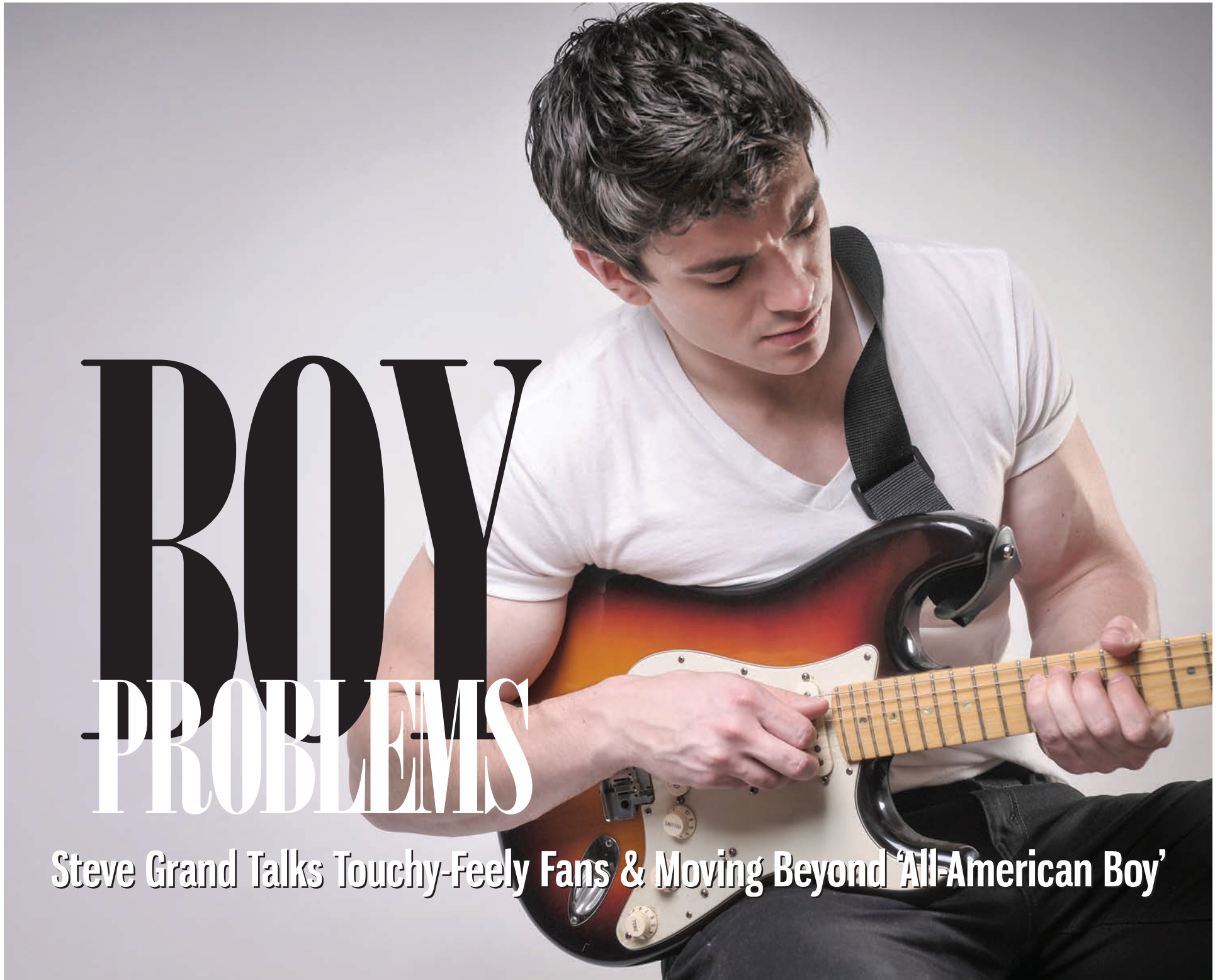


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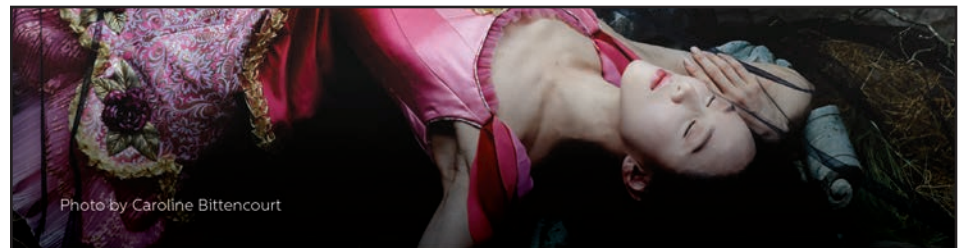
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COVER STORY

22 Boy Problems: Steve Grand

NEWS

- 4 Trans Day of Visibility has international impact
- 6 Couples celebrate LGBT Wedding Expo
- 8 Same-Sex Wedding Expo vendors profess passion for LGBTQ community
- 12 Affirmations to host relationship skills class
- 14 Obama nominates Merrick Garland for SCOTUS position
- 14 SCOTUS nominee has history of ruling against gay plaintiffs
- 18 Michigan Catholic Conference modifies health care coverage
- 18 Motown Invitational Classic throws bowling rules out the door

OPINION

- 16 Parting Glances
- 16 Transmissions
- 17 Creep of the Week: Laurie Higgins

LIFE

- 24 The Frivolist
- 26 Happenings
- 27 Puzzle and comic
- 28 Entertainment equality study released
- 29 Classifieds
- 30 Cool Cities: Lansing

ONLINE PHOTOS



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HAPPENINGS



Obama nominates Merrick Garland for SCOTUS position; SCOTUS nominee has history of ruling against gay plaintiffs

See page 14

CREEP OF THE WEEK



Laurie Higgins
Illinois Family Institute

Laurie Higgins of the Illinois Family Institute is one such pearl-clutcher. She, along with the usual anti-LGBT suspects, is encouraging parents to pull their kids out of school on DOS lest they be indoctrinated with the message that it's not OK to call a kid "fag" and push him down the stairs after gym. See page 17

SAVE THE DATE



Motown Invitational Classic throws bowling rules out the door

See page 18

VIEWPOINT



There's a transgender in my soup

See page 16

VOL. 2412 • MARCH 24, 2016
ISSUE 957

PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP

20222 Farmington Rd., Livonia, Michigan 48152
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National Gay Media Association
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Trans Day of Visibility Has International Impact

BY AJ TRAGER

FERNDALE – Since launching the event on March 31, 2009, Executive Director of Transgender Michigan Rachel Crandall is pleased to see that the Transgender Day of Visibility has truly gone international and will be celebrated in multiple countries around the world, including those where it is illegal to be LGBT.

TDoV was born out of a need for a positive celebration for the trans community. Crandall was frustrated because the only trans day of the year was the International Day of Remembrance, a day to recognize the brothers and sisters who were killed for being trans, and decided to create a day to celebrate who trans people are, what they've accomplished and what they can do.

"This just isn't a celebration – it's a powerhouse, a force, that is changing policy and law around the planet," Crandall told BTL. "I think it really shows people what we are all about. It really shows people that we are regular people and it is really all about our freedom."

Since TDoV last year, 17 countries in Europe have signed a declaration of intent on the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia held May 17 to improve LGBT rights in Europe, calling for quick, accessible and transparent gender recognition procedures. The European Transgender Network continued to work with activists and policy makers across the region to progress towards improving gender recognition legislation in Slovenia, Lithuania, Greece, the Czech Republic and Malta.

The World Health Organization issued a report condemning forced sterilization of trans people.

Turkey saw its first transgender beauty pageant in Istanbul as part of a weeklong celebration of Pride.

The Kenyan high court ordered the National Examinations Council to change a trans activist's legal name on her academic certificates after the council failed to recognize her gender identity.

A Russian bill to ban trans individuals from driving failed to pass into law.

And in India, after a ruling by the Indian Supreme Court made changes to official documents allowing trans people to identify themselves, a census found that the country is home to half a million self-identified trans people. The country also, for the first time, elected an openly-trans candidate in a mayoral election and appointed the first trans news anchor.

"Visibility Day was such a breakthrough. It wasn't going to happen when the only transgender day was about people who were

Since TDoV last year, 17 countries in Europe have signed a declaration of intent on the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia held May 17 to improve LGBT rights in Europe, calling for quick, accessible and transparent gender recognition procedures.

killed; people were not going to come out. However, once there was actually a designed day I think it really gave people permission to come out and celebrate. I mean, I know so many people around the world who are coming out right on Visibility Day, or are having their operations right on Visibility Day. I think that's why it was a breakthrough," Crandall said.

She and the Transgender Michigan team are also very pleased to see the influx of allies participating in and learning about trans days of celebration and the trans community. Twenty years ago, Crandall explains, there was much less activity on the side of trans allies. Today, many allies are active in the fight for trans equality, with many of them helping to coordinate events and help spread the word on activist angles such as furthering trans healthcare services.

Local Events

For the next two months Affirmations will host a Trans Day of Visibility art show in the Pittmann-Puckett Gallery. Crandall says that the team is getting submissions from everywhere and is pleased that the works will be featured for the time leading up to Pride events in the summer. That gallery is free and open to the public.

The flagship event, an Open Mic Night held March 28 at Five15 in Royal Oak, is expected to see upwards of 50 attendees who will gather to watch many different performances by trans artists. The show begins at 6 p.m. at 515 S. Washington Ave.

On the Day of Visibility, Crandall will participate in a panel discussion at the Michigan Social Work Conference as an expert therapist, and will teach other therapists on how to work with trans clients.

Finally, on April 1 Crandall will host an evening meet and greet at the Grand Traverse Pie Co. in Lansing for people to become more acquainted with Transgender Michigan and learn how they can get involved. Grand Traverse Pie Company is located at 200 S. Washington Square.



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Couples Celebrate 2016 LGBT Wedding Expo

BY AJ TRAGER

DETROIT – Between the Lines/Pride Source hosted its largest LGBT wedding expo yet this past weekend, featuring over 110 vendors and nearly 800 attendees all packed into the lower level of MotorCity Casino Hotel. Couples and some singles, too, came from all over southeast Michigan to participate in the first LGBT Wedding Expo since marriage equality swept over the country last June.

“When we got the notice about this we said, ‘Jan (Stevenson) is really putting on a party this year. We can see there are 110 vendors here that are coming out to support us and we have a few that we would like to shout out to really quick, who helped us (with our wedding),’” said Jayne DeBoer-Rowse, wife of April DeBoer.

Jayne and April are celebrities in the Michigan LGBT community. Together their case legally fought the 2004 Michigan Marriage Amendment and worked its way up the courts until it was eventually consolidated with same-sex marriage cases from three other states and then argued before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Jayne and April have been regular guests at the LGBT Wedding Expo and this year they brought all five of their children to celebrate love and equality.

When Jayne approached BTL publisher Jan Stevenson last year inquiring about a venue that creates wedding invitations, Stevenson was surprised to find that the landmark couple who fought for LGBT rights in Michigan hadn’t planned much of their wedding. Four hours and several phone calls later to LGBT Wedding Expo vendors, Stevenson and the BTL staff were able to get an entire wedding donated to Jayne and April who celebrated their wedding last August.

“Between The Lines has done a tremendous amount of publicity and (has provided) support for us throughout this whole fight. Jan is one of the biggest gifts to this community. Thank you very much to BTL, and we support them. Thank you all for coming out and supporting us in this fight, as well,” Jayne concluded.

#DesiRae

Destiny Hemphill and Raven Tyus met in a work bathroom six years ago on Halloween. They were both doing work for breast cancer awareness and knew it was love at first sight when they bumped into one another.

Tyus was with another partner at the time and says that Hemphill was a bit of a trouble



Ashlee Gravley and Samantha Harris (above) are first time LGBT Wedding Expo attendees and came out to get wedding ideas and estimates as they start to plan their wedding, set for July 2017.

