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NEWS

Court Ruling in Transgender Discrimination Case Sets Dangerous Precedent

Federal Judge's Decision Affirms Religion Is Justifiable Excuse to Fire Transgender Employees

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

U.S. District Judge Sean Cox ruled on Aug. 18 that R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Home's Owner Thomas Rost did not discriminate against Aimee Stephens, formerly Anthony Stephens, when he fired her.

In his ruling, Cox wrote that requiring the funeral home to do something it was religiously opposed to because of discrimination laws "would impose a substantial burden on its ability to conduct business in accordance with its sincerely-held religious beliefs... under the unique facts and circumstances of this case, the funeral home is entitled to a RFRA exemption from Title VII (and the sex stereotyping body of case law under it)."

This decision, according to ACLU LGBT Staff Attorney Jay Kaplan represents the "dangerous slippery slope that people feared regarding the Burwell v. Hobby Lobby decision that an individual employer can use his or her individual religious beliefs as justification for discrimination."

Alliance Defending Freedom, a Christian legal group, issued a statement applauding the ruling. Attorney Douglas Wardlow said, "The feds shouldn't strong-arm private business owners into violating their religious beliefs, and the court has affirmed that here."

Yet the facts in this case, Kaplan said, "demonstrated that the Harris funeral home was not a religiously affiliated home, served all denominations and is open to anyone in the public, and yet because of the owner's professed individual religious beliefs, he can both willfully violate civil rights laws and such civil rights laws cannot be enforced."

Stephens was employed since 2007. Her termination came two weeks after she wrote her employer a letter informing them about her transition from male to female, and explaining that she intended to dress in appropriate business attire as a woman. The funeral home's owner, Thomas Rost, responded by handing Stephens a severance agreement telling her that what she was "proposing to do" was unacceptable. Rost's testimony confirmed that Stephens was fired because "he was no longer going to represent himself as a man. He wanted to dress as a woman."

The court concluded in April 2015 that the EEOC had properly alleged a sex discrimination claim asserting that Stephens was fired for failing to conform to Rost's sex- or gender-based stereotypes. The funeral home then amended its answer to raise defenses under the Free Exercise Clause and RFRA.

“...if religious motivation exempts businesses from anti-discrimination laws, our government would be powerless to enforce laws to protect all Americans against the harms of discrimination.”

- ACLU Attorney Jay Kaplan

"This is a reckless ruling against a woman who was fired simply because she is transgender," said Human Rights Campaign Legal Director Sarah Warbelow. "Judge Cox's deeply disappointing decision has the possibility of setting an incredibly dangerous precedent that purported religious beliefs can be used as an excuse to violate non-discrimination laws. It has the potential of opening a Pandora's box of discrimination against a wide range of vulnerable communities. We are incredibly concerned about the implications."

This is one of the EEOC's first lawsuits on behalf of a transgender employee. Spokeswoman for the commission, Christine Nazer said, "We are disappointed with the decision and reviewing our next steps."

Kaplan said he hopes those next steps are an appeal of this decision to the 6th Circuit Court.

"The implications of allowing this broad RFRA exemption in this case are staggering. People do hold sincerely held religious beliefs about many things and those beliefs are protected by the constitution," he said. "However, if religious motivation exempts businesses from anti-discrimination laws, our government would be powerless to enforce laws to protect all Americans against the harms of discrimination."

This mean business owners could refuse service to people of color, on the grounds that religious beliefs forbid racial integration. Employers could refuse to hire women or pay them less than men, because their religious beliefs require women to remain at home. Colleges and universities receiving federal funds could impose religiously motivated racial segregation policies.

"All civil rights laws would be subject to this challenge that the discrimination was motivated by religion," he said. "This kind of challenge, our claim has no foundation in our laws and our constitution."



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Harvest of Hope Fundraiser to Benefit Ozone House

BY BTL STAFF

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The 8th Annual Harvest of Hope Fundraiser on Sept. 9 from 6:30-10 p.m., presented by Domino's and Masco Cabinetry, will give supporters a chance to contribute once again.

The fundraiser, at the Travis Pointe Country Club at 2829 Travis Pointe in Ann Arbor, will include a strolling dinner, drinks, music, a silent auction, and the live Hope Challenge Paddle Raise. But also, an opportunity to hear from some of the youth who can speak firsthand about the life-changing work Ozone House does every day.

Most of the young people, around 98 percent, the Ozone House supports are homeless and report serious family conflict. Sixty-six percent flee unsafe circumstances due to neglect, physical or sexual abuse. Many are considered "throw-aways" because their parents no longer have the capacity to care for them as a result of their substance abuse, mental illness, or the stresses of poverty. Others age out of foster care with nowhere to go.

Donations ensure that the Ozone House can continue providing services to hundreds of homeless and runaway youth free of charge. Tickets for the Harvest of Hope fundraiser are \$160 each. For more information or to purchase tickets, contact Allison Morris at 734-662-2265 or email amorris@ozonehouse.org.

Learn more about the Ozone House at www.ozonehouse.org.



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Between The Lines Newspaper

Michigan Pride Off to Late Start, Relocates Amid Tension

BY TODD A. HEYWOOD

Officials with Michigan Pride admit this year's Lansing pride events got off to a late start, but are hopeful that a new set of sponsors combined with a new location will lead to a renewal of the event.

"This hiccup has put us back on track," said Ryan Sebolt, co-chair of the organization. "We've more than made up ground, in no small part because of the partnerships."

Those partnerships are with the commercial association and businesses in Lansing's REO Town. That's a region of the city located just under a mile south of the state Capitol. It's named after the former REO Motor company, one of the nation's first auto industry leaders. The neighborhood has seen a resurgence and revitalization in recent years. The local utility sunk hundreds of thousands of dollars into the main thoroughfare in the neighborhood, South Washington Ave., as part of building its new natural gas powered electricity generated power plant in the neighborhood. A host of chic bars and eateries have popped up, as well as a wine bar and a church that believes in reparative therapy for the LGBT community.

The move to REO Town represents the annual pride festivals third location in as many years. Two years ago the festival was in Old Town, the city's de facto gay neighborhood. Last year, organizers moved the event to Riverfront Park in downtown Lansing – a return to the festivals 90s beginnings. City of Lansing records show that in April, Michigan Pride officials sought use of the same Riverfront Park location.

"We thought we were in a better position than we were," Sebolt said.

Recognizing that tough position set the board into a scramble just six weeks before the announced date of the event. There were discussions of closing Clinton Street in Old Town, a side street linking the city's two gay bars – Spiral Dance Bar and Esquire Bar. But negotiations with Spiral collapsed, according to both sides.

The cause of the collapse is not entirely clear. Spiral manager Sam Courtney said the bar offered to provide the nonprofit a stage, sound systems, arrange all the festival entertainment and to move the festival into the bar's parking lot, cutting costs for Michigan Pride associated with city street closures.

But Sebolt characterized the offer from the dance club as a "take-over."

"We just wanted them to help with some entertainment," he said.

Courtney said the Spiral offer included a request to place two Spiral employees on the Michigan Pride Board of Directors. The



This year's festival will be held in Lansing's REO Town. BTL file photo: 2015 Rally by AJ Trager

bylaws allow up to nine board members, but the organization is currently operating with five. In addition to the board posts, which Courtney said would be only for the duration of the festival this year, the bar sought access to volunteers from Michigan Pride to help with the stage, access to the organization's social media accounts to promote the entertainment, and someone from Michigan Pride to pass the bucket at Spiral to raise funds to underwrite the entertainment and stage.

Courtney and Liz Deatruck, assistant manager at Spiral, made the offer during a meeting with Antionette King-Short, a board member of the organization known locally as DJ Fudgie. King-Short offered to take the proposal to the Michigan Pride Board, but Spiral representatives were told they were not allowed to come to the meeting, they told BTL.

Sebolt said the Spiral team was not prohibited from attending the meeting, rather the board wanted the opportunity to discuss the proposal without the representatives present.

"Once we discussed it, we would have – if we decided to go that way – had them in to discuss it," Sebolt said.

But that never happened. REO Town Commercial Association made essentially the same offer as Spiral. The organization accepted that offer, and the commercial association actually put in the application for the city permits – placing its own executive director as the contact for the festival. Sebolt said the partnership with REO Town has already resulted in three businesses stepping up as sponsors. He declined to discuss what that categorization meant.

Spiral officials contend a personal conflict

between King-Short and bar owner Tom Donnell was the true driving force behind the move to REO Town. King-Short denied there was an issue, saying only that the conflict between the two from two years ago "had been addressed internally."

Former Michigan Pride board members tell BTL that is not accurate. The board members talked to BTL on the condition that they not be identified because of nondisclosure agreements they had signed. Those members said King-Short's personal battle with Spiral led to her trying to cut the dance bar out of all events in 2015.

That conflict appears to also be interfering with the nonprofit's largest fundraiser, the White Party. That party happens the Friday before Pride. For \$10, participants get a wristband which gives them access to three gay-friendly venues in Old Town – Sir Pizza, Esquire Bar and Spiral. But this year, as of deadline, Spiral is still waiting for a contract with the nonprofit.

"We are waiting for a contract with them before advertising," Courtney said.

But Pride officials said Spiral had refused to donate 100 percent of the door to the organization and as a result, would not be an official location. Spiral has for the past few years donated a percentage of the door to Michigan Pride.

And while the festival will be held over two and half miles away from Old Town where the gay bars are, Pride leadership said they are excited to "highlight other parts of the city of Lansing."

See page 15 of this issue for more info.

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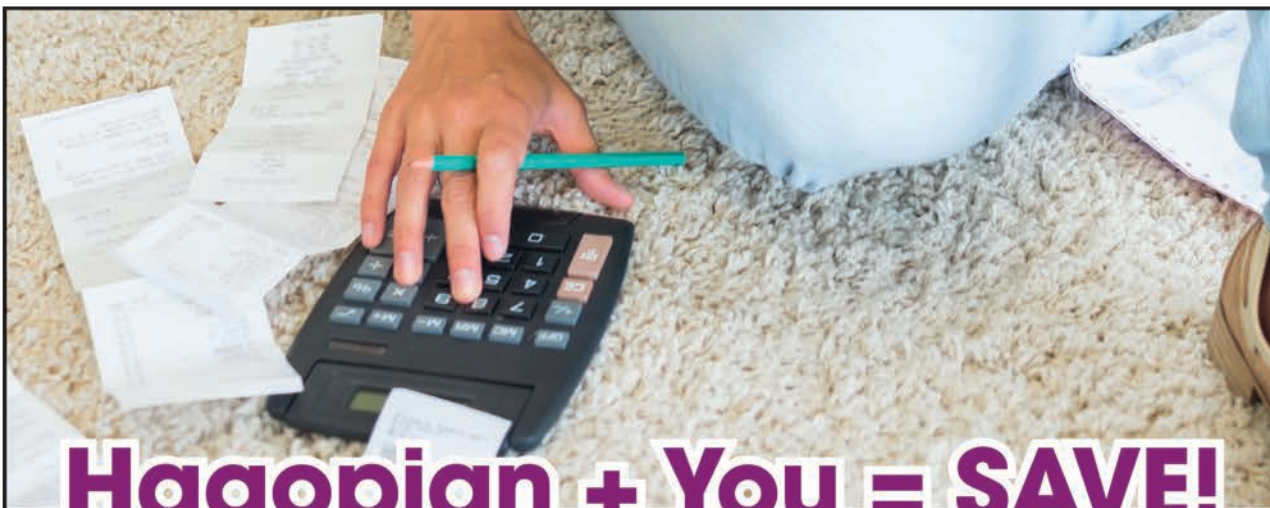
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LGBT Community Center in the Works for Traverse City

BY AJ TRAGER

Polestar: noun, a thing or principle that guides or attracts people.

