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LGBT Workplace Equality

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During National Anthem

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Transgender Victims' Advocate



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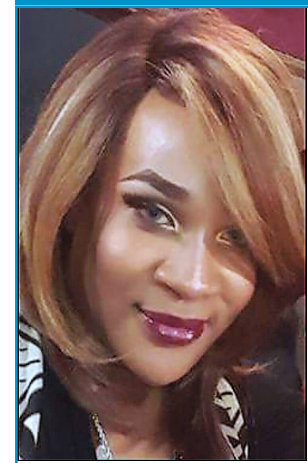
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NEWS

Memorial Service Planned for Jeffrey Montgomery

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT – A special gathering is planned Sept. 17 at 11 a.m. at the McGregor Conference Center at Wayne State University, 495 West Ferry Ave. in Detroit, to celebrate the life and times of Jeffrey Montgomery, pioneering activist and the founding executive director of the Triangle Foundation (now Equality Michigan).

Under Montgomery's leadership, the Triangle Foundation grew from a small band of friends in 1991, to a state-wide political organization that took on a range of pertinent LGBTQ issues, including hate crimes, police misconduct, the reprehensible "gay panic" defense, and the political rights of the LGBTQ community. Throughout his life Montgomery was honored by leaders and organizations at both the state and national levels for his advocacy and role in advancing civil and human rights. A powerful visionary, Montgomery helped lead not only an organization for LGBTQ rights in Michigan, but he was also the co-chair of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Projects. Montgomery was a frequent media presence and nationally respected advocate who helped with founding the Equality Federation and contributed to many other components of the overall modern-day movement for human rights.

In 2010, the Triangle Foundation evolved into Equality Michigan after merging with



the Lansing-based Michigan Equality. EQMI inherited the massive body of work, high-bar legacy, and the strong foundation Montgomery laid for the continued progress the community is still experiencing today.

In the words of his brother, John Montgomery, "What an incredible person he was and what a champion for human rights." EQMI looks forward to seeing everyone at the memorial to celebrate every bit of that champion.

Read more about Montgomery's history online at pridesource.com.

For those who want to preserve and highlight the legacy of his work, a donation to fund the documentary of his life, "America, You Kill Me," is suggested.

Inclusive Justice Hosts Conference to Support Trans Lives

BRIGHTON – The Faith Allies for Trans Lives: Stand Up for Justice conference and training on Sept. 17 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. will address the need for acceptance of LGBTQI people within religious and spiritual communities, and for the equitable treatment of all, especially sexual minorities in local, state and federal public policy.

"We came to realize the trans community is being especially targeted in Michigan as part of the backlash since marriage equality," said Rev. Beth Rakestraw, IJ co-chair and Pastor of Divine Peace Metropolitan Community Church. "Trans people are bearing the brunt of that backlash. We felt it was very important to take a stance."

The faith-based coalition, Inclusive Justice said it welcomes leaders to join in building "a

statewide network of congregations inclusive of all traditions that affirm the inherent dignity and worth of every human being as a matter of spiritual conviction."

Presenters will include National LGBTQ Task Force faith organizing staff members Kathleen Campisano, Bri Sanders and Camden Hargrove, State Board of Education President John Austin, Rev. Dr. Julie Nemecek and state House Rep. Jon Hoadley (D-Kalamazoo).

Pre-registration for the public event at St. Paul's Episcopal Church on 200 W St Paul St. in Brighton is required online at www.inclusivejustice.org or by phone at 301-512-9632. A \$40 donation is suggested. A continental breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Correction

In the Sept. 1 issue of Between The Lines, in the story "Elliott as Authentic as the Art," we incorrectly stated that Elliott Broom was part

of a collective decision-making process with current Museum Director Salvador Salort-Pons in reference to the Kresge court project. It was completed under former Museum Director Graham Beal. We apologize for the error.



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MERGE Makes Strides Toward LGBT Workplace Equality

Michigan Employee Resource Groups share best practices, address LGBT company concerns

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Coming out at work is becoming easier for LGBT workers with inclusive policies making their way from the board room into the everyday culture of the American workplace. Things are progressing and there is a demand for more equality, but hard-working Michigan employees are still at risk of being fired or harassed on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Equality Michigan's Department of Victim Services tracks at least 50 cases of LGBT employment discrimination each year. Compounding the issue, since 1974, is a Congress that repeatedly rejects legislation to protect LGBT workers in the private sector. The Employment Non-Discrimination Act has been introduced in every Congress since 1994 except the 109th, and defeated. ENDA was replaced by a more comprehensive Equality Act in 2015 that will take time to pass through the current Congress as there is no clear pathway. In the meantime, Michigan is one of eight states with campaigns working in 2016 to amend existing state anti-discrimination laws, such as the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, to protect the LGBT community.