Larry Iddins Jr. and Ward Supernois (below) have attended every LGBT Wedding Expo and say that this year was the “biggest, baddest, most spectacular expo ever.” They look forward to coming next year before their wedding in August 2017. BTL Photos: AJ Trager



maker during the last cycle of her former relationship. They stayed close friends for months and were very supportive of one another.

This year, the couple plans on getting married on the sixth anniversary of their meeting. They’ll both be wearing white dresses, with Tyus’ dress accented in red: costumes for their expected 150-200 guests are mandatory. Tyus has picked out Hemphill’s ring and her dress, but aside from that, the rest of the wedding has yet to be planned.

“We’re looking at all of the basic stuff. We’re going to be at Rustbelt in Ferndale, but aside from the venue and the date, we’re looking for everything. She already has her dress, but I don’t have mine,” Hemphill said. “We’ve got our photographer picked out and she’s still finding a dress,” Tyus said. “That’s why we’re sticking around, we’re waiting for the next dress show.”

They were impressed with the fashion show and took video of each dress and how it moved on the body. Hemphill seemed to

be particularly impressed with the dresses donned in heavy amounts of rhinestones or the dresses that had long trains. Following their interaction with BTL, they headed straight over to longtime vendor B. Ella Bridal.

A small but meaningful wedding

This year Emmanuel Rosales and Pablo Ordiz will finally tie the knot after being together for 13 years. They met at a Detroit bar while they were out with friends, one thing led to another and now, post-marriage equality, they’re planning their wedding.

Ordiz says that he is nervous despite being with Rosales for over a decade.

“I’m still nervous. I don’t even know why,” Ordiz said.

“It’s not so much the marriage part – it’s the whole process of making it official and showing that to your friends and family, knowing that we are a legitimate couple now,” Rosales said. “Since marriage was not really an option for us, we didn’t really contemplate it. Now that it is, and there are federal benefits, it definitely encourages us to get married, especially since we’ve been together for such a long time”

They have less than two months before the big day and came to the LGBT Wedding Expo to finalize some odds and ends of the ceremony preparations they have yet to complete, such as finding tuxedos or picking the venue.

“We came here to see good ideas and we are really impressed. There are a lot of things going on, and everything is really beautiful,” Ordiz said.

This was their first LGBT Wedding Expo and even though they are planning a wedding for a small group of 35 people, they want the evening to be magical and one to remember. They’ve decided to work with MotorCity Casino Hotel as their venue and were really impressed with the amenities and opportunities the casino provides.

Ordiz and Rosales also stopped by a few of the adoption vendors to see what their options are. After they get married, the couple plans to expand their family and adopt children. They plan on starting with one and then integrating more children into the home as time goes on.

“We waited a long time before we could get married. I’m glad that this was available to us prior to our wedding,” Rosales said.

A more classic feel

“I never thought that I’d see the day where

we could get legally married in our state,” Ward Supernois said.

Supernois and his partner, Larry Iddins Jr., planned a commitment ceremony a few years ago but ran into some financial trouble. They’ve been together for seven years and are pleased to announce their wedding date has officially been set for August of next year at Greenmead Historical Park in Livonia.

They met at the Metropolitan Community Church of Detroit where they have both attended and have been active in for many years. They’re LGBT Wedding Expo veterans and ran the MCCD vendor table at the expo in the past. This year they were talking to vendors, planning their wedding and trying to find a cake maker who can cater to their artistic plans. They’re expecting anywhere from 120-150 attendees at their wedding and want to make sure the day goes just the way they want.

“We shared our idea with Sweet Dreams Bakery and they said, ‘Absolutely, not a problem, we can do that and expand on it,’” Iddins explained. “We collect Depression glass and we’re going to take some of the designs and etchings from the Depression glass and recreate it on the cake.”

They recently attended a bridal expo but were highly turned off by the treatment they received from staff and other participants. First, the organizers couldn’t imagine why men would want to participate in a bridal expo, and then they couldn’t figure out how to sign them in since neither Iddins nor Supernois is the “bride.” After that experience, Supernois and Iddins appreciate the existence of an LGBT specific wedding expo even more.


“This is the best LGBT Wedding Expo and it gets bigger and better every year,” Iddins said.

“This is how I’ve always envisioned it to be like,” Supernois concluded.




Destiny Hemphill and Raven Tyus (above) will tie the knot on Halloween this year and came to the expo to find both Hemphill’s dress and the finishing touches to their wedding. The couple loved the B. Ella Bridal fashion show. Anthony Shakeshaft and Tom Toon (below) say that they have been married five times between domestic partnerships and multiple marriages in the U.S. and England, where Shakeshaft was born. They came out to the LGBT Wedding Expo to show support and celebrate their legally recognized marriage. BTL Photos: AJ Trager







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Same-Sex Wedding Expo Vendors Profess Passion for Serving LGBTQ Community

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

“Is it OK to come in?” Amy Krizanek, co-owner of Bombshell Bridal Boutique (<http://www.bombshellbridal.boutique/>) in St. Clair Shores, remembers when a lesbian called and asked if it would be alright for her and her partner to shop there for wedding dresses. “I was disgusted,” she says. “This is 2016.” But there are business owners, even now, who can legally refuse service to members of the LGBT community. Although the politics of LGBT equality have progressed, Congress is still divided, and it will be an uphill battle to pass bills such as the Equality Act. Until then, we have to support each other.

Around 110 inclusive vendors came together on March 20 to do just that during the Ultimate LGBT Wedding and Anniversary Expo, hosted for the sixth year by Between the Lines and Pride Source Media Group. To the lesbian couples who enter the boutique and feel like they have to hide it from the staff, Krizanek says, “You be you.” That was the overall message delivered to LGBT attendees as they

mingled in the MotorCity Casino Hotel’s state-of-the-art ballroom, picking up goodie bags, gathering information and dreaming up their special day.

Most curvy girls feel ignored by typical stuffy bridal shops. Krizanek and her sister, Amanda, are paving the way for plus-size brides in Michigan as the only bridal gown boutique specializing in a voluptuous figure. They are both self-proclaimed curvy girls who “get it.” Krizanek and her staff are “happy” to accommodate more hips, more bust and more waist sizes 14 and up.

“We want to make you feel gorgeous,” she says. Sure, the idea of a traditional white bridal gown is “valid,” Krizanek says, however, “things have changed” and what a girl wears on her wedding day is no longer dictated by history. Within a mix of traditional and couture dresses, the boutique carries blush, ivory, champagne and floral options.

After all that curvy talk, it made sense to grab another sample of cake. April and Michelle Anderson of Good Cakes and Bakes (www.goodcakesandbakes.com) in Detroit

came to the expo for their first time with made-from-scratch mini cupcake samples full of organic, high quality and fresh ingredients. Side note: they are well-known for their gooey butter cake. April, a passionate baker, attended Macomb Community College for Pastry Arts where she gained knowledge on pastry techniques, artisan breads, French pastries and recipe development. During a time when anti-LGBT people are taking what April calls a “judgmental stand, not a religious stand,” it makes sense for her and her wife of four years to “jump on this market.”

“It’s so crazy,” she says, to think other business owners would not do the same. Julie Koleszar of the Orange Peacock Gallery in Jackson agreed.

“It’s a horrible business practice and incredibly rude,” she says, admitting she has not experienced much discrimination as a representative of AG Chocolates (<http://agchocolates.com/>) in Jackson. That could be a result of Chris Kitley’s hard-to-resist handmade artisan chocolates. The classically trained chocolatier has been in business for

10 years.

Kitley provides a “full sensory experience” for his customers with decadent chocolate party favors that can include chocolate truffles in a variety of flavors such as lavender blackberry, Mayan chocolate tea, blood orange and passion fruit, to name a few. His love for the confection, art and beauty is apparent. Not only does Kitley customize chocolates with colored cocoa butter, he also uses Chocolography technology to decorate chocolates with a customers’ photos, images and text. “Whether it’s a gift box, a chocolate centerpiece or a single chocolate next to a cup of coffee, he knows how to make a memorable statement,” says Koleszar.

Making memories is a huge selling point for the Michigan Renaissance Festival (<http://www.michrenfest.com>) in Holly. It would be hard to forget celebrating a wedding in authentic Renaissance style. A fairy-tale wedding, perhaps, with an open-air garden gazebo ceremony followed by a reception in either the Blackstone Castle or the Crystal Palace.

“This is truly about making it your own,” says wedding coordinator Kim Petit. If you want to be a knight jousting in the field or a pirate plundering villages for loot, anything goes in the 16th Century Village. “We offer something unique for anybody that wants to be happy,” she says.

If you ask DeVonna Snowden of Top That! Event (<http://topthatevent.com/tte/>) in Warren about ensuring happiness in the LGBT community, she will tell you, “It’s about time. Somebody has to lead the way.”

Snowden is the territory sales manager for Metro Detroit’s premier full service event company, which handles coordination and planning, design, décor, linens, florals, entertainment, lighting, audio, visual, photography and videography, transportation, rentals, and stationary. Together, they are carrying out the legacy of the late Todd Lloyd, founder, who is remembered for creating that one perfect day, that one perfect moment, that one perfect memory.

“We are so happy to provide a safe space for LGBT couples to enjoy themselves,” she says. Their inspiration comes from the latest trends – this year, Snowden says navy is the new black accented by coral or rose gold – and the excitement and anticipation of their clients. Top That! Executive Coordinator Cassie Lewis sums it up best: “No one should be deprived of a fabulous wedding.”



AG Chocolates in Jackson delighted Expo attendees with an irresistible chocolate fountain and spectacular chocolate treats.



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Secretary of State Office Agrees to Assist Trans Residents with Gender Marker Changes

BY TODD HEYWOOD

In a reversal of previous policy by the Republican secretary of state, some transgender and gender non-conforming Michiganders could soon see their state issued driver's licenses and identifications reflect their gender identity.

On March 17, Secretary of State Ruth Johnson announced she would no longer rely only on medical documentation of gender reassignment surgery in allowing transgender and gender non-conforming residents to change the gender marker on their state issued identifications. She announced she would instead accept a U.S. passport in issuing gender markers.

"It is a small but important step," said Amy Hunter of the ACLU Transgender Project. "It will allow a fairly significant group of folks to change gender markers without the burden of a surgical option they may not be able to afford or want."

Johnson opposed changing policies related to gender markers and state issued identifications during her initial campaign for office.

"I do not support allowing people to change their gender on their license as a result of surgery or lifestyle," she said in a statement in 2010.

At the time she was in a pitched battle for the GOP nomination for the post with former State Rep. Paul Scott.

Scott entered the race in February with a great deal of attention on his announcement that he would not allow transgender residents to change their gender markers on their state ID cards. The practice of changing one's gender is currently allowed under secretary of state policy with a letter from a doctor stating that the person in question has undergone some type of medical procedure to treat their gender dysphoria.

The move by Johnson at the time garnered the praise of Gary Glenn, then the head of the American Family Association of Michigan. Glenn has since been elected to the state Legislature.

"In an era of identity theft and national security concerns, we're glad that Ruth Johnson has now joined Rep. Paul Scott in expressly stating her opposition to the Secretary of State policy of allowing men to falsely identify themselves as female on their state-issued driver's license, and vice versa," said Glenn at the time. Glenn also leads the anti-gay American Family Association of Michigan. "The people of Michigan should at minimum be able to trust their state government to tell the truth, not enable certain individuals' psychological and emotional delusions by officially and legally identifying them as something they biologically are not. We urge all candidates for secretary of state to let voters know where they stand on this honesty-in-government issue."

State Rep. Jon Hoadley, D-Kalamazoo, said he was pleased with the move by the secretary, but he wants to see more action.

"We have a lot of work to do to make sure that we fully recognize people's gender identity," he said. "I look forward to working on comprehensive legislative solutions."

Detroit area Democratic State Rep. Brian Banks has introduced legislation to remove some barriers related to changing gender markers on official state of Michigan identification documents, Hoadley said.