TRAVERSE CITY— Five LGBT individuals in Traverse City have developed an exploratory committee named Polestar to research the interest and sustainability of an LGBT community center to serve Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Benzie, Kalkaska, and Antrim counties.

The committee envisions a space for LGBT people to gather and have a cup of coffee, watch movies, throw potluck dinners, and create a directory of LGBT-friendly businesses.

The closest community center is located in Muskegon, 130 miles to the south, which means that those seeking aid have to travel a significant distance to reach LGBT-inclusive services. Some individuals travel all the way to Ferndale to utilize the many services Affirmations provides.

“The community up here in northern Michigan is fractured. There are pockets and not everybody knows about one another. In creating the center we are hoping we can connect everybody together and provide information and services. Our tagline is ‘educate, advocate and connect,’” said Rebecca Fuller, a committee member who moved to the area one year ago.

Many LGBT people living in the area, she said, moved there 20-30 years ago and have since given up on connecting with the local LGBT community.

“There are a lot of people who have just gone on with their life and haven’t spoken with each other,” she said.

With a population of around 14,000 spread throughout the five-county area, it’s no surprise that communication and maintaining social connections is a significant hurdle for LGBT people in northern Michigan. Rural areas are known for being more isolated; however, Polestar wants to change that perception and connect the local LGBT community.

The group began assessing the interest and community needs on March 1, when it launched its own needs assessment survey. They expected the assessment would gather 200 responses from March to the end of June, but to the group’s surprise they received more than 250 responses within the first four weeks.

“People continue to take it,” Fuller said. “We’re still getting responses. Just got one yesterday. We’re really surprised and



Members of Polestar and Executive Director of Equality Michigan, Steph White, on stage at the June 13 Town Hall meeting. Photo courtesy of Drita D’Alessandro. Inset: PolestarTraverseCityCommunityCenterLogo

encouraged by the amount of responses.”

According to the survey, the local LGBT community wants more social opportunities and outings so they can meet people and develop a stronger sense of community. They also want to see extended health and youth services. Many people have also called for a guest speaker or events of size so they will feel more secure being out and about.

“A lot of people living in these small communities aren’t all out, they fly under the radar as much as possible,” Fuller said. “We’ve gotten a number of responses from people who are not fully out in their communities, people that are trying to go by unnoticed. And a lot of that is for safety reasons. They feel they’d have push-back, especially at work.”

Building A Community Center

“There’s nothing out here. We haven’t even opened up a center and we get inquiries by phone and through the website from health care providers wanting to hook up their clients with services,” John Young, a committee member said, adding that they have been friends for years. They met a few years ago at a Wednesday night coffee social group, which ended, and they continued to meet weekly.

“When I met Chris, all he talked about



is an LGBT community center, and one of those Wednesdays I got tired of hearing them so I went home and googled how to start a community center. And if you google that, right away an organization called CenterLink comes up,” Young explained.

Within a week, he and the Polestar team were on a conference call with CenterLink.

Many of the top LGBT community centers in the state are members of CenterLink, including Michigan’s largest LGBT community center, Affirmations. The organization helps current and prospective community centers improve their organizational and service delivery capacity and increase their access to public resources.

“We’ve gone at an incredible pace,” Young said. “This whole conversation started at the

end of this past February. We believe we’re going to have a physical location within a year. And we’re proud of that. I’m sure it’ll start out small and we can help to grow it.”

“Traverse City is relatively small but it is the anchor for all of northern Michigan,” said Eddie Grim, a committee member. “So a center here would have a large influence over northern Michigan. And there will be ways that it will reach out beyond that area by necessity.”

The group is working 10-15 hours a week to develop the center. Young believes that sometimes individuals such as themselves just have to “take a leap of faith,” but the success of the proposed center is all about money.

“If it can’t get financial support, it’s not going to happen. We’re not yet a non-profit. But our goal is to be non-profit by the end of the summer,” Young said.

Polestar’s bylaws are written to be flexible, Grim said, so the group can function as a small entity and then later on, when there’s more provisions, Polestar can work on bigger projects like education efforts.

“I would use the word surprising. I think there’s a timing that just seems to be right,” Young said. “I don’t think any of us envisioned it coming together so quickly, and so well.”

Town Hall Meeting

Nearly 100 people attended a Town Hall meeting in June to introduce Polestar to the Traverse City community, and to see what kind of support exists for the community center project. The meeting was important to supplement the information the committee has gathered from their survey; however, the meet and greet also provided an opportunity for the community to address any concerns they may have.

Stephanie White, executive director of Equality Michigan and Mary Jo Schnell, executive director of the Benton Harbor LGBT community center were both present along with the first openly-gay mayor of Traverse City, Michael Estes.

The next step for the center is to finish filing for their 501c3 status in the next two to four weeks, and to lay the groundwork for strong programs and services. Young said he expects to have designated community center space early next year.

To follow Polestar’s progress or learn more about their fundraising efforts, visit www.tcpolestar.org.



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SAGE Metro Detroit Requests Affirming Service Providers for Rainbow Resource Guide

LGBT Older Adults Need Help Locating Supportive Agencies, Businesses

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

How many times have we heard the story about the older lesbian woman who felt uncomfortable when the furnace repairman came to her house and asked her where her husband is? She is someone's mother, grandmother, or friend, but in this case she is also someone who is still grieving the recent loss of her partner. Feeling awkwardly compelled to answer the repairman, she is further traumatized by his response. "What do you mean you're not married? What do you mean you had a partner?"

What about the gay man who shares a room with the straight man at a senior living home? He was moved to the dementia ward when the straight man's family complained. But he didn't have dementia. This led to his depression, further isolation, and ultimately his suicide.

This is one of the the most tragic and extreme examples of what is happening to LGBT older adults who are misunderstood and ignored. But as stories such as these continue to circulate, SAGE Metro Detroit Director Angie Perone said LGBT older adults are going back into the closet, wondering how they fight when they are weak and incapable, or who will help care for them without judgment?

These concerns are important when between one and four million of the estimated 39.6 million adults ages 65 and older in the U.S. identify as LGBT. As more resources are becoming available to LGBT older adults, they won't do much good unless they reach those who need them.

In an effort to bridge the gap for the aging LGBT community in southeast Michigan specifically, Perone said SAGE Metro Detroit is "putting together a resource guide to help LGBT older adults make informed decisions about which service providers to use. We want to make it as easy as possible for this community to know where to go and who to call. This includes helping service providers who might not know where to send their clients. We want to help them help LGBT older adults who they are serving every day."

SAGE Metro Detroit was established in 2015 and is one of 29 chapters of the nationwide organization SAGE (Services & Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and



Transgender Elders) serving 21 states across the country.

Since then, this group of volunteers has been providing premier LGBT cultural competency training, helping to create safe spaces and offer a framework for many programs and services that are lacking for LGBT older adults in the local area.

"There are a number of people who reach out, asking who they can trust, whether they need some work done in their home or want to find a doctor's office where they can be out and feel safe," Perone said.

While SAGE Metro Detroit does not require a specific non-discrimination policy in order to be listed, they will provide sample language for businesses that want to use it.

"However, we do require that everyone who participates, including independent contractors and self-employed service providers, check a box expressing their commitment to provide equal service to all customers, clients, and

residents," she said.

Participating was never something that Debra Yamstein had to give a second thought to. She is dedicated to assisting older adults with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders as the Director of Senior Adult Services with Jewish Vocational Services in Southfield. Yamstein is also the Director of the Dorothy and Peter Brown Adult Day Care Program through Jewish Senior Life in West Bloomfield.

"Dementia doesn't discriminate. We want to be a safe space for everyone and by participating in the resource guide, we can make more people in the LGBT community aware of the supports and resources available. No one should have to go through dementia or dementia care on their own," Yamstein said.

As an organization that is committed to improving the lives of elders, she said the SAGE Metro Detroit screening process for the resource guide gave JVS a chance to take another look at their inclusion policy.

"Although the Brown Center has always been a welcoming place, that wasn't entirely clear in our policy. I welcomed the opportunity to clarify our position as allies," Yamstein said. "SAGE offers the opportunity for staff training if an organization is concerned about offending anyone, but it's also okay to say that we are learning and we might make a mistake and please help us to grow and be better."

Which is part of being in the service industry. "It's our job to serve people...Nobody should have to fear being their true self when seeking services. Often, it's hard for people to ask for help in the first place and if they have to fear that they will be discriminated against also, then the barrier becomes greater. This is a barrier that we can affect and change..." Yamstein said.

At SameAddress in Southfield, Vice President of Sales and Marketing Garry Cole agrees.

See SAGE, next page

LGBT Aging Resources

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The following agencies provide information and referrals for services such as meals, housing, in-home care, and transportation. They have trained their staff on how to sensitively identify and appropriately serve LGBT callers.

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SAGE Metro Detroit Events

Monthly Meeting

SAGE Metro Detroit meets at Affirmations the third Wednesday of every month at 9:30 a.m. at Affirmations on 290 W. Nine Mile Rd. in Ferndale. Meetings are open to the public; all are welcome.

Provider Reception

Once per quarter, the LGBT Older Adult Coalition hosts a Provider Reception. The meeting lasts about an hour and offers an introductory look at the special challenges

and barriers facing LGBT older adults as they age. The receptions are free to attend and are specifically designed for professionals in the aging and older adult services field. For more information about the next Provider Reception, please contact coordinator, Judy Lewis at jlewis@sagemetrodetroit.org.

Cultural Competency Training

Free intensive LGBT cultural competency training is available for aging service providers, as well as LGBT organizations and their staff. SAGE Metro Detroit trainers are certified by the National Resource Center on LGBT Aging. Read www.lgbtagingcenter.org/training/index.cfm more about the scope and content of the training offered. To attend an upcoming training, please contact coordinator Judy Lewis at jlewis@sagemetrodetroit.org.

Resource Library

Visit the SAGE Metro Detroit Library www.sagemetrodetroit.org/library/ for a list of guides that recommend policy and practice implementation to help aging service providers offer an inclusive and welcoming place for LGBT Older Adults.

For more information, visit www.sagemetrodetroit.org. To be listed in the SAGE Metro Detroit Rainbow Resource Guide, contact Joe Cadovich, Chair of the Rainbow Resource Guide Committee, at 313-757-2439 or at resourceguide@sagemetrodetroit.org.

► SAGE

Continued from p. 10

“We recognize that the older LGBT community has been underserved because of a strong reluctance to bring people into the home because of many years of discrimination they may have faced,” Cole said. “We also know that often the need is greater because many don’t have biological children that often play the role of primary caregiver. Long term care and other service providers need to recognize and be a part of the solution to this challenge.”

A challenge that SAGE Metro Detroit is hoping to overcome with the Rainbow Resource Guide.

A report from the National Council on Aging and the American Society of Aging caught the attention of Kelly

Winn, Executive Director of the Disability Network Oakland & Macomb. Issues that disproportionately affect LGBT older adults, according to the report, include stigma, isolation and unequal treatment. Also, that LGBT older adults have fewer opportunities for social and community engagement than do their heterosexual peers.

“Having worked with consumers on many of these barriers...I felt it was a good fit and a natural extension for us to support and be included in the resource guide,” Winn said. “It is my hope that businesses would become open-minded and partner with all community organizations so we can one day truly become inclusive of all.”

SAGE Metro Detroit suggests a \$50 donation to cover administrative costs, but there are no required fees to be listed in the Rainbow Resource Guide.

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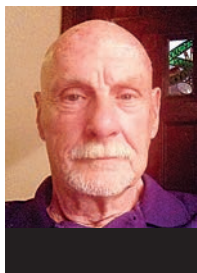
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Wrinkle, Wrinkle 'Little Star'

Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

There's nothing quite as ho-ho-hum as other people's sex lives. Unless, of course, they're young, pretty, age legal and available of their own good-natured free will (or by tax-free monetary inducement.)

