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A LOATHSOME LOOPHOLE

How Some LGBT Michiganders Exploit Discriminatory Law

January 14, 2016
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Please see **Brief Summary of
Patient Information** with important
warnings on the following pages.

Brief Summary of Patient Information about GENVOYA

GENVOYA (jen-VOY-uh) (elvitegravir, cobicistat, emtricitabine, and tenofovir alafenamide) tablets

Important: Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with GENVOYA.

There may be new information about GENVOYA. This information is only a summary and does not take the place of talking with your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment.

What is the most important information I should know about GENVOYA?

GENVOYA can cause serious side effects, including:

- **Build-up of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis).**

Lactic acidosis may happen in some people who take GENVOYA. Lactic acidosis is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Lactic acidosis can be hard to identify early, because the symptoms could seem like symptoms of other health problems. **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following symptoms, which could be signs of lactic acidosis:**

- feel very weak or tired
- have unusual (not normal) muscle pain
- have trouble breathing
- have stomach pain with nausea or vomiting
- feel cold, especially in your arms and legs
- feel dizzy or lightheaded
- have a fast or irregular heartbeat

- **Severe liver problems.** Severe liver problems may happen in people who take GENVOYA. In some cases, these liver problems can lead to death. Your liver may become large and you may develop fat in your liver.

Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following symptoms of liver problems:

- your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice)
- dark “tea-colored” urine
- light-colored bowel movements (stools)
- loss of appetite for several days or longer
- nausea
- stomach pain

- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking GENVOYA for a long time.**

- **Worsening of Hepatitis B infection.** GENVOYA is not for use to treat chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV). If you have HBV infection and take GENVOYA, your HBV may get worse (flare-up) if you stop taking GENVOYA. A “flare-up” is when your HBV infection suddenly returns in a worse way than before.

- Do not run out of GENVOYA. Refill your prescription or talk to your healthcare provider before your GENVOYA is all gone.
- Do not stop taking GENVOYA without first talking to your healthcare provider.
- If you stop taking GENVOYA, your healthcare provider will need to check your health often and do blood tests regularly for several months to check your HBV infection. Tell your healthcare provider about any new or unusual symptoms you may have after you stop taking GENVOYA.

What is GENVOYA?

GENVOYA is a prescription medicine that is used without other HIV-1 medicines to treat HIV-1 in people 12 years of age and older:

- who have not received HIV-1 medicines in the past **or**
- to replace their current HIV-1 medicines in people who have been on the same HIV-1 medicines for at least 6 months, have an amount of HIV-1 in their blood (“viral load”) that is less than 50 copies/mL, and have never failed past HIV-1 treatment

HIV-1 is the virus that causes AIDS.

GENVOYA contains the prescription medicines elvitegravir (VITEKTA®), cobicistat (TYBOST®), emtricitabine (EMTRIVA®) and tenofovir alafenamide.

It is not known if GENVOYA is safe and effective in children under 12 years of age.

When used to treat HIV-1 infection, GENVOYA may:

- Reduce the amount of HIV-1 in your blood. This is called “viral load”.
- Increase the number of CD4+ (T) cells in your blood that help fight off other infections.

Reducing the amount of HIV-1 and increasing the CD4+ (T) cells in your blood may help improve your immune system. This may reduce your risk of death or getting infections that can happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

GENVOYA does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS. You must stay on continuous HIV-1 therapy to control HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses.

Avoid doing things that can spread HIV-1 infection to others:

- Do not share or re-use needles or other injection equipment.
- Do not share personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes and razor blades.
- Do not have any kind of sex without protection. Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.

Ask your healthcare provider if you have any questions about how to prevent passing HIV-1 to other people.

Who should not take GENVOYA?

Do not take GENVOYA if you also take a medicine that contains:

- alfuzosin hydrochloride (Uroxatral®)
- carbamazepine (Carbatrol®, Epitol®, Equetro®, Tegretol®, Tegretol-XR®, Teril®)
- cisapride (Propulsid®, Propulsid Quicksolv®)
- ergot-containing medicines, including: dihydroergotamine mesylate (D.H.E. 45®, Migranal®), ergotamine tartrate (Cafegot®, Migegot®, Ergostat®, Medihaler Ergotamine®, Wigraine®, Wigrettes®), and methylergonovine maleate (Ergotrate®, Methergine®)
- lovastatin (Advicor®, Altoprev®, Mevacor®)
- midazolam, when taken by mouth
- phenobarbital (Luminal®)
- phenytoin (Dilantin®, Phenytek®)
- pimozone (Orap®)
- rifampin (Rifadin®, Rifamate®, Rifater®, Rimactane®)
- sildenafil (Revatio®), when used for treating lung problems
- simvastatin (Simcor®, Vytorin®, Zocor®)
- triazolam (Halcion®)
- the herb St. John’s wort or a product that contains St. John’s wort

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking GENVOYA?

Before taking GENVOYA, tell your healthcare provider if you:

- have liver problems including hepatitis B infection
- have kidney or bone problems
- have any other medical conditions
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if GENVOYA can harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking GENVOYA.

Pregnancy registry: there is a pregnancy registry for women who take HIV-1 medicines during pregnancy. The purpose of this registry is to collect information about the health of you and your baby. Talk with your healthcare provider about how you can take part in this registry.

- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you take GENVOYA.
 - You should not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.
 - At least one of the medicines in GENVOYA can pass to your baby in your breast milk. It is not known if the other medicines in GENVOYA can pass into your breast milk.
 - Talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Other medicines may affect how GENVOYA works.

Some medicines may interact with GENVOYA. **Keep a list of your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.**

- You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for a list of medicines that interact with GENVOYA.
- Do not start a new medicine without telling your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider can tell you if it is safe to take GENVOYA with other medicines.

How should I take GENVOYA?

- Take GENVOYA exactly as your healthcare provider tells you to take it. GENVOYA is taken by itself (not with other HIV-1 medicines) to treat HIV-1 infection.
- GENVOYA is usually taken 1 time each day.
- Take GENVOYA with food.
- If you need to take a medicine for indigestion (antacid) that contains aluminum and magnesium hydroxide or calcium carbonate during treatment with GENVOYA, take it at least 2 hours before or after you take GENVOYA.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking GENVOYA without first talking with your healthcare provider. Stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking GENVOYA.
- Do not miss a dose of GENVOYA.
- If you take too much GENVOYA, call your healthcare provider or go to the nearest hospital emergency room right away.
- When your GENVOYA supply starts to run low, get more from your healthcare provider or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to GENVOYA and become harder to treat.

What are the possible side effects of GENVOYA?

GENVOYA may cause serious side effects, including:

- See “What is the most important information I should know about GENVOYA?”
- **Changes in body fat can happen in people who take HIV-1 medicine.** These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck (“buffalo hump”), breast, and around the middle of your body (trunk). Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The exact cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known.
- **Changes in your immune system** (Immune Reconstitution Syndrome) can happen when you start taking HIV-1 medicines. Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections that have been hidden in your body for a long time. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you start having any new symptoms after starting your HIV-1 medicine.
- **New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider should do blood and urine tests to check your kidneys before you start and while you are taking GENVOYA. Your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking GENVOYA if you develop new or worse kidney problems.
- **Bone problems** can happen in some people who take GENVOYA. Bone problems may include bone pain, softening or thinning (which may lead to fractures). Your healthcare provider may need to do tests to check your bones.

The most common side effect of GENVOYA is nausea.

Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

- These are not all the possible side effects of GENVOYA. For more information, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist.
- Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

General information about the safe and effective use of GENVOYA.

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information leaflet. Do not use GENVOYA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give GENVOYA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

This Brief Summary summarizes the most important information about GENVOYA. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider. You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for information about GENVOYA that is written for health professionals.

For more information, call **1-800-445-3235** or go to **www.GENVOYA.com**.

Keep GENVOYA and all medicines out of reach of children.

Issued: November 2015


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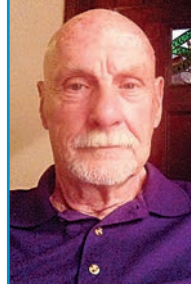
BTL CELEBRATES WEDDINGS



Together 30 years, Clare Coughlin and Barbara Hardison told BTL it was important to legally marry. They share their ceremony with us.

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PARTING GLANCES



Charles Alexander looks back at forgotten transgender hero

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OPINION

“It is so disappointing that some LGBT people and their attorneys are arguing that former partners should continue to be legal strangers to children they shared while together.”

Jan Stevenson speaking out on child custody battles that use painful anti-gay tactics



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LGBT BALLOT INITIATIVE

Michigan Board of Canvassers Approves LGBT Constitutional Amendment Language – What Happens Now?

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Can LGBT Civil Rights Win On Michigan Ballot in 2016?

Join The Discussions Online @ www.pridesource.com

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NEWS BRIEFS

Suit Against Planet Fitness Dismissed

MIDLAND COUNTY – WNEM reports that the suit against a Midland Planet Fitness following a locker room controversy has been dismissed. The controversy over a transgender member using the female locker rooms stemmed from another member, Yvette Cormier, complaining; the Planet Fitness revoked her membership stating she violated their nondiscrimination policy. Cormier then filed a lawsuit in Midland County Circuit Court March 23, 2015 against the gym, saying their gender identity policy created a hostile environment for women and children. The story went viral in spring 2015.

However, Midland County Circuit Judge Michael Beale dismissed the suit Jan. 11. Beale ruled the policy alone wasn't sufficient to create a hostile environment.

Cormier's lawyer, David Kallman, issued a press release following the dismissal: "Mrs. Cormier filed this lawsuit to protect women and children and to hold Planet Fitness accountable for its irresponsible policy and actions. It is clear that the appellate courts in Michigan will have the final say in this case."

To sign up, visit www.mdsl.org. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/metrodetroitsoftball.

New Parents of Trans Youth Support Group Launches

LAKE ORION – A new group to help the guardians of trans youth better understand the realities and experiences of trans identities is set to launch next week.

The group will be facilitated by Lisa Goyette, a trans activist and ally and proud parent of a trans son. Goyette is a member of Stand With Trans, a nonprofit organization working to provide trans youth with the tools needed so they can be empowered, supported and validated as they transition into their authentic selves.

"You just have to love your kids – unconditionally. The rest will come. I have seen first-hand what happens when a trans teen is given support, understanding and acceptance. And, I've seen the devastation when they are not supported," Stand With Trans founder Roz Keith said in a press release about the new support group.

Meetings will be held every first and third Tuesday of each month. The first meeting will take place at 7 p.m. Jan. 19 at St. Mary's In-The-Hills Episcopal Church. The group will serve the Lake Orion, Oxford, Clarkston, Rochester, Pontiac and Troy areas.

St. Mary's In-The-Hills Episcopal Church is located at 2512 Joslyn Court in Lake Orion.

Goyette can be reached by email at lisa@standwithtrans.org or by phone at 248-330-8493.

Alabama Justice: Judges Should Refuse Gay Marriage Licenses

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) – Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore is once again suggesting that Alabama probate judges refuse to issue marriage licenses to gay couples – despite the U.S. Supreme Court ruling more than six months ago that effectively legalized same-sex marriage throughout the country.

The outspoken chief justice issued an administrative order Wednesday saying the Alabama Supreme Court never lifted a March directive to probate judges to refuse licenses to gay couples. He said the order to refuse the licenses remains in "full force."

However, Moore stopped short of directly telling judges to refuse the licenses.

Susan Watson is director of the ACLU of Alabama. Watson called Moore's order "silly" and said it wouldn't change the fact that most Alabama judges are issuing licenses to gay couples.

LGBT Softball League Opens Spring Registration

The Metro Detroit Softball League/MDSL LGBT is opening registration for its 2016 season. The all inclusive league plays from May through August, with all skill levels encouraged to join.

Two games are played each Sunday at Borden/Hellen Allen Parks in Rochester Hills. Recreational and competitive divisions are available.

Special to the league is the "bar of the week," where the teams unwind each week after play. The event is hosted by the league's sponsors.





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Loathsome Loophole: How Some LGBT Michiganders Use Discriminatory Law Affirmations New Executive Director Exploits Anti-LGBT Tactic in Custody Fight

BY AJ TRAGER

The Obergefell v. Hodges decision by the U.S. Supreme Court last June (which made same-sex marriage legal across the country) has created a potentially new legal landscape for child custody cases involving same-sex parents in Michigan. Right now, six family law cases currently being processed through the Michigan court system are using a longstanding statute that allows for discrimination against LGBT parents as the basis for their legal argument. Some parents who were denied access to children after a breakup have decided to fight for legal standing (and thus visitation rights) in the aftermath of SCOTUS' decision.

Of the six cases, one in particular is striking and lends itself to a multitude of unanswered questions.