Many Fortune 500 companies decided long ago not to wait for change to happen. They have implemented their own policies and practices against LGBT discrimination in the workplace. The Big Three automakers, for example, were some of the first companies to adopt healthcare benefits in June 2000 for same-sex domestic partners of salaried and hourly employees. Over the course of 30 years, employee resource groups (ERGs) have increasingly become the best vehicles to help a diverse range of people obtain a voice within large corporations and influence change.

LGBT-specific ERGs are one way employees can gain acceptance and build understanding on the job, and at the same time help their businesses flourish. They promote an inclusive environment that helps companies to hire and retain the best employees. They also help companies reach out to LGBT customers, improving their bottom line.

The Michigan Employee Resource Group, or MERGE, has been meeting once a month for the past ten years to discuss topics ranging from how to increase LGBT ERG membership to social and judicial issues that impact the community. The networking organization is made up of LGBT ERGs from major corporations in southeast Michigan.



“Several of us who were members of other Detroit-area ERGs had been chatting informally and saw an opportunity for something a little more structured to share stories and best practices,” said Adam Bernard, associate director of competitor intelligence at General Motors. Bernard is also the chair of GM Plus (People Like Us), the company’s affinity group since 1993 (officially in 2000) for direct, contract and retired employees of GM Corporation, its subsidiaries and affiliates, in support of LGBT workplace equality.

“We share ideas on a variety of things, including how to keep members active and participating within the ERGs, and sharing ideas or addressing LGBT issues within our companies. Events are designed to be informal and social in nature,” said Bill Peters, senior IT project manager in the Application Development Project Management Office at Ford Motor Company. Peters is also the chair of Ford GLOBE, the company’s LGBT ERG established in 1994 under the name “Ford Family,” which changed a year later to GLOBE.

Both GM Plus and Ford GLOBE, in collaboration with Fiat Chrysler Automobiles Gay and Lesbian Alliance (GALA), formed MERGE in 2006 as a social group of the Big Three ERGs. Bernard notes that George Westerman, who at the time was part of IBM’s ERG (and later went to work at Affirmations), was the one who came up with the original

notion of the group.

“Partnering with MERGE was an easy decision,” said Jim Houston, vice president and district manager for South Oakland at Comerica Bank. “We are committed to becoming the financial services provider of choice to the LGBT community and other diverse communities. Through our participation, we work to increase customer access to experienced colleagues who understand the unique needs, perspectives and opportunities of individuals and businesses in the LGBT community. Our participation also supports our workplace diversity efforts. I know that, personally, I chose to accept a position with Comerica Bank because of its sponsorship of LGBT events. When I was considering a job offer from Comerica, seeing the bank’s sponsorship of Motor City Pride helped ease my concerns about the bank’s culture of acceptance for LGBT employees,” Houston said.

Comerica has earned a second consecutive perfect 100 rating on the 2016 Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Equality Index – a measurement of how equitably large private businesses in the U.S. treat their LGBT employees, consumers and investors. “One of Comerica’s best practices was the creation of our diversity training program, called Master of Diversity Awareness. The program encourages employees to grow in their understanding of and appreciation for diversity. This can be

accomplished by participating in diversity initiatives, attending community events and participating in diversity training and a variety of other activities,” Houston said.

The HRC compiles an annual list of the major companies who have met the criteria of being a best employer to work for. Eight Michigan-based corporations received a perfect score from HRC: Ford, General Motors, Dow Chemical Co., Dykema Gossett PLLC, Kellogg Co., Herman Miller Inc., Steelcase Inc., and Whirlpool.

In 2002, only 13 businesses nationally scored 100 percent; today, 407 businesses achieved this top rating, spanning nearly every industry and investment throughout the world. This year’s CEI contains 70 new businesses that opted into the survey. In addition, the number of rated businesses affording specific protections for transgender employees has increased significantly from 5 percent to 87 percent. Even transgender medical coverage has gone from a rarity to common, according to the 2016 CEI report, with 40 percent of Fortune 500 businesses now offering these crucial benefits.