In the course of my four score – and still counting – existence I've investigated many marvelous nooks and a few incredible crannies of a decidedly libidinous nature.

And, like a goodly share of my older cronies, I've learned that the adage I had heard woefully repeated to me in my 20s, "Nobody wants you when you're old and gay," ain't necessarily so. Not by a long shot. (Viagra notwithstanding.)

For those of you who plan to live well past middle-age studhood marketability (the crossover usually hits in tidal waves of dieting, exercising, hair tinting, fibbing, padding and panic, say about age 35, or a generously repetitive age 39), please mark your perpetual youth desk calendar with the following encouragements.

More than likely you'll still be able to perform – not as sure fire often, not as grandly choosy of your multiple partners or your serial monogamy cohorts, but certainly a little more expertly – at 50, 60, 70 and, if you try extra hard and stretch your 'imagination,' at 80.

Like everybody else, those of us who are wrinkle-roomers – especially male – think a lot about sex, even if we pretend not to. Sex as a commodity of day-to-day daring do lurks alluringly everywhere, 24/7. On TV, in the movies, books, magazines (and certainly denounced and/or titillated over each Sunday from thousands of begrudging or envious church pulpits).

When I was a kid, say 12 or 13, my sexual knowledge could be summed up as playground zero. My folks never discussed sex. I recall my total shock at finding a copy of Sexology magazine, with dozens of incomprehensible Gray's Anatomy illustrations, stashed under the cushion of a living room chair.

Here are some media items recently gleaned from contemporary Barnes & Noble sources to make your view from over the hill conversationally brighter. The first comes under the rubric of "nosegay." (Source: "The Science of Orgasm," Johns Hopkins Press.)

According to the authors, a certain unnamed, but nonetheless enterprising – presumably happy, high on pot – young man was able to achieve the Big O by applying an electric vibrator to his nose and to his knee cap.

Applying the selfsame double-AA instrument to his schwantz, he climaxed with an unexpected bon voyage: "an image of an ocean liner appeared (to him) in the distance, being raised from the depths by an uplifted hand."

For what it's worth, the authors clinically opine, "This description indicates that there was coherence among somatic, visceral and cognitive activities leading up to the orgasmic moment." (No wonder gay sea cruises are so popular.)

For those who remember the "God, was I drunk last night" syndrome, here's a twist. It's called "sexsomnia," according to an in-depth article in the British publication New Scientist. "For most of us, sex and sleep don't happen at the same time. When they do, it can be an emotional and legal disaster. (Count your bedtime sheep, Mary. Just don't bugger them.)

And, this from a tell-all issue of Mother Jones. Subject, "The Way of All Flesh." Expose! On Christian sex sites, anything goes, so long as you are married and shun porn. Oral and anal sex, toys and fantasies. Mild pain through spanking. All are possibilities.

One wonders how Solomon managed with 600 wives and a goodly number of missionary-position concubines. Probably worn about by his third go-around of being 39.

Charles@pridesource.com



Viewpoint



BY MICHELLE E. BROWN

Make America Great Again? Ain't Nobody Got Time for That Rhetoric!

Waiting in line at a popular restaurant, I overheard another patron (Caucasian male around 70) approach the hostess and say "Where's the men's room or should I just use the ladies' room? That's what they want, right?"

The hostess blushed, pointed and, with a sheepish smile, said "The men's room is over there." Her body language said his comment made her feel uncomfortable but she said nothing. She then turned to us and said "How many" and led us to our table.

As for me well – as my mother would say – if looks could kill, orange would be my new black!! I was beyond pissed and contemplating what action I was going to take when the man rejoined his group which, remarkably, was seated at the next table from us. There are no coincidences in life – IJS!!

My partner had not heard the full comment, so I enlightened her. Trying to talk me down off my "angry activist" ledge, (after moving all the sharp utensils from my reach) she commented that the man was just a dinosaur whose time was running out.

True but those words that tone. Words have power. You say what you mean and, whether intentionally or unintentionally, you mean what you say.

Words, like ashes from a fire, can remain incendiary long after they've been uttered with unintended consequences long after the media firestorm has died down.

Those words – that off-handed bathroom remark alluding to transgender bathroom rights – were just a reminder that many have similar feelings about the place of African Americans, Latinos, immigrants, LGBTQ people and others in our society as second class citizens.

I get it, he was/is just a dinosaur, but the rhetoric of the 2016 political season has, for many of these dinosaurs, defined their last stand. Sadly they have found a gladiator willing to wield all the hate-filled rhetoric used historically to divide those of us in the 99% and extend their hold on power just a little longer.

You would think in this age of "Google," instant fact-checking, and 24/7 media coverage, we would be a smarter electorate.

However, I've seen too much injustice, hatred and

See Brown: Rhetoric!, next page

► Brown: Rhetoric!

Continued from p. 12

inequality to find solace in the fact that the days for his ilk are numbered or that change will come merely by our hoping for the best while remaining silent when confronted by bigotry and ignorance.

I've also lived enough years to recognize that greatness is a relative term and for the vast majority of Americans the greatness talked about by Trumpites has never been a reality only, at best, a dream.

It's not an impossible dream! It is dream held and passed down - regardless of race, class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation or gender expression - through the generations.

It is the dream best articulated by Martin Luther King Jr. and, despite many advancements, still a dream deferred.

The Langston Hughes' poem "Montage of a Dream Deferred" begs the question of how a people might react if they have a cherished dream for many generations that has failed to come true. It reads:

"What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore - And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over - like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode?"

Hughes was writing at a time when African Americans were still suffering the injustice of Jim Crow laws. Fast forward to 2016, and although Jim Crow may be gone, the net of inequality lives on and has been expanded to include not just African Americans but other communities of color, has crossed boundaries of gender, sexual orientation, race and class and includes the many immigrants who answer Lady Liberty's call to the "tired, poor and huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

So here we stand at this moment in time. On one side there's a demand for inclusivity, attention to issues of social justice/equity and the beginning of a social revolution. It did not end when Bernie Sanders was not the nominee but was the beginning of conversations, actions and a movement that might ultimately bring about real change.

On the other side, well there's that call to "make America great again" building upon racist, bigoted, and xenophobic tactics that historically have only diminished the country not made it great - NEVER!

Grace Lee Boggs once said, "We urgently need

We are stronger not just in our communities, our country and our world when we work to attain not just the American dream, but a global dream of equality, social, environmental and economic justice for all instead of kicking the can down the road on the backs of those less fortunate or different from the status quo.

to bring to our communities the limitless capacity to love, serve, and create for and with each other." We are stronger not just in our communities, our country and our world when we work to attain not just the American dream but a global dream of equality, social, environmental and economic justice for all instead of kicking the can down the road on the backs of those less fortunate or different from the status quo.

Any crackpot can make statements in the media that fan the flames of hatred, insecurity and fear. Words have power. Even if retracted, walked back or claimed to be sarcasm, once uttered words take on a life of their own and the results can be divisive, tragic and even fatal.

As Sweet Brown (no relation) said in her infamous You Tube Video "Ain't Nobody Got Time for That!!"

Let's be stronger together, not just at the polls in November, but each and every day. Stand up for what you believe in; push back against hate speech; fight for all our dreams; love who you love boldly, proudly and unapologetically. Claim your space in this expanding, intersectional world and be OUT!! There's room on our rainbow wave for everyone because we ARE stronger together.

Michelle E. Brown is a public speaker, activist and author. You can follow her writing and activities at www.mychangeiam.com and on www.twitter.com/mychangeiam.

Creep of the Week

Peter LaBarbera

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

It's always strange to me to hear people talk about the "gay agenda." Because undoubtably anyone who uses this term is anti-gay.

First of all, it's important to remember that having an agenda isn't necessarily a bad thing. Like when your boss asks you, "So, what's on your agenda today?" she isn't asking you what subversive things you're planning on doing to ruin the company.

That said, the "LGBT community" is a misnomer. In reality, people who fall under the umbrella of LGBT are incredibly diverse in every way. There is no one thing that everyone agrees on, except maybe a desire to be treated fairly and equally under the law (though there's no doubt far less consensus once you start talking about how to get there and what to do).

Which is why Americans For Truth About Homosexuality President Peter LaBarbera's Aug. 19 "report" for Accuracy in Media, an organization that isn't actually interested in accuracy so much as paranoid that the "liberal media" is out to get them, is so ridiculous.

In "Media Myths of the Homosexual-Transgender Agenda," LaBarbera writes, "The purpose of this report is to expose and refute some of the longstanding statistical lies and propagandistic myths of the LGBT ... activist movement. With media support, homosexual and leftist activists now openly campaign to banish dissenting conservative voices. This dangerous dynamic gives the homosexual-transgender lobby nearly full rein to advance its agenda."

Ha. "Banish dissenting conservative voices," eh? If he means that we think people who espouse the belief that LGBT people aren't human and are incapable of love and unworthy of life don't deserve TV air time and shouldn't be a reporter's go-to for an opposing viewpoint on every article about any LGBT issue, then yes, banish them. Let them assemble their banished selves in the dark realm of a place like Accuracy in Media or Americans For Truth About Homosexuality.

LaBarbera's "report" doesn't really offer anything new. It's more like a "greatest hits" of anti-LGBT talking points: nobody's born gay,

LaBarbera's "report" doesn't really offer anything new. It's more like a "greatest hits" of anti-LGBT talking points: nobody's born gay, sex-reassignment is mutilation, anti-gay reparative therapy works, homos die young, LGBT people make bad parents, etc.

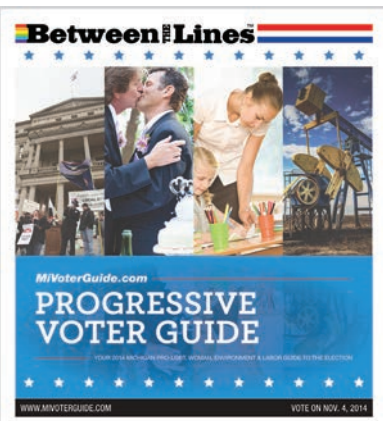
sex-reassignment is mutilation, anti-gay reparative therapy works, homos die young, LGBT people make bad parents, etc.

But what I'm most interested in is what he calls "The 10% Myth." LaBarbera tries to get to the bottom of just how many LGBT people there are in the U.S. The rough figure of 10% has been bandied about for years. LaBarbera writes, "The 10 percent myth served its purpose of projecting enormous 'gay' political strength when the movement was still weak." In other words, the LGBT movement was just pretending to be 10% of the population for the political clout. And we all know that preceding to exist is a totally sound political strategy.

LaBarbera then throws out some other much smaller numbers eventually coming to the claim that LGBT people are about 3% of the population. To which I say, "Who cares?" Who cares what the percentage is? It's not an easily ascertained or verifiable number. It's as if LaBarbera is arguing that once a minority falls below a specific percentage then it's okay to declare them inhuman.

And he is. Because for LaBarbera, LGBT people are inhuman. That is, in fact, the cornerstone philosophy of his hateful organization Americans For Truth About Homosexuality. The very name implies that homosexuals are liars; that homosexuality is something to be exposed as evil.

Then again, until we know the exact percentage of the U.S. population who are members of LaBarbera's little club, how can we even be sure they even exist at all?



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Federal Judge Grants Injunction Temporarily Blocking Obama Administration Student Guidelines

For Now States Free to *Not* Comply in Protecting Transgender Students

BY LISA KEEN

In a move that could put increased attention on the U.S. Supreme Court, a federal judge Sunday issued a temporary order blocking the Obama administration from taking any action against states that refuse to comply with its guidelines concerning treatment of transgender students in federally funded schools.

