grim. With no other options, an ex-con agrees to join a risky mission to bring balance to the two worlds. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Friday Night Movie Night and Sing Along - Les Miserables 8 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. Goaffirmations.org

Wanda Sykes 8 p.m. Mature audiences only. The Whiting, 1241 E. Kearsley St., **Flint**. 810-237-8689. Thewhiting.com

Saturday, Nov. 22

Transgender Leadership Training 10

might have a drug problem. This may be a Common Needs meeting, but any addict seeking recovery is welcome! The time has come that any addict seeking recovery in the Washtenaw area can find it. The more diverse the fellowship, the more members we are able to reach! The goal is to make the message of recovery available to all so that any addict can come to NA and feel that they too belong in this fellowship! Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Court, **Ann Arbor**. 734-995-9867. jimtoycenter.org

Cher 7:30 p.m. Dress to Kill Tour. With Pat Benatar and Neil Giraldo. The Palace of Auburn Hills, 5 Championship Dr., **Auburn Hills**. 248-377-0100. Palacenet.com

Drag Queen Addictions 10:30 p.m. LaBelle and Aretha Franklin impersonator April Summers brings her big personality to the stage as she introduces a lineup of drag stars. 18+. Inuendo Nightclub, Corner of Nevada St. and Southbound I-75,

others about how to make Michigan an equality state. Pizza provided for volunteers. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org

Talk Tuesdays 6 p.m. Free. KICK, 41 Burroughs St. 109, **Detroit**. 313-285-9733. e-kick.org

Wednesday, Nov. 26

Free to be Me Group 12:30 p.m. This is a support group for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning. The Jewish Gay Network of Michigan (JGN), 6600 W. Maple Road, **West Bloomfield**. 248-432-5467. Jgnmi.org

Senior Koffee Klatch 1 p.m. A lively, discussion and social group for LGBT adults over 45. Group covers topics

See Happenings, page 42

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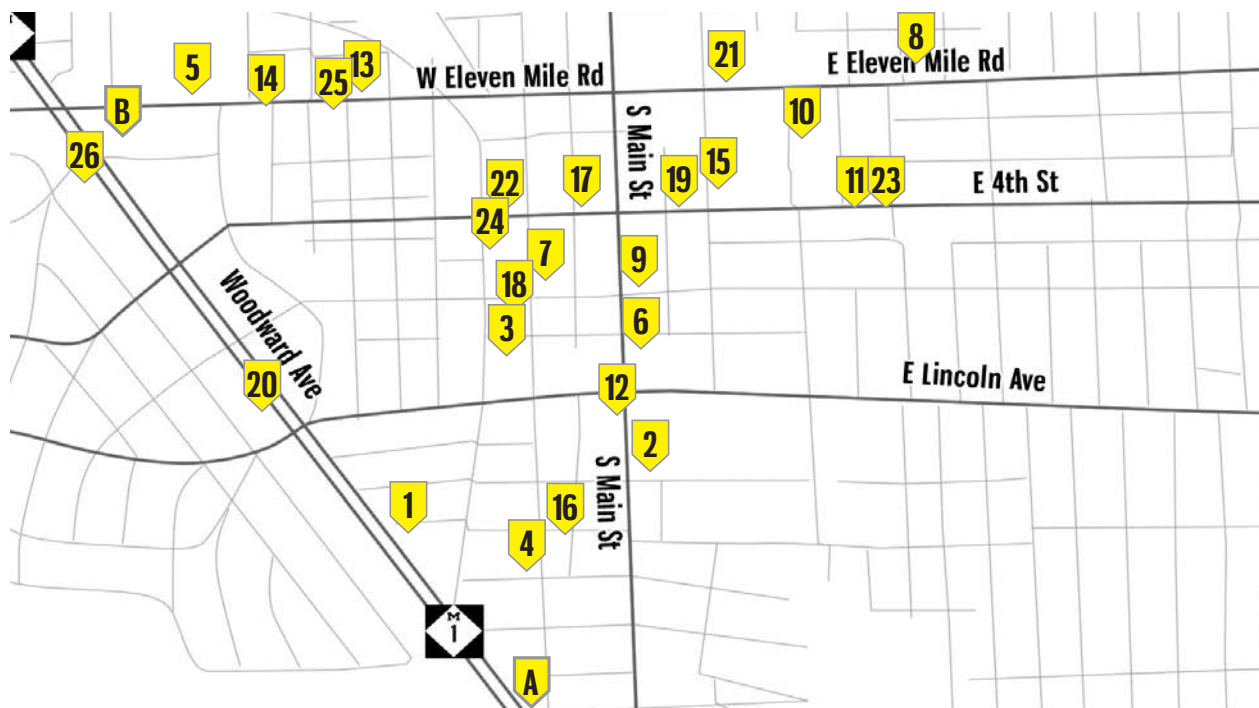


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Editor's Pick

Grosse Pointe Theatre presents "A View From the Bridge" by Arthur Miller at 8 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday, Nov. 20-22.