The move by Johnson was motivated in part by an ongoing federal lawsuit brought by the ACLU of Michigan. That case is still working through the federal court in Detroit.

Ultimately, however, the ability to change gender markers is about "safety" said Hunter.

"There is a risk when the identification does not comport with one's true, authentic gender identity," she said.



Affirmations to Host Relationship Skills Class

BY AJ TRAGER

FERNDAL – In order to help the LGBT and ally community better navigate their relationships whether they are good, bad or somewhere in between, The Michigan Network – which consists of Affirmations, HAVEN, Equality Michigan, Turning Point and Macomb Community Domestic Violence Council – will host a seven session relationship skills series starting April 6.

The seven week course will focus on how individuals can better understand themselves and those that they interact with. Topics will include: anti-oppression, exploring relationship values, healthy conflict resolution, establishing boundaries, accountability, building community connections and expectations and negotiations.

The skills class curriculum was developed by The Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse in Seattle and is designed to arm individuals with better skills in navigating their own relationships.

"Participants can expect a lot of interesting content and prose to help them reflect on who they are and who they want to be in relationships with other people. It's not academic but after the anti-oppression (session), it is very tangible. It is about getting skills that you need for the relationships that you want," said Director of Programs at Affirmations, Lydia Ahlum Hanson.

Sessions one and two – anti-oppression and relationship values – really create the foundation for the course over all, Hanson told BTL. The logical next step after discussing expectations and negotiations was accountability, she said. It's a skill and process that no one is born with and acts as a container in which relationships form and are maintained. Everyone must be accountable to

themselves and to their partners.

The course will then move into boundaries and conflict. These two aspects of relationships play off one another. Most often than not, a conflict arises when a boundary is crossed and the course will help participants assess situations in their lives that led them to conflict and help them prevent those spaces in the future.

The last session will allow participants to take a step back and think about what they have learned throughout the other sessions, think about the different communities that participants are a part of and think about the various resources that are available within these communities to support healthy relationships.

"Relationships cannot take place in a vacuum. They really need to take place within a supportive, accountable community that is going to help individuals hold up a mirror to ourselves and think, 'Am I being accountable, am I aware of my boundaries and articulating those to other people, and am I willing to negotiate with folks about expectations, or am I being a bully and exhibiting power and control and being an invasive partner?'" Hanson explained.

Who are the facilitators?

HAVEN will have a facilitator at every session and there will be other facilitators who will come in to co-facilitate with that anchor. Each session will have someone skilled and trained as an intimate partner service provider and is part of a sexual assault agency who has experience in prevention.

"So when we talk about different types of identities and perspectives, we'll have facilitators who are a part of the trans community, some who identify as gay or lesbian, some who identify as cisgender. And that is what

I mean in terms of having different perspectives and having different people coming to the table," said Kole Wyckhuys, Director of Prevention Education at HAVEN.

Hanson has taken the course and found the material to be extremely beneficial and learned skills that she could directly apply to the relationships in her life. She returns to the Relationships Skills Course this year as one of the many facilitators that will assist participants as they discuss and navigate better skills to apply to relationships.

"You have an array of different facilitators who can offer some of their personal experiences and be a mirror for participants as we wade through the sometimes pretty heavy material. I really think about how I show up in relationships as a queer, cisgender, white woman. And how do I then support my femme partner? And what does our conflict look like? And how does gender and white privilege play out in that? In some places it's harder to have those rich conversations and provide rich examples and entry points into the content if we only have one or two facilitators for all seven questions," she said.

The registration for the series will end March 30. The seven part series costs \$35 per person and will stretch from April 6 through May 18. Those interested in the course are asked to commit to as many sessions as possible to get the fullest experience from the course.

The class, which is polyamorous and BDSM inclusive, is open to anyone regardless of relationship status or history and will not claim to say there's one way to do a relationship.

To register for the class, go to <http://gaybe.am/rskr>.

For questions, contact Hanson at lhanson@goaffirmations.org.



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Obama Nominates Merrick Garland to fill Scalia's Seat

BY LISA KEEN

President Obama announced March 16 that he is nominating Merrick Garland, a 63-year-old white male chief judge of the federal appeals court in Washington DC, to replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In announcing Garland's nomination, President Obama said he is a "thoughtful, fair-minded judge who follows the law."

"People respect Merrick's deep and abiding passion for protecting our most basic constitutional rights," said Obama. Garland served on the DC Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals alongside now U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts Jr. On that federal appeals court, he upheld a gay Navy man's discharge even though two discharge boards said there was insufficient evidence to merit discharge. He also joined a decision that upheld a Federal Communications Commission action against the operator of a low-power radio broadcaster serving the gay community. Additionally, he joined then DC Circuit Judge John Roberts Jr. in a decision rejecting police liability for misconduct by officers who sprayed a chemical deterrent on members of a pro-gay protest group during President George W. Bush's first inaugural parade.

Given the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee's announced intention to ignore Obama's nominee, the choice of Merrick Garland to replace the high court's most conservative justice set off immediate conjecture. Obama said Garland's name came up repeatedly during previous Supreme Court nominee searches as one proffered by both Democrats and Republicans.

But Obama has previously nominated judges that break new ground – the first Latina to the Supreme Court, the first openly gay man to a federal appeals court, the first African-American lesbian to a federal district court. Why would he choose a white, male moderate as his last nominee to the nation's highest court?

Many court observers predicted Obama would choose Sri Srinivasan, a member of the federal appeals court in DC, to become the first Asian member of the Supreme Court. Srinivasan, 49, has the advantage

of having been confirmed on a 97 to 0 vote in the Senate in 2013, after an easy confirmation hearing. (Srinivasan had argued for the Justice Department for overturning the Defense of Marriage Act, but his argument was on a strictly procedural issue.) Srinivasan had clerked for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and conservative 4th Circuit Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson. And he had the support of such prominent conservatives as former Republican Solicitors General Paul Clement and Kenneth Starr.

Garland is characterized by many court observers as a moderate, but he clerked for one of the Supreme Court's most liberal justices: William Brennan. Garland was nominated to the federal district court of DC by President Clinton.

Scotusblog.com noted that, during his district court confirmation hearing in 1995, Garland assured senators that he did not believe judges should "solve societal problems" but simply "apply law to the facts of the case." Garland was born in Chicago in 1952. He graduated magna cum laude from Harvard Law, and clerked for Judge Henry Friendly, worked at a law practice, and then became an assistant to President Jimmy Carter's attorney general Benjamin Civiletti. He helped prosecute the Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh. President Obama said Garland would begin meeting with senators March 16 and he pleaded with Senate Republicans to give Garland an up or down vote. Failure to do so, said Obama, will wreak havoc with the Supreme Court and democracy.

Senate Republicans continue to say they will not meet with Garland and will not give him a hearing. They argue that, because a presidential campaign is underway, the decision for who should replace Scalia should be delayed until a new president is chosen.

Garland immediately choked up at the Rose Garden ceremony, saying the nomination was the "greatest honor I have ever received." He noted that his ancestors fled to the U.S. to avoid anti-Semitism. People must be confident, said Garland, that decisions are "based on the law and only the law" and that judges must "put aside personal views or preferences and follow the law, not make it."



President Obama stands with U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Merrick Garland, as the president announces Garland's nomination as a justice of the Supreme Court. AP photo: Pablo Martinez Monsivais.

SCOTUS Nominee Has History of Ruling Against Gay Plaintiffs

BY LISA KEEN

Judge Merrick Garland, President Obama's nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court, has ruled against gay plaintiffs three times. This is the kind of record that might usually guarantee that Republican senators would be eager to confirm him. It might also be the sort of record that would prompt LGBT groups to urge a more cautious review. Though the Human Rights Campaign expects to support Garland's nomination, it and other LGBT groups and leaders, such as U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, are taking some time to study his record before endorsing him. But most Senate Republicans are, for the moment, standing firm in their refusal to consider the nomination – at least, not until they calculate that Garland would be a better nominee than the next president might select. (Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell promised Sunday "that's not going to happen.")

"I cannot imagine that the Republican-majority Senate, even if it were soon to be a minority, would want to confirm a judge that would move the court dramatically to the left," McConnell told Fox News

anchor Chris Matthews. And that seems to be the growing assessment of Garland: that, despite a relatively moderate to conservative record, he would become part of the Supreme Court's liberal bloc. New York Times legal reporter Adam Liptak says political scientists believe Garland would be "well to the left" of Justice Anthony Kennedy. Kennedy is the justice who has provided the key swing vote for the Supreme Court's most historic decisions in favor of equal rights for LGBT people.

On the day President Obama announced Garland's nomination, the Human Rights Campaign issued a statement, calling him "highly qualified." But the group stopped short of an endorsement. A spokesperson said HRC would make an official endorsement decision after it does its own examination of his record and after Garland gets a hearing from the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"President Obama has a history of appointing pro-equality Supreme Court Justices," said the HRC spokesperson, referring to Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan. "We are confident that, in Judge Garland, we will find another Associate Justice to the Supreme

Court who stands on the side of fairness and equality."

Garland has an extensive record. He has participated in thousands of cases. Three of those cases had gay plaintiffs, but all three failed to get the relief they sought from three-judge panels that included Garland.

The first case involved an Ohio man, Jerry Szoka, who operated a low-power FM radio station in 1997 specifically to reach gay men and women and the arts community in Cleveland. But the Federal Communications Commission had banned the operation of such small stations – known as microbroadcast stations – because they were causing interference with major radio stations that served the broad general public. Szoka operated the radio station in defiance of the ban and without ever applying for a radio operator's license. The FCC ordered him to stop broadcasting and to pay an \$11,000 per day fine for every day in defiance. In *Grid Radio v. FCC*, Szoka filed suit in federal court to challenge the order, and jurisdictional issues brought the case before the DC Circuit. Szoka said the ban on microbroadcasting violated the Communications Act of 1934 and his First Amendment rights to serve a community that

was “not adequately served” by full-power stations. The panel rejected his first claim, noting that Szoka never applied for a license, then rejected his First Amendment claim.

“Valuable as Grid Radio’s broadcasts may have been,” stated the 2002 panel decision penned by Judge David Tatel, “we think it clear that the Commission had no obligation to consider the station’s individual circumstances before shutting it down.” The panel said the FCC was simply enforcing a ban on microbroadcasting. “Permitting Szoka or anyone else to operate without a license as a means of challenging the microbroadcasting ban ... could produce the very chaos ... the licensing regime was designed to prevent.”

In the second case, *Turner v. Department of the Navy* (decided in 2003), Petty Officer Jim Turner sued the Secretary of the Navy to overturn his “other than honorable” discharge. In 1994, when the military’s policy of banning openly gay people was still in place, several of Turner’s male peers on the USS *Antietam* accused him of making sexual advances. The ship’s captain and an administrative board declared him guilty and discharged him. A Board for Correction of Naval Records said there was insufficient corroboration of the charges and recommended his record be cleared. But a deputy assistant Secretary for the Navy rejected that recommendation. Turner sued in federal court, echoing the BCNR’s finding that the evidence against him had been insufficient. Turner also argued that his captain violated the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” regulations by initiating an investigation without “credible evidence” and that an investigator violated the policy by asking one of the sailors about his sexual orientation.

The appeals panel, which included Garland, noted that Turner had “a respectable record of seven years of military service” and that the charges against him initially seemed more like “inflamed” interpretations of “horseplay.” But it upheld a federal district court, saying proper procedures had been followed. The decision was written by Senior Circuit Judge Stephen Williams.

In the third case, Garland was on a panel with then appeals court Judge John Roberts Jr., who now serves as chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. The case was *International Action Center v. U.S.* The 2004 decision addressed a lawsuit filed by a coalition of groups and individuals who opposed “racism, sexism, oppression of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people.” It sued federal and local law enforcement personnel for injuries inflicted on protesters at President George W. Bush’s first inaugural parade. The protesters said that, while engaging in “lawful, peaceful activity” along the parade route, undercover officers struck them and sprayed them with pepper spray. The lawsuit alleged that supervisors of the undercover officers should be held personally liable for their injuries. The supervisors argued they had qualified immunity and a three-judge panel that included Garland agreed. Roberts wrote the panel opinion, saying plaintiffs failed to establish that the police supervisors were guilty of misconduct in their training and supervision of police, rather than “mere negligence.”