The August 21 order, from Judge Reed O'Connor (an appointee of President George W. Bush), enables at least 23 states that have expressed opposition to Obama administration guidelines issued in May, to ignore those guidelines until the court can rule on the merits of lawsuits challenging them.

The guidelines, from the U.S. Department of Education and Department of Justice, state that discrimination against transgender students violates federal law against sex discrimination and that schools failing to comply with the laws could lose their federal funding.

A White House spokesman reiterated Monday the administration's contention that the guidelines were "certainly not a mandate" and characterized the lawsuit as an election year attempt to "play politics" with issues involving transgender students.

"[O]ur goal has been from the beginning to provide for the safety and security and dignity of students all across the country," said John Earnest, press secretary for President Obama.

Lambda Legal and four other national legal groups working on LGBT issues expressed disappointment in Judge O'Connor's injunction. They said it is likely to confuse school districts trying to help transgender students and goes against "years of clear legal precedent nationwide establishing that transgender students have the right to go to school without being singled out for discrimination."

The groups said the injunction would have "no effect on the ability of other courts or lawyers representing transgender people to continue to rely on the federal government's interpretations of Title IX or on prior decisions that have reached similar conclusions about the scope of federal sex discrimination laws."

Big enough conflict?

But the injunction could have an effect on whether the U.S. Supreme Court agrees to take up the issue sooner rather than later. Judge O'Connor's decision in this preliminary matter contradicts a ruling of another federal court. And conflicts among federal courts make issues more likely to attract Supreme Court intervention.

The Fourth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 - which prohibits discrimination based on sex by federally funded educational institutions - prohibits discrimination based on gender identity.

Judge O'Connor for the U.S. District Court of Northern Texas said "the plain meaning of the term sex" does not include gender identity. Noting that the Supreme Court had granted a stay against the Fourth Circuit decision, O'Connor said a decision from the Supreme Court "may obviate the issues in this lawsuit."

Judge O'Connor's decision makes clear he thinks states opposing the Obama administration guidelines have a strong case. He said "the plain meaning of the term sex" in Title IX "meant the biological and anatomical differences between male and female students as determined at their birth." The guidelines, therefore, are "contrary to law." In the preliminary ruling, he said the guidelines pose a sufficient level of threat to the statutes and

constitutions of plaintiff states to demonstrate "a threat of irreparable harm" that warrants a temporary injunction.

Starting in 2010, Obama administration agencies began interpreting federal laws barring discrimination on the basis of "sex" to include "gender identity." That meant laws prohibiting discrimination based on sex provided some protection for people whose gender identity is different from that stated on their birth certificate. In May, the departments of Education and Justice distributed a letter with "guidelines," saying discrimination against such transgender students violates federal laws and that schools failing to comply with the laws could lose their federal funding. The letter, said O'Connor, "provides not only must [states] permit individuals to use the [school restrooms and facilities] consistent with their gender identity," but stipulates that alternative accommodations are unacceptable.

Thirteen states filed the lawsuit, Texas v. U.S., to argue that Congress intended "sex" to refer "only to one's biological sex, as male or female." Those states include Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Ten other states (Arkansas, Kansas, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Wyoming) filed a similar lawsuit in a federal court in Nebraska.

In granting the injunction, Judge O'Connor said the Obama administration's guidelines are "clearly designed to target" plaintiff states with "legal consequences" if the states fail to follow the guidelines.

The Obama administration's guidelines and actions, said O'Connor, "indicate that (states) jeopardize their federal education

funding by choosing not to comply" with the guidelines. Thus, he said, those guidelines are both "legislative and substantive" and that the public should have been given an opportunity to comment on those guidelines.

"The information before the Court," said O'Connor, "demonstrates (the Obama administration agencies) have 'drawn a line in the sand' in that they have concluded (states) must abide by the Guidelines, without exception, or they are in breach of their Title IX obligations."

"Permitting the definition of sex to be defined (as the Obama administration has stated) would allow (the administration) to 'create de facto new regulation' by agency action without complying with the proper procedures."

At issue are two federal laws that prohibit discrimination based on sex - Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which covers employment, and Title IX of the Education Amendments Act, which covers educational institutions.

A brief filed by five pro-LGBT legal groups argued that federal appeals courts governing many of the states opposing the Obama guidelines have already ruled that sex discrimination includes discrimination against transgender people.

The groups include Lambda Legal, the ACLU, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (formerly known as GLAD), and the Transgender Law Center.

Jon Davidson, national legal director for Lambda Legal, said he does not believe O'Connor's ruling will increase the probability that the Supreme Court will accept the Fourth Circuit case. He said "a large number of issues" in the Texas v. U.S. case "go beyond what is at issue in the [Fourth Circuit] appeal, such as whether the states, state and local

agencies, and state officials that brought the suit were sufficiently harmed" by the guidelines.

"Granting review in [the Fourth Circuit case, Gloucester v. Grimm] wouldn't resolve all those issues," said Davidson, "so I don't think the preliminary injunction in Texas v. U.S. puts pressure on the Supreme Court to hear the Gloucester case."

Shannon Minter, NCLR's national legal director, said he thinks O'Connor's injunction will likely be stayed.

Minter notes that, in discussing the "plain meaning" of "sex" in federal law, O'Connor "completely disregards Price Waterhouse. In that 1989 decision, a majority of the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Title VII's prohibition of discrimination because of "sex" include discrimination against an employee based on expectations for an employee's appearance and behavior based on their biological sex. (Notably, Justice Anthony Kennedy dissented.)

"This is a political case brought to make a political point," said Minter. "The states don't have any actual injury. They are just expressing their disagreement with the Department's view of the law, but that abstract disagreement is not a valid basis for a federal lawsuit. This is political posturing at the expense of a small group of vulnerable children."

The Texas Tribune noted that Judge O'Connor issued a temporary injunction in March of last year to block enforcement of an Obama administration interpretation of the Family and Medical Leave Act that required states to provide to same-sex married couples the same benefits it provides to opposite-sex married couples. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton withdrew that lawsuit after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June of last year that state bans on marriage licenses for same-sex couples was unconstitutional.

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Wyoming Supreme Court Hear Arguments on Same-Sex Marriage

BY BEN NEARY

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) - The Wyoming Supreme Court must decide whether to remove from office a Pinedale judge who says her religious beliefs would prevent her from presiding over same-sex marriages.

The court heard arguments Aug. 17 on Judge Ruth Neely's appeal of a removal recommendation from the Wyoming Commission on Judicial Conduct and Ethics. The court will issue a written opinion later.

Neely, who's not a lawyer, is a municipal judge in Pinedale and has been suspended from her position as a circuit court magistrate in Sublette County.

The ethics commission investigated Neely after she told a reporter in 2014 that she wouldn't preside over same-sex marriages. Her lawyers said no same-sex couples have asked her to perform their marriage.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last year that same-sex couples nationwide may marry.

Lawyer James Campbell of the Alliance

Defending Freedom, an Arizona religious advocacy law firm, spoke for Neely at the Aug. 17 hearing. He argued that removing her from office would violate her constitutional rights.

"This case presents significant First Amendment issues," Campbell told the five judges of the Wyoming Supreme Court.

Campbell said Neely only had expressed her opinion about the institution of marriage, and hadn't done anything to show bias or prejudice against any individual. "In 21 years on the bench, Judge Neely has never faced allegations that she's been unfair to anyone," he said.

Many prominent judges as well as major world religions share Neely's opposition to same-sex marriage, Campbell said.

Lawyer Patrick Dixon, representing the ethics commission, said Neely's case amounted to, "a low point and a black mark in the history of the judiciary in Wyoming."

Dixon argued that the state's judicial code of conduct prohibits all judges - from magistrates through supreme court justices -

from showing through their words or actions bias against people on the basis of their sexual orientation or other factors.

While Dixon argued that Neely's religious beliefs are discriminatory, he said the commission wasn't targeting her because of those beliefs. Rather, he said the commission recommended removing her because her public statement that she couldn't preside over same-sex marriages violates the judicial code of conduct.

Neely's case has similarities to the legal action in Kentucky against clerk Kim Davis.

A conservative Christian, Davis was jailed briefly last year after she refused to allow her office to issue same-sex marriage licenses. Her case sparked a national debate over the religious freedom of civil servants versus the civil rights of same-sex couples before she ultimately agreed to alter the licenses to remove her name and title.

In Neely's case, the Wyoming Supreme Court rejected attempts from a group of current and former Wyoming lawmakers as well as national religious organizations to

file "friend of the court" briefs in support of Neely.

Neely and Campbell declined comment after the court hearing.

"We have judicial ethics and standards for a reason," said Jason Marsden, executive director of the Denver-based Matthew Shepard Foundation and a former Wyoming resident.

"It's meant to assure the public that everyone that sits on the bench is impartial, and handles cases on their merits, and on the facts and not on any other basis," he said. "For (Neely) to make the statement that a big chunk of the public is simply not welcome to exercise their constitutional rights in her courtroom flies in the face of everyone's First Amendment protection that we don't have an official state religion."

The foundation is named after the University of Wyoming student who was beaten, tied to a fence and left for dead in 1998. His slaying became a rallying cry in the gay rights movement and a federal hate crimes law now bears his name.

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Wedding Business Blooms For Florists

BY JAN STEVENSON

Beautiful flowers are an integral element of any wedding, creating much of the romance and magic for couples on their special day. Flowers accent the exquisite clothes, and are carefully designed to make each reception table look grand. Floral arrangements at the ceremony frame the couple in a lovely array. A bride's bouquet, the boutonnières on each tuxedo – the flowers are a cornerstone tradition of the American wedding.

And wedding flowers are big business.

The average U.S. wedding cost \$26,645 in 2015, according to The Wedding Report, a national survey of the wedding industry. Brides Magazine reports that most couples spend between seven and ten percent of their total wedding budget on flowers – that's an average of about \$2,500 per wedding.

With the legalization of same-sex marriage, wedding florists are enjoying a surge in new business. According to a June report from the Williams Institute at UCLA, weddings by same-sex couples have generated an estimated \$1.58 billion boost to the national economy, and \$102 million in state and local sales tax revenue, since the U.S. Supreme Court's decision extending marriage equality nationwide in June 2015. Since Obergefell v. Hodges, 132,000 same-sex couples have married, bringing the total of married same-sex couples in the U.S. to 491,000. This spending could support an estimated 18,900 jobs for a full year.

Almost a half million weddings translates into a lot of flowers!

"From a florist perspective we are making same-sex weddings a norm in our marketing materials, and florists that aren't embracing it are going to lose a lot of business," said Sadie Quagliotto, social media and marketing



Robbin Yelverton, co-owner of Blumz By JRDesigns, and associate Pam Lord at the 2015 Ultimate LGBT Wedding and Anniversary Expo. The 2017 Expo will be March 26 at the MotorCity Casino Hotel. BTL file photo: Andrew Potter

manager for Blumz by JRDesigns in Ferndale and Detroit. When asked if orders for same-sex weddings have increased their floral business, Quagliotto exclaimed, "Big time! Especially in the first six months after marriage became legal. People were waiting to get married for a long time and were just waiting for that verdict. They came in ready to go with their budgets already filled out."

Other local florists said that they also experienced a surge in business right after the decision and that many of the couples were

significantly older than most couples with whom they usually work.

"That's the biggest difference that I've seen in the same-sex couples we have worked with," said Tim Galea, owner of Norton's Flowers and Gifts in Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor. "We have not had any same-sex couples under 30, maybe not even under 40. These are people who have been living together a long time and want to consummate it in a ceremony. We had one female couple in their 70s."

David Schroeter, owner of Schroeter's

Flowers in Farmington, said that he has worked with many long-term couples, but he also did a wedding for a relatively new couple. "There was one couple that surprised me they were doing something that big so soon."

Older couples tended to spend more on their weddings. "Because couples tend to be a little bit older and both working, they tend to be a little more extravagant and bigger spenders."