Newly appointed Executive Director of Affirmations Susan Erspamer is being represented by attorney Jim Rasor in an equitable parenthood case filed July 31 of last year. Erspamer and her former partner, Robbin Sawyer (represented in court by Amanda Shelton), pursued motherhood during their 16 year relationship that ended in 2009. Erspamer gave birth to a boy in 2002 and adopted a young girl five years later.

The couple maintained a co-parenting relationship for a few years following the split; however, Sawyer was denied access or visitation to the children in 2012. Rasor is seeking a motion for summary judgment, using the equitable parenthood statute to argue that Sawyer has no legal standing since the couple was not legally married.

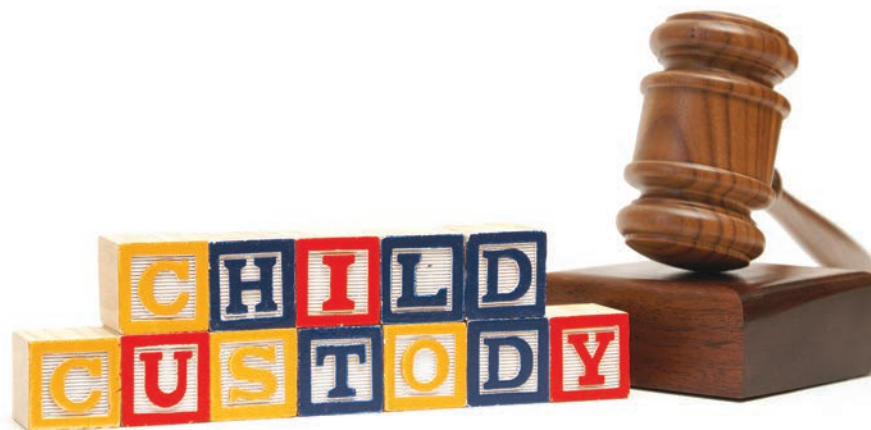
BTL requested comment on the case and Erspamer asked that all responses come directly from her lawyer.

"My client is a mother of two school-aged children who is following her lawyer's advice as to best protect those children from an unstable and violent person who last had contact with them in 2012 when she violently attacked my client and her wife in front of the children. Keeping in mind that this person chose to end her relationship with the children in 2009 by finding someone else online and moving out of the house and out of the child's lives," Rasor told BTL.

Shelton refutes the claim of domestic violence noting, "Ms. Erspamer's legal position is to deny the children she raised with Ms. Sawyer the right to have two legal

"I think it's exceptionally disappointing and could be astronomically devastating to our community. We are already fractured right now as a state despite the huge win in June. For any member of our community to use an anti-gay law to harm another individual in our community and potentially harm our entire community is completely irresponsible and, in my opinion, morally reprehensible."

– Attorney Jennifer LaTosch



parents – to deny them the love, affection, and support of Ms. Sawyer who raised them since the eldest child was born and the youngest child was adopted.

"Ms. Erspamer is using the allegations of domestic violence, which are demonstrably false, to deflect attention from the true nature of this case. It is critical to note that Ms. Erspamer has kept the children from Ms. Sawyer for nearly four years by hiding behind Michigan's horrible discriminatory laws which, until the Supreme Court's ruling in Obergefell v. Hodge, left Ms. Sawyer without any legal rights to their children. Ms. Erspamer's reliance and exploitation of laws that discriminate against LGBTQ parents not only hurts the children in this family

but is damaging to all LGBTQ families in Michigan," said Shelton.

BTL confirmed with Rasor that no police reports or formal complaints exist regarding the domestic violence claim.

Affirmations

BTL reached out to the board president of Affirmations for comment.

"The board has not yet had a chance to discuss this issue. My perspective is, this is a significant and important issue to the LGBT community, but it would be inappropriate for Susan's (Erspamer) employer to get involved with or comment on her personal custody litigation," Affirmations board president Frank

Aiello said.

Family law attorney Jennifer LaTosch from Miller Canfield said she was extremely disappointed to learn that Erspamer is a defendant in one of the six cases currently using this historically anti-gay legal tactic to their benefit. Affirmations just went through major staff changes following the sudden resignation of executive director Darrius Hilmom in November, after only six months on the job. LaTosch was hoping that the organization would get a break, but now questions the new executive director's ability to lead while using a longstanding anti-gay tactic that has historically inflicted harm on many non-biological LGBT parents.

"I think it's exceptionally disappointing and could be astronomically devastating to our community. We are already fractured right now as a state despite the huge win in June. For any member of our community to use an anti-gay law to harm another individual in our community and potentially harm our entire community is completely irresponsible and, in my opinion, morally reprehensible," LaTosch said. "That's for any member of the community. But if you put yourself out there as a leader, whether it be in the political realm or the social realm or in the legal realm, it is even more impactful and devastating."

For decades lawyers have used marriage as a weapon against LGBT people in court. In this particular case, Rasor told BTL that if Sawyer and Erspamer were a committed couple, they would have pursued marriage, perhaps in another state or country. But post-Obergefell, does that position hold up?

"It's devastating to see in family law. Yes, family law attorneys are advocates for their clients, but I don't think being a good advocate in family law means that you win everything," LaTosch added. "It means that you've provided assistance for your client to get through this process and know their rights have been met, and they can still be a family at the end of it. It's much better for a kid for both their parents to be sitting next to each other at graduation than to be sitting at opposite sides of the auditorium. I think that is part of our job as a family law attorney. To help these families work through this transition."

Judge Karen McDonald of the Oakland Circuit Court is to hear arguments for and against Sawyer v. Erspamer (case No. 15-833465-DC) on Jan. 13.

Michigan

Unique to Michigan

The concept of equitable parenthood, or “de facto” parenthood, was first introduced in the 1987 case of *Atkinson v. Atkinson* and was later revisited in 1999 in the case of *Van v. Zahorik*. Both cases involved a heterosexual couple where the male party was not the father of the child but was seeking custody or visitation rights after a breakup.

In *Atkinson*, the soon to be ex-husband was granted equitable parenthood due to having a lengthy relationship with the child that was recognized by the mother. In the *Van* case (10 years later), Michigan Supreme Court Justice Clifford Taylor, writing for the majority, held that the doctrine of equitable parenthood was rooted in marriage – therefore denying any LGBT co-parents legal standing to fight for visitation rights to the children they helped raise.

The precedent set by the state Supreme Court in the *Van* case determined that equitable parenthood was limited to the context of a legal marriage – a precedent unique to Michigan. Michigan is the only state in which marital status is the determining factor in whether a person has parental rights. LGBT couples were legally barred from getting married until six months ago and did not qualify for equitable parenthood legal standing in state family law cases. Michigan law also states that marriage is a requirement for a couple to second-parent adopt or co-adopt a child. The non-biological parent, with no legal standing, could therefore be denied contact with their children. Any petition to the courts for parenting time was considered frivolous.

However, the SCOTUS decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* last June may include some language that could lead to a change in Michigan’s law.

Justice Anthony Kennedy, who wrote the majority opinion, showed he understood the importance of marriage for the children saying, “Without the recognition, stability and predictability marriage offers, children suffer the stigma of knowing their families are somehow lesser. They also suffer the significant material costs of being raised by unmarried parents, relegated to a more difficult and uncertain family life. The marriage laws at issue thus harm and humiliate the children of same-sex couples.”

ACLU Files Amicus Brief

“The ACLU feels very strongly about this. If *Obergefell* is to have any meaning, it’s that LGBT families are to be treated on equal footing as opposite sex families and you cannot double penalize some people because they weren’t afforded the protections from marriage,” ACLU of Michigan LGBT Special

“Unfortunately all of this is collateral damage as a result of years of laws and policies denying the existence of LGBT relationships and their families, including parent-child relationships.”

– ACLU Attorney Jay Kaplan

Projects Attorney Jay Kaplan told BTL.

The ACLU of Michigan has filed a 154-page amicus brief in support of the non-biological mother, Robbin Sawyer.

“And unfortunately all of this is collateral damage as a result of years of laws and policies denying the existence of LGBT relationships and their families, including parent-child relationships,” he continued. “But what we always come back to is the harm that’s being done to the kids. Why should kids of gay parents not be afforded the protections that equitable parenthood provides in terms of stability?”

“The Supreme Court justices in *Obergefell* really focused on the social stigma of not allowing and not recognizing these families to get married and the psychological harm it would cause the children not having their family be recognized,” said LaTosch.

Since the *Van* decision, the ACLU of Michigan and many other legal teams across the state have represented same-sex couples in family law court over this very matter. Kaplan, who has seen the direct harm this type of law can have on children, has watched LGBT lawyers even use the “de-facto” parenthood precedent to get cases thrown out of court.

“What is so disheartening is that members of our community have in the past used the fact that you can’t get married to justify taking away the kids and basically saying to the courts that our relationships don’t count – they’re lesser, they’re not entitled to protection including parent-child relationships. And it’s equally disconcerting now that we have these landmark decisions with *Obergefell* and *Windsor* that talk about the harm that comes to children when you deny the parents the right to get married and you deny the protections and the stability,” Kaplan said.

“Lawyers representing members of the community will use the bad law and in many cases not deny that there was a parent-child relationship, but they will use the *Van* precedent to win their case anyway,” said Kaplan.

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January 14, 2016 | BTL 11

Triplett Joins Equality Michigan Staff

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT – Equality Michigan, the statewide LGBT anti-violence and advocacy organization, appointed former East Lansing Mayor Nathan Triplett, M.A., J.D., as its new political director.

Triplett spent seven years as a staffer in the Michigan House of Representatives and has worked as a civil litigator. He comes to EQMI after most recently serving as director of Priorities Michigan.

“I couldn’t be more excited to have Nathan join our team,” said Stephanie White, executive director of EQMI. “He brings not only his leadership skills and deep history in LGBT movement work, but also his vast experience in law, policy, advocacy and public service. I am thrilled to work with him to end discrimination against LGBT residents of Michigan.”

The new political director has a long history working for LGBT rights. He started with organizing a Gay-Straight Alliance in high school and has 15 years LGBT advocacy and public service experience working in various capacities as an organizer, policy advocate and elected official. For eight of those years, Triplett served on the East Lansing City Council, and was eventually elected the city’s youngest mayor in 2013.

During his City Council tenure, Triplett championed numerous pro-LGBTQ initiatives, including an Equal Benefits Ordinance, Domestic Partner Registry and an Other Eligible Individual Benefits Policy for municipal employees. Triplett’s work earned East Lansing back-to-back perfect scores on the Human Rights Campaign’s Municipal Equality Index. In addition to his work in East Lansing, Triplett worked to pass comprehensive nondiscrimination ordinances in cities across Michigan.

“We’re so impressed with the caliber of Nathan’s contributions to human rights and the lives of Michigan residents that we can’t wait to see what he does as a part of our Equality Michigan team,” said EQMI Deputy Director L. Michael Gipson.

In addition to his professional positions, Triplett served as the president of the Board of Trustees of the Michigan Municipal League, and served as a former member of Michigan Equality, the National Stonewall Democrats and the National Board of Directors of the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN).

“I’m elated to join the great staff at Equality Michigan. This work has been a lifelong passion of mine. There has never been a more critical time to be doing the work of building political power and moving a pro-equality policy agenda forward in Michigan,” Triplett said.

Triplett is a graduate of Michigan State University’s James Madison College with bachelor’s degrees in political theory/constitutional democracy and social relations. He holds a master’s in public policy from the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan and a Juris Doctor from the Michigan State University College of Law. He lives in East Lansing with his wife and newborn son.

Revisiting Discrimination

A Decade Later, Capitol City Reviews Human Rights Ordinance

BY TODD HEYWOOD

LANSING – A decade after the Lansing City Council first approved its local human rights ordinance, it is being reviewed and is now up for some changes.

A committee of the city council, lead by City Councilmember At-Large Carol Wood, has been reviewing the ordinance “line by line” as well as its implementation for a year. Proposed changes to define harassment, a hostile work environment and bullying were presented in a public hearing Jan. 11, but Wood expects the ordinance to be referred back for more amendments before a final hearing and vote will occur.

Wood said that despite the ordinance having been in place for a decade, and been the topic of conversation and debate for two – including a contentious ballot measure in 1996 which resulted in the revocation of another version of the ordinance by the voters of Lansing – many community members who served on the committee

expressed surprise that the law existed.

“They didn’t know it existed,” said Wood in an interview Jan. 8, following a meeting of the committee. “And we have only had two complaints filed since the law went into effect.”

Why there have been so few complaints is unclear to Wood, but she and the committee worked with city officials to create a pamphlet advertising the ordinance and the process to file complaints. Wood said she expects the committee to adopt language into the updated ordinance to require city officials to report annually on the implementation and enforcement of the city’s ordinance.

Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero’s office said it was still reviewing the ordinance changes and had no comment as a result. Bernero was a champion of the original law in 2006.