A classic American drama, the story chronicles the life of Italian-American longshoreman Eddie Carbone, who lives in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn. Set in the 1950s, the play delves into the corruption surrounding the docks and the intricacies of living in the legal and illegal immigrant world of the '50s where nothing seems fair and

loyalty is often misplaced.

Performances will take place at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial's Fries Auditorium, 32 Lake Shore Road, Grosse Pointe Farms. Tickets are \$18 and can be purchased by phone at 313-881-4004, on line at www.gpt.org; or at the Grosse Pointe Theatre ticket office at 315 Fisher Road, Grosse Pointe (Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.). Tickets are also available before the show at the Fries Auditorium Lobby Box Office.

Happenings

Continued from p. 38

pertaining to aging and outside speakers. Potluck dinners at members homes, lunches out and holiday parties. Meets ever Wednesday on the upper level of the Affirmations building. Senior Koffee Klatch, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. GoAffirmations.org

Free HIV Testing 6 p.m. The AIDS Service Organization, **Lansing**.

HIV Testing 6 p.m. Free. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org/events/event_details.asp?id=430531

W.E.T. 10 p.m. DJ Selina Style is coming to Detroit to join in Getting Detroit WET! WET strives to create a safe space that highlights the diversity of LGBTQI Women. Bring your diversity, resilience and fabulosity to the dance floor! All welcome. Cover: \$3-5. W. E. T. Detroit, 3930 Cass Ave., **Detroit**. 313-831-3830. womenentertainmentteam@gmail.com Facebook.com/events/1495798890695274/

Thursday, Nov. 27

Toastmaster's International SpeakOUT! Club 7 p.m. Toastmasters will show you how to listen more effectively, think on your feet and speak confidently Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Court, **Ann Arbor**. 734-995-9867. Jimtoycenter.org

MUSIC & MORE

Classical

Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra "Nov. 2014 Chamber" Tickets: \$9-10. Jewish Community Center, 2935 Birch Hollow Dr., **Ann Arbor**. 1:30 p.m. Nov. 21. A2so.com

Chamber Music Society of Detroit "Chamber Music Society of Detroit in Midtown". Max M. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. Sep. 26 - Nov. 21. 313-576-5111. Chambermusicdetroit.org

Detroit Symphony Orchestra "Gershwin in Paris". Max M. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. Nov. 20 - Nov. 22. 313-576-5111. Dso.org

Concerts

Saugatuck Center for the Arts "Suzanne Vega" Tickets: \$36. 50. Saugatuck Center for the Arts, 400 Culver St., Saugatuck. 8 p.m. Nov. 22. 269-857-2399. Sc4a.org

Static Network "TRIBUTE! TRIBUTE!" A night of punk tribute bands. Join us for a

blast from the past when four local tribute bands pay homage to punk bands. 18+. Cover: \$7. Paychecks Lounge, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck. 9 p.m. Nov. 22. 313-874-0909. Paycheckslounge.com

The Ark "Robyn Hitchcock" With special guest Lera Lynn. Tickets: \$15. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., **Ann Arbor**. 8 p.m. Nov. 20. 734-761-1800. Theark.org

The Ark "Ben Daniels Band" Tickets: \$20. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., **Ann Arbor**. 8 p.m. Nov. 24. 734-761-1800. Theark.org

The Palace of Auburn Hills "Cher" Dress to Kill Tour. With Pat Benatar and Neil Giraldo. The Palace of Auburn Hills, 5 Championship Dr., Auburn Hills. 7:30 p.m. Nov. 23. 248-377-0100. Palacenet.com

The Chamber Music Society of Detroit "Paul Barnes" Tickets: \$15-30. Max M. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. 8 p.m. Nov. 21. 248-855-6070. Chambermusicdetroit.org

The Magic Bag "Savoy Brown featuring Kim Simmonds" Tickets: \$25. The Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Ave., **Ferndale**. Nov. 22 - Nov. 21. 248-544-3030. themagicbag.com

The Majestic "Rebel Spies" Featuring Devious Ones and more. Garden Bowl, 4120 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. 10 p.m. Nov. 26. 313-833-9700. Majesticdetroit.com