As same-sex marriage becomes more

SeWeddings, page 20

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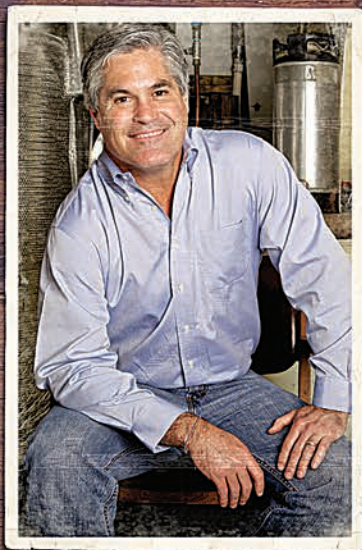
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MARRIAGE

► Florists

Continued from p. 18

accepted and mainstreamed, so have the kind of flowers arrangements at same-sex weddings.

“Typically they have been fairly traditional,” said Schroeter “With each of our female couples, one has carried a bouquet and the other has worn a boutonniere.”

Quagliotto said she’s seen a shift towards more traditional floral styles since marriage became legal. “We used to see more of a difference when it wasn’t legal – they didn’t want to go full out wedding. Now the number one thing I’ve seen is they want the exact same thing as everyone else – they want the pomp and circumstance. It’s become more of the same.”

Even though tradition reigns, the creativity quotient is higher at same-sex weddings, florists said.

“The guys we’ve worked with have been more contemporary-minded, more artistic. They tend to look for

something more extravagant and glitzy,” said Galea.

“We just did a really beautiful one at the MOCAD in Detroit. Every table was dedicated to a different famous painter and each table had a different theme and centerpiece. It was one of the most creative weddings I’ve ever seen,” said Quagliotto.

Schroeter said that he likes to work with his clients to establish a comfort level and a sense of trust. As a gay man, he feels a natural bond when working with same-sex couples.

“I would say it’s a little easier, because once I come out to them it helps. They can relate to me easier.” He shared how exciting it was for him when marriage equality became legal. “The day it became legal there were two women at the front of the line at the Oakland County Courthouse and one was the daughter of one of the women who works here. It was fantastic – and of course we did the flowers for their reception.”

Resources

Find LGBT-friendly businesses to plan your next event at BTLWeddingExpo.com

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Lesbian Pastor, United Methodist Church Agree to Separation

EDGERTON, Kan. (AP)—A lesbian pastor has agreed to go on involuntary leave from her United Methodist Church in Edgerton to avoid a church trial over her sexual orientation.

Cynthia Meyer and Methodist officials agreed in early August that her leave will begin Sept. 1. Her final sermon in Edgerton will be Aug. 28. No other United Methodist church will be able to appoint her as a pastor but churches could hire her to “perform functions equivalent to a lay staff person,” according to the agreement.

The Kansas City Star reports Meyer revealed her sexual orientation to her congregation in January, when she thought the denomination was considering changing its ban on homosexual clergy. That has not happened, so the agreement was reached “to avoid the harm and trauma of a trial,” according to a statement from the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Meyer, 53, said on Aug. 17 she wanted to avoid a trial because she could have lost her credentials to ever be a pastor again. She plans to work in lay ministry or for a nonprofit while she waits for the denomination to change its policy, which would allow her to return to the pulpit. She will receive a \$37,000 severance, which was one year's salary.

“I've signed away my right to live out my calling - to be most fully who God has called me to be - I hope only for a time,” Meyer wrote in a statement after the agreement. “My heart is broken, yet I trust that God will work through even this for good.”

Rita Jones, president of the United Methodist Women in Edgerton and secretary of the church council, said the congregation did not want to lose Meyer.

“A congregation never agrees a hundred percent on anything, but a big majority here supported her and wanted her to stay,” Jones said. “She is an excellent pastor and we are sorry to see her leave and wish her the best.”

In May, the top policymaking body of the United Methodist Church voted to delay consideration of all LGBT-related proposals. A new commission will spend at least two years reviewing policy on the subject, with the goal of developing a plan to address differences within the denomination. The Methodists adopted

a policy in 1972 that called same-gender relationships “incompatible with Christian teaching.”

Former LDS Church Lobbyist Joins Board of LGBT Mormon group

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—A former lobbyist for the Mormon church has joined the board of a support group for gay and transgender Mormons.

The group Affirmation says Bill Evans, who spent decades in the public affairs office of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is a straight ally of the LGBT Mormon community and one of three new members on the 16-person management board.

Affirmation president John Gustav-Wrathall says Evans helped the group start a relationship with church officials four years ago and will continue that outreach in his new role.

Evans retired as a church lobbyist several years ago and now works with homeless youth.

Evans says in a statement that the LGBT community showed him grace and openness that were part of a transformative journey for him.

Lesbian Sues Catholic School Over Firing

HACKENSACK, N.J. (AP)—A woman is suing a Roman Catholic school in New Jersey, alleging the school violated the state's discrimination law when she was fired because she's married to a woman.

But Christopher Westrick, an attorney for Paramus Catholic High School, its president, James Vail, and the Archdiocese of Newark, on Friday planned to ask a judge to dismiss Kate Drumgoole's suit. In court papers, the lawyer argues Drumgoole was not dismissed because of her sexual orientation.

Westrick said his clients didn't violate the state's anti-discrimination law because it allows churches to require their workers to abide by the tenets of the Catholic faith.

“Instead, she was terminated for violating the Ministerial Policies and the Code of Ethics - in failing to abide by the tenets of the Roman Catholic faith, i.e. by entering into a same sex marriage,” Westrick states.

He also said his clients' actions are also protected under the First Amendment,

which ensures the free exercise of religion.

Drumgoole told The Record newspaper she was fired as dean of guidance and head coach of the basketball team in January after administrators learned she was married to a woman.

In certification filings, Drumgoole said her job never included religious instruction.

As a guidance counselor, she set up tutoring for struggling students, provided counseling on academics and preparing for college, ensured that learning-disabled received help, and intervened in bullying incidents. But her role became more administrative after promotions in 2013 and 2014, such as running department meetings and organizing award ceremonies.

Drumgoole said other faculty members remain employed even though they don't abide by the church's tenets, and that she feels as though she was singled out.

Drumgoole said only one co-worker knew about her private life.

“I'm a private person,” she said. “Particularly when you work with adolescents, I believe your private life should be private.”

Westrick declined to comment when reached by phone.

Pope Outlines Vision for Promoting Life, Family Issues

VATICAN CITY (AP)—Pope Francis on Aug. 17 outlined his vision for how the Vatican will promote family and life issues, naming an American moderate to head the new Vatican office for families and laity and directing related institutes to give merciful care to spiritually wounded Catholics.

Dallas Bishop Kevin Farrell, a former Legion of Christ priest whose brother is also a top Vatican official, now becomes the highest-ranking American at the Holy See.

Francis appointed the Irish-born Farrell on Aug. 17 as he formally created the new Dicastery for the Laity, Families and Life, which combines several Vatican offices into one.

Francis also named an Italian moderate, Monsignor Vincenzo Paglia, to head two academic institutes affiliated with the new laity office — one dealing with bioethics, the other with marriage — and told Paglia he should focus on promoting the merciful side of church doctrine.

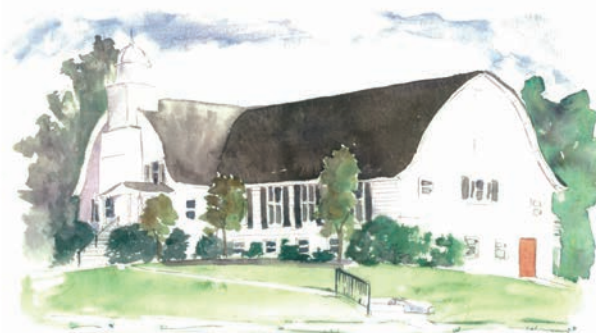
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Photo: Amanda Voisard

Local Performer Inspires Orlando Community to Keep On Dancing

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Dance can heal, we know that. It can be a cathartic soul-soother, as it's been, ironically, in Orlando after the recent June 12 Pulse Nightclub shooting claimed 49 lives and left the city, and the world, devastated and shaken and scared. It can heal people like Blue Star at the age of 4, when ballet classes fixed her "weird, turned-in legs," and once again now, at 42, as a professional dancer who finds comfort in her art – the same art that has brought light to the Orlando community when it needed it most.

"You look around," says the out dancer,

recalling the days after her space, The Venue, reopened, "and everybody is just smiling and having a great time and they're loving the song and they're dancing and they're dancing."

In the hours and weeks after the tragic shooting, they kept moving only to stop to make noble contributions. Water, gift cards, paper towels, food. You name it. Blue, along with others in the community, organized the call for donations, putting together care packages for the victims, the victims' families and Pulse employees, whom she calls her "family."

"I always say that I'm the facilitator of fun," says Blue, affectionately known to the

community as the "Mother of Burlesque," "and I became a facilitator in another way. I had these volunteers show up, and it was amazing to watch that happen – my staff just pulling together. To be able to walk into a place that we established four years ago – you never know what you're preparing for, but these last four years have really been preparation for what happened."

Since 2012, Blue has been the brainchild behind The Venue, a rental and performance establishment – a "safe space" for people to come together in artistic unity, or, yes, even to celebrate the impending birth of a newborn. Just a few miles from Pulse, on Virginia Drive,

the space has hosted a variety of gatherings, from cabarets and burlesque shows to baby showers and bar mitzvahs.

But then the massacre happened, the deadliest mass shooting in modern American history, and suddenly Blue knew the community needed this space, which she says she "built with love." Love abounded in the days following the incident, and The Venue was full of overflow from The Center, Orlando's preeminent LGBT community organization. "From sunrise to sunset," she remembers, "it was this ongoing energy field of hugs and donations and coping."

And healing. When Venue officially

“You do what you’re supposed to do and we are here to help one another, and so I feel like it’s kind of just the way it goes. This is what you need to do and you’re gonna do it and then the next step comes and you’re gonna do that too.”

reopened the following Friday with a burlesque show, Blue recalls the vibe being “gentle.”

“These four walls – that’s our imagination land,” she says, “and that’s where we get to get away from things. Unfortunately, that was taken away from (the Pulse victims).”

After Pulse, Blue’s movement-oriented hashtags – #ArtHeals, #BurlesqueHeals and #HealingOrlando – have helped mend the community’s wounds.

“She’s sort of grassroots, low-budget while simultaneously shining like a diamond in both dance and song,” says Billy Manes, editor of Florida LGBT publication Watermark. “She’d just as soon play Donna Summer’s ‘On the Radio’ and lose her mind in the living room as she would kick a leg up, collapse and cry within the span of second on stage in front of hundreds. Blue Star is the real deal.

“She has changed this town for the better. She’s changed me for the better.”

For Blue, her compassion for her fellow Orlando friends and “family” is a no-brainer. “You do what you’re supposed to do,” Blue says, simply, “and we are here to help one another, and so I feel like it’s kind of just the way it goes. This is what you need to do and you’re gonna do it and then the next step comes and you’re gonna do that too.”

Even before Pulse, Blue was offering hope in the midst of tragedy through other altruistic endeavors. In 2014 she co-founded the Barber Fund, a grassroots organization established to assist men, women and children with cancer. The nonprofit is named in honor of Blue’s friend, the late John “Tweeka” Barber, who died of sinonasal carcinoma in 2011. The Barber Fund’s “One Love” slogan, inspired by a David Guetta and Estelle song of the same name, “has been so important since 2011.” In recent months, following Pulse, “it’s everywhere,” she says.

“When her best friend John ‘Tweeka’ Barber died, she gave her all to start the One Love Foundation to fund others who are dealing with the terrors of cancer. When the Pulse massacre happened, she danced this city through its pain, showing up where necessary and never showboating,” says Manes.