Of note, Lansing City Attorney Joseph Abood told committee members – after an initial review of information related to a waiver to Title IX rules given to Spring

Arbor University – that it is possible the conservative Christian institution could now be immune from enforcement of the city’s human rights ordinance, despite operating a campus within city limits.

Spring Arbor was sued by former instructor and administrator Julie Nemecek over allegations they fired her for being transgender. The case was settled out of court for an undisclosed sum. But that incident resulted in the university cancelling a potential partnership with Lansing Community College. Under the proposed partnership, Spring Arbor would have gotten to use a brand new building on the campus of the community college to encourage students to further their educations beyond two year and technical degrees. But in May 2007 after LCC administration officials sent a letter to all potential partners requiring them to follow LCC policies – including prohibition on discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity – Spring Arbor withdrew from the relationship.

New Initiative Will Improve Access to Healthy Food for Seniors and Children

DETROIT – The Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan announced Monday it has been awarded a grant of \$2.5 million from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to support initiatives that improve access to healthy food for seniors and children throughout southeast Michigan.

The grant dollars will be used to launch Healthy Food Connect, an initiative designed to support innovation in healthy food access with educational initiatives and competitive grants for collaborations between organizations throughout the region with ideas and expertise in food, health, seniors and/or youth. More details on Healthy Food Connect educational initiatives and grants will be released in February.

“Healthy Food Connect offers a unique opportunity to expand and replicate successful strategies, as well as create new partnerships, with the ultimate goal of making improvements to the health of young people and seniors in the region,” said Mariam C. Noland, president of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan. “We are grateful to the Michigan Health Endowment for providing support

to increase food access and improve health in our communities.”

More than 30 community foundations across the state applied for funding through the Michigan Health Endowment Fund’s fall 2015 grant application process. Grant requests focused on areas such as prenatal care and infant mortality; health services to support adopted and fostered children; healthy food access; wellness and fitness programs; access to mental health services; technology enhancements; health related transportation needs; access to care/integrated care; and teen pregnancy prevention.

“The Michigan Health Endowment Fund board is proud to support a variety of very successful programs already positively impacting the health of Michigan’s children and seniors as a result of our first grant funding effort,” said Rob Fowler, board chairman. “We look forward to building additional relationships with Michigan’s community foundations and other nonprofit organizations as they continue their focused work to improve the health of Michigan’s most vulnerable residents.”

Community foundations were eligible

to apply for grants in support of programs to improve the health of children and seniors in their regions. Those foundations receiving funding, in turn, now have the ability to offer their affiliate foundations or smaller community organizations the opportunity to seek grants that support similar programs.

“We are pleased to collaborate this year with community foundations on projects that seek to enhance the well-being of Michigan’s children and seniors in their local communities,” said Paul Hillemonds, executive director of Michigan Health Endowment Fund.

The mission of the Michigan Health Endowment Fund is to improve the health of Michigan residents and reduce the cost of health care, with special emphasis on the health and wellness of children and seniors. The fund was created as part of 2013 state legislation that allowed Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan to become a nonprofit mutual health insurer. The Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan is a full-service philanthropic organization “leading the way to positive change” in the region.

Remembering the History of Michigan's LGBT Ballot Fights

BY TIM RETZLOFF

In recent months, the group Fair Michigan launched an effort to guarantee protections for sexual orientation and gender identity within the Michigan constitution by means of a statewide initiative slated for the November 2016 ballot. A number of critics have asserted that whenever LGBT rights are put before voters, such measures always fail. This claim is not only inaccurate, it also masks a complicated, and perhaps promising, history of past referendum battles.

Ballot campaigns in the U.S. have seen mixed success for supporters of LGBT rights.

Anita Bryant set a toxic tone nationally back in 1977 when her "Save Our Children" campaign instigated the repeal of a new gay rights ordinance in Dade County, Florida, followed in rapid succession by repeals in Wichita, St. Paul and Eugene. Californians arrested the wave of anti-gay electoral defeats in 1978, when, thanks to a major education campaign led by Harvey Milk and Sally Gearhart, voters turned back the Briggs Initiative, a ballot proposal to ban homosexual teachers.

The repeal of Houston's non-discrimination ordinance in the odd-year election of 2015 should be understood not only in the context of its own particular circumstances, but also in the context of voter support in 2014 of LGBT protections in the city constitution in Dallas and voter approval in 2012 of same-sex marriage in the states of Maine, Maryland and Washington.

The mixed historical bag of national failures and successes has its counterpart in our own state.

During the early years of gay liberation in the 1970s, Michiganders were on the vanguard of pursuing rights for gay, lesbian and transgender citizens. As early as 1971, a coalition of activists refused to endorse the Traxler Amendment, which would have repealed state sodomy and gross indecency statutes, unless the proposal also eliminated laws against crossdressing.

On March 7, 1972, East Lansing became the first municipality in the

U.S. to ban discrimination against homosexuals in city hiring. On July 10, Ann Arbor's city council enacted a civil rights ordinance that included "sexual preference" as a protected category – another national first – though not before a slim majority of council members stripped the words "transvestism" and "trans-sexuality" from its language. ("Gender identity" would not be included in the Ann Arbor ordinance until 1999.)

In November 1972, Detroit voters considered a new city charter with provisions to protect citizens from discrimination based on sexual preference. In a year when Richard Nixon won re-election in a landslide and state voters decisively rejected legalizing abortion, the proposed charter went down to defeat. One year later, on the same day Detroit voters elected Coleman Young as the city's first black mayor, voters also approved the charter they had rebuffed just one year before.

Voters in Ypsilanti in 1975 rejected by 64 percent to 36 percent an ordinance proposed by the Human Rights Party that would have prohibited discrimination based on "sexual preference," a harbinger of how difficult it would be to advance gay rights in Michigan.

In 1977, in response to fears that Anita Bryant would bring her anti-gay campaign to the Great Lakes State, activists from Detroit, Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids, East Lansing, Flint, and elsewhere gathered in Lansing to establish the Michigan Organization for Human Rights. MOHR members proved to be instrumental in securing passage of Detroit's strong Omnibus Human Rights Ordinance, enacted in 1979 to enforce the charter provision.

By the early 1980s, MOHR was pushing House Bill 5000, also known as the Dressel Amendment, in order to add "sexual orientation" to the state's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. A conservative challenger targeted and defeated moderate Republican James Dressel of Holland in the August 1984 House primary race in response to Dressel's sponsorship the bill. For the next decade or more, support for LGBT rights became seen as poisonous for many local elected officials.

In the mid-1990s, even with no state law and few city ordinances yet on the books, a Saginaw fish farmer sought to advance a ballot initiative to prevent any nondiscrimination protections for LGBT Michiganders. The highly mobilized Michigan Campaign for Human Dignity stymied his efforts.

Then in 2004, by a 59 percent to 41 percent margin, voters statewide adopted a constitutional amendment that defined marriage as only between a man and a woman. Yet a closer analysis yielded signs of hope. Not surprisingly, Ann Arbor and East Lansing voters spurned the discriminatory amendment. But so did 17 suburbs in the Republican stronghold of Oakland County, including Berkley, Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Clawson, Hazel Park, Keego Harbor, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Southfield Township, Sylvan Lake, and West Bloomfield Township. Half of the suburbs that rejected the amendment supported George W. Bush at the top of the ticket.

Over the years, several communities have faced prolonged battles for local LGBT rights protections that took many attempts to succeed. After failed efforts in the 1980s to secure an ordinance in Lansing over the opposition of anti-gay Mayor Terry McKane, the Lansing City Council under pro-gay Mayor David Hollister approved an ordinance on March 18, 1996.

A group called Majority Opposing Special Treatment (MOST) quickly garnered enough signatures to place the question on the fall ballot. Despite exit polls that showed Lansing's nondiscrimination ordinance winning by 30 percent, the measure lost by 4 percent.

In December 2006, the Lansing council enacted a new ordinance. Despite threats from the American Family Association of Michigan, a ballot challenge to the law did not materialize.

In December 1997, after months of deliberation, and 22 years after the largely forgotten 1975 vote, Ypsilanti lawmakers unanimously passed a nondiscrimination ordinance that included protections for sexual orientation and gender identity.

See Ballot History, page 15



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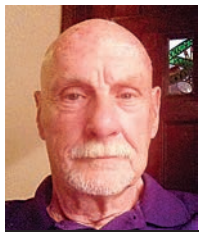
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Our Forgotten Transgender Hero

Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Tamara A. Rees is 92. She leads a quiet, uneventful, grandmotherly life with her adopted children's children somewhere in Los Angeles, California.

In 1954 – two years after serving as a Bronze Star wounded and decorated World War II U.S. Army paratrooper – then Robert Rees, age 30, transitioned in Holland from male to female.

The transition was made after personal years-long introspection, determination, inner self trust, and against much cautious, ignorant, expensive, psychiatric opinions. It led to much international media publicity. The notoriety would be short-lived.

Most know about Christine Jorgensen. Army Sergeant George, who transitioned M-to-F in 1953. These days only a handful of LGBT history buffs know who Tamara Rees is, or, who she was for a brief two years as a curiosity, celeb nightclub entertainer.

I made Tamara's acquaintance by a chance reading of an article in an old copy of a Sexology Magazine anthology. The article is dated 1959. It's title: "Male Becomes Female: The life story of one of the most widely publicized cases of sex change in recent history."

The Sexology piece is among the first published first-person accounts dealing openly with what it means to be a trans person.

A true confession of sorts, the commentary carries the byline Tamara A. Rees, with faded photographs of a visibly awkward young Robert in paratrooper gear, contrasted with a fully dynamic Tamara in a sequined gown, ample cleavage uplifted in a here-I-am, I'll-show-one-and-all who I've at long last become.

Tamara speaks openly of her early fascination with a neighbor girl's clothes and pretty ribbons. Her innate desire to play with dolls. Of being bullied by school boys. Of secretly dressing in her sister's and mother's clothing. Of her great success at Halloween as a 14-year-old dressed as a woman.

Of parental misunderstanding and censure. Of her rebellious year of running away from home. Of brief Navy service, followed shortly after as a paratrooper.

Her initial adult visits to several psychiatrists in search of answers proved frustrating. Their responses varied from disbelief, belittlement, Freudian psychobabble, and get-over-it-Robert!

While stationed in Europe, Robert found a German psychiatrist who recommended operative advances then currently being made in Holland to persons like Christine Jorgensen (1926 - 1989).

Summing up, Tamara observes, "The road is a long hard one, full of heartaches, disappointments and great expense. Surgical transition is a prolonged and complicated one. The surgery does not create a woman where the patient was once a biological male, nor can the patient hope to birth children. It merely brings the physical appearance of the patient into harmony with the mental pattern."

The publicity that Tamara received when returning to America, unfortunately, proved to be problematic. She embarked upon a show business career that was almost her psychological and emotional undoing.

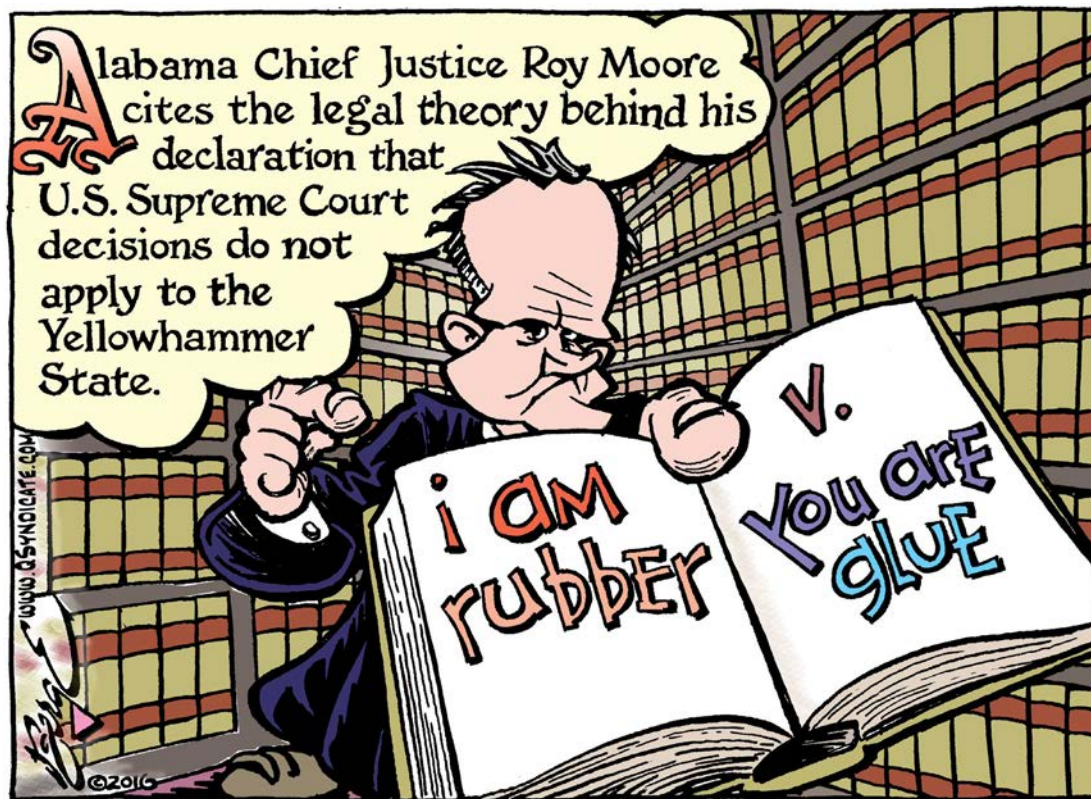
"Upon my return to this country, I had hoped to escape publicity and start a new life, my past unknown to anyone. Unfortunately, this was not the way matters turned out." (She married a James Courtland in 1955, which is now regarded as the first transgender wedding.)