The Majestic "U Guesed It featuring OG Maco and Early Mac". The Magic Stick, 4120 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. 8 p.m. Nov. 25. 313-833-9700. Majesticdetroit.com

Film & Video

The Berman Center for the Performing Arts "Moulin Rouge on Film" The Ballet has been seen by close to 60,000 people across North America and has elicited cheers and ovations wherever it tours. Along with a rousing French soundtrack, the ballet features high-kicking choreography and a passionate story of love, ambition and heartbreak. Performed by Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet. Berman Center for the Performing Arts, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield. Nov. 23 - Nov. 23. 248-661-1900. Theberman.org

The Majestic "Reel Cool Time Film Night". Garden Bowl, 4120 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. 10 p.m. Nov. 20. 313-833-9700. Majesticdetroit.com

THEATER

Civic/Community Theater

A View From the Bridge \$18. Grosse Pointe Theatre at Grosse Pointe War

Memorial Fries Auditorium, 32 Lakeshore Road, Grosse Pointe Farms. Through Nov. 22. 313-881-4004. www.gpt.org

Cinderella \$5-7. Riverwalk Theatre, 228 Museum Dr., **Lansing**. Nov. 28 - Dec. 7. 517-482-5700. www.riverwalktheatre.com

Leading Ladies \$14-16. Farmington Players, 32332 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. Nov. 28 - Dec. 20. 248-473-1856. www.farmingtonplayers.org

Mary Poppins: the Broadway Musical \$16-36. Windsor Light Music Theatre at St. Claire Centre for Performing Arts (Chrysler Theatre), 201 Riverside Dr., West, Windsor. Through Nov. 23. 519-974-6593. www.windsorlight.com

Old Times \$12. Ann Arbor Civic Theatre at A2CT Studio Theater, 322 W. Ann St., **Ann Arbor**. Nov. 21 - 23. 734-971-2228. www.a2ct.org

Shrek, the Musical \$13-24. The Kalamazoo Civic Theatre at Civic Auditorium, 329 S. Park St., Kalamazoo. Nov. 28 - Dec. 14. 269-343-1313. www.kazooicivic.com

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever \$15-32. Richmond Community Theatre at Maniaci's Banquet Hall, 69227 N. Main St., **Richmond**. Nov. 28 - 29. 586-727-9518. www.richmondtheatre.com

College/University Theater

Caroline, or Change \$10-28. U-M Department of Musical Theatre at Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 Murfin Ave., **Ann Arbor**. Nov. 20 - 23. 734-763-3333. tickets.music.umich.edu

Hair \$5-20. The University Theatre at Williams Theatre inside The Gilmore Theatre Complex at Western Michigan University, 2200 Auditorium Dr., Kalamazoo. Through Nov. 23. 269-387-7222. www.wmutheatre.com

Peter Pan This magical story has stretched over a century and continues to delight all ages with defying feats, mythical creatures, fantastic swordsmanship, fierce pirates, legendary battles and, most of all, high flying tricks with the help of a little pixie dust. \$10-20. Bonstelle Theatre, 3424 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. Through Nov. 23. 313-577-2960. www.bonstelle.com

The Liar \$8-14. Oakland University Dept. of Music, Theatre and Dance at Varner Studio Theatre, 2200 N. Squirrel Road, **Rochester**. Through Nov. 23. 248-370-2030. www.oakland.edu/mtd

See Happenings, page 46

www.PrideSource.com

Una Bella Notte At MOT

BY AMY J. PARRENT

In the Michigan Opera Theatre program handed out at “Madame Butterfly,” there is an interview with 93-year-old John Fleming, WWII veteran, retired teacher and MOT volunteer. He recalls being enthralled by opera as a child listening to the Victrola.

When Fleming was born, “Madame Butterfly” was an almost-new piece, having premiered in 1904. We are still that close to this work. Motion pictures existed when this opera opened. So did the telephone – although it was not yet necessary to ask people to turn theirs off before the show began.

So it is not some relic from a far-different time and place. Neither is it one of those spectacles. This is not about plotting kings and queens. There are no horses or elephants parading across the stage. It is almost a chamber piece, a kind of contemporary theater, or a small art film about a simple young woman – a smart woman, too smart for the time and place she is stuck in – whose family perhaps once had money, but now has none. And the cocky young man whom she has the misfortune to love is a sailor from a foreign country, a very foreign country called America.

Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton, portrayed commandingly in both presence and voice by Noah Stewart, is the Yankee naval lieutenant thrilled by the conventions of his temporary home in Japan. He likes very much the arrangement with a geisha set up by a broker: a 999-year contract, which he can drop out of any month. “In this country, houses and contracts are elastic,” he brags to an acquaintance, the consul Sharpless.

Sharpless – played with engaging conviction by baritone Michael Mayes – is actually quite sharp, warning the callous lieutenant that such a path will lead to a corrupt heart.

He is even more appalled when the bridal party enters, and he learns the beautiful young woman is only 15.



Inna Los stars in Michigan Opera Theatre's “Madame Butterfly.” Photo: John Grigaitis

REVIEW

Madame Butterfly

Michigan Opera Theatre
at Detroit Opera House
1526 Broadway St., Detroit
7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 19
7:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 21
7:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 22
2:30 Sunday, Nov. 23
\$25-128
313-237-SING
www.michiganopera.org

Cio-Cio-San – Madame Butterfly – is as complex and mature a teen as you will ever see, and leading lady Inna Los heartbreakingly inhabits this character. Although at times early on in the evening her voice sounded just slightly overpowered by the music – perhaps especially in contrast to Stewart’s large tenor – from the near seats she gave a film-worthy performance.

On the one hand, already a slave to love for this American, the young Butterfly is also bright, even witty, although with a family history that hangs a dark shadow. Even if this were not one of the most famous operatic stories of all, you would still know this was not going to go well.

But oh, what a way to watch a sorrowful story unfold. The supporting performers, including Kimberly

Sogioka as Suzuki, Julius Ahn as Goro, and Zachary Coates as Prince Yamadori, are all excellent. On opening night adorable little Morgan Armstrong nearly stole the show – a not easy feat with this production – as Butterfly and Pinkerton’s child. The MOT chorus, too, is a fine support. Kudos as well to the evening-long robust sound of the MOT Orchestra under the direction of Stephen Lord.

In the technical areas, it is particularly the lighting by Michael Baumgarten that enhances the simple but powerful emotions of the story. And this is where the feeling of watching a contemporary piece comes into play: How striking, how uncomfortable is that wordless, almost motionless sequence late in the final act, Butterfly’s long night of waiting for Pinkerton to return at last, as the lighting shifts ever so subtly from evening to night to dawn again, and the audience, waiting with her, feeling for her, while the “Humming Chorus” and the instrumental montage plays underneath like the world’s best film score.

We want that happy ending for Butterfly and her baby – although maybe with a better guy than that Yankee cad. But even if we don’t get that, we get a haunting piece of music. And of theater.

Puzzle solution on pg. 44

B	L	A	B	A	G	N	E	S	A	S	P	S		
I	O	T	A	C	R	E	D	O	S	T	E	W		
B	O	O	R	C	A	V	I	L	H	A	N	A		
I	M	P	R	O	U	D	T	O	B	E	G	A	Y	
			A	P	S	E	S	I	O	N	E			
T	H	E	G	R	E	A	T	E	S	T	C	S	T	
O	Y	V	E	Y			R	U	T	H	O	A	R	
A	P	E	S		S	E	E	R	S		B	A	S	E
D	E	R		A	T	M	E		H	E	C	H	E	
Y	S	L		G	I	F	T	S	G	O	D	H	A	S
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G	I	V	E	N	M	E		T	I	M	C	O	O	K
O	D	I	E		A	L	V	I	N		K	I	L	N
R	I	N	D		T	A	I	N	T		E	L	I	E
E	G	G	S		A	M	A	S	S		D	Y	N	E

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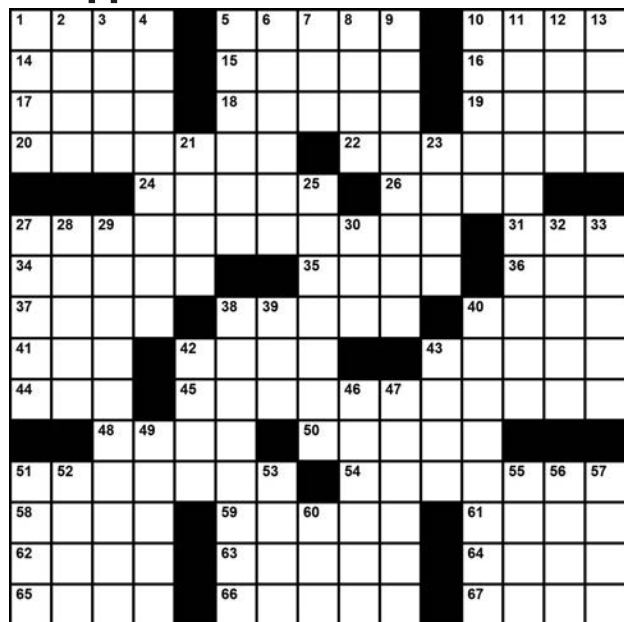