Jon Davidson, national legal director for Lambda Legal, said the three gay-plaintiff cases “don’t tell us very much about his judicial philosophy or views of constitutional and legal issues relating to sexual orientation, gender identity or HIV status.” Lambda and many groups and court enthusiasts are poring over Garland’s record now, and many will likely find details that will encourage or encumber their support for the nominee. For instance, the Boston Globe reported Saturday that Garland, “under pressure from a leftist group” during the 1970s’ Vietnam protest era at Harvard undergraduate school, asked a student-faculty committee to consider having a campus referendum on whether the school should allow ROTC back on campus. He then later voted against holding a referendum. That left the existing ban intact.



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Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Peg Me Once, Peg Me Twice

In 1953, a madam by the name of Polly Adler wrote a tell-all best seller about her 30 years in the brothel business, “A House is Not a Home.” It created a sensation.

(I was too young to apply for a real estate license, but I do recall my parents talking hush hush about Polly while I tried to listen for Good Housekeeping details, glass to the bedroom wall.)

I was 13 when I got an inkling that something was more than “a miss” on my own inner city block. An older, macho guy about 25 asked me if I knew where the “party girls” – said with a wink and an elbow nudge – hung out. “You know, kid. The whore house.”

I hadn’t a clue why he hit on me. Maybe he was nearsighted and thought I looked butch or sexually precocious beyond my prepubescent years. I learned later that the bordello was around-the-corner. The Hickory House Restaurant. Short ribs – long rubs!

At 14, I delivered groceries for Samhat’s Market, a Muslim brothers-owned store, where I also learned a smattering of Arabic: Kaif halak? (How are you?) I also found myself, one scary evening, ducking behind counters during a bang-bang armed robbery. But that’s another story.

One hot summer Samhat delivery I met my first “sex worker.” Miss Blonde Bombshell answered her door in a see-through nightie. I dutifully surrendered my bread, milk, cheese. And, not knowing what else to do, I bowed. Instead of a tip, I got a cleavage peek. (I would have preferred the tip.)

I’m sure her intentions were meritorious. To help me earn my Boy Scout Badge for exploring unknown, impregnable terrain. To be truthful, I wasn’t much interested in her kind of Tenderfoot instruction. My boyhood motto: To light a fire, rub two sticks together. Long enough. Hard enough.

Probably the most famous 20th century brothel was Salon Kitty. Established by the German Gestapo in the fashionable west end of Berlin at the onset of World War II. It was a high-class operation catering to horny Axis diplomats (German, Italian, Japanese), war heroes, politicians.

Kitty’s workers were glamorous mädchen, motivated not by sex for fun and/or profit but by a sense of patriotic duty to the Vaterland. Heil Hitler! Deutschland uber alles! (Germany over all. Or, more accurately: Germany on top of everyone! Donald Trump take note.)

Kitty Salon was electronically bugged. The girls were trained to tease, titillate, twist classified information from clients. Fascist Italy’s Prime Minister, Count Ciano, was a frequent guest. He was rated an “indolent lay” by staff. Meglio che scam!

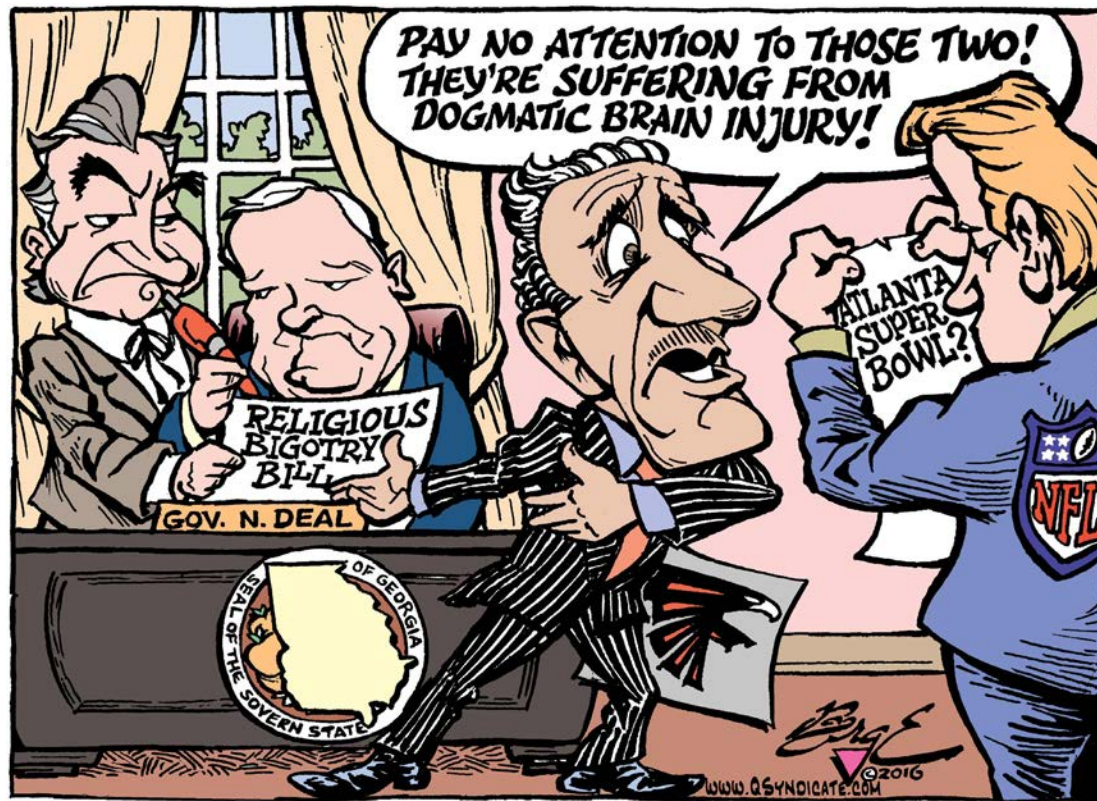
Few earthshaking diplomatic secrets were ferreted out at Kitty Salon, but everyone had a helluva good time, at least until the Soviet Rooskies came and raped and ravaged the city up one end and down the other.

As far as the spy brothel business goes, we Americans did the Germans one better. We set up a male brothel, operated patriotically. Cost efficiently. Wiretapped. Run by the FBI. (Somebody’s gotta do it, Mary, er, J. Edgar Hoover!)

The brothel (or “peg house” as it was called) was located near – no big goose step! – Gay Street in Greenwich Village. Reports the late, prolific writer Isaac Asimov, who dug up this steamy tidbit for his “Facts & Figures” collection: “the decor was nautical.” (But nice!)

“The house was staffed with multilingual agents for the purpose of extracting shipping – and receiving! – information from sailors. The FBI later claimed it was a very successful operation.” (Especially for those sailors on the multilingual pegging end of the business.) Ship, ship ahoy! Turn over, and out!

Charles@pridesource.com



Transmissions



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

Waiter, There’s a Transgender Person In My Soup!

Michael Savage is, like any number of other right-wing talk-radio hosts, no stranger to courting controversy. He’s made inflammatory statements from groups ranging from the Catholic Church to veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. This schtick has been very successful for him, leading his “Savage Nation” program to be one of the most listened to radio talk shows in the country

Savage took to the airwaves this month to discuss where he sees the United States going should Hillary Clinton be elected this November.

“She is an absolute dictator,” said Savage. “She will seize guns and make them illegal in any way necessary.” Of course, Savage has been saying the same thing about Obama for eight years or so, including jumping on the “Sandy Hook conspiracy” bandwagon. He had more to say about the Clinton

presidency beyond the usual Second Amendment statements, and this is where it gets truly interesting.

“Socially (the country will be) a nightmare,” said Savage. “There will be a transgender in your soup.”

He broke to commercial right after this, not bothering to elaborate on how a transgender person would end up in one’s minestrone, or what he was even trying to mean. Yet it’s worth noting, in the world of far-right politics, he doesn’t need to explain. Just throwing up a transgender boogeyman is enough. We’ve reached a point where simply using the word transgender is enough to get you in very hot water.

Transgender people being used this way is not necessarily new. I can recall the same sort of scaremongering around transgender teachers nearly two decades ago. Before that, gay and lesbian

See Waiter, next page

people were marginalized by the same style of hate mongers, who usually applied highly stereotyped cross-gender expressions on each. In the last few years, this sort of alarmist activity around transgender people has reached new levels.

With the end of the marriage rights battle – aside from the rise now of “Religious Freedom” bills – the right is looking for their new foe. TIME magazine’s “Transgender Tipping Point” issue, as well as the coming out of Olympic gold medalist and reality TV star Caitlyn Jenner, gave them a potential new target.

They also discovered a new way to fear monger with transgender people, revamping old arguments about gays and lesbians attacking kids in bathrooms. We’ve seen this attack for years now, with arguments that allowing transgender people to use restrooms of their preference will open the bathroom doors for all sorts of pedophiles and rapists. Indeed, in the fringe world that Michael Savage’s core audience surely inhabits, there is no distinction between transgender people and these predators.

In 2014, a month before the aforementioned issue of TIME magazine, the Office for Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education issued guidelines that made it clear that transgender students were protected from discrimination under Title IX. It is Title IX that has required schools to allow transgender students to use facilities consistent with their gender identity and expression – and what has caused fights over restrooms at schools across the country, including the recently defeated vetoed HB 1008 in South Dakota.

As I indicated above, many of these fights are cleverly calculated by the same foes we saw in the marriage battles. Much of this is a cynical attempt to fill their coffers at the cost of transgender rights; in much the same way Michael Savage will apparently say anything for ratings.

But there is a fringe out there that eats these things up, who decide to gobble up the word salad of right-wing scaremongers. Presumably paired alongside their transgender soup.

Another well-known right-wing radio personality, Alex Jones of “InfoWars,” has – amongst all his other conspiracy theories – claimed that the first lady, Michelle Obama, is transgender. Presumably, the story goes, the president is a gay man, and Michelle is actually male.

In the words of an insurance commercial, “This isn’t how it works! This isn’t how any of this works!” The whole notion is laughable, nonsensical and ludicrous. I’m not going to try to unpack how bad it is, nor do I suspect anyone

These are the times we live in. This is a raucous, unbelievable political season, where anti-transgender discrimination is – to one level or another – a part of one major party’s plank, and where just using the term is enough to inflame passions. There is a fringe out there that listens to these talk shows, the rhetoric of these politicians, and even their own insecurities, and acts on them.

literate enough to read this column will need me to do so.

I would also be remiss to not mention the Planned Parenthood shooter, Robert Lewis Dear. Dear was himself the very sort of audience member who might listen to Savage or Jones. He fell into the belief that Planned Parenthood was “selling baby parts” – another right-wing dog whistle in heavy rotation – and took matters into his own hands. He killed three people and injured nine others.

In the wake of the shooting, The Gateway Pundit, a self-described “right of center news website,” declared that Dear was a transwoman due to a clerical error on his voter registration. The story was repeated often, even repeated by current Republican presidential candidate Ted Cruz. Of course, Dear is not transgender, and even a cursory look at his history makes that plain to see.

People ask why transgender people are being murdered at such a high rate, especially as awareness has risen. Read above, and I think you can tell me the answer.

These are the times we live in. This is a raucous, unbelievable political season, where anti-transgender discrimination is – to one level or another – a part of one major party’s plank, and where just using the term is enough to inflame passions. There is a fringe out there that listens to these talk shows, the rhetoric of these politicians, and even their own insecurities, and acts on them.

This is the real societal nightmare, and it has very little to do with transgender people being in your soup.

Gwen Smith pairs best with a good split pea. You’ll find her at gwen-smith.com.