"With the temptation of large sums of money and contracts offered to me, I must admit that I strayed from the course and was almost lost by my decision to enter show business. After two years of nightclub appearances I became ill as a result of the fast pace and irregular hours.

"During this illness I had the opportunity to reexamine the situation and came to realize that I would never find peace and happiness as long as I remained in the public spotlight."

So said, one can only wonder: Caitlyn Jenner, is there a lesson to be learned here?

Charles@pridesource.com



BTL Viewpoint

We Shouldn't Invalidate Our Own Relationships



OPINION BY JAN STEVENSON

It is so disappointing that some LGBT people and their attorneys are arguing that former partners should continue to be legal strangers to children they shared while together.

The win for marriage equality was huge. After a lifetime witnessing our relationships routinely invalidated, we finally won the right to legally marry the person we love. We also now have all the responsibilities that go with that commitment, including the huge responsibilities that go with raising children who may be brought into our marriages.

But with marriage we also get divorce. And with divorce there is pain, disappointment, rage and custody battles. How we deal with the end of our relationships will tell us more about who we are as individuals and a community than how exhilarated we are at the start of our marriages.

That is why it is so disappointing that some LGBT people and their attorneys are arguing that former partners should continue to be legal strangers to children they shared while together. Before marriage equality one partner was always a legal stranger to the children, discounted because Michigan does not allow

unmarried couples to jointly adopt. But to use that argument now strikes us as the height of hypocrisy. Why – after such a long fight for marriage equality – does it make sense to use old, bad, discriminatory law to argue that a former partner has no standing because the couple was not allowed to legally marry in Michigan?

There are six such cases now percolating through Michigan family courts. In each case the parent with custody of the children is arguing that their former partner should have no parental rights because they were never married. It's using the now unconstitutional ban on same-sex marriage to keep a former partner away from their children. It's a bad, hurtful argument and LGBT people should not be using it, even if the law still allows it.

It is especially disheartening that the new executive

See Relationships, next page

► Ballot History

Continued from p. 13

I attended some of the packed council sessions as a reporter for *Between The Lines*. The vicious attacks I witnessed from opponents were among the worst anti-gay slurs I'd ever heard.

Foes of the Ypsilanti ordinance, under the banner Citizens Opposing Special Treatment (COST), forced the question onto the ballot in May 1998. Contrary to local and national expectations, residents of Ypsilanti upheld the ordinance in a landmark victory.

Hardly dissuaded, opponents calling themselves "Ypsilanti Citizens Voting YES for Equal Rights Not Special Rights" put forward a charter amendment to deny LGBT protections in the November 2002 election. The group followed a familiar homophobic and transphobic playbook, which included mailers that raised the specter of transgender predators endangering children in women's restrooms. Once again, however, Ypsilanti residents voted to uphold the city's human rights ordinance.

Ferndale voters first considered and ultimately turned down a nondiscrimination ordinance in 1991. Ferndale's council made a second attempt to pass such an ordinance in September 1999, only to have voters repeal it in February 2000 by a tally of 2,406 to 2,288.

Six years later, in 2006, Ferndale voters okayed a similar human rights ordinance 5,428 to 2,897.

Voters in Royal Oak rescinded a nondiscrimination ordinance in 2001, the same year that, by a 2-to-1 margin, residents of neighboring Huntington Woods approved a similar ordinance covering sexual orientation and gender identity.

Royal Oak revisited the issue again in 2013, when its council approved an ordinance in March. That November, the new law survived a referendum challenge despite attack ads that raised what opponents termed "the Bathroom Issue."

Past battles have been bruising, expensive, exhausting and sometimes heartbreaking, but they have not been uniformly lost. Yes, Hamtramck

► Relationships

Continued from p. 14

director of Affirmations, Susan Erspamer, is using this argument against her former partner. Erspamer and her ex-partner, Robbin Sawyer, were together 16 years before separating in 2009, during which time they brought two children into their family. Sawyer has not been allowed to see the children for four years and had no legal remedy during that time to change that until now. She has filed a lawsuit arguing that since *Obergefell v. Hodges* brought marriage equality to same-sex couples, she should have legal standing and be allowed visitation with the children.

Equitable parenting rights is one of the next big issues facing the Michigan LGBT community. We need our leaders to understand the social and political issues facing our community. We do not need our leaders doing the very things that

A Fair Michigan ballot question to amend the state constitution may or may not be won. Many supporters of LGBT rights may have solid reasons to oppose their push, but inaccurate history should not be among them. History shows that LGBT rights do not always lose at the ballot box. History also shows that any push forward – win or lose – is never wasted.

voters turned back the city's new ordinance in 2008. Keep in mind, however, that 65 percent of Kalamazoo voters resoundingly endorsed their city's new ordinance in 2009.

Like Jim Dressel 30 years prior, in 2014 Republican Frank Foster of Petoskey lost his seat in a primary challenge because he sponsored a bill to amend Elliott-Larsen. Maybe, in a GOP-controlled Legislature, support for LGBT rights remains, at least for some, as politically suicidal in 2016 as in 1984. However, a fuller grasp of past battles over LGBT rights suggests that we are in changing times.

A Fair Michigan ballot question to amend the state constitution may or may not be won. Many supporters of LGBT rights may have solid reasons to oppose their push, but inaccurate history should not be among them. History shows that LGBT rights do not always lose at the ballot box. History also shows that any push forward – win or lose – is never wasted.

Tim Retzlaff teaches history and LGBTQ studies at Michigan State University. He received his PhD in history from Yale in 2014 and is currently at work on a book about gay and lesbian life and politics in Metro Detroit from 1945 to 1985.

continue the devastating discrimination that has wrenched our families apart for decades – just because the law allows it and they can.

The law has not been our community's friend historically. But now with marriage equality we have the chance to build strong families because our relationships are considered valid in the eyes of the law.

It is not acceptable for the leader of our state's largest LGBT community center to be on the wrong side of this argument. If her ex-partner should not see the children for some other valid reason, then make that argument. But don't argue that the relationship never counted in the first place.

*Jan Stevenson is the co-publisher of *Between The Lines* and the founding executive director of Affirmations from 1989 - 1995.*

Creep of the Week

Ben Carson

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Whether you call them "special rights" or "extra rights," it has long been the argument of the anti-gayers that what LGBT people want goes above and beyond the rights of "normal" people.

It reminds me of that scene in "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" when Wonka gives each child an Everlasting Gobstopper. Veruca Salt turns to Violet Beauregarde and shouts, "Hey! She's got two! I want another one!"

"Stop squawking, you twit!" Violet hollers back, holding up the single Gobstopper in her hand.

Got it. Transgender kids are garbage.

Meanwhile Mr. Wonka is setting them up to lose the contest. He's got the real power. But they're too busy bickering with each other to notice.

It's a pretty good depiction of Republican politics, actually. If you can make people believe they're being ripped off by their neighbors, it's pretty easy to distract them and get them to vote against their own interests. Like when Republicans convince married heterosexuals that gays and lesbians don't just want the right to marry, they want to destroy the entire institution. Before marriage equality came along, it was a common argument that lesbians and gays had the same right to marry as everyone else, so long as it was to someone of the opposite sex.

Which brings us to today's squawking twit, Ben Carson.

In a recent interview, host Matthew Franck asks Carson, "What will you do as president to guarantee that federal funding will not be used to force school districts to require girls to shower with boys?"

"You see how silly this is. It's beyond ridiculous that you take the most abnormal situation and then you make everyone else conform to it," Carson replies.

He continues, "So, you know, boys who say, 'I feel like a girl today, I wanna go in the girls' lavatory,' that is such a bunch of garbage."

Got it. Transgender kids are garbage. Also, Carson has no understanding of what a transgender kid is. And he's got



Carson

another guy, just as clueless, asking him to protect Americans from all of these boys trying to pull a fast one so that they can see girls in their underwear.

"That's one of the very reasons that I have been an outspoken opponent of things like gay marriage," Carson says. "I don't have any problem with gay people doing anything they want to do."

So long as they don't want to get married, duh.

"Everybody is equal, everybody has equal rights, but nobody gets extra rights," Carson continues. "And when we start trying to impose the extra rights based on a few people who perhaps are abnormal, where does that lead?" After all, Carson adds, gay people already have freedom of association.

"If gay people wanna have an association, they can have an association," he says. "If they wanna have legal documents created so they can have visitation rights and share property, they can have that done. Without disturbing the whole system."

In other words, homos and trannies, you're all a bunch of freaks. And for that you not only deserve to be discriminated against, but you should be thankful for having any rights at all! Now stop disturbing the perfectly happy heterosexual system.

"We are absolutely destroying ourselves because we are paying attention to political correctness," Carson continues. "You know, our time is running out. If we don't stand up for principles now and we get a progressive (president) and they get two or three Supreme Court picks, say goodbye to America."

And hello to Gaymerica! Where everything's coming up roses and there's no business like show business! And Ethel Merman is on the 10 dollar bill, obviously.

Oh, and where opposite sex couples can't get married, per se, but are welcome to try to cobble together some sort of legal relationship at a lawyer's office. Have fun with your freedom of association. Because if it was good enough for the gays, surely it'll be good enough for you.

Indiana Senate LGBT Bill Leaves Out Transgender Rights

BTL STAFF AND AP

INDIANAPOLIS – A Republican state senator who previously proposed granting Indiana civil rights protections to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people has unveiled a new bill that would leave transgender rights out of the equation.

Sen. Travis Holdman of Markle released the new proposal Jan. 7 amid divisions in the GOP-controlled Senate over his previous bill.

Holdman's new bill would have lawmakers study the transgender rights issue after this year's legislative session. It also adds more robust protections for those with "sincerely held" religious opposition to gay people.

Unlike his prior proposal, the new bill would allow cities that previously passed LGBT rights protections to keep those ordinances on the books.

Senate leaders say both this bill as well as Holdman's previous measure will be considered by a Senate committee.

Republican State Senator Travis Holdman, R - Markle, authored the bill that leaves the "T" out of LGBT. Holdman said Thursday transgender issues should be studied and vetted before lawmakers add them to the state's civil rights code.

"I think folks are pretty well settled on the gay issue and the lesbian issue and the marriage issue but I think the biggest concern is getting our arms around the transgender piece and what that means," he said.

"It's not a heavy lift to most people of Indiana. They're ready for sexual orientation and gender identity to be treated the same as anybody else's condition of birth or their religious conscience," said State Representative and House Minority Leader, Scott Pelath, D - Michigan City.

On Thursday at a press conference, Freedom Indiana's Chris Paulsen said, "Writing some Hoosiers out of a law is just like writing discrimination into the law." Freedom Indiana is the organization that spearheaded the anti-religious freedom fight in 2015.

Republicans are also considering removing the requirement of marriage licenses in Indiana. Republican lawmakers are looking to have couples sign a legal contract instead, saying they are looking to avoid a situation where a clerk refuses to issue a license to same-sex couples as Kentucky Clerk Kim Davis did last summer.

Gov. Mike Pence is expected to announce his position on civil rights issues at the State of the State address on Tuesday evening after presstime.

Strength and Longevity of Legal Gains May Change in 2016 Politics and Lawsuits

BY LISA KEEN

Coming off another high achievement year, the LGBT community can relax and take it easy for a while now, right?

The federal Defense of Marriage Act is gone. Same-sex couples can obtain marriage licenses and recognition in all 50 states. LGBT people can serve in the military. LGBT people working for the federal government can file employment discrimination claims under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Those working for companies that contract with the federal government now have protection under a presidential executive order. Those visiting a same-sex spouse in the hospital are also protected by a presidential executive order. And, perhaps most importantly, the current presidential administration has made clear, through actions and words, that it will stand up for the civil rights of LGBT people.