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Across

- 1 Use your lips unfaithfully
- 5 Endora portrayed
- 10 Bites of Marc Antony's girlfriend
- 14 "I" of Socrates
- 15 Belief summary
- 16 One way to cook fruit
- 17 Crude dude
- 18 Bitch and moan
- 19 Mandlikova of tennis
- 20 With 22-Across, statement by
- 22 See 20-Across
- 24 Recesses for Rev. Piazza
- 26 Skye on screens
- 27 54-Across counts his orientation to be among these (with 45-Across and

- 31 St. Louis clock setting
- 34 "Holy smoke!" at Beth Simchat Torah
- 35 Baseball's Babe
- 36 Paddle
- 37 Hairy copiers
- 38 Voyeurs, e.g.
- 40 Home, to Glenn Burke
- 41 Essen article
- 42 Where to look, in "Misty"
- 43 Anne of "Volcano"
- 44 Big initials in fashion
- 45 See 27-Across
- 48 Like the 13 Amer. colonies
- 50 Rimbaud's room
- 51 See 27-Across
- 54 Apple CEO who just came out
- 58 Garfield's partner
- 59 Flat singer of the Chipmunks
- 61 Brick oven
- 62 Fruit cover
- 63 Perineum, in slang
- 64 Foundation for Humanity name
- 65 Quiche ingredients
- 66 Gather up
- 67 Unit of force
- 8 Cut
- 9 Stars of the Gay Men's Chorus
- 10 Washed-out
- 11 Western wagon
- 12 Elizabeth of "Transamerica"
- 13 Go to and fro
- 21 "Aida," to Gomer?
- 23 Threesome answer to "Which one?"
- 25 "The ___ of San Francisco" ('70s TV show)
- 27 Sycophant
- 28 Plugs, plugs, plugs
- 29 "Are you out of your ___ mind?"
- 30 Where to find it.
- 32 Younger daughter of Michelle
- 33 Family diagrams
- 38 Some palm markings
- 39 Band that recorded "Unbelievable"
- 40 Adorned
- 42 Gomer's "anti"
- 43 Celeste of "All About Eve"
- 46 Bedding fabrics
- 47 Tiny flashes
- 49 Actor Robert and family
- 51 "Myra Breckinridge" writer Vidal
- 52 Ginsberg's "Gotcha"
- 53 Jack of old Westerns
- 55 Like some lubes
- 56 "Brothers & Sisters" producer Ken
- 57 You may go down on one
- 60 Caesar's way

Down

- 1 Netanyahu, from the land of the cut
- 2 Weaving machine
- 3 Lying on
- 4 Shooting off in the artillery corps
- 5 Point a finger at
- 6 First-class
- 7 St. of Liberace Museum

Solution on pg. 43



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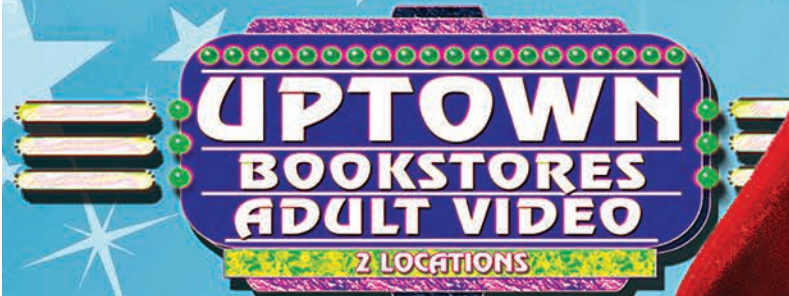
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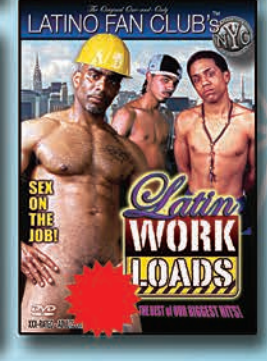
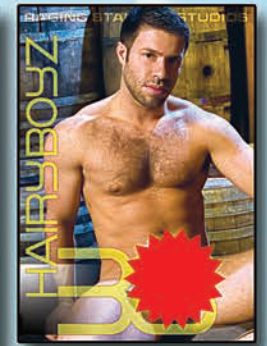


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