Creep of the Week

Laurie Higgins

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

It’s almost that time of year again: April 15 is the annual Day of Silence where students across the country choose to spend the day without



Laurie Higgins

speaking in order to call attention to anti-LGBT bullying in schools. And this year, like every year, the anti-LGBT right is clutching its collective pearls at the very thought.

Laurie

Higgins of the Illinois Family Institute is one such pearl-clutcher. She, along with the usual anti-LGBT suspects, is encouraging parents to pull their kids out of school on DOS lest they be indoctrinated with the message that it’s not OK to call a kid “fag” and push him down the stairs after gym.

“Parents should no longer passively countenance the political usurpation of public school classrooms through student silence,” Higgins writes on the IFI website.

Let me take a moment to point out that Higgins doesn’t really give a shit about public schools. The right have been undermining public education for years and support private charter schools where kids can learn that Jesus rode around on dinosaurs. You can go to the IFI’s website yourself and peruse the articles about education. Most of them are about how to keep transgender students out of locker rooms or about how great homeschooling is.

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), which is responsible for the DOS, characterizes the event as “a student-led national event that brings attention to anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment in schools.”

Sounds like a worthy goal, right? After all, LGBT kids do get bullied a lot, and the suicide rate for LGBT young people is heartbreakingly high.

But not for Higgins. She takes issue with the DOS because, as she claims, it’s not about preventing bullying but is actually intended “to undermine the true belief that homosexuality and cross-dressing ... are immoral.”

It’s an interesting take on the anti-

bullying event as it implies that the only way to support “the true belief” that being LGBT is immoral is to continue to allow kids who bully their LGBT peers to keep operating with impunity. Also, cross dressing and transgender are not the same thing. But hey, the suicide rate for trans youth is even higher than the rate for LGB youth, so it’s extra nice that Higgins managed to bully them while making her point that bullying isn’t the real issue.

Higgins complains that groups like GLSEN aren’t actually interested in keeping LGBTQ students “safe,” a goal, she writes, “all decent people share.”

“The rhetoric of ‘safety’ ... substitutes speciously for the more accurate term of ‘comfort.’ To suggest that in order for those who self-identify as homosexual (or ‘transgender’) to be ‘safe,’ no one may disapprove of homosexual conduct is both absurd and dangerous.”

I agree that such a thing would be absurd, except that such a thing is not actually a thing. Let me start with the issue of safety versus comfort. If a student does not feel comfortable at school because they face persistent unchecked harassment and bullying, that can, and does, erode the quality of their education. Higgins seems to think that the very idea of being “comfortable” at school is a laughable luxury when it really is fundamental to an institution of learning.

Also, to assert that “no one may disapprove of homosexual conduct” on the DOS is indeed absurd. For one thing, GLSEN includes in its DOS materials the fact that students who disagree with the DOS have a right to protest. But as GLSEN also points out, “Those who do not support the GLSEN Day of Silence often protest, but rarely contribute positively to finding ways to end anti-LGBT harassment.”

And that’s because those opposed to DOS aren’t actually interested in ending anti-LGBT harassment because they don’t want to even acknowledge that LGBT youth exist. DOS helps to make the invisible visible: the very real, very human LGBTQ students across the nation who are very much deserving of a safe and, yes, comfortable place to learn and grow.



Motown Invitational Classic Throws Traditional Bowling Rules Out the Door at Cash-O-Rama Event

Take a break from the Easter weekend holiday festivities on Saturday, March 26 and put your bowling skills – or lack of skills – to good use and have a little fun, make new friends and win money. The Motown Invitational Classic (MIC), Michigan's oldest and largest LGBT bowling tournament, will host its first ever Cash-O-Rama bowling event at Super Bowl Lanes located at 45100 Ford Road in Canton.

The event is different from a typical MIC tournament. In fact, it's really not a tournament at all. The United States Bowling Congress rules and standard bowling courtesies that are normally followed get thrown right out the door. At Cash-O-Rama, it's no longer bad form to call out a bowler's name as they make their way down the approach. And forget one or two lane courtesies. The host might have a group of people lined up next to a bowler as he or she attempts to make their shot. A competitor also can switch bowling hands or throw their ball between someone else's legs if they choose.

"Everything goes if the host of the event says so," said MIC Treasurer Kelly Clark. "The most important rule is to have fun since you can't take things too seriously. It's not about getting the most strikes or the highest score, but rather getting as much cash from the host as you can."

The amount of cash depends on where the automatic pinsetters randomly place colored bowling pins on the lanes. When a "money" shot appears, the host will do what he or she can do to distract a bowler, making it harder to win money. If bowlers get a natural strike or spare with the "money" shot, they win. The host also may offer bowlers a "double or nothing" deal, but it's not going to be easy.

Rules for Cash-O-Rama will be given to all participants at the beginning of the event.

The cost of the event is \$20 per person and includes one large pizza with a three person maximum per lane. Registration begins at 7 p.m., March 26 followed by bowling at 8 p.m. All participants must be 18 years of age or older.

"The event is a great opportunity to learn more about the local LGBT bowling leagues while helping to raise funds for MIC," said Clark. "This is going to be a fun and exciting event and we hope that everyone, regardless of skill, has a great time."

For more information about MIC or Cash-O-Rama, visit www.mictournament.org, www.facebook.com/MICTournament or contact micscretary@outlook.com.

Michigan Catholic Conference Modifies Health Care Coverage for Legally Domiciled Adults

BY AJ TRAGER

LANSING – The Michigan Catholic Conference, in a letter sent mid-March to pastors and employees of the Catholic Church in Michigan, said that it will be modifying its health care coverage to extend coverage for legally domiciled adults.

Legally domiciled adults are those who are above 18, have lived with an employee for at least six months and are financially interdependent with the employee. The decision made by the Catholic Conference, which oversees the health care for Catholic employees in the state, complies with changes in federal law post-marriage equality. Despite changes to church health coverage, the Catholic Church maintains its opposition to same-sex marriage and the intimate moments that happen between two consenting adults.

"Due to recent changes in federal law regarding the provision of health benefits, Michigan Catholic Conference has adopted a modification to MCC benefits to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The inclusion of the LDA (Legally Domiciled Adults) benefit allows for the MCC health plan to be both legally compliant and consistent with church teaching," the MCC letter reads.

Stephanie White told the Washington Post that the eligibility change highlights the benefit of having federal agencies take a lead on "issues of fairness" and is glad to see the Catholic Church taking steps to protect families.

"The policy also shows that even

"I think it's a mistake to construe this as any kind of overture by the Catholic Church to the LGBT community. I think it's more about ensuring that they are compliant."

- Patrick Brewis, member of Fortunate Families

groups and businesses that are resistant to basic nondiscrimination protections can find a way to follow the law and treat everyone equally," White said.

Patrick Brewis, former director of stewardship at a Catholic Church in southeast Michigan and in New York City, moved back to Michigan in the past two years to take care of his mother. As a member of a group of families, parents and allies called Fortunate Families who affirm and celebrate LGBT people striving to continue to embrace their Catholic faith, Brewis is skeptical that MCC intended on helping LGBT Catholics.

"In the language that the Catholic Conference put out, nowhere do they mention the words gay, same-sex marriage, gay relationship or the like," Brewis told BTL. "It's important

from the legal perspective and that the Catholic Church can now say it's compliant with the federal law, and it's important from an LGBT perspective in that gay couples, for example, can now have coverage extended to them and that's fantastic news. But I think it's a mistake to construe this as any kind of overture by the Catholic Church to the LGBT community. I think it's more about ensuring that they are compliant."

Church employees may now have the option of extending healthcare coverage to their partners, but they would still be fired for discussing their same-sex union with their coworkers.

As a former employee of the church, Brewis used to receive their healthcare coverage but could not extend it to his partner and remembers the silencing behaviors used by the church against any employees who may have been closeted.

"I could be reprimanded or fired from my job for being in a same-sex relationship. I had to sign a document that said I wasn't to engage in activities contrary to the Catholic Church," he said.

Brewis believes the only way for change to happen within the church is visibility. If LGBT Catholics come out and show the church who they are, what they look like, what their relationships look like and how living authentically empowers someone to be their whole self, then the world might see change.

"The only way for change and transformation to happen in the church is to make yourself visible," he said. "What I've found is that the fears were more unfounded than the reality of the situation."

Pastor Frank Turner to Speak at Faith Alliance Town Hall

FERNDALE – Pastor Frank Turner will speak at a March 31 town hall about LGBTQ people's experiences with faith, planned by the Affirmations Faith Alliance.

Members of the Faith Alliance will discuss an exciting launch of the Faith Discussion Group at Affirmations this spring. Turner will serve as moderator and will provide the keynote address.

Turner, from the Believers Congregation in Novi, wasn't always a strong supporter of the LGBT community and has come a long way from his time as an active homophobe. In an op-ed published in *Between The Lines* last year, Turner describes his passage into acceptance and how his faith helped guide him to a place of compassion and inclusion instead of hatred and

intolerance.

"But as my allegiance to the denomination gave way to my discipleship to Jesus, a transformation took hold in my heart, and I found the only satisfying answer to the question of marriage equality is love," he wrote.

The town hall will begin at 6 p.m. at Affirmations. Affirmations is located at 290 W. Nine Mile Road in Ferndale.

Divine Peace
Metropolitan Community Church

Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday 3-20-16 10 AM
Maundy Thursday 3-24-16 7 PM
Good Friday 3-25-16 7 PM
Easter Breakfast 8 AM
Easter Service 10 AM

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Good Friday
3/25 at Ferndale First UMC at 7:00 pm

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Easter Brunch 9:30 am
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Worship Guide

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Alleluia!



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www.kingofkingslutheran.org
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- **Rochester Hills**
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Focus on Georgia Governor in Religious Exemption Debate

ATLANTA (AP) – Georgia’s business community and other opponents of a bill protecting those who object to same-sex marriage called March 17 for Gov. Nathan Deal to veto it, likely starting weeks of intense lobbying on the Republican.

Some religious and political officials hailed the bill’s passage on March 16, thanking GOP leaders of the General Assembly for increasing “religious liberty” protections.

Republican leaders, meanwhile, hoped the measure would end years of legislative sparring over various protections for people acting on religious belief, rebutted by charges of discrimination from gay-rights advocates. The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision this year legalizing gay marriage sharpened the debate.

The measure would prevent government penalty against faith-based organizations that refuse to serve someone if it would violate a “sincerely held religious belief” or hire someone “whose religious beliefs or practices or lack of either violate its religion. It includes language based on a federal “religious freedom restoration act,” preventing government from burdening religious belief.

Public employees who refuse to perform their duties, such as a clerk issuing marriage licenses, would not be covered. The bill says it doesn’t permit discrimination prohibited by federal or state law.

It also would allow religious officials to refuse performing gay marriages and protects any individual who refuses to attend a marriage that conflicts with their faith.

Lawmakers on March 16 didn’t immediately send the bill to Deal, who

faces a May 3 deadline to act.

Deal hasn’t addressed the version that cruised through the legislature in several hours on March 16. But he has asked lawmakers for a compromise that protected religious belief “without setting up a situation where we could be accused even of allowing or encouraging discrimination.”

“We do not have a belief, in my way of looking at religion, that says that we have to discriminate against anybody,” Deal, a Baptist, told reporters weeks ago. “If you were to apply those standards to the teachings of Jesus, I don’t think they fit.”

Deal’s religious roots, though, have not been his focus as governor. He campaigned for re-election to a second and final term by touting Georgia’s ranking by trade publications as the top state to do business. Corporate leaders in Georgia said they’re hopeful Deal will consider the boycott threats levied against Indiana after 2015 passage of a “religious freedom” law, along with his prior concerns about the bill.

“I think Gov. Deal appreciates all the good work that has been done during his time in office, and I don’t think he wants to see it undone,” Jenner Wood, a SunTrust Bank executive and chairman of the Metro Atlanta Chamber’s board, said.