This is the LGBT Golden Age, right?

That may depend on whether LGBT people seek 24 karat gold equality or something less pure, and the length of that Golden Age, however pure it might be, may be short-lived depending on how certain lawsuits and presidential campaigns turn out this year.

In terms of the quality of LGBT equality, under federal and state laws, Americans are protected from private job discrimination based on race, sex, religion and national origin. But there is no federal law prohibiting private job discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. And of the 50 state laws prohibiting discrimination in private employment, only 22 prohibit sexual orientation discrimination and only 19 prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Job Discrimination

This is why so many legal activists were quick to note, following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision (*Obergefell v. Hodges*) striking down state bans on marriage for same-sex couples, that LGBT people "can be married on Saturday and fired on Monday."

There is also a looming threat to LGBT equality under "Religious Freedom Restoration" laws.

Twenty-one states already have such laws, giving persons and businesses a path to circumvent nondiscrimination laws by claiming their religious beliefs require discriminating against LGBT people. And, according to the National Conference of State

“Plan A was stopping LGBT equality. Plan B is using (religious) exemptions.”

- ACLU LGBT Project Director James Esseks

Legislatures, 12 more states will consider adopting such legislation this year.

Opponents of equal rights for LGBT people have been trying this religious exemption argument for years, but following last June's marriage decision, those efforts increased. Florists, bakers, wedding vendors and others have tried to use such laws to avoid doing business with same-sex couples getting married. And there's concern others might use them to deny LGBT people jobs, housing and service in restaurants and hotels.

The U.S. Supreme Court has yet to take a case to test the constitutionality of such laws in the LGBT context. It refused to hear a wedding photographer's appeal in 2014, but more lawsuits are coming through the system and the argument is evolving to include the First Amendment right to freedom of expression. Just last month (Dec. 16), a Massachusetts judge ruled that – despite an exemption for religious institutions to the state's human rights law – a Catholic school did not have constitutional protection to violate a state law when it rescinded a job offer to a food services employee "because he was a spouse in a same-sex marriage." The school had argued it had a First Amendment freedom of expression right to deny employment to a man married to a man. But the judge agreed with Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, who sued the school on behalf of the gay employee. GLAD expects the school to appeal. And because the case involves a federal constitutional issue, it could end up in front of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In another case, the Lexington-Fayette Urban Human Rights Commission is suing a commercial printing company for using that same freedom of expression argument to refuse to print T-shirts for a gay pride event.

"If that argument were sufficient to allow (the company) Hands On Originals – a for-profit business that markets its services to the public at large – to violate the anti-discrimination laws, a host of other businesses would be able to engage in illegal discrimination as well," argued a Dec. 28

friend-of-the-court brief from Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Several county clerks – most notoriously Kim Davis in Kentucky – have tried to cite their personal religious beliefs as justification for refusing to enforce the *Obergefell* ruling's requirement that same-sex couples be treated as other couples in obtaining marriage licenses. The ACLU is representing several same-sex couples in a lawsuit against Davis that is now pending before the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals. Oral argument on that appeal could come as early as this month.

Jon Davidson, national legal director for Lambda Legal, noted that some states are trying to avoid recognizing marriages of same-sex couples who married before the Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell*. One of Lambda's lawsuits, filed last month in a federal court, challenges North Carolina's refusal to issue corrected birth certificates for two children born to a lesbian couple who married in Canada in 2003.

Alabama

The National Center for Lesbian Rights has one of the more important post-*Obergefell* cases, pending now at the U.S. Supreme Court level. It is challenging a decision by the Alabama Supreme Court to refuse to recognize in Alabama a lesbian's adoption of children she raised from birth with the children's biological mother. The adoption took place in Georgia in 2007 and, since the women's relationship broke up, the biological mother has sought to block the other mother from visitation. NCLR legal director Shannon Minter says NCLR hopes the Supreme Court will agree to review the case. As the group's brief notes, "all families who obtained adoption judgments in (other) states may now have a parent whom Alabama courts may hold to be a legal stranger to her children in Alabama." On Dec. 14, the U.S. Supreme Court granted a stay of the Alabama Supreme Court decision until the full court can decide whether to take the appeal this year.

And some efforts to thwart full equality for LGBT people are using a combination of legal arguments and political tactics.

"Plan A was stopping LGBT equality. Plan B is using (religious) exemptions," said ACLU LGBT Project Director James Esseks in a recent telephone conference with reporters. "Plan C" appears to tie scare tactics in political messaging to misrepresent the impact of nondiscrimination laws.

Twenty-one states already have such laws, giving persons and businesses a path to circumvent nondiscrimination laws by claiming their religious beliefs require discriminating against LGBT people.

In the upcoming state legislative sessions, said Esseks, many predict a “tremendous wave of anti-trans bills” prompted in large part by the vote in Houston in November. In that vote, citizens repealed a new law prohibiting discrimination based on a wide variety of characteristics. Their votes seemed largely persuaded by a campaign from opponents who claimed the prohibition of gender identity discrimination would lead to sexual predators attacking young girls and women in public restrooms.

The anti-trans trend is longstanding. When the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990, it explicitly excluded from protection “transsexualism ... (and) gender identity disorders not resulting from physical impairments.” Last month, a case GLAD is involved in challenged that exclusion in a hearing before a federal judge in Pennsylvania, said GLAD Executive Director Janson Wu. The U.S. Department of Justice also submitted a brief that argued that gender dysphoria should not be excluded from ADA’s definition of disability, and a decision is expected this year.

There are other political influences on legal rights for LGBT people this year: One is a serious effort to denigrate the authority of the judicial branch to declare which laws are constitutional and which are not. Nearly all of the Republican presidential hopefuls have loudly proclaimed they think the Supreme Court exceeded its authority by declaring state bans on marriage for same-sex couples to be unconstitutional. U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, who is currently leading the large field of candidates in Iowa, called the decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* “lawless” and likened the five justices who supported it to “jackboots” in Nazi Germany.

Obviously, there will be much at stake legally for LGBT people in who is elected president in November.

Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton issued a FactSheet on Dec. 17 detailing how, as president, she would attempt to “fight for full federal equality for LGBT Americans.” Among other things, she says she would “work with Congress to pass” a federal law prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation in “employment, housing,

schools, access to credit, public education, jury service and public accommodations.” And she says she would also support efforts by the courts to interpret existing federal law prohibitions on sex discrimination to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

Donald Trump, who is leading the Republican field in New Hampshire and in nationally based polling of Republican voters, is “one of the best, if not the best, pro-gay Republican candidates to ever run for the presidency,” according to the Gregory Angelo, head of the national gay Republican group, Log Cabin Republicans. Trump, he added, opposes an amendment to the federal constitution that would ban marriage for same-sex couples, and he supports amending the Civil Rights Act to include a prohibition against sexual orientation discrimination. But Trump has also said that, while he acknowledges the Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell* as the law of the land, he does not support “gay marriage.” And he hasn’t been pinned down on other issues relating to the LGBT community specifically.

Cruz, the Iowa frontrunner in the Republican

presidential field, said in his first 100 days he would fight for the “First Amendment Defense Act,” which seeks to circumvent laws prohibiting discrimination against same-sex couples by urging that such discrimination is a product of a person’s free exercise of religion. It also seeks to prohibit the federal government from taking any adverse action against a person who “acts in accordance with a religious belief or moral conviction that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman.” Cruz is one of two Republicans still in the race (the other is Ben Carson) who signed the National Organization for Marriage’s pledge, promising to “work to overturn” the right of same-sex couples to marry and to change all “regulatory, administrative and executive actions” to “be consistent with the proper understanding of marriage as the union of one man and one woman.”

The outcome of that presidential race is far from predictable at this point. But one thing does seem clear: Whatever “golden” moment the LGBT community might be enjoying now, the line ups in the courtroom and political arena this year will almost certainly have a significant impact on how lasting and solid that moment will be.

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North Dakota Mulls Changes to Reflect Gay Marriage Ruling

BY JAMES MACPHERSON

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) —A Legislative committee debated Tuesday whether to suggest changes to the North Dakota Constitution and state statutes to reflect the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling legalizing gay marriage, or whether to leave the now-invalidated state laws in place in protest.

The Supreme Court in June declared that same-sex couples have the right to marry nationwide, and a federal judge ruled shortly afterward that North Dakota's ban on gay marriage was unconstitutional.

North Dakota had state laws defining marriage as between a man and a woman, and 73 percent of North Dakota voters approved a state constitutional amendment in 2004 limiting marriage rights to man-woman couples.

Rep. Kim Koppelman, R-West Fargo, one of 21 members on the Legislature's interim Judiciary Committee, said the state could leave the moot laws on the books as a "public policy statement," similar to what some states have done to protest the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision from 1973 that established a nationwide right to abortion.

But Gail Wischmann, who is a Cass County Sheriff's Office sergeant in Fargo, told the committee it should make a recommendation to the full Legislature to update the wording of the constitution and statutes to include same-sex couples.

Wischmann said she married her partner, Laurie Baker, last month.

"If you don't change the statute recognizing all married couples, then it's almost like we're thumbing our nose at the Supreme Court decision," Wischmann said. "No matter what anybody's beliefs are, it's the law."

The North Dakota Legislature meets in odd-numbered years and does not reconvene until January 2017. The committee's chairman, Sen. David Houge, R-Minot, said the panel does not have to hurry its recommendation to the full Legislature.

"We have the luxury of waiting a year to see what other states do," he said.

About 75 same-sex couples in have been married in North Dakota since the ban on gay marriage was nullified, said Donnell Preskey Hushka, a spokeswoman for the North Dakota Association of Counties. That's just a little more than 1 percent of the 4,800 marriage licenses issued last year in the state, she said.

Sixteen of North Dakota's 53 counties issued same-sex marriage licenses last year, and three — Morton, Walsh and Stark — "found alternative employees" in those counties to issue the licenses for same-sex couples after workers assigned to the task objected.

New PrEP Studies Offer Hope, Caution

BY TODD HEYWOOD

Newly released studies are offering more hope for the efficacy of the once-a-day HIV prevention pill, but also ringing a sour note of concern.

PrEP was approved by the FDA in 2012. It is the use of the drug Truvada. Taken daily, the anti-HIV drug was shown in early human studies to be, when taken daily, at least 92 percent effective in preventing someone from contracting HIV. Since then, some studies have placed that efficacy as high as 99 percent.

After it was approved, some high profile HIV activists expressed concerns the use of the drug would create super viruses; lead to significant spikes in other STIs as people on PrEP threw caution to the wind and ditched the condoms; and warned that the potent drug would cause serious side effects.

"We conclude that (Truvada) for PrEP for HIV infection favorably compares to aspirin in terms of user safety," the authors wrote. "While long-term studies are needed, providers should feel reassured about the safety of short- and medium-term PrEP for HIV infection with (Truvada)."

The second study found the results of the demonstration project for PrEP conducted in

three U.S. cities. Those cities were Miami, San Francisco and Washington, DC. According to HIVandHepatitis.org, the study was published in the JAMA Internal Medicine website. It reported that of the nearly 600 participants — men who have sex with men or transwomen — none of the participants that showed blood levels consistent with four or more doses of the drug contracted HIV.

"The incidence of HIV acquisition was extremely low despite a high incidence of STIs in a large U.S. PrEP demonstration project," the authors wrote in the study. "Adherence was higher among those participants who reported more risk behaviors. Interventions that address racial and geographic disparities and housing instability may increase the impact of PrEP."

That adherence point is also key as it knocks down arguments by opponents of PrEP that people won't take their medications. The fear those opponents expressed is that low adherence would lead to infection and potentially resistance.

And while it is rare, a new study in the Journal of Infectious Diseases found that resistance to the anti-HIV drugs can occur when a person is infected during PrEP treatment.

"These results suggest that resistance

selected by PrEP is rare but can occur both with PrEP initiation during acute seronegative HIV infection and in PrEP breakthrough infections and that FTC is associated with a greater frequency of resistance mutations than TDF," the authors wrote.

In that study which reviewed 121 blood samples of people in PrEP studies that had seroconverted, researchers found 26 individuals had blood levels consistent with PrEP use. Of those, five had developed resistance.

Also a study out from The Science Translational Medicine reports that serotyping, or refusing to have sex with a person of a differing HIV status, may be feeding the epidemic. Researchers reviewed 617 newly infected patients for the source of their virus and found, "Seventy-one percent of transmissions were from undiagnosed men, 6 percent from men who had initiated antiretroviral therapy (ART), 1 percent from men with no contact to care for at least 18 months, and 43 percent from those in their first year of infection." The authors estimated that 19 percent of those cases of infection could have been prevented with annual HIV testing and immediate start of anti-HIV drugs.