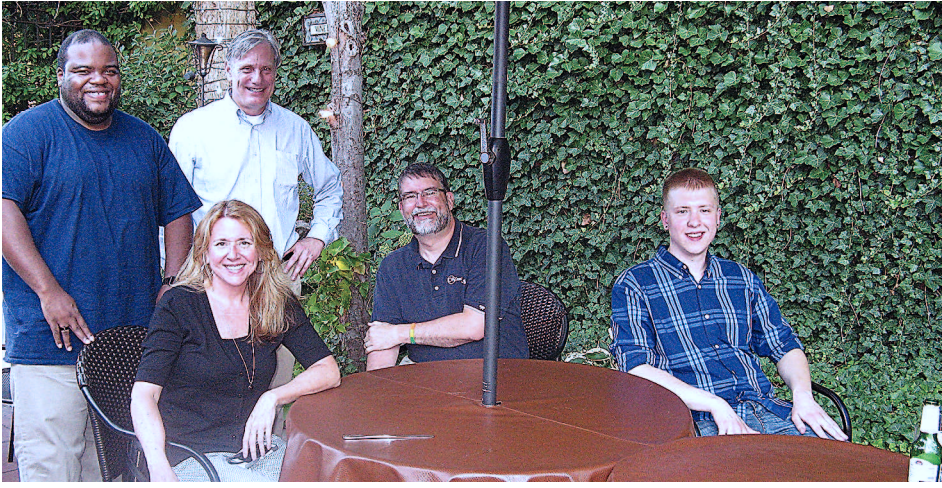
For the 12th consecutive year, Ford has received a 100 percent on the HRC CEI, and continues to remain a leader in LGBT corporate equality. “We are very proud of this achievement,” Peters said. He said the company has a public facing website that serves multiple purposes and supports the company’s efforts within the LGBT community.

“It is a conduit for communications with people that may not be comfortable emailing using corporate email. It also communicates externally that Ford GLOBE is active in many places. This can result in vehicle sales because of Ford’s supportive and inclusive policies,” Peters said.

So what can other companies do to improve their rating? “We would recommend partnering with the appropriate persons within the organization to work on possible solutions and action to close the gap,” Peters said. Bernard added, “The key is an engaged leadership team that sends a positive message of diversity from the top down because they will make the policies enabling you to meet the HRC criteria.”

Or, directly connect with MERGE for support and information on how to strengthen an LGBT ERG within a company.

“We have seen our ability to help companies that are a little newer to this space,” Bernard said about developing a workplace culture



Julie Geiger of Deloitte & Touche, Brandon Johnson of Ernst & Young, Jesse Johnston and Jamie Liegerle of General Motors, and Gary Johnson of Fiat Chrysler. BTL photo: Kate Opalewski

that welcomes input from a wide variety of individuals with diverse beliefs and backgrounds. “A couple of things we consider best practices include our storytelling (informing leadership about the community from both a personal and business standpoint), our education and training (which includes PFLAG Straight for Equality training) and our new mentoring program for LGBT and allied individuals. I think we’ve learned some lessons from other companies as to how to engage and interact with leadership, which has shaped our own internal communications,” Bernard said.

Collaboration

MERGE collaborates with the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce, among other organizations. They discuss best practices and challenges for LGBT ERGs using tools provided by the chamber via Out and Equal, the world’s premiere nonprofit organization dedicated to achieving LGBT workplace equality. Together, both organizations hosted a monthly meeting in March at the Detroit City Distillery in downtown Detroit, where representatives from around 10 companies attended. The overall goal of the event was to determine if Michigan

companies are on the same page in regard to LGBT workplace equality and the amount of support given to LGBT ERGs.

“We wanted to know the pros and challenges LGBT ERGs are still facing in the workplace,” said Kevin Heard, board president of the chamber. “While the information gathered is not reflective of all companies that are a part of MERGE, it gives us a starting point.”

Some common pros listed were:

- Size of ERG organization.
- Involvement at company events.
- People within ERGs are acknowledged.
- 75 percent ally participation.
- Human resources puts forth effort to equalize benefits.

- Executives support the ERG organization. A few of the challenges listed were:

- LGBT participation is lacking.
- There is a lack of protection in workplace laws and companies should do more to change that.
- The ERG is not promoted within the company.
- Members are afraid of management backlash – dealing with religious coworkers and LGBT employees.
- Human resources is not versed on LGBT rights, requests or laws.

See MERGE, page 15

Resources

Jim Houston
Vice President and District
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Comerica Bank
P.O. Box 75000
Detroit, MI 48257
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www.comerica.com/about-us/community-involvement/diversity-commitment.html

Adam Bernard
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Equality Michigan Hires New Transgender Victims' Advocate

Longtime Trans Activist Jeynce Poindexter Takes on Role

BY JASON MICHAEL

DETROIT – Jeynce Poindexter, known throughout metro Detroit's LGBT community as Jeynce Mizrahi, has been hired as Equality Michigan's first ever transgender victims' advocate. Poindexter comes to EQMI after being active in the LGBT community for quite some time.