The Atlanta chamber is among more than 500 companies and groups in a coalition called Georgia Prospers that formed this year to oppose any legislation that could harm the state’s reputation. It includes such recognizable companies as AT&T, Coca-Cola, Delta Air Lines, Home Depot and UPS.

Mike Griffin, the Georgia Baptist Mission Board’s representative at the Capitol and one of the bill’s

biggest supporters, said it would act as “insurance” for religious people. Supporters often cite examples of students cited for hazing after holding a Christian foot-washing ceremony on a public campus or a student denied space for a prayer group at a public school.

“It’s something you want to have before you need it,” Griffin said. “The bottom line is protecting people from government action.”

The Georgia Republican Party’s chairman also praised state lawmakers, noting delegates at a state GOP convention supported passage of a “religious freedom” bill.

“We applaud and thank state lawmakers for listening to grassroots Republicans,” Chairman John Padgett said.

Lawmakers across the country have proposed a variety of religious exemptions for opponents of same-sex marriage this year, prompted by similar pressure.

Georgia lawmakers could have tamped down criticism by creating protections for LGBT people or minorities, said Robin Fretwell Wilson, a family law specialist at the University of Illinois Law School.

Wilson advised legislators in Utah on a 2015 law granting religious exemptions while creating gay-rights protections and called the Georgia bill a “mashup” of legal exemptions for religious people or organizations. States that legalized gay marriage before the Supreme Court’s ruling created similar exemptions for religious organizations like adoption agencies, she said.

Georgia’s bill “is a one-sided deal,” she said. “And people don’t like one-sided deals.”

Transgender Advocate’s Talk Canceled at Brown After Petition

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) – A speech by a writer and transgender advocate was canceled at Brown University after being swept up in a controversy over the event’s co-sponsorship by the university’s Jewish student center.

An online petition demanded Brown RISD Hillel be removed as co-sponsor of the event and accused the group of defending what it called the “Israeli state’s policies of occupation and racial apartheid.”

The student group that organized the talk, Brown Moral Voices, said in a statement that representatives for Janet Mock indicated on March 16 she was

canceling her March 21 talk because it was received with controversy rather than open dialogue. The cancellation drew criticism from some students, who said the change.org petition was anti-Semitic.

Mock did not immediately return messages seeking comment. She wrote the book “Redefining Realness” and hosts MSNBC’s online series So POPular!

Brown Moral Voices is run through Brown RISD Hillel, the Jewish student group for Brown and the nearby Rhode Island School of Design. The speech was co-sponsored by other groups and centers on both campuses, including the LGBTQ

Center and Brown’s Swearer Center for Public Service. The director of Brown RISD Hillel did not immediately return an email seeking comment.

The change.org petition was started two weeks ago by a group that calls itself only “Brown Students” and did not identify its members. It said they were concerned about Hillel’s sponsorship of the event because Mock is a prominent advocate for transgender people and people of color, and they believe Mock’s invitation is part of a strategy to improve Israel’s image. It said it did not want students to boycott the event.



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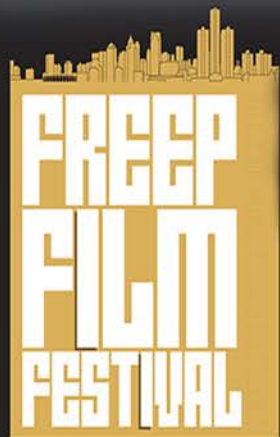
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Boy Problems

Steve Grand Talks Touchy-Feely Fans & Moving Beyond 'All-American Boy'

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Steve Grand can barely stand himself – that is, the superficial, Internet-packaged version of the singer/songwriter/dreamboat presented to the public since even before his 2013 viral hit “All-American Boy” rocked our gay world.

“I don’t like the me that most people probably see,” admits Grand, 26.

Now, the self-proclaimed “weird guy trapped in a douchey gym guy’s body” is tackling YouTube with a fun and frank smattering of endearing, no-holds-barred confessionals. He takes on his constantly-criticized image... and also a half gallon of Breyers, which he (in)appropriately slurps as he dishes practical advice on clean bottoms.

In another video, called “Steve and Trev PUMP it up at the GYM,” Grand delivers on the dream of him wearing compression pants over his jockstrap.

As he preps new music, the “All-American Boy” is certainly less all American-y these days. In our new freewheeling interview, Grand opened up about everything and anything: people’s “low expectations” of him, his more carefree career attitude, his junk, boner kills, handsy fans, haters and his fear that someone will start singing “All-American Boy” while having sex with him.

I have a confession to make: I like you better now than I did at the beginning of your career.

Fuck you! (Laughs) ... I’m kidding.

Yeah, fuck me. I blame the Internet. I got bits and pieces of you. The abs. The music. But now, through your YouTube videos, we’re finally seeing the real you.

I’m not so bad. People have (such) incredibly low expectations of me, that I just need to show up. For my performances, I need to not be terrible and people will be impressed. I just know people have really, really low expectations of me and that’s what the Internet does. I’m such an easy person to target. Young, good-looking, white gay men – we love to hate those people. But there’s been a real person there the whole time.

It’s weird. For a long time there’s been a big disconnect between how much I could expect to be understood by people and how much I actually *was* understood by people. I

had this unreasonable expectation that I was going to be understood by people and it took me a long time to get over that. I don’t make sense in any kind of headline, so I’ve kinda given up on that and I’m fine with it. The more you kind of give up and don’t care, the more people feel that and like that.

When did you stop caring as much?

Of course I do care. I revel in not caring, but I still am human. I’m not very good at crafting the public image version of me. I’m just not. I’m too messy of a person, and I care too much about being able to be a real dimensional human being.

Why do you say you’re “messy”?

(Hesitates) There’s a good answer to this.

Some people just make more sense in a headline. Taylor Swift – she’s an example of someone who’s not really messy. She’s a well-oiled machine. Everything about her is very comfortable and that’s one of the reasons she’s so massively successful. That’s not a criticism; it’s an objective observation. With me, I still am just a regular person operating in the same world as everyone else. I’m not rich and famous. And I think there’s a weird disconnect that, when someone has any degree of fame on social media or whatever, we discount them as being a real, complicated human being. I feel like I have always fought for myself to be seen as a complex, nuanced human being, to the point where I would rather not have lots of success and notoriety if it means that I can’t let all the messy edges of me show.

“All-American Boy” categorized you as “country music’s first out gay male,” but then you didn’t make any “country” music after that and even resisted the label. Was that time in your career as confusing for you as it was for other people?

What I’m mostly confused about is how important labels are to people. Music is music and maybe “All-American Boy” is a country song to some people and maybe it’s not to other people. I just never put much energy into thinking about what it was classified as. I probably would’ve been smarter to, but I just genuinely don’t care about labels that much. I never called myself a country singer, so yeah, it was kind of confusing and another reason why you have to separate yourself from the way that you’re seen publicly. Even going down to the most basic details of who I am publicly, it’s not even correct. I never said I’m country and I never said I’m the first anything; those are all things that people associated with me and it had absolutely zero to do with anything that I said or did myself.

Do you regret having that song be country-tinged at all because it put you in a box that you didn’t want to be in?

No – I have to learn everything through life experience. I didn’t have anyone taking me through this. It’d be so easy to get caught up in, “I regret this, I regret that.” We’re not all on the same playing field, and I’ve had certain advantages and I’ve also had certain disadvantages. One is that I really got into this on my own and I didn’t necessarily have the guidance that maybe would’ve made everything turn out a little differently.

With that said, is the facial hair intended to shift you from the “All-American Boy” image?

(Laughs) I’m really trying! I’m really, really trying. It’s not growing right! But it’s natural and nice. I just feel like it fits my personality to be more cuddly and look like a bear a little bit. Even having shitty facial hair fits my personality. (Laughs)

Can you talk about the struggle to be taken seriously as a music artist when there are

half-naked photos of you circulating all over the Internet?

It used to be really frustrating, but I’ve readjusted my expectations. I don’t have that high of expectations for the general public – I mean, we don’t even understand things that really actually fucking matter, like, with this election. So why should I expect people to take the time to understand me? I don’t matter. And people don’t even care about things that *do* matter.

I take my music seriously. I’m a good musician and I’m a good performer, and I also like to work out my body and show it off sometimes. It’s a fleeting thing; when I’m 50, I’m not gonna look like this.

Everybody has to feel like they have to be a special snowflake. People can’t just look at a picture of a hot guy and let it be beautiful. It has to be some statement about them. Let people just fucking appreciate what is beautiful and let things be beautiful if they’re beautiful.

So, you never look at a photo of another guy and think, “I wish I could look that good”?

Oh my god – of course I do. But I try to take personal responsibility and not lash out at that person because they maybe make me feel less. I just fucking look at the picture and enjoy it. I’ve had a lot of moments where I’ve seen someone who is maybe more beautiful or someone who sounds better than me or has written a song that I think is gorgeous – yeah, sometimes I have that envy and that jealousy rises up. I could either leave a really bitter comment about it on the Internet or I could go work on my own shit and be the best I can be.

Do you think your more risqué photos have helped or hurt your career?

Oh, I don’t know. It is what it is. I’m just trying to be myself.

Would you ever go back into modeling full time?

I never was a model. I never got paid for any of it. I’m just another guy who has photos online of me in my underwear and that’s really all it is. It’s really true. I don’t know what qualifies as being a model anymore because we all have Instagram accounts. Max Emerson is a model. I’m not. I just wanted to take pictures of myself with my clothes off.

You recently got naked for a promo advertising bassackwards tees. Tell me about that.

I got with them and worked with them and we’re still figuring out which organization it’s gonna benefit. It’s definitely gonna be an LGBT organization. If people are gonna click on this shit then yeah, I’ll be a part of this cool T-shirt (campaign) and we’ll give some of the proceeds to our cause and everyone wins.

How do they decide how much butt to show in a

See Steve Grand, page 25

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The Frivolist

Spring Into These Calorie-Burning Activities to Shed Your Winter Padding

BY MIKEY ROX

Hard time keeping your hands out of the cookie jar this winter? Polish off those last few Oreos then set your sights on spring with these easy-to-integrate activities that'll have you sweating and shedding in no time.

Train for a foot race

A few weeks ago I decided for the first time to compete in a half-marathon race. My gym was advertising the event, and on the advertisement was a URL for a 12-week, increasingly rigorous conditioning regimen that I could follow to get into race-ready shape. I'm nearly halfway through the program and I'm proud to say that I haven't missed a goal yet. This may be an intimidating feat for some, but it's absolutely achievable if you commit yourself to it. To help yourself stay on track, invite a friend to join the race with you; you two can work out together and provide support in times of doubt and fatigue.

Participate in an obstacle course

In addition to the half marathon this spring, I've also signed up for a challenging obstacle course called Rugged Maniac, which I expect will test my strength and endurance over its 5K course. Some of the obstacles include scaling a warped wall a la "Ninja Warrior," jumping over fire, climbing ladders, hopping

barricades, trudging through mud and more. If you're not confident that you can complete a course of this intensity, there are several other traveling fitness courses during the spring and summer months including ROC Race, Insane Inflatable 5K and Mud Factor that may set up camp near you.

Pop into a trampoline park

Trampoline parks are all the rage right now — seems like a new location opens every month — but they're not just for kids. Adults can get in on the action too by joining open jumps, playing ultimate dodgeball, dunking baskets or signing up for scheduled fitness programs that will work you out to the tune of 1,000 calories an hour in some classes.

Take new classes at your gym

If you already belong to a gym but your routine has lost its luster or you've just slacked off because, well, winter, get back into the swing of things by trying something new. Personally, I'm not always a self-motivator when it comes to exercise, so I benefit from the group classes that my gym offers (which at most gyms are included in the regular membership), and the same strategy may work for you. Visit your facility's website to view the class schedule and register for one or two that appeal to you. You may be surprised at how much you enjoy it.