Salt Lake City's First Openly Gay Mayor Sworn into Office

BY MICHELLE L. PRICE

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Jackie Biskupski was sworn in Monday as Salt Lake City's first openly gay mayor, a landmark the former state lawmaker acknowledged shortly after taking the oath of office.

Biskupski, 49, said the historic moment should not be taken lightly, and noted great strides have been made for LGBT people in the state.

"I know that we have work to do still. And it is work that I take seriously," she told reporters. "But I am a firm believer that in order for true equality to exist for anyone, we must pursue it for everyone, and that is a goal of mine."

In a speech on the steps of the city-county building after being sworn in, Biskupski cited a gay rights battle in Utah's capital city two decades ago that spurred her to enter politics.

After the city's East High School formed the state's first gay-straight alliance club in 1995, the Salt Lake City School District banned all noncurricular clubs to try to block it. The district reversed its decision several years later after lawsuits and protests.

"That sparked in me a responsibility to my own community," Biskupski said Monday.

Biskupski said that when she became Utah's

first openly gay lawmaker in 1998, she found common ground to work with people with different ideologies and cultures. She struck a similar note in her speech, pivoting to air quality and economic development. She has said she plans to work on both issues with the conservative, Salt Lake City-based Mormon church.

Her ascension to the mayor's office comes on the heels of new rules by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints targeting gay members and their children. The new policy, which prompted widespread backlash, bans baptisms for children of gay parents until the kids turn 18 and disavow same-sex relationships.

Biskupski is not a member of the faith and said she hopes the church reconsiders the policy. After her election results were certified, she met with church officials in December and gave them a letter explaining her concerns about the policy. But Biskupski's campaign said the meeting was largely a discussion about city issues such as air quality and economic development.

LGBT issues also didn't define the tight race between Biskupski and incumbent Ralph Becker. Salt Lake City is a liberal island in the state where no Republican has been elected

mayor in four decades. Becker, a prominent Democrat, also was seen as an ally of the city's strong LGBT community, and the gay rights group Equality Utah endorsed both candidates.

While the mayor's race centered more on issues such as bike lanes and billboards, LGBT activists celebrated Biskupski's win as a milestone in the conservative state.

During the campaign and after her victory, Biskupski reflected on how the LGBT movement had progressed in Utah since she was first elected to the state House. She said that at the time, several of her colleagues in the Legislature wouldn't look her in the eye or shake her hand.

Biskupski served in the House until 2011. After that, she worked in the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office.

Along with Biskupski, new Salt Lake City councilman Derek Kitchen was sworn in Monday, becoming the city's second sitting gay councilman.

Kitchen and his husband, Moudi Sbeity, were one of three couples who sued to overturn the state's same-sex marriage ban.

New Salt Lake City councilman Andrew Johnston and incumbent councilman Charlie Luke also were sworn in Monday.

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Together 30 years, Clare Coughlin and Barbara Hardison told BTL it was important to legally marry.

Accepting Idiosyncrasies and Showing Love Often

BY AJ TRAGER

MACOMB COUNTY – It was important for Clare Coughlin and Barbara Hardison to get married after being together for nearly 30 years. Their relationship has weathered many storms; over the years they have experienced car accidents, the loss of many loved ones and have endured the pain of cancer.

Coughlin met Hardison in the '80s after accepting her boss' invitation to compete in a local bowling league. Coughlin stayed on the team and their romance eventually blossomed.

"It wasn't love at first sight or anything," Coughlin said. "It took us awhile."

They did not rush to the courthouse directly following the U.S. Supreme Court marriage equality ruling last June and wanted instead to celebrate the day with those that have supported them throughout the years. They finally tied the (legal) knot on Sept. 9, 2015 before beloved friends and family.

The weather was dicey and Hardison and Coughlin were concerned about rain falling during the ceremony. Thankfully, the black clouds cleared and the only hiccup during the ceremony was the crow of a rooster.

Both Hardison and Coughlin had one of their closest friends stand with them during the ceremony at the quiet wedding in the backyard of a friend's home in Ray Township, decked out with luau decorations and all the fittings for a delicious pig roast. Family and friends from Florida to Arizona came to attend the Hawaiian themed wedding.

Two of their nieces performed flower girl duties and their great nephew was responsible



for handing out silk leis to all the attendees. A special signature drink was even created by Coughlin's nephew Jeff, called "Island on the Street," a pineapple drink inspired by romantic events in their relationship.

They were first joined 15 years ago in a more traditional style church ceremony at Divine Peace MCC by Rev. Deb Cox. But much like life changes, so too did their feelings of validity. Coughlin and Hardison both say it is hard to describe how they feel four months after being legally wed.

"When you're getting ready to get married and you're making all these plans, you think it's just an action. But after you do it and sign the paperwork and everything, you feel different. Different because you're legal. And it just feels like it's recognized," Hardison said.

"And it's a validation," Coughlin chimed in. "It's hard to describe. But it's how it feels to be able to say, 'Yes, I'm married.'"

The ceremony concluded with "Wonderful World" by Louis Armstrong.

As an older couple but still working full time, Hardison and Coughlin spend much of their free hours playing board or card games. They both grew up playing card games and they have shared the activity since the beginning of their relationship. Even though they may take things a little slower now due to Hardison's

See Married, page 22

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► **Married**

Continued from p. 21

bum hip and repercussions from other physical illnesses, together they remain strong and passionate in their relationship and say that communication is the key to a successful, long-lasting relationship.

“One of the things that we’ve learned over time is that you just have to get to know the other person and what the other person’s idiosyncracies are and learn to deal with them so that it becomes part of the way life is,” Coughlin said. “I am German and Irish. So I can be known to have a temper and can be known to get over excited easily, so Barb has had to learn how to handle that and let it blow over. I just think that when people get together, they have to be in it for the long haul and you don’t know what’s going to come your way.”



“When you’re getting ready to get married and you’re making all these plans, you think it’s just an action. But after you do it and sign the paperwork and everything, you feel different. Different because you’re legal. And it just feels like it’s recognized.”

– Barbara Hardison



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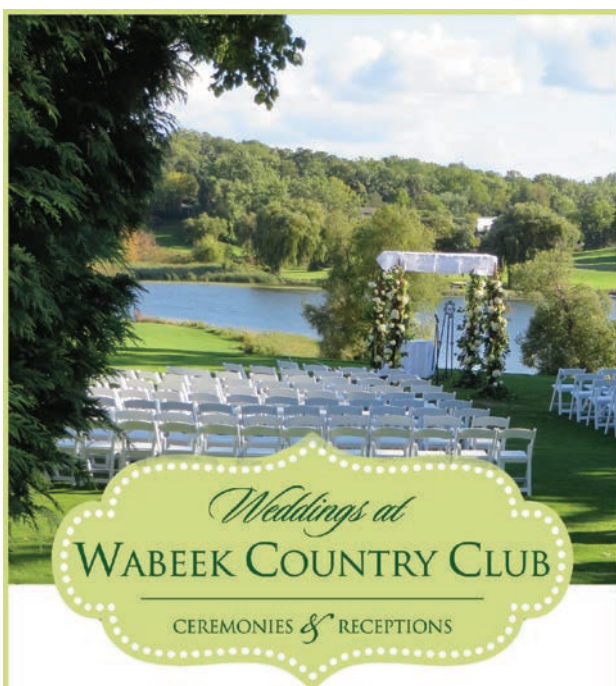
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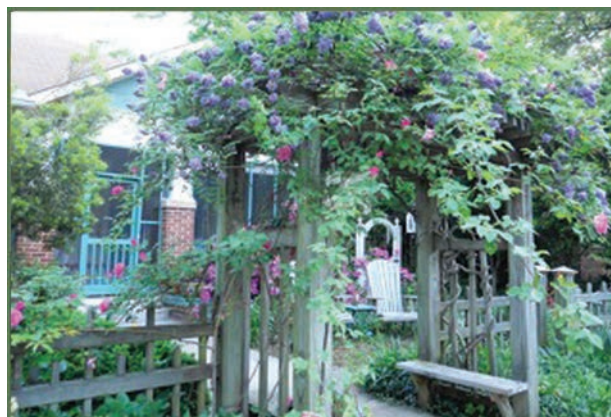
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Planning Your Ceremony

More tips and hints than you can shake a bouquet at!

You've been together long enough to know that you've found the person to pledge your life and love – congratulations! With gay marriage now legal across the country, the LGBT community is finally entitled to official, legally-binding ceremonies. Since these rights have so long been denied to our community, planning a marriage ceremony can seem like an enormous and impossible undertaking. (And, well, wedding planning is stressful – just ask your straight friends!) However, if you break everything down into small tasks well in advance, you will be able to throw even the grandest and most elaborate ceremony with minimum angst. Following are a few simple rules and suggestions that should help ensure that you and your spouse-to-be are still speaking to each other by the time that special day arrives, and that you both have the wedding of your dreams.

1 Share your fantasies with each other (Oh, get your mind out of the gutter – I meant your fantasies about the perfect ceremony and reception – there will be time enough for the other fantasies later). Make sure to take notes as you brainstorm ideas. Once this list is complete, go back through it and decide what elements might actually be possible or within reach with some modification. Now you can both begin to sketch out a realistic plan

2 Begin planning early so you have time to thoroughly explore all of your options. Last-minute arrangements usually result in significantly higher costs to receive the same quality of service.

3 Don't be afraid to ask a lot of questions. Friends and family have more information than you could imagine.

4 Be sure to use LGBT-owned and LGBT-friendly businesses wherever possible to avoid unnecessary discrimination and bias. Use guides such as this one and a variety of local publications to help locate vendors and accommodations that welcome your business.

5 Put everything – yes, EVERYTHING – in writing. Contracts should include a detailed description of what is to be provided, the times the vendor will start and finish (as well as what can be done if overtime is needed), who is responsible when things don't go exactly as planned, and the delivery and return dates for rentals. Read the fine print before you sign and don't be afraid to question anything on the contract that seems unclear. Get a signed copy. List emergency phone numbers where the vendor can get in touch with you as well as another contact person. Finally, ask a trusted friend or family member not directly participating in the ceremony to help make sure that all is going according to plan on the Big Day, and empower them to make decisions if need be.

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Hear Me Out

Best of 2015

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

10. Madonna, 'Rebel Heart'

In 2015, it was strange hearing Madonna sound so... human. A cluster of cuts from the queen's 13th studio album imparted a rare authenticity and striking

vulnerability typically not ascribed to music's self-proclaimed Unapologetic Bitch. Madonna caring about people's opinions of Madonna – and confessing those feelings? Yup. At least on “Joan of Arc.” Madonna lifting you up, hugging your heart and making this “mad, mad world” just a little easier to cope with? Yes, that too: “Ghosttown” – also the heyday throwback “Living for Love” –

reveals, for the first time in years, a deeper, more poignant pop queen.

9. Miguel, 'Wild Heart'

Look beyond Miguel's piercing peepers, winning smirk and that perfectly coiffed just-after-5 o'clock shadow – just try real hard, you can do it – and what you'll find is a real music man. That's right: His underheard “Wild Heart” is as

dreamy as he is, all SoCal Prince vibes and hypersexual playfulness (put a condom on when you listen to “the valley”), but also genuinely affecting. Highlights are the introspective, identity-questioning “what's normal anyway” and “leaves,” an amping guitar-riffed wonder that hurts as much as it heals.

8. Brandi Carlile, 'The Firewatcher's Daughter'

“I miss the days when I was just a kid,” Brandi Carlile sings, sweetly, longingly. Now 34, and out and married and mothering, Carlile was self-reflective on her rustic release “Firewatcher's Daughter,” living for tomorrow but remembering today and yesterday. On arguably the album's most impassioned ditty, “Wherever Is Your Heart,” the Seattle-born singer-songwriter relishes being “born to roam,” which is precisely what this, her first major-label-less release, does. The journey pauses in the past but lives, powerfully, in the present.

7. Adele, '25'

“Hello.” One short, simple word, but it was enough. A gift. A gif. That brief salutation brought Adele back into our lives as if she'd been gone for a lifetime. In pop years, it sure seemed that way, and the meme-worthy lyrics of her first single served as a “Hi, I'm back, bitches” moment and also a searing reminder of the heartbreak the record-breaking belter can inflict when she powers through a sad song. Like “All I Ask,” a gutting assertion

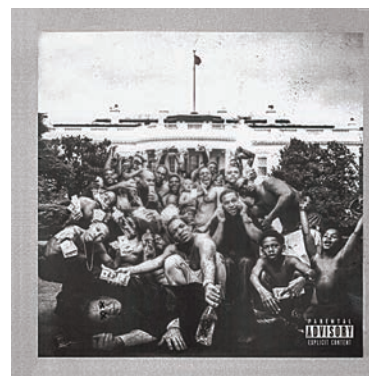
to an imminent ex. Like “When We Were Young,” a reminder that your youth is dead, gone, bye forever. So good, though. Yes: Hello from the other side of not-great album sales, Auto Tune and general imperfection.