"I've had years of experience volunteering with Men of Color, the REC Boyz, the Ruth Ellis Center," Poindexter said. "I've gone to sessions and workshops for youth and HIV prevention. Whatever it is that I could have done throughout the years I have done it. So I knew this new position wasn't too far out of reach for me. It was already stuff that I was very familiar with."

In their statement on the hire, EQMI's Director of Victim Services Amanda Kearns said the agency was thrilled to have Poindexter on board.

"Ms. Poindexter brings a wealth of knowledge and a fresh perspective to our team," said Kearns. "We are excited for her to provide even more culturally appropriate services to the trans community in Detroit and throughout Michigan."

Kearns said EQMI is dedicated to taking on trans issues and making sure that segment of

the LGBT community is represented.

"This hire and new position at EQMI is but one example of how transgender issues are a priority for the department and agency as we deepen our outreach to traditionally underserved populations within the LGBTQ community, particularly trans communities of color," Kearns said.

For her part, Poindexter has been making a name for herself as of late in the trans community. She began holding community panel discussions this summer to address the needs of the trans community, how the community at large can be of help and how to bridge the gap in services that sometimes excludes trans men and women.

"I decided to try to and be proactive instead of just sitting back and pointing fingers," said Poindexter. "I would rather try to identify the problems and see how things could be resolved ... think of ways that we could bridge the gap and have conversations where there is a broad level of respect for everyone. The meetings have gone exceptionally well."

Poindexter partnered with the Trans Sistas of Color Project to organize a picnic and memorial service in July for members of the trans community lost to violence. The event was called Remembering Our Fallen Angels.

"The picnic was to not only bring light to



Jeynce Poindexter

the violence against the trans community, but it was also to show a form of respect for any and every trans who has been a victim of violence in our community,"

Poindexter said. "I knew some of the girls, a lot of them, and those that I didn't know well I knew in passing. It gave me a greater sense of respect and responsibility to acknowledge them and acknowledge their lives and let their family and friends know that we did not forget them."

It was at the picnic that Poindexter was approached by Serena Johnson, EQMI's senior victims' advocate, and asked to apply for the position.

"She pulled me to the side and told me that she was informed that she should meet me," Poindexter recalled. "She had been told that I was doing good work in the community. Then she gave me her number and told me to follow

up with her."

Poindexter did. And after two interviews the position was hers. But before she took it, Poindexter said she had nearly as many questions for those interviewing her as they did for her.

"I had several really key questions that I took to the interview," explained Poindexter. "I really was excited about their responses. They were questions pertaining to did they have any apprehension about working with a trans woman. I got really good responses and feedback from Michael [Gipson, deputy executive director], Amanda, Stephanie (White, executive director) and Serena about the broad scope the position entails and how I could go about doing it. I wanted to make sure I was going to be working in an environment that I would be comfortable in and that would allow me to thrive both personally and professionally."

Indications are Poindexter will.

"Jeynce has contributed a lot to the ballroom community and I'm happy to see that she is stepping up as an advocate," said Bre' Campbell, executive director of the Trans Sistas of Color Project. "I'm really excited to see her growth not only in this position but as a leader in the community."

Meet and Greet with Democratic Congressional Candidate Gretchen Driskell

BY BTL STAFF

HUNTINGTON WOODS – Meet State Rep. Gretchen Driskell (D - Saline) and candidate for Michigan's 7th Congressional District, for an evening of conversation about issues directly impacting the LGBT community. The event takes place Sept. 13 at 7 p.m. in Huntington Woods and is hosted by Kevin Howley and Jason Tylenda, Howard Israel and Henry Grix, Tom Wilczek and Steve Quinkert, Susan Horowitz and Jan Stevenson, Nancy Katz and Margo Dichtelmiller, Larysa Blynsniuk and Rep. Jim Townsend.

Driskell has been a vocal proponent of legislation introduced at the local and state levels that supports and protects LGBT rights, including the expansion of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. She has fought against efforts to curtail the basic freedoms of the LGBT community by voting against legislation that is discriminatory, including restrictions on same-sex couples adopting.

Driskell was elected as State Rep. in the 52nd House District in November 2012. She sits on the Agriculture, Elections, and Communications and Technology Committees. In addition to LGBT rights, she is focused on job creation and building small business, as well as prioritizing the public education system and protecting the environment.