Continued on next page



www.PrideSource.com

► Frivolist

Continued from p. 24

Accept challenges on your fitness tracker

One of the cool ways I'm ensuring that I meet certain fitness goals I've set for myself, like on my Fitbit fitness tracker, is to accept and extend challenges between the friends with whom I'm connected through the device. Turning the wearable into a little friendly competition is fun, and I push myself a little further every day to stay ahead.

Incorporate exercises into your chores

Sneak in squats while you're vacuuming the steps, bang out a few pushups when you're putting storage items under the bed, and do a few curls with your grocery bags from the car to the house. It's easy to turn your mundane chores into mini-exercises to keep your muscles moving.

Do more manual labor around the house



Instead of hiring a handyman or gardener to tackle items on your spring-cleaning to-do list, try your own hand at what you'd normally farm out. If you're capable of cleaning up the yard and laying your own mulch you should be doing it yourself anyway, but at least now you'll get a decent tan and save a couple

hundreds bucks while you're at it.

Rent equipment to try a new fitness activity

Last year I bought a couple kayaks to add

extra activity into my spring and summer routine, and this year one of my goals is to learn how to standup paddle board. These boards are quite expensive to purchase, so renting is a great option for me, especially since I'm not sure I'll like it. You can rent nearly any kind of sports and fitness equipment these days, from typical bicycles to more extreme equipment like kite-boarding kites. Whatever suits your fancy – and fitness level.

Join a social sports league

I've been part of a social sports league in some capacity for at least the past 10 years – and I can't sing the praises of these groups enough. I've been a member of kickball, dodgeball and cornhole teams in the past, and currently I play on a couple bowling leagues and a shuffleboard league. I'm certainly not getting buff on these leagues, but they still keep me moving (some more than others), and they're a great way to dust yourself off, get your blood pumping and make a few new friends as the cold weather makes way for sunshine and warmth.

Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world. He splits his time between homes in New York City and the Jersey Shore with his dog Jaxon. Connect with Mikey on Twitter @mikeyrox.

► Steve Grand

Continued from p. 23

video like that?

Everyone's seen my butt, but some days I'll feel more like an instigator than other days; other days I want no part of that. With this, I don't think I'd done anything that I hadn't done before. I just wanted to make a video that was beautiful and sexy.

Under what circumstances would you go completely au natural?

And show my dick? You can pretty much see it in some of the shots from the past, but I probably wouldn't. I'd rather not. But if someone was like, "Here's a million dollars," I would be like, "Sure." But, like, I don't think my dick is that exciting. It's just like, whatever. It's pretty unremarkable. I think it's good to be proud of what you have but I think there are more interesting things about me than my relatively... what's the word I'm looking for? It's very appropriately sized and shaped, that's what I would say.

That's gonna be the headline somewhere: "Steve Grand calls his dick 'unremarkable' and 'appropriately sized.'"

That's fine. If it makes people happy...

How has notoriety changed your life?

That's a big question. I don't know. I have a Wikipedia page! Googling myself is a really scary thing that could have really adverse effects on my psyche!

You're not supposed to do that, Steve.

I definitely don't anymore. It took a long time. It's been months since I've done it. I'm terrified of what's out there.

How has it changed dating for you?

When "All-American Boy" came out I couldn't be on dating apps without getting shit for it, but now it's fine. It doesn't really have any effect.

Have you ever been faced with a flirty fan that made you uncomfortable?

Someone was tickling me as we were taking a picture and I'd kind of had it, and I think they thought they were being sneaky about it. But I really reacted and made a scene. "That tickles!" And I jumped. There's a picture of me reacting. It's hilarious. I was gonna repost it but I didn't wanna embarrass the guy. Like, it's fine. He was tickling my side; I don't know what he got out of that. Sometimes people, if they're more drunk, their hand will lower to my ass and I'll be like, *OOOK*.

You have to slap their wrist?

Yeah. (Tickling) is one of those things. I felt like tickling me was really presumptuous and I didn't like it. It was uncomfortable. One time there was someone who was a fan and I was like, "You're really hot," and, you know, that whole thing happened, but that doesn't really happen. I just feel like I'm automatically put in a position when someone is a fan. I'm already something to them. There's an expectation there. It freaks me out to think about if I'm having sex with someone they might be thinking about my music video, like that's really weird to me. I wouldn't like that.

Or if they wanted to play your music during sex.

My fear is that someone will start singing "All-American Boy" during it. People joke like, "Oh, I feel like we're in your music video," and that's a boner kill. I like to keep those things separate. It's so pure. What I put out there is so pure and I don't want to think about purity when I'm actually having an intimate moment.

What's next for you?

I really do wanna have something out in the next couple of months and I wanna move more quickly with getting content out there. I really want to put out a full album, so I'm working on that right now. I'm in a better frame of mind and what I'm putting out is


gonna be about a lot of things that happened in the last two years. I'm more grown up and things are gonna be more stripped down. I just feel like I'm better and more comfortable with myself, so I'm letting the edges of me be present on the album and in the recordings more than before. I was always trying to round off my edges because I wasn't comfortable with them. It's gonna be a little more gritty. It's gonna fuck up people's brains.

So the "Anti All-American Boy"?

Yeah, I have a rebellious spirit and that's what made me want to do "All-American Boy" as my first thing, but now I'm rebelling against something different. I don't feel like making a music video about two guys is an act of rebellion. So, what am I saying now? That's the question I've been asking myself while making this music. It's gonna be interesting. I'm grateful I've relieved myself of the burden of trying to be whatever expectations people had of me because I think I fucked all that up good enough to where I'm able to freely be myself now.

Chris Azzopardi is the editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service. He once made Jane Fonda cry. Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).

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Editor's Pick

Local organization Hustle & Flo Productions is hosting their "First Annual Ballroom and Steppers affair." The amateur dance competition is being dubbed "the hottest all-female ballroom & steppers competitions and AFTER PARTY." Talent skills range from basic beginners to Chicago steppers. The event is perfect for those who are still in class and those who would love to show off those "fancy

moves."

Enjoy the open dance party right after competition. Free food, BYOB, Cash Prize and Trophy to all winners. Drink set-up sold. Admission is \$20 a person at the door. All participants must pre-register. Just email hustleflo4244@gmail.com with their name, city, state, dance style (beginner ballroom, advanced ballroom, free style or stepper, trio/quad) and song choice.

The event will begin at 8 p.m. Saturday, March 26 at Golden Gate Banquet Hall, 8599 N. Lilley Road, Canton. For those with questions, call Flo at 734-329-4556 or Hustle 734-678-9993.

Happenings

OUTINGS

Friday, March 25

Adam Lambert With special guest Alex Newell. The Fillmore Detroit, 2115 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. www.ticketmaster.com

Saturday, March 26

Hustle & Flo's First Annual Ballroom & Steppers Affair 8 p.m. Welcome to one of the hottest all female ballroom & steppers competitions and AFTER PARTY. This is a competition show that you do not want to miss! Talent skills range from basic beginners to Chicago steppers. THIS IS AN AMATEUR COMPETITION! Perfect for those who are still in class AND those who would love to show off those fancy moves. Enjoy the open dance party right after competition. Free food, BYOB, Cash Prize and Trophy to all winners. Drink set-up sold. \$20/person at door. All participants must pre-register. Just email hustleflo4244@gmail.com with Name, City, State, Dance style- (Beginner ballroom, advance ballroom, free style or stepper, trioquad) and Song choice. Questions call Flo at 734-329-4556 or Hustle 734-678-9993. Hustle & Flo Productions, 8599 N. Lilley Road, **Canton**. 734-329-4556 . Hustleflo4244@gmail.com

Monday, March 28

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

Thursday, March 31

Faith & LGBTQ Townhall 6:30 p.m. Pastor Frank Turner, from the Believers Congregation in Novi, will be the Keynote and Moderator for the event. Refreshments will be served. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.Goaffirmations.org/programs-services/community-events-activities

Friday, April 1

Brackets For Good Online Tournament Starting Feb. 26, online donations to help your favorite

nonprofit organization advance in Brackets For Good and get one step closer to \$10,000 can be made by visiting annarbor.bfg.org. \$1 equals 10 point. Brackets For Good, **Ann Arbor**. www.Annarbor.bfg.org

Sunday, April 3

Hunkapella 7 p.m. Tickets: \$38-48. Olympia Entertainment, 2301 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. 313-471-6611. www.Olympiaentertainment.com

Wednesday, April 6

Relationship Skills Class This 7-session series is for LGBTQ people and their friends & loved ones. Topics include: exploring relationship values, healthy conflict resolution, establishing boundaries, accountability and building community connections. This series is open to everyone, regardless of relationship status or relationship history. The cost of the series is \$35 per person. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road,

Ferndale. 248-398-7105. www.Goaffirmations.org

MUSIC & MORE

Classical

Detroit Symphony Orchestra "Beethoven's Pastoral" . Max M. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. 8 p.m. April 2. 313-576-5111. www.Dso.org

Concerts

UMS "Gil Shaham Bach Six Solos with original films by David Michalek" Tickets: \$12-56. Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., **Ann Arbor**. 8 p.m. March 26. 734-764-2538. www.Ums.org/performance/gil-shaham/

Dance

UMS "American Ballet Theatre: The Sleeping Beauty" Tickets: \$29-109. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St., **Detroit**. March 31 - April 3. 734-764-2538. www.Ums.org/

multi-performance/american-ballet-theatre-the-sleeping-beauty/

Film & Video

Michigan Theater "CineManga Film Series" Different anime or Japanese film each Wednesday night. State Theater, 233 State St., **Ann Arbor**. Jan. 13 - April 27. 734-668-8397. www.Michtheater.org

THEATER

Auditions for The Wedding Singer Rehearsals will start mid-April. Please bring your conflicts with you at your audition. No conflicts will be honored during the final rehearsal week in studio, nor during tech week at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre. **Ann Arbor Civic Theatre**, Children's Creative Center, 1600 Pauline Ave, **Ann Arbor**. March 27 - March 28. 734-971-2228. www.A2ct.org/audition

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

ART 'N' AROUND

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 "Dance! American Art 1830-1960" The exhibition is organized by the DIA and presents more than 90 paintings, sculptures, photographs and costumes brought together for the first time to celebrate and explain the important place of dance in American culture. **Detroit Institute of Arts**, 2100 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. March 20 - June 12. 313-833-7900. www.Dia.org

Flint Institute of Arts "From Heart to Hand: African American Quilts from the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts" Throughout history, quilts have held an important and cherished place in our culture, particularly in the American South. **Flint Institute of Arts**, 1120 E. Kearsley St., **Flint**. Jan. 24 - April 10. 810-234-1695. www.Flintarts.org

Editor's Pick



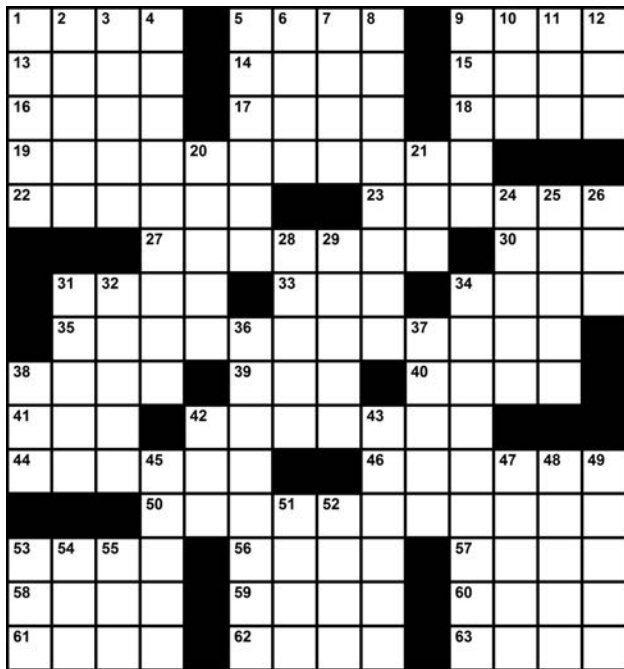
Ani DiFranco comes to **Ann Arbor's Michigan Theater** April 2. The feminist icon is singer, guitarist, multi-instrumentalist, poet and songwriter and has released over 20 albums. She will play at Intersection in **Grand Rapids** the following day.