6. Kendrick Lamar, 'To Pimp a Butterfly'

Kendrick Lamar changed hip-hop last year. Turned it up, down, sideways. And he even had time to team with Taylor Swift for “Bad Blood,” scoring him his first No. 1 on Billboard's Hot 100. Not that he needed Swift – Lamar's second major-label album, “To Pimp a Butterfly,” speaks for itself. And it speaks boldly, declaring painful truths about race and his own personal demons with rage-filled cinematic flair and simmering jazz flavor.

5. Susanne Sundfør, 'Ten Love Songs'

It isn't just the ominous lure of mad love on the deliciously fuming “Delirious” – “I hope you have a safety net, because I'm going to push you over the edge” – that lands Susanne Sundfør a spot on the list. It's certainly enough, though. She ravages every word of that song with a shark's bite, and it's a magical moment among many (give “Darlings” all the vocal awards) nestled within the front-to-back brilliance of 10 love songs that are equal parts euphoric, enchanting and enraged.



4. CHVRCHES, 'Every Open Eye'

I remember hearing CHVRCHES for the first time at a festival even before obsessing over their then-unreleased debut, "The Bones of What You Believe." The music was alive, bursting with retro shimmer and sowing the same kind of emotional catharsis of, say, Robyn. I was hooked. The disc did not disappoint, nor did its follow-up, the also-marvelous "Every Open Eye." CHVRCHES' sound is still deeply rooted in the wondrous midnight-hour wheelhouse they shaped on "Bones," and, once again, to staggering effect. A slump-less sophomore album as divine as their name.



3. Patty Griffin, 'Servant of Love'

What does the world need? Peace... and Patty Griffin's voice. The former is especially apparent to anyone who, you know, is living right now, but: Have you heard Griffin's most recent Grammy-nominated release? The alt-folk phenom sings like angels must; "Rider of Days" sounds like thousands of winged beauties, soaring to the afterlife, dancing through the clouds. It's a sweet reverie, and one of the most gorgeous pieces of music this universe has ever heard. But also, it's a rare sliver of light on yet another one of Griffin's masterworks, a brooding, beautiful catharsis of a world on fire.



2. Carly Rae Jepsen, 'E•MO•TION'

People, what gives? One of 2015's greatest unsolved mysteries, Carly Rae Jepsen's absurdly looked-over "E•MO•TION" didn't find its commercial sweet spot. And fine. Their loss. Our gain: the charming Sia-written jam "Making the Most of the Night," a punchy piece of pick-me-up pop; "Warm Blood," a cuddly come-down; and "When I Needed You," which sounds like her winning audition to be the fifth member of The Go-Go's. And on and on and on. Yes, Carly: I really really really like this.



1. Sufjan Stevens, 'Carrie & Lowell'

On "Carrie & Lowell," Sufjan Stevens' quiet descent into the dark corners of grief and despair after the loss of his mother, the sexually ambiguous singer-songwriter says so much with so little. Leaning on minimalist atmospherics, his open-book outing sounds as if it were recorded in the late hours of the night in the quiet of his bedroom, just Sufjan's guitar and his lonely stream-of-conscious. It's powerful and potent. And it's death, and it's life. The weirdly comforting truth that "we're all gonna die" on the lullaby-like "Fourth of July" – a final exchange with his passing mother – is a stinging reality, and "Blue Bucket of Gold" feels like a dream.



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Audience Definitely 'Buying' What Ringwald is 'Cellaring'

BY TANYA GAZDIK

FERNDALE – You've got to really like someone to spend nearly two solid hours with them talking to you. Thankfully, Richard Payton is instantly likeable in the latest production at The Ringwald, "Buyer & Cellar," in which he does just that. The one-act comedy by Jonathan Tolins features Payton as the one and only character, Alex, who chronicles his experience working for Barbra Streisand.

The play opens with Alex walking onto the simple set, which includes two elegant wingback chairs and a phonographic turntable. Payton flashes his million-dollar smile and the audience instantly falls in love with him and his character. He goes to the turntable and plays the instantly recognizable theme song from the movie "The Way We Were." After Barbra croons the opening two lines, the music fades and Alex begins to relate the captivating story of how he ended up working for Streisand. He goes into long form detail about what the megastar was like as a boss, and semi-friend.

The premise: Alex is an underemployed Los Angeles actor who worked in Barbra Streisand's Malibu basement—aka her own private shopping mall—where she stored (OK, hoarded) all of her



Richard Payton is instantly likeable in the latest production at The Ringwald, "Buyer & Cellar."

acquisitions. Although the beginning of the play's script includes disclaimers that none of what Alex claims is true, it's hard not to wonder throughout the performance if some of it isn't based in reality. Indeed, author Jonathan Tolins says he got the idea for the play from Streisand's descriptions in her own book, "My Passion For Design," about the personal mall. Anyone with even the slightest affinity for Streisand will understand the jokes and references

about the star, whose love-bordering-on-worship by the gay community is rivaled only by that for Judy Garland.

Payton, who confesses to being influenced greatly by Streisand, could not be more perfect for the role of Alex. He's adorable and his comedic timing is perfect. During the opening night performance, he wasn't afraid to improv a little dialogue based on the hilarious reaction from an audience member to one of the witticisms.

The physicality of a nearly two-hour long one-man performance with no intermission cannot be denied. Hats off to Payton for never showing a single sign of fatigue. Despite his energy and commitment, the play does drag a little at the end and would have benefited from some editing/tightening to shave off some time. That said, the audience ate it up and not a single joke fell flat. Even those indifferent to the mega-famous Babs will find something to giggle about in the absurdity of her ultra-rich lifestyle.

Originally published on www.encoremichigan.com. Visit Encore Michigan for more theater coverage, reviews and more. The Ringwald Theater is located at 22742 Woodward Ave. in Ferndale. For more info call 248-545-5545.

Love, Passion, Political Intrigue Played Out in Grosse Pointe

BY BTL STAFF

GROSSE POINTE – Grosse Pointe Theatre's 68th season continues with the politically charged "Chess, The Musical" (book by Richard Nelson, lyrics by Tim Rice, music by Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson.) The eight-performance run begins on Sunday, Jan. 17 and runs through Saturday, Jan. 30. All performances will be held at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial Theater.

"Chess, The Musical" is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc. Set during the Cold War, the U.S. and Soviet rivalry plays out through an international chess championship. Freddie Trumper, the brash American grandmaster, arrives with Florence Vassy, his Hungarian-American female chess second, who falls in love with Anatoly Sergievsky, the intense Russian champion. From Bangkok to Budapest, the players, lovers, politicians and spies all struggle to get the upper hand.

The songs, by two members of the group ABBA, include the international



Left to Right: David Roberts, Sandria Haney and Jose Cabrera. Photo by Dale Pegg.

hits "One Night in Bangkok" and "I Know Him So Well."

GPT's 68th season will continue in February with a powerful Purdon Studio Theatre production of "A Steady Rain" at the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House. In March the classic Southern comedy, "Steel Magnolias," once again graces their stage, and the season concludes with the iconic Broadway musical, "Hello, Dolly!"

Grosse Pointe Theatre Grosse Pointe Theatre is a community theater whose

purpose is to engage and enrich the community by continuing a tradition of exceptional theatrical experiences. Membership is open to all persons over age 18 with an interest in the performing arts. Grosse Pointe Theatre is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization and donations are tax deductible.

For more show information, audition dates and to purchase individual or season tickets, visit the Grosse Pointe Theatre website, www.gpt.org.

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Annual Ferndale Blues & Music Festival Celebrates 15 Years

BY BTL STAFF

One of the longest running and popular winter events in Southeast Michigan is the Ferndale Blues & Music Festival. The Annual Ferndale Blues & Music Festival is set for Jan. 29-Feb. 6 and includes live bands and music from blues and jazz to rock and everything in between.

The annual festival, held in downtown Ferndale and neighboring cities, will grow its reputation in 2016 and showcase a large array of local and regional musicians and bands along with the annual giant "Blues Barbeque." Each year, the festival features up to 70 concerts and events at a dozen or more venues over the course of nine days. The climax is a combination indoor/outdoor Blues, Barbeque and Ribs Burn Out held downtown on the last Saturday through

One of the longest running and popular winter events in Southeast Michigan is the Ferndale Blues & Music Festival. The Annual Ferndale Blues & Music Festival is set for Jan. 29-Feb. 6 and includes live bands and music from blues and jazz to rock and everything in between.

Feb. 6th this year. The music festival grows in stature and popularity each year.

The festival keeps expenses low, and more than 60 volunteers work the events and raise more than \$25,000 in proceeds for two local charities: Ferndale Youth Assistance and Michigan AIDS Coalition. Venues include bars, nightclubs, restaurants, comedy clubs, coffeehouses, churches, schools and community centers. More than 25,000 people will attend the events and more than 500,000 people will see the advertisements, website, Facebook pages, news coverage, QR code, posters and flyers. All contributions, donations, and sponsorships are tax deductible under federal IRS rules.

The Annual Blues & Music Festival is supported by the City of Ferndale, the Ferndale DDA, Ferndale Area Chamber of Commerce, Ferndale Youth Assistance, elected officials and numerous additional community organizations and media outlets.

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Editor's Pick

The Magic Bag asks, "Take a handful of your favorite '80s songs, a splash of some retro fashion, a pinch of panache and an eye-popping video spectacle in the background and what do you get? The Mega 80s, of course!" The Ferndale venue plays host to the ultimate cover band, which has taken southeast Michigan by storm since their emergence into the Detroit music scene.

Now veterans of the 1980s cultural milieu, they're still rocking as hard as ever. The band brings back all the fads, fashions and music of the '80s in one killer live performance. The Mega 80s were voted

"The Best Cover Band In The City" by the readers of the Metro Times in 2015. They've also won the "Best Cover Band" category in Real Detroit Weekly for 13 consecutive years.

The next nights of "The Mega 80s" are 8 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 15, Saturday, Jan. 30 and Saturday, Feb. 6. The event is always 21 and over. Cover is \$10 at the door.

Sunday, Jan. 24

TransCend TransCend provides support and resources to the Southwest Michigan transgender community, their significant others, family, friends, and allies. Meetings occur twice per month on the 2nd Wednesday and 4th Sunday. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. www.Kglrc.org

Monday, Jan. 25

LGBT Sexual Assault Survivors Groups 5:30 p.m. Any member of the LGBT community, age 13-24, who is a survivor of sexual assault is welcome. This group is open to all LGBTQIA+ individuals who have experienced any form of sexual assault in their lifetime. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-345-5595. nschneider@ywcakalamazoo.org

Thursday, Jan. 28

I'll Eat You Last and Buyer & Cellar The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., **Ferndale**. 248-545-5545. www.TheRingwald.com

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

Chess, The Musical 8 p.m. Tickets: \$24. Grosse Pointe Theatre, 32 Lake Shore Drive, **Grosse Pointe Farms**. 313-881-4004. www.Gpt.org

Jazz in the Gallery 7:30 p.m. A local jazz ensemble, led by pianist and vocalist Brandon Perkins, rehearses and holds casual jam sessions in the Pittmann-Puckett Gallery every Monday evening. Jazz in the Gallery is open to

Equality Knowledge Project Speaker Series

5:30 p.m. Different speaker and presentation each time. Equality Research Center, 329 King Hall, **Ypsilanti**. 734-487-3032. equality.emu@gmail.com

Wednesday, Jan. 27

Queer People of Color 6 p.m. QPOC hopes to be a supportive radical environment for people of color that are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. The coalition will support conversation about issues that face our community, build friendships and, furthermore, serve the greater Kalamazoo area. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. www.Kglrc.org

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and historical period. The six musicians performing in this concert include violinist Benjamin Beilman, an Ann Arbor native whose career has been burnished by a series of major awards recognizing his extraordinary musical talent. This breathtaking program combines the intensity of extraordinary ensemble playing with the virtuosity of the soloist. Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Jan. 22. 734-764-2538. www.Ums.org/performance/chamber-music-society-of-lincoln-center

Concerts

Olympia Entertainment "Muse" With special guest X Ambassadors. Tickets: \$39.50-69.50. Joe Louis Arena, 19 Steve Yzerman Dr., Detroit. 7:30 p.m. Jan. 14. 313-396-7000. www.Olympiaentertainment.com

The Jewish Community Center of Metro Detroit "Tenors UnLimited" Tickets: \$30-35. Berman Center for the Performing Arts, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield. 8 p.m. Jan. 16. 248-661-1900. www.Theberman.org

The Magic Bag "The Mega 80s" 21+. Cover: \$10. The Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Jan. 15 - Feb. 6. 248-544-3030. www.Themagicbag.com