“Blue is a sort of pivotal bar of light in Orlando, an insurmountable force of nature in her compassion for others,” he continues. “You wouldn’t think a classically trained dancer with that smirk and wit would give a damn about anyone, but she gives all the damns.”

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



Andy Macdonald at the Ann Arbor Skatepark by Andrew Somers



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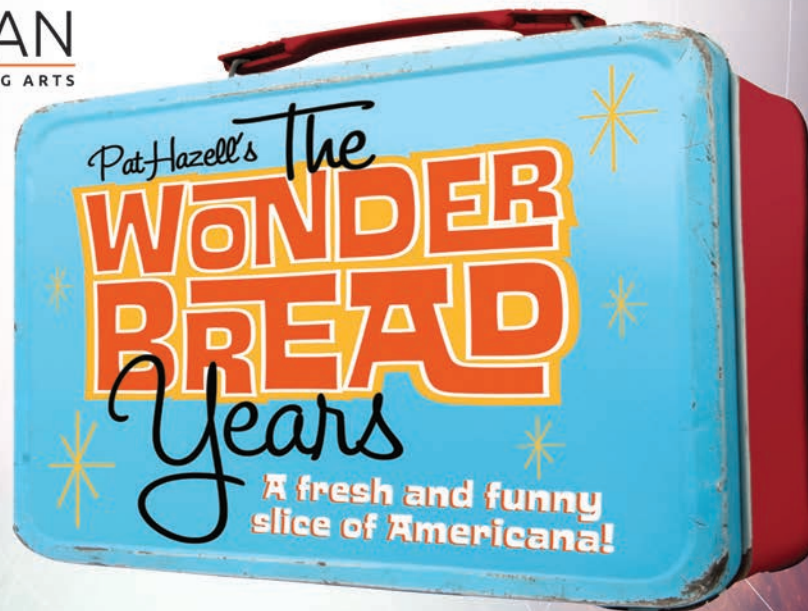


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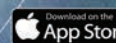
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Firey Wood

Out Actress Talks Orlando Tragedy, Co-Star Ellen Page & Bisexual Label

BY LAWRENCE FERBER

Openly bisexual actress Evan Rachel Wood is fired up lately about the Orlando massacre, misconceptions about bisexuality, and her role in the post-apocalyptic indie, "Into The Forest."

Led by queer female dream team Ellen Page, Wood and director Patricia Rozema ("When Night Is Falling," "I've Heard The Mermaids Singing"), the film is based on Jean Hegland's post-apocalyptic 1996 novel. Living in the remote, woodsy Northwest with their father, siblings Nell (Page) and Eva (Wood) find all power and technology has suddenly gone down due to a mysterious event, but that's the least of their problems when a tragic accident, shifty strangers and a horrific crime strike their once idyllic corner of the woods...

The Raleigh, NC-raised Wood (her father, David Ira Wood, is a local theater icon), 28, is probably best known for playing Mickey Rourke's estranged lesbian daughter in 2008's "The Wrestler," a lusty Sapphic vampire queen in HBO's "True Blood" and a debauched adolescent in her 2003 breakout "Thirteen." She came out as bisexual in a 2011 Esquire interview, dated Kate Moennig of "The L Word" (whom, she says, remains a best friend), and on June 10th this year made a YouTube video to clear up misconceptions about bisexuality and share her personal tale of revelation.

"There is so much shame that comes with that 'bisexual' label, so I was like, I'm not going to be ashamed or silent," she remarks.

The mother of a 3-year-old son (dad is actor Jamie Bell, whom she amicably parted with in 2014), Wood chatted by phone about post-apocalypse existence, the Orlando tragedy, her turn as an android in HBO's upcoming sci-fi series "Westworld," and which political figures she'd go on a date with.

As a North Carolinian, are you rolling your eyes about the HB2 bathroom bill, transphobia and other horrible GOP legislation going on down there lately?

Oh my god. I can't even. It's embarrassing. When I grew up there we prided ourselves on being a progressive Southern state. It's really disturbing to see this happening.

Ellen Page brought both you and Rozema on "Into The Forest." Was the fact she was also openly queer an element that helped convince you to sign on?

Well, the script really drew me, and it was just a really pleasant coincidence that me and Ellen and Patricia are all out. We had a few giggles about it, like that's pretty cool, but no. It worked out that way.

So what issue does the movie address that most compelled you?

How disconnected we are from our primal nature and how we relate to our environment. No one really knows or is taught how to live off the land, to forage for food, to survive without all the luxuries and conveniences of a soft bed or gas. Too often we don't ask ourselves the question of what would happen if you didn't have those readily available. They are luxuries. I felt it was a reminder of what's really important when all the things are taken away – in this case, two sisters and the love they have for each other, because that's what's keeping them alive.

This is a big spoiler to those unfamiliar with the book but needs to be touched on. There's a scene where Eva is raped, and it's downright painful to watch. Can you talk about that?

That was really intense. We did that in one take. The only thing important to me was how it was shot. I didn't want to glorify it in any way or take away from the emotional trauma by focusing on just what's happening physically, because I think that's part of the problem of what's happening with rape culture. People think it's not a big deal because you're still alive afterwards and it maybe only lasted 15 minutes. But what they don't understand is it's not the physical trauma that's most damaging. Of course it's damaging, painful and horrible, but it's the emotional scars rape leaves that take a lifetime to deal with and come back from. You lose a part of yourself, it's taken from you,

“I'm just done hiding, I'm done walking on eggshells, and I think a lot of people feel that way, but I also have a desire to show and give people as much love as possible.”

and it's really hard to get back. I think that's what we showed in the film. You see this girl just disappear slowly, and when that happens you're in such shock your body doesn't know how to handle it.

Did you and Ellen discuss the Orlando massacre when it happened last month?

She was one of the first people I contacted. I tried to make a point of reaching out to a lot of my queer friends, because obviously this is devastating for everyone, a blow to us all, but I think it cuts a little bit deeper to those who feel it could have been them. It's devastating and we were shaken up by it, but I view myself as a person who can stay strong in the face of despair and ignorance. This is one of those cases where I got really scared and sad, but then angry in a good way because it was motivation

and inspiration. I'm just done hiding, I'm done walking on eggshells, and I think a lot of people feel that way, but I also have a desire to show and give people as much love as possible.

Let's shift gears to some lighter topics for a bit, shall we? Who are your current celebrity crushes?

You know what, I met Jamie Lee Curtis yesterday and I've got to say she is a babe! I was so speechless and starstruck, and I've been so in love with her for so long and she was even more beautiful in person.

How about Nick Jonas, who has been happy to court the gay boys as well as the girls?

Oh, I don't know enough about him and what he's doing!

Elizabeth Warren? Would you say yes to a wine and cheese date with her?

I love her. Oh, hell yeah. She's great.

And Bernie Sanders?

Sure! Can he bring the bird? (Laughs) I'd date them all except Trump.

Are you Team Hillary?

Ummm... as opposed to Trump? (laughs) I... politically getting involved in the press is very dangerous right now. I'm not voting for Trump!

Whose life story would you most like to play?

Janis Joplin. It's a dream forever and ever, and (the response is always) like, "Oh, you're too pretty." Dude, movie magic! She's just incredible to me.

What can you tell me about your character in "Westworld," and are there LGBT characters?

Absolutely. It's based in the future, and it's going to be much more fluid (sexually), so of course that's there. My character is a "host." I think what's going to be really cool about the "hosts," because we don't like to use the word "robot," is they would be more fluid and genderless. It's going to blow people's minds. The writing impresses me the most; it's so intricate, deep – an existential nightmare – and very much based in reality. It's set in the future but based on real technology we're developing now, looking at the state of humanity and where we're at, what we consider entertainment, and why we're so attracted to darkness. It's taking a good, hard look at that.

As a mom of what you call "the raddest" son, what is your wish for your child's future?

More tolerance, empathy, kindness and communication. That's a reason I had children. Sometimes people think, "I'm not going to have a kid because everything's so messed up," but I felt, here's my chance to put something good into the world, raise a good man and for him to be the change. That's a lot to put on him, but that's how it works.

The image contains three vertical posters for events at Spiral Dance Bar. The first poster is for 'WHITE PARTY' on Friday, August 26th, starting at 9 PM. It features a rainbow gradient and lists performers for the Tent, Big Room, and Patio. The second poster is for 'KIDS DAY!' on Friday, August 26th, from 4-8 PM. It is described as a family-friendly event with free school supplies for kids and activities like food, dancing, games, face painting, and fun. The third poster is for 'PRIDE' on Saturday, August 27th, starting at 6 PM. It features an 'After Party' and lists performers for the Tent, Big Room, and Patio. All posters include the Spiral Dance Bar logo, address (1247 Center St., Lansing, MI), website (www.SpiralDanceBar.com), and social media handles.

SPIRAL DANCE BAR // 1247 CENTER ST., LANSING // WWW.SPIRALDANCEBAR.COM

Happenings

OUTINGS

Thursday, Aug. 25

Quicken Loans Sports Zone 9 a.m. Basketball courts and volleyball area open to public daily. Quicken Loans, 662 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. www.campusmartiuspark.org/events

Outdoor Games 12 p.m. Table tennis, chess, checkers, beanbag toss, and more. Quicken Loans, 662 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. www.campusmartiuspark.org/events

Mix & Mingle 5:30 p.m. Downtown Happy Hour. Channel 955, 800 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. www.campusmartiuspark.org/events

Healthy Moves: Strength & Cardio Boot Camp 6:30 p.m. Hosted by the Bedrock Wellness Center. Quicken Loans, 662 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. www.campusmartiuspark.org/events

Trivia Night at aut Bar 7:45 p.m. Event is free of charge. Queer Young Professionals and Students of Ann Arbor/Ypsi, 315 Braun Ct., **Ann Arbor**. 734-994-3677. www.meetup.com/

Friday, Aug. 26

PFLAG Sweet Savoy Bake Sale 8 a.m. Funds raised benefit Sacred Heart Rehab Center HIV/AIDS Care Program. PFLAG Tri-Cities, 127 S. Franklin, **Saginaw**. leishashaler@gmail.com www.pflag.org

Kids Day! A Family Friendly Event for LGBTQ Youth, Parents and Allies 4 p.m. Free hot dogs, chips and drinks, face painting, dancing and games. Spiral Dance Bar, 1247 Center St., **Lansing**. 517-371-3221. info@spiraldancebar.com www.spiraldancebar.com

Red Hot Fridays 9 p.m. No cover charge before midnight. Password "Red Hot." Red Door Night Club, 22901 Woodward Ave., **Ferndale**. 248-541-1600. info@reddoornightclub.com www.reddoornightclub.com

Spiral's White Party 9 p.m. Wear white. Spiral Dance Bar, 1247 Center St., **Lansing**. 517-371-3221. info@spiraldancebar.com www.spiraldancebar.com

Saturday, Aug. 27

Dexter Cider Mill 1 p.m. Oldest continuously operating cider mill in Michigan. Queer Young Professionals, 3685 Central St., **Dexter**. www.meetup.com

True Colors 9 p.m. Pride After-Party Spiral Dance Bar, 1247 Center St., **Lansing**. 517-371-3221. info@spiraldancebar.com www.spiraldancebar.com

Sunday, Aug. 28

16th Annual Wine and Food Festival 1 p.m. Sample more than 150 award-winning Michigan and

international wines, locally brewed beer and live entertainment. Tickets \$25; \$10 for "designated drivers." Kroger, 3554 Walton Blvd., **Rochester Hills**. 248-377-0100. https://www.palacenet.com/events/detail/wine-and-food-festival

Inaugural Motor City Music & Food Festival at Motor City Harley-Davidson 5 p.m. The Festival will include pool tables, darts, live music, stunt bike exhibitionists, a full cash bar and more. Tickets: \$25 per day. Motor City Harley-Davidson, 34900 Grand River Ave., **Farmington Hills**. 248-202-4662. matt@ultimatefunproductions.com http://motorcitymusicandfoodfest.com/entertainment/

Beginner Yoga for Baby Boomers 7 p.m. \$5 per person. RSVP required. Universalist Unitarian Church, 25301 Halsted Road, **Farmington Hills**. 248-345-4867. chas5540@aol.com

Tuesday, Aug. 30

Naked Men's Yoga 6:30 p.m. Naked Men's Yoga, **Ann Arbor**. massage4@aol.com http://groups.yahoo.com/group/michigan_mens_clothing_optional_yoga

Thursday, Sep. 1

Transgender Meeting 7 p.m. First Thursday monthly. PFLAG Tri-Cities, 815 N. Grant, **Bay City**. tri-cities.pflag@gmail.com www.pflag.org

Editor's Pick



Spiral Hosts Family Fun Day

As a kickoff to Pride weekend in Lansing, Spiral Dance Bar is hosting its first Kid's Day! The afternoon event will include free hot dogs and chips, face painting, dancing and games for children and adults of all ages.