Away from her music, Ani is also well known for her activism. Over her career she has supported a large amount of causes such as abortion rights and gay visibility. She played a selection of concerts in 1993 with other musicians as a protest to the Gulf War whilst in 2004 DiFranco visited Burma to educate herself on resistance movement and fight for democracy. She contributed a song to a CD which raised

money for the United States Campaign for Burma.

The Michigan Theater show begins at 8 p.m. Saturday, April 2. The theater is located at 603 E. Liberty St., **Ann Arbor**. Tickets are \$30-55. For more information, visit www.michtheater.org.

Q Puzzle



- 31 Start of a Shakespearean title
 33 Teaching deg.
 34 Out-of-this-world org.
 35 Official theme song of the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras 2016
 38 Rainbow shapes
 39 Title for Derek Jacobi
 40 Snakes in the grass
 41 Feeling of bottoming out
 42 Aging first mate, perhaps
 44 Role for Agnes Moorehead
 46 Dante translator John
 50 Shifting between male and female identity
 53 S&M session souvenir?
 56 Tammy Baldwin, in brief
 57 Michelangelo Signorile's column, with "The"
 58 Jelly not for bread
 59 You might find desire under them
 60 Pizarro foe
 61 Oral votes
 62 What you can catch in South Beach
 63 With mouth wide open
- 8 "Aida" backdrop
 9 Bite-size pies
 10 "Not a Pretty Girl" singer Di Franco
 11 Get-up-and-go
 12 Meadow mama
 20 Like a nervous Nellie
 21 Provincetown's Cape
 24 "The Sound of Music" name
 25 Makes more bearable
 26 DeLaria of "Orange Is the New Black"
 28 Changed the decor of
 29 Ban targets
 31 Ohio's "Rubber City"
 32 Like a fem's clothing
 34 Longing for Garbo, for example
 36 Mead, while living in Samoa
 37 Ariz. neighbor
 38 Blow away
 42 Rough stuff underground
 43 Straddling
 45 Shrek and others
 47 Feeling badly about McClanahan?
 48 Style of "We Are Family"
 49 Where to see Tom, Dick, or Harry
 51 Oscar ___ Renta
 52 Frequent award for "Modern Family"
 53 Crazy like a fox
 54 Hustler's stick
 55 Org. for Evan Wolfson's peers

Ain't That a Shane

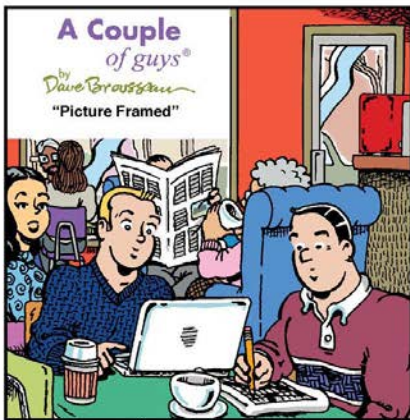
Across

- 1 'N Sync member Lance
 5 Sonar signal
 9 Strip in the locker room
 13 Lorca's eight
 14 "Celluloid Closet" narrator Tomlin
 15 From the top
 16 Pronoun for King James
 17 Nicky, in "Funny Girl"
- 18 Like a fruit ready to be plucked
 19 Australian drag queen a.k.a. Shane Jenek who sings
 35-Across
 22 Place of fast-growing sexual activity?
 23 Zero of "The Producers"
 27 Barometer type
 30 "Diff'rent Strokes" actress Charlotte

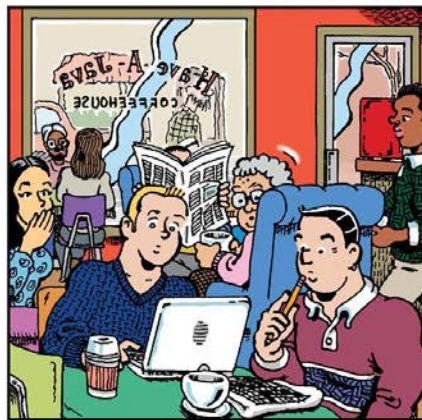
Down

- 1 Mismanage
 2 Sound of a sudden, involuntary discharge
 3 Say "STATS!" in a chat room
 4 Sucking candy
 5 Witherspoon's "Legally ___"
 6 Green fruit
 7 Sophie B. Hawkins' "As ___ Me Down"

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INCLUSION or INVISIBILITY?

Comprehensive Annenberg Report on
Diversity in Entertainment

Entertainment Equality Study Released

Investigation Underway

NEW YORK (AP) – In one of the most exhaustive and damning reports on diversity in Hollywood, a new study finds that the films and television produced by major media companies are “whitewashed,” and that an “epidemic of invisibility” runs top to bottom through the industry for women, minorities and LGBT people.

A study released Feb. 22 by the Media, Diversity and Social Change Initiative at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism offers one of the most wide-ranging examinations of the film and television industries, including a pointed “inclusivity index” of 10 major media companies – from Disney to Netflix – that gives a failing grade to every movie studio and most TV makers.

“We don’t have a diversity problem. We have an inclusion crisis,” said Stacy L. Smith, a USC professor and one of the study’s authors, in an interview.

The study, titled the Comprehensive Annenberg Report on Diversity, examined the 109 films released by major studios (including art-house divisions) in 2014 and 305 scripted, first-run TV and digital series across 31 networks and streaming services that aired from September 2014 to August 2015. More than 11,000 speaking characters were analyzed for gender, racial and ethnic representation and LGBT status. Some 10,000 directors, writers and show creators were examined, as was the gender of more than 1,500 executives.

The portrait is one of pervasive underrepresentation, no matter the media platform, from CEOs to minor characters. “Overall, the landscape of media content is still largely whitewashed,” the study concludes.

In the 414 studied films and series, only a third of speaking characters were female, and only 28.3 percent were from minority groups.

Just 2 percent of speaking characters were LGBT-identified. Among the 11,306 speaking characters studied, only seven were transgender (and four were from the same series).

“When we start to step back to see this larger ecology, I think we see a picture of exclusion,” said Smith. “And it doesn’t match the norms of the population of the United States.”

Following a request made in May by the American Civil Liberties Union (which cited previous USC studies, as well as those by UCLA and the Directors Guild in claiming women have been “systematically excluded” from directing jobs), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission last year began investigating gender discrimination in Hollywood.

The “inclusivity index” is a report card for the performances of 21st Century Fox, CBS, NBC Universal, Sony, the Walt Disney Co., Time Warner, Viacom, Amazon, Hulu and Netflix. Those companies encompass all the broadcast networks, most major cable channels, all of the major movie studios and three of the dominant streaming services.

None of the six major studios rated better than 20 percent overall; Time Warner fared poorest of all with a score of zero. The report concludes that the film industry “still functions as a straight, white, boy’s club.”

Some of the same companies, however, scored better when their TV and digital offerings were evaluated. Disney, the CW, Amazon and Hulu all scored 65 percent and above.

“When we turn to see where the problem is better or worse, the apex to this whole endeavor is: Everyone in film is failing, all of the companies investigated,” said Smith.

The research offers the chance for comparison between mediums. Do streaming services adhere to the established patterns of traditional television or deviate from them?

Some of the study’s most troubling finds are simply absences. Roughly 50 percent of the examined content didn’t feature one Asian or Asian-American character; 20 percent didn’t include one black character. Researchers argue for change beyond “tokenism,” including making target goals public and creating a system of checks and balances in storytelling decisions.

“People are still erased. It’s 2016 and it’s time for a change,” said Smith. “We’ve laid out concrete actionable steps because we don’t want to do this again in 10 years.”

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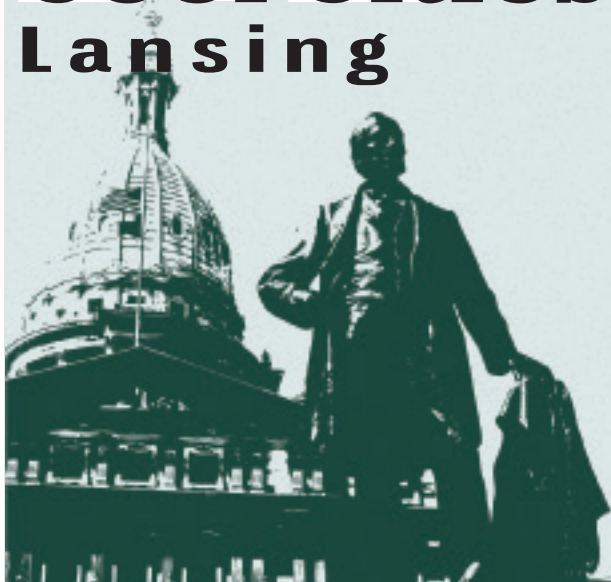
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Michigan Musical Theater Award Set to Honor Late MSU Professor Greg Reuter

EAST LANSING – Twenty-year Broadway stage veteran, Los Angeles actor and beloved MSU Department of Theater professor Greg Reuter was one of theater’s fiercest supporters and an avid teacher for actors nationwide. Since his untimely death in 2015, support has poured in from across the country to honor a man who always put his students first and changed lives through his dedicated work ethic and charming skill.

To pay homage to Reuter, the Ovation Awards – now titled the Sutton Foster Ovation Awards – will award the Greg Reuter Excellence in Musical Theater Education Award. This annual award will be given to the Michigan theatrical educator who follows the same upstanding ideals with which Reuter taught.

MSU Department of theater Chairperson Kirk Domer says, “When Greg joined the MSU Department of Theater, it was like having Broadway in the classroom. He helped our musical



Photo: Greg Reuter

among many others, Reuter was a true champion of theater and of continuing theatrical education for generations to come.

“Greg’s greatest passion in life was

Center.”

Michigan High School educators in all aspects of theater qualify for the Greg Reuter Excellence in Michigan Musical Theater Education Award – director, designer, stage manager, etc. – and are nominated for the award by their students based on factors including the educator’s positive influence, their innovation and uniqueness and their overall rapport with students. Award nominations are available not only to full time teachers, but also to anyone who works directly with the students on a production, special project or in the classroom. The complete list of qualifications along with the nomination form can be downloaded at www.whartoncenter.com.

The Sutton Foster Ovation Awards performance and presentation will take place June 11-12 on Wharton Center’s Cobb Great Hall Stage. The awards weekend includes intensive education, rehearsal and

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theater students not only learn songs and steps, but also understand trade acting.”

“Greg was a native of Michigan thrilled to return to his roots,” added MSUFCU Institute for Arts & Creativity Associate Director Kris Koop Ouellette. “In his four months as a professor at MSU, he established life-long contacts in the industry, drew national attention to the MSU Musical Theater department and inspired students and faculty alike.”

A performer in “The Producers,” Monty Python’s “Spamalot,” “Aida,” “Shrek the Musical” and “Fosse,”

theater,” his parents said. “Having this award being named after him is a testament to his life’s work and we are so proud to see his legacy live on. He was so proud of the students he taught and commented many times on how fulfilling being a professor was for him.” The award is an homage to a dedicated teacher.

Wharton Center Executive Director Mike Brand says, “Greg was an amazing educator and brought so much life and joy to his work. His time spent working alongside our MSUFCU Institute for Arts & Creativity was cherished by everyone at Wharton

coaching for all nominees, culminating in a performance of Broadway numbers and an awards ceremony in front of a live audience. The winners of the competition are considered the top male and female musical theater performers in Michigan for that given year. Each winner receives a \$1,000 cash prize, a scholarship to Wharton Center’s Take It From The Top Summer Broadway Intensive, and an all-expense paid six day trip to New York City to represent the state of Michigan in the National High School Musical Theater Awards.

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