UMS "Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis" Tickets: \$10-60. Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. 7:30 p.m. Jan. 20. 734-764-2538. www.Ums.org/performance/1516-jazz-at-lincoln-center-orchestra/

Happenings

OUTINGS

Thursday, Jan. 14

Patti Labelle 8 p.m. Tickets: \$50-85. Sound Board - Motor City Casino, 2901 Grand River Ave., **Detroit**. 800-745-3000. www.Soundboarddetroit.com

Friday, Jan. 15

Shabbat Service 6:30 p.m. Temple Echad, 1420 Hill St., **Ann Arbor**. www.Temple-echad.org

It's Our 70's Show! 8 p.m. Out Loud Chorus is celebrating the decade of the 70s! You'll hear the music of Cat Stevens, the Bee Gees, Donna Summer, Carole King, Barry Manilow, Kiki Dee, Barbra, Elton John and Stevie Wonder. Tickets are \$15 in advance/\$18 at door, \$12 for seniors & students (65+). Free for children under 4 and unemployed people. Out Loud is sponsored in part by the Michigan Council of Arts and Cultural Affairs and the NEA. Our Saturday night performance is sponsored by the WCC Out-Space Club. Paul Haebig directs the chorus. Annie Jeng accompanies us on piano, Tamara Perkuhn plays drums and Edie Herrold rounds out the trio on bass. Colette Jacobsen joins our regular band on guitar. Out Loud Chorus, 4800 E. Huron River Dr., **Ann Arbor**. 734-265-0740. outloudchorus@gmail.com www.OLconline.org

Sunday, Jan. 17

Livingston County PFLAG Monthly Meeting 2 p.m. Please join us for our monthly support group the third Sunday of every month at 2 p.m. Livingston County PFLAG, 200 W St Paul St., **Brighton**. 517-548-0839. LivingstonPFLAG@aol.com www.facebook.com/pflaglivingston

Pride NA 6:30 p.m. Confidential and anonymous. Open to all individuals impacted by addiction. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. www.Kglrc.org

Monday, Jan. 18

Happy Hour 4 p.m. Come join us for happy hour and Man Crush Monday. Grenadier Club, 3101 McDougall, **Detroit**. 313-910-6867.

Wednesday, Jan. 20

Senior Koffee Klatch 1 p.m. A

discussion and networking group for people 45 and older. Various discussion topics, social outings, bake-offs, and potlucks are incorporated throughout the year. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. khug@goaffirmations.org <http://goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups>

Affirmations Run Club 6 p.m. An informal group of runners and walkers of all abilities. Seasoned marathoners, beginner walkers, and everything in between! Everyone is welcome, just show up! Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. jpactor@goaffirmations.org www.Goaffirmations.org/programs-services/community-events-activities

Thursday, Jan. 21

Faith Alliance Meeting 12 p.m. Welcoming new members who would like to be involved with the intersection of faith, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 2208 Winchell Ave., **Kalamazoo**. www.Kglrc.org

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

Young Jean Lee's Theater Company:

Untitled Feminist Show 7:30 p.m. Six utterly charismatic stars of the downtown theater, dance, cabaret, and burlesque worlds perform a fully nude, wordless celebration of identity. This exhilarating work uses a dizzying array of modes to shake up gender norms through movement and music. A theater piece full of paradoxes and juxtapositions of the best kind. **Untitled Feminist Show** constantly surprises, twisting and turning in hilarious ways that both reveal and challenge the viewers' assumptions about gender politics. UMS, 121 Fletcher St., **Ann Arbor**. 734-764-2538. umstix@umich.edu www.Ums.org/multiperformance/young-jean-lee-untitled-feminist-show/

Friday, Jan. 22

The Come Out 7 p.m. HUES - Humans United for an Equal Society, 2021 E. Michigan Ave., **Lansing**. www.facebook.com/events/532570946905690/

Young Jean Lee Theater Company: Straight White Men 8 p.m. When Ed and his three adult sons come together to celebrate Christmas, they enjoy cheerful trash-talking, pranks and takeout Chinese. Then they confront a problem that even being a happy family can't solve: when identity matters and privilege is problematic, what is the value of being a straight white man? A compassionate study of one man's uneasy search for meaning, and his



consciousness beyond religion. The synagogue offers a spiritual rather than religious communal experience that is tailor-made for contemporary lifestyles and inclusive beliefs."

The next Shabbat evening service is 6:30-7:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 15. Temple Echad holds services at 1420 Hill St., Ann Arbor. For more information, visit www.temple-echad.org.

discovery that, in the world of straight white men, failure may be acceptable, but being content with a disappointed life is most definitely not. UMS, 911 North University, **Ann Arbor**. 734-764-2538. umstix@umich.edu www.Ums.org/multiperformance/young-jean-lee-theater-company-straight-white-men/

the public. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Rd., **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. khug@goaffirmations.org <http://goaffirmations.org/programs-services/community-events-activities>

Tuesday, Jan. 26

Free STI & Rapid HIV Testing 5 p.m. Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, Trichomoniasis, Syphilis. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.Goaffirmations.org

Editor's Pick

Interested in expanding spiritual and religious connections with a progressive, post-denominational synagogue? Temple Echad has recently opened in Ann Arbor and is hoping to do just that, operating under the tagline of "not your Yiddishe Mama's Shul!" The synagogue offers a spiritual rather than religious communal experience that is tailor-made for contemporary lifestyles and inclusive beliefs.

Abby Wells, MSW, MA (Doctoral Candidate) and representative of the synagogue, says, "Temple Echad is an independent, progressive congregation that respects the mystery of the whole and honors the Jewish tradition through which it was inspired. Guaranteed to have many interfaith fans, what makes Temple Echad unique is not its openness to other traditions but rather its focus on raising

consciousness beyond religion. The synagogue offers a spiritual rather than religious communal experience that is tailor-made for contemporary lifestyles and inclusive beliefs."

The next Shabbat evening service is 6:30-7:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 15. Temple Echad holds services at 1420 Hill St., Ann Arbor. For more information, visit www.temple-echad.org.

MUSIC & MORE

Classical

UMS "Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center" The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, one of 11 constituents of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, presents chamber music of every instrumentation, style

THEATER

Butler Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. Through March 13. 313-868-1347.

Macbeth by William Shakespeare Dark Night Theatre presents Shakespeare's famous tragedy, Macbeth, directed by Joanna Hastings. Featuring the talents of Nan Bauer, Scott Screws, Adam Weakley, Mouse Courtois, Karl Sikkenga, Libby Masaracchia, Andaiye Spencer, Iris Hastings, and more. Pay-what-you-can, suggested donation \$20. Dark Night Theatre, Theatre Nova at the Yellow Barn, 416 W. Huron, Ann Arbor. Jan. 14 - Jan. 17. www.Artful.ly/theatre-nova/store/events/8020

The Odd Couple Tickets: \$19-43. The Purple Rose Theatre, Purple Rose Theatre, 137 Park St., Chelsea. Jan. 21 - March 30. 734-433-7673. www.Purplerosetheatre.org

ART 'N' AROUND

Cranbrook Art Museum "Empire by Andy Warhol" The presentation at Cranbrook Art Museum is shown in relation to "Lou Reed, Metal Machine Trio: The Creation of the Universe." Cranbrook Art Museum, 39221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. Dec. 1 - March 13. 877-462-7262. www.Cranbrookart.edu

Cranbrook Art Museum "Lou Reed, Metal Machine Trio: The Creation of the Universe" Cranbrook Art Museum, 39221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. Dec. 1 - March 26. 877-462-7262. www.Cranbrookart.edu

DIA "30 Americans" Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Oct. 1 - Jan. 18. 313-833-7900. www.Dia.org

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104 ANNOUNCEMENTS - BUSINESS

LGBT-Friendly Wedding And Party Planning Vendors

Find hundreds of resources to plan your event with supportive businesses. BTL has produced the Ultimate LGBT Wedding and Anniversary Expo for five years. Find what you need at www.btlweddingexpo.com

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ANNOUNCEMENTS - COMMUNITY SERVICES

Michigan LGBT Resources

Find hundreds of resources around the state online and in our digital edition of PrideSource Magazine. Visit www.pridesource.com/directory.html or open the digital edition.



BTL Pet of the Week - Jefferson

Meet Jefferson! This 1-year-old Chihuahua mix is a happy little guy. He can be shy at first but once he warms up, he's all puppy kisses! The adoption fee includes sterilization, age-appropriate vaccinations, the MHS Adoption Guarantee and much more. For more information, visit or call the MHS Detroit Center for Animal Care at (313) 872-3400 and provide the pet ID number, 821525.

Naked Men's YOGA



Meets in Ann Arbor
TUESDAYS AND SATURDAYS 6:30-7:30 PM

Contact Dave at message4@aol.com
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/michigan_mens_clothing_optional_yoga

BTL Wedding Announcements Free!

BTL is celebrating marriage equality by running announcements of your wedding, recommitment vows, anniversary or engagement. Simply send us your pics and a description, up to 50 words, and we will run it as space permits in BTL! Send to editor@pridesource.com

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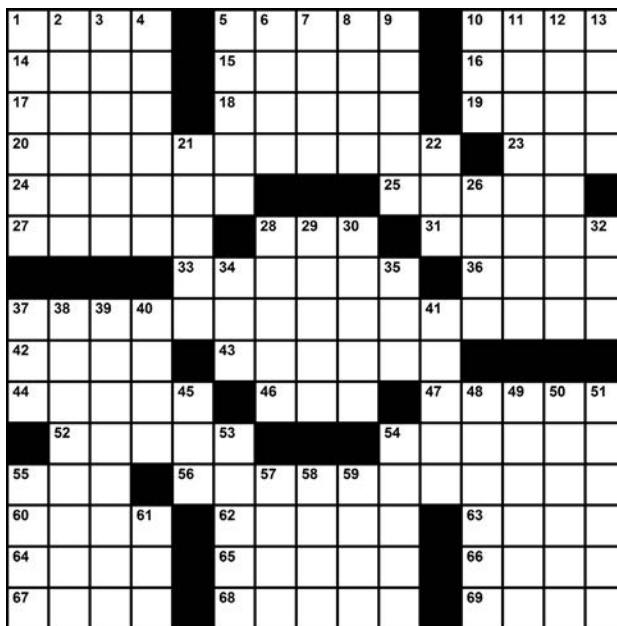
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Q Puzzle



and ended by 56-Across five years ago
42 Penetrating reed
43 Poet Edna St. Vincent ____
44 "Over my dead body!"
46 Bridal bio word
47 Prop department jewelry
52 Leisure fabric
54 One who does it doggie style?
55 Have the blahs
56 President from a {ITAL very} southern state
60 Lorca's half-dozen
62 Billy Elliot portrayer Bell
63 Omar of "ER"
64 Kinsey org.
65 Fragile layer
66 Fruit flavor for gin
67 Lambda Leg. Defense lawyer, e.g.
68 Bowling alley button
69 Gay wedding guide author Ayers

12 1998 Ian McKellen film
13 Costner character
21 Part of an apology
22 Albert to Armand, in "The Birdcage"
26 Lit ____ (English major's class)
28 Alan of "Little Miss Sunshine"
29 Utensil for giving "more" in "Oliver"
30 Went to second, to Billy Bean
32 Phallic fish
34 Belief system
35 Doe in Disney's "Bambi"
37 Mafia figure
38 Like a slave to a master
39 Patricia Highsmith, as a writer
40 Student on "Glee," e.g.
41 Universal donor
45 Part of Adam in a Cukor film?
48 If all goes right
49 Vibrator, to a sex toy shop
50 Beats, to Bernstein
51 Uses a rubber
53 Air Force rank of Adrianna Vorderbruggen, who advocated repeal of 37-Across
54 Shooting type
55 Tibet setting
57 Opposite of erect
58 Israeli author Oz
59 Movie theater
61 Oink pen

Happy Anniversary

Across

1 Part of an actor's pay between parts?
5 R.E.M. frontman Michael
10 Israeli statesman
14 Give a good beating to
15 Fable fellow
16 Building manager, briefly
17 How some chatter
18 Jeremy of "M. Butterfly"
19 You don't want them in your

pants
20 President from a southern state
23 Fam. docs
24 Foucault's farewells
25 Peru's ____ Picchu
27 Ivan of the court
28 Capone and Capp
31 Really feel for?
33 Peter Pan opponent
36 "Why would ____?"
37 Policy started by 20-Across

Down

1 Like Krippendorf's group
2 Chemical salt
3 Earn, slangily
4 Emulated Vidal Sassoon, e.g.
5 Travels with one's first mate
6 Polo of "The Fosters"
7 Has the stage
8 Bordeaux bridge
9 Race site in Auden's land
10 Peruvian pronoun
11 Anal opening, in slang

Find solution to this puzzle at
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