In an effort to raise money to help children in need have school supplies for the upcoming scholastic year, Spiral has set a goal of gathering donated materials including: 100 backpacks and standard school necessities such as pens, pencils, markers, colored pencils, glue sticks and notebooks. Monetary donations also accepted.

Kids Day will run from 4-8 p.m. Friday Aug. 26 in the Spiral Parking lot. The event is free of charge. For more information email Sam Courtney at sam@spiraldancebar.com.

Spiral is located at 1247 Center St., Lansing.

Saturday, Sep. 3

Michigan State Fair Admission: \$6-8. Fifth Third Bank, 46100 Grand River Ave., **Novi**. 248-348-6942. www.michiganstatefairllc.com

Lesbian Euchre 6 p.m. Please arrive early to register. \$5 donation to Affirmations. This is for beginners (must know the basics of the game) to the experienced. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. lsbnandii@aol.com www.goaffirmations.org

Retro Fevre Saturdays 9 p.m. Music from 80s, 90s, and today. Red Door Night Club, 22901 Woodward Ave., **Ferndale**. 2485411600. events@reddoornightclub.com http://www.reddoornightclub.com/events/

Sunday, Sep. 4

Paddle Group 1 a.m. Yak season is April through October. Yak Womyn, **Ann Arbor**. sapphosis@yahoo.com

Monday, Sep. 5

Ann Arbor "Aut" Social Group 7:30 p.m. Ann Arbor area lesbians and friends gather to dine and socialize. Aut Bar, 315 Braun Court, **Ann Arbor**. 734-769-8385. joinautsocial@umich.edu www.autbar.com

Tuesday, Sep. 6

Show Your Support for MIC Every Tuesday, Julian's will donate 15 of the bill to MIC, just tell them you're "here for MIC." Motown Invitational Classic, 27380 VanDyke, **Warren**. www.julianosrestaurant.net

Care to dance? 7 p.m. Learn to urban ballroom every Tuesday night. Bring a partner, or not. Sisterhood Social Excursions, 8670 Grand River Ave., **Detroit**. www.meetup.com

Detroit Metro Area Pagans Monthly Meetup 7 p.m. This is an open pagan roundtable that has various discussions held on the first Tuesday of every month. Michigan Pagans, 150 Cass Ave., **Mt. Clemens**. www.meetup.com

MUSIC & MORE

Comedy

Funny Or Die "Oddball Comedy and Curiosity Festival" Featuring Sebastian Maniscalco, Brian Regan

and John Mulaney. Tickets: \$25-\$121. DTE Energy Music Theatre, 7774 Sashabaw Road, Clarkston. 4 p.m. Sep. 3. 248-377-0100. www.dteenergymusictheatre.org

Concerts

AEG Live "O.A.R. The XX Tour - Evolution of a Revolution" Tickets: \$54.75-\$79.75. All ages welcome. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. 7 p.m. Aug. 25. 248-399-2980. www.axs.com/events/310431/o-a-r-tickets

AEG Live and The Ark "Toad the Wet Sprocket" Tickets: \$29.50-\$55. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. 7 p.m. Sep. 1. 248-399-2980. www.romtlive.com

Black Iris "Mac Sabbath with Clownvis Presley" Tickets: \$15. Populux, 4120-4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 8 p.m. Aug. 31. 313-833-9700. www.majesticdetroit.com

Blind Pig "PokePig" Featuring Neekapz and Digeri, Vest and Tyler, DosLopez and Katzmeow. Tickets: \$5-\$8. Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., **Ann Arbor**. 9:30 p.m. Aug. 25. 734-996-8555. www.blindpigmusic.com

Live Nation "Slightly Stoopid - Return of the Red Eye Tour" With SOJA and Fortunate Youth. Tickets: \$29.50-\$39.50. The Fillmore Detroit, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 5:30 p.m. Aug. 28. www.thefillmoredetroit.com

Live Nation "Laury Hill" Tickets: \$35-99. The Fillmore Detroit, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 7 p.m. Sep. 2. www.thefillmoredetroit.com

Majestic Theater "Lil Yachty" The Boat Show Tour. Tickets: \$20. All ages welcome. Majestic Theater, 4120-4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 7 p.m. Aug. 30. 313-833-9700. www.majesticdetroit.com

Majestic Theater "Bayside" Special guests The Menzingers and Sorority Noise perform. Tickets: \$21-\$25. All ages welcome. Majestic Theater, 4120-4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 7 p.m. Aug. 26. 313-833-9700. www.majesticdetroit.com

Palace Sports and Entertainment "Summerland Tour" Starring Sugar Ray, Everclear and Lit. Tickets: \$16-\$61. Freedom Hill Amphitheatre, 14900 Metropolitan Parkway, Sterling Heights. 7:30 p.m. Sep. 3. www.palacenet.com/venues-events/

freedom-hill-amphitheatre

The Ark "George Bedards Match Box Blues" Tickets: \$20-\$27. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Aug. 27. 734-761-1800. www.theark.org

The Carr Center "Evenings in Paradise" Local and national jazz and R&B favorites. Paradise Valley Beatrice Buck Park, See website for location details, Detroit. June 7 - Aug. 25. www.downtowndetroitparks.com

Dance

Jewish Community Center "Tommy Tune Tonight!" Tickets: \$63. Berman Center for the Performing Arts, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield. 7:30 p.m. Aug. 25. 248-661-1900. www.theberman.org

Festivals

Static Network "Foxfest! Women's Music & Art Festival" Tickets: \$10. A portion of proceeds to benefit Girls Rock Detroit, Alternatives for Girls and Genesis House. The Tanager Gallery, 715 E. Milwaukee, Detroit. 8 p.m. Aug. 27. 313-873-2955. www.facebook.com/FoxfestDetroit/?fref=ts

THEATER

Crooked Tree Play Festival Roustabout Theatre Troupe, Downtown Main Street Milan, 2 Tolan St, Milan. 6 p.m. Aug. 25. https://www.facebook.com/events/257795524577620/

College/University Theater

Ernie - The Play Tickets: \$15-70. Wharton Center for the Performing Arts, Michigan State University, 750 E. Shaw Lane, East Lansing. Aug. 24 - Aug. 27. 800-WHARTON. www.whartoncenter.com

ART 'N' AROUND

Ann Arbor Art Center "Alternative Printmaking" Class fee: \$140. Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 W. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. Aug. 22 - Aug. 25. 734-994-8004. https://apm.activecommunities.com/annarborartcenter/Activity_Search/891

Cranbrook Academy of Art "John Glick: A Legacy in Clay" More than

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Sep. 11. 313-833-7900. www.dia.org
Lawrence Street Gallery "Shel Markel's Solo Show" Works by Sheldon Markel. Lawrence Street Gallery, 22620 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Aug. 3 - Aug. 27. 2485440394. www.lawrencestreetgallery.com

Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit "Methexis: Works by DEPE Space Resident Mitch McEwen" A video series. Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit. July 8 - Aug. 28. 313-832-6622. www.mocaddetroit.org

Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit "Detroit City/Detroit Affinities" Works by Annette Kelm Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit. June 3 - Aug. 28. 313-832-6622. www.mocaddetroit.org

PNC Financial Services Group "Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for

Utopia" Tickets: \$6-10. Cranbrook Art Museum, 39221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. June 18 - Oct. 9. 877-462-7262. www.cranbrook.edu

Solo Exhibition by artist Futura "New Horizons" Artist Reception, Saturday, June 18 at 6 p.m. Library Street Collective, 1260 Library St., Detroit. June 18 - Sep. 3. 313-600-7443. www.lscgallery.com

Static Network "Hazel Park Art Fair" Free admission. Around 80 artists and 17 musical acts. All ages welcome. Green Acres Park, 620 W. Woodward Heights, Hazel Park. Aug. 27 - Aug. 28. 313-886-7860. www.hazelparkartfair.com

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Catie Newell: Overnight" Irving Stenn, Jr. Family Gallery. University Of Michigan Museum Of Art, 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. June 11 - Nov. 6. 734-763-4186. www.umma.umich.edu

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Editor's Pick

Meadow Brook Wine and Food Festival

The 16th annual Wine & Food Festival is coming to the Meadow Brook Amphitheatre Aug. 27-28. Kroger has partnered with Bonterra Organic Vineyards of Hopland, California and Bell's Brewery of Kalamazoo and more to provide festival attendees with an opportunity to sample more than 150 award-winning Michigan and international wines with an array of locally brewed beer themed in the varieties of "Michigan: Love from the Glove!," "Around The World" and "Best Buys of the Season."

The festival will include the delicacies of three food trucks. The Palace Sports & Entertainment's "Pistons Maplewood Barbeque" Food Truck will serve the house smoked barbecue from its own smoker; Marconi's Pizza Food Truck will serve a selection of specialty pizzas, breads and fries and Time2Chill Detroit Gelato Truck will feature Palazzolo's Artesian Gelato and Sorbetto.

Live entertainment will highlight feature performances by Chris Cranick, the Shahida Nurullah Quartet and Mike Stefaniak.

A complete list of wineries, vendors and other activities are available online at <http://bit.ly/2b7fygW>. The festival will run 1-9 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 27 and 1-4 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 28. Tickets are \$25; \$10 for "designated drivers." The Meadow Brook Amphitheatre is located at 3554 Walton Blvd. Rochester Hills, MI 48309. For more information call 248-377-010.



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Statuary

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Fountains
Garden benches
Planters, Pots & Urns
Statuary

Events at Affirmations Feat. New Installation in the Pittmann-Puckett Gallery

A new installation at the Affirmations Pittmann-Puckett Gallery titled "Cass Corridor Revisited, 1976-1984" highlights the LGBTQ history of Detroit's Cass Corridor.

Photographer Bruce Harkness lived in the Cass Corridor's north end during the '70s as he pursued a bachelors degree in art from what is now the College for Creative Studies. Harkness is a straight man who had no connection to the LGBTQ community prior to the project during an era when most gay men and women were targeted for violence.

The Cass Corridor was known for its underground art scene and for being a hot spot for the LGBTQ community to safely live, work and play. The neighborhood has changed a lot since Harkness documented the vibrant and warm lives living in the area; and has fallen victim to plight, poverty, crime, demolished neighborhoods, vandalism and arson. Much of what Harkness captured is gone today.

The exhibit consists of roughly 50 black and white photographs highlighting much of the LGBTQ happenings in the area during the late '70s and early '80s. During his two years documenting the area, Harkness captured shots of residents of the Niagara Apartments, images from the Willis Bar, Jumbo's and Drag Queens at the Gold Dollar Show Bar among others.

While the Gold Dollar Show Bar is now



most known for hosting some of Detroit's most successful indie bands including performances by the White Stripes and Electric Six, the bar has a distinctly LGBTQ legacy as a key drag bar in Detroit.

According to the artist himself, the collection represents a good slice of photographic history. Many of the photos from Detroit's Gay Bar culture and other community spaces that no longer exist have never been shown before.

Harkness holds both a bachelors and a masters of fine arts in photography. His images have preserved an important piece of Detroit's LGBTQ history.

"Cass Corridor Revisited, 1976-1984" will be on display from July 30 to Sept. 30. Prints can be purchased for \$50. For more information call Affirmations at 248-398-7105.

Other Events at Affirmations

As one of the top 10 LGBTQ community centers in the nation, Affirmations hosts a multitude of events and social

opportunities for the LGBTQ community of metro Detroit.

"Coming Out Over Coffee" is held every Saturday at 10:30 a.m. and provides a space for LGBTQ and questioning individuals to start their journey as an out person through confidential and diverse conversation with like-minded participants.

"Smear Lipstick" is a group for self-identified feminine lesbian women to identify issues specific to them. It is a safe space for open discussion, networking and unity building. The group also does a monthly community service project to increase their visibility in every community. Meetings are held every fourth Saturday from 3-6 p.m.

The Youth Drop-In Center provides a safe place for youth to engage their peers for networking, fun and learning. Open Fridays and Saturdays, 4-9 p.m. for youth between the ages of 13 and 20. Adults, aside from trained volunteers, are not allowed in the space. Attendees can utilize the Center's XBOX 360 and assorted games, pool table, board games, WIFI, Netflix and much more.

Zumba is offered for \$6 each Monday at 6:30 p.m. Make sure to bring water. All abilities are welcome.

For a full list of Affirmations' activities visit the BTL calendar at <http://pridesource.com/calendar.html>.

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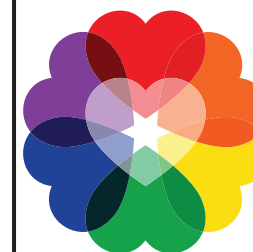


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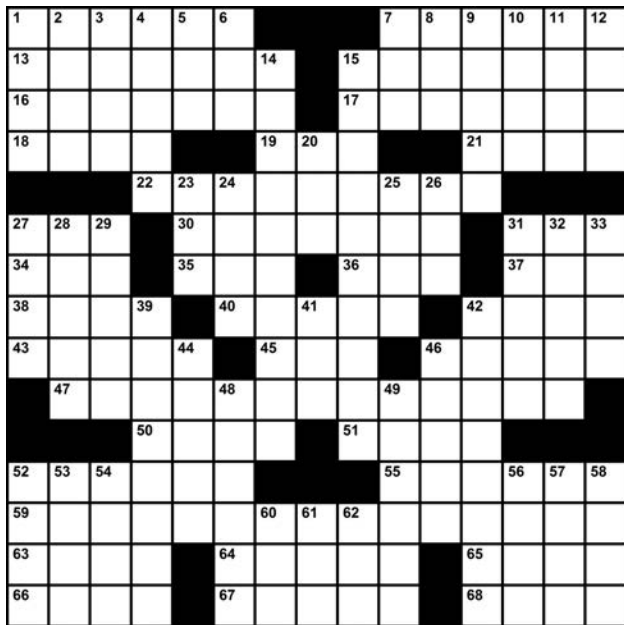
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Q Puzzle



Got Milk

Across

- 1 Activist Milk of this puzzle's quote
- 7 Street in San Francisco where Milk was "mayor"
- 13 Like the naked eye
- 15 Tip of a thick tool?
- 16 Coming
- 17 Lincoln's side of the penny
- 18 Big top performer
- 19 The Batmobile, e.g.
- 21 Market corrections

- 22 Area of tongue usage
- 27 Talk and talk
- 30 With 47- and 59-Across, what a gay activist said about the shot that would kill him
- 31 IRS info
- 34 Crack fighter pilot
- 35 Suffix with bear
- 36 JFK debater in '60
- 37 The, to the Greeks
- 38 Statue's modesty protector
- 40 Phrase before "forgiven"
- 42 Open your mouth to let it out
- 43 Bert's roommate
- 45 Head lines?
- 46 "After Delores" author

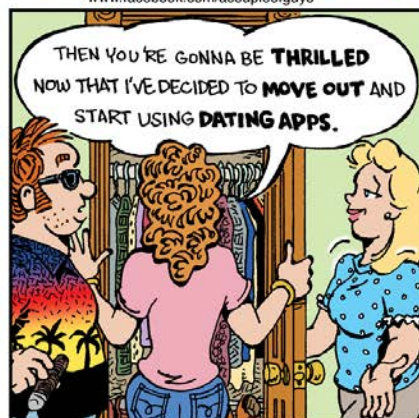
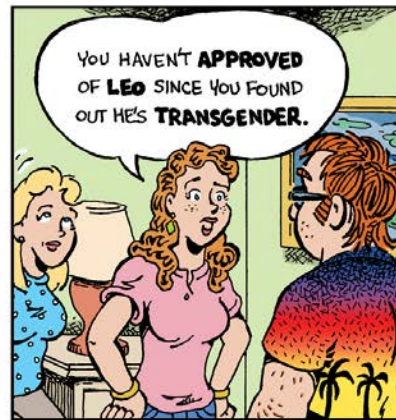
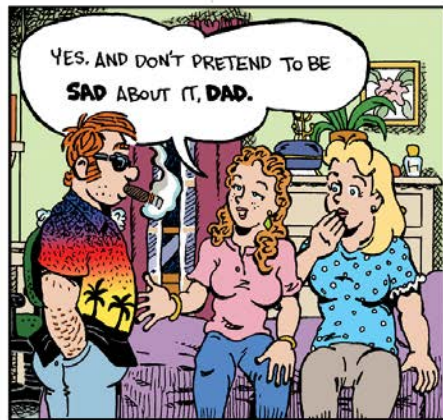
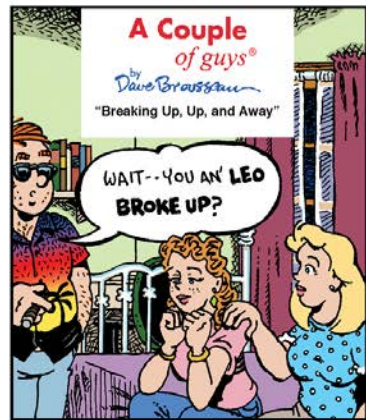
- Schulman
- 47 See 30-Across
- 50 Italian well
- 51 Long pants, for short
- 52 Lorca's grocery
- 55 Activity of a siren
- 59 See 30-Across
- 63 Split
- 64 Eagle appendage
- 65 Drag queen's leg scraper
- 66 They're performing, in Fame
- 67 Garbo, for one
- 68 Tasty tubers

Down

- 1 The rainbow flag has six
- 2 Hathaway of "The Devil Wears Prada"
- 3 Uncommon, to Caligula
- 4 Early fiddles
- 5 College web address suffix
- 6 To date
- 7 Where a trucker parks his bottom
- 8 Off-rd. ride
- 9 You can stick your tools in these
- 10 Polo of "The Fosters"
- 11 Sound grate?
- 12 Lines from Lesbos
- 14 Bruce Jenner at the Olympics
- 15 Straight to the point
- 20 Offspring of a queen
- 23 Giant quarterback Manning
- 24 Hill with a flat top
- 25 Some bitches put it in their mouths

- 26 Cigarette pkg.
- 27 Larry Kramer's alma mater
- 28 Like sourballs
- 29 Reeves of "My Own Private Idaho"
- 31 Dinah of a golf classic
- 32 Whale finder
- 33 Close at hand, to the Bard
- 39 European nuts
- 41 "___ Miz"
- 42 Night alright for fighting, to Elton John
- 44 Whitman work
- 46 Like Edna Turnblad
- 48 Makes into law
- 49 Dahl of Hollywood
- 52 Martin's "Ed Wood" role
- 53 Bucatinsky's "All ___ the Guy"
- 54 Good with the hands
- 56 "I" of Socrates
- 57 "Cheers" barfly
- 58 Mardi ___
- 60 Perry Mason's field
- 61 Grand ___ Opry
- 62 Gay guy, to Brits

Find solution to this puzzle at www.pridesource.com




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4 Scientific Reasons You Should Laugh More in Bed

The Frivolist

BY MIKEY ROX

This may sound odd to you, but I love laughing during sex. No, I'm not laughing *at* my partner (well, maybe sometimes I am), but rather, we're usually laughing together. Maybe we missed each other's mouths while kissing in the dark, or perhaps a hand went someplace unexpected (but probably welcomed). I enjoy laughing in bed because I don't take sex seriously. Sex should be fun and exciting and it should feel good – and as it turns out, laughing can contribute to all those things that make doing the deed so great. In fact, it's quite common – and healthy. Here are a few educated reasons why.

1 Laughing during sex makes couples feel safer

If you and your partner are laughing in the midst of the bump-and-grind, you've reached the ultimate relationship goal – in my opinion, at least – of being totally comfortable while you're naked together. I don't enjoy being guarded when I'm otherwise completely exposed, and I want my partner to be relaxed as possible too.

It stands to reason then, as a result of your superior senses of humor, a greater sense of security is established in the relationship – a positive byproduct of giggling at each other's real-time sexual misfortune – according to licensed marriage and family therapist Lori Schade.

“When a couple can be playful and laugh together and it is accepted, the relationship feels safer, and then they feel safer to explore various options in their sexual relationship,” she says.

Which is just one more reason for your wall-to-wall neighbors to be envious.

2 It relieves the pressure to ‘perform’

We've all had those nights – thank you, Thirsty Thursdays – when we're not in the right frame of mind when it's time to show that bar trick what's good. That's because we're so concentrated on performing well – and striving for climax – that the anxiety we've caused ourselves overshadows the carefree romp we should be having.

“When couples get fixated on goal-oriented behavior in bed (i.e. orgasm), it often generates pressure and anxiety, which are counter to performance,” Schade reveals. “When they instead are just experiencing each other in the moment and can laugh together, they are more likely to increase the quality of the sexual interaction.”

The takeaway? Let out a few belly laughs in bed to blow a better load.

3 Laughing helps you relax your muscles for a more pleasurable tryst

Sex feels great – or at least it should – but there are exercises we can do before getting down to the nitty-gritty that can heighten the experience for even more pleasure. You won't break a sweat, either – because all you need is a robust chuckle.

Scientifically speaking, laughter can release endorphins that promote stress reduction and pain for an overall more satisfying outcome, says licensed sex and relationship therapist Courtney Geter.

“During sexual activity, our bodies may be tense and tight from stress during the day or anxiety about the sexual activity,” she explains. “Laughing before or during sexual activity is one way to help relax muscles to prevent pain or possible injury during sex. For clients experiencing anxiety during sexual activity, I help them incorporate ways to ‘play,’ including laughing with each other long before the sexual activity. This helps prep the brain and body for activity.”

4 Mutual laughter between partners means you're both in touch with the dynamics of your relationship

Any couple who have been together for a length of time, let's say two years or more, knows that sex can become routine, commonplace and, dare I say it, boring – because, as Schade admits, “Sexual experiences and relationships wax and wane.”

Hope is not lost, however.

The first thing you need to know is that it's totally normal; every relationship deals with this at some point. Secondly, being able to laugh about it to keep the affection running steady when the physical aspect of your sexual relationship experiences hills and valleys is a sign that you're in a good place.

“Laughing implies acceptance of a variety of levels of desire and performance,” Schade adds.

Your relationship may not be perfect, but your ability to laugh with each other suggests that there's a level of openness and honesty that many other couples lack. Hold tight on that revelation when things get wonky down there and you'll be A-OK.

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.

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