Driskell is running to unseat Republican Congressman Tim Walberg Nov. 8. She released her first ad on Aug. 31. The spot, called "Zero," draws a strong contrast between her and Walberg, who has opposed zero trade deals during his time in Congress. Driskell says she would vote against bad trade deals and fight for Michigan jobs.

Walberg has voted for trade deals six separate times in Congress. Last year, he voted in favor of the Trade Promotion Authority, which makes it easier for TPP to pass. Driskell opposes bad trade deals and wants to stop American jobs from being outsourced. She was vocal in her opposition to fast-tracking the

TPP, when Walberg voted to fast-track it last year. Just last week, she held a rally with Rep. Debbie Dingell (MI-12) alongside local labor leaders, where Driskell once again pledged to fight against TPP in Congress.

In May, William Milliken, the former Republican governor of the state, endorsed Driskell for Congress.

"Voters in Michigan's 7th congressional district have an opportunity this year to select a representative in Congress who has a clear record of working in a constructive way to fashion solutions to the challenges we face as a state and nation," Milliken said in a news release about her. "As Saline's longest-serving mayor and more recently as a member of the Michigan House of Representatives, Gretchen Driskell has a record of working constructively to achieve positive results, not simply scoring political points. She recognizes that we are one state and one nation and that in the end we all go up or down together," Milliken said.

Driskell said she's honored to have the

endorsement of such a well-respected Michigan leader. His endorsement adds to Driskell's list of bipartisan



Gretchen Driskell

endorsements, including former 7th District Reps. Joe Schwarz and Mark Schauer.

Please RSVP to Gretchen@votegetreten.com or call 734-707-6729 for more information. To support Driskell, visit <https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/huntingtonwoods> or make non-corporate checks payable to Gretchen Driskell for Congress, PO Box 464, Saline, MI 48176.

LGBT Going Back To School, Campus Pride Index, Shame List and More

BY AJ TRAGER

It's the first week of school for students in the state and across the country and by Thanksgiving break, many high school students will be applying for their undergraduate programs.

A lot goes into choosing a university – the class listings and graduate programs, available on and off campus resources, diversity of the student body, location, proximity to friends and family and, of course, price. In addition, for many students who identify as LGBTQ the way a university treats and respects LGBTQ students greatly factors into which program they will apply to and enroll in.

Campus Pride, a 501(c)(3) comprised of student leaders and campus groups working to create a safer college environment for LGBTQ students, recently released its 2016 Best of the Best Top 30 List of LGBTQ-friendly colleges and universities with no Michigan schools listed.

The organization creates multiple college lists from the Best of the Best distinction to the Shame List, but is best known for its Campus Pride Index, which consists of over 230 colleges across the nation that have LGBTQ-friendly and inclusive practices. None of the 12 Michigan universities listed in its Campus Pride Index received the highest percentage in the Campus Pride score of LGBTQ-friendly benchmarks for policies, programs and practices and therefore did not qualify for the organization's Best of the Best nod.

Some schools that are included in the top 30 this year include Cornell University in New York with 4.5/5 stars, Claremont in California with 5/5 stars, Portland State University in Oregon with 4.5/5 stars and the University of Illinois at Chicago with 4.5/5 stars.

"Prospective students and their families expect colleges to be LGBTQ-friendly. They want to know what LGBTQ programs, services and resources are available on the campus - and which are the 'Best of the Best,'" said Shane Windmeyer, executive director of Campus Pride and creator of the Campus Pride Index. "Now more than ever, there are colleges that are recruiting LGBTQ youth - and they are investing in a campus that is fully supportive of LGBTQ students."

According to Windmeyer, "there is a lot to find for LGBTQ life at these campuses." Many of them are specifically addressing recruitment and academic retention efforts for LGBTQ students as well as concerns for transgender student safety. Many of these colleges house an LGBTQ student organization which addresses LGBTQ concerns, creates safe spaces and designs LGBTQ student activities and volunteer opportunities.

Campus Pride Shame List

Campus Pride's Shame list identifies the absolute worst campuses for LGBTQ youth in the U.S. that openly discriminate against LGBTQ students and have requested Title IX exemptions. Two Michigan colleges made this list.

Andrews University in Berrien Springs made the Shame List for opposing student advocacy for LGBTQ homeless youth, along with banning same-sex relationships and official LGBTQ student groups.

Spring Arbor University in Spring Arbor, also made the Shame List because it holds an exemption to Title IX, allowing the college to discriminate against its students on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy or having an abortion while still receiving federal funds.

"Religion-based bigotry is careless and life-threatening," Windmeyer said. "LGBTQ young people face high rates of harassment and violence, especially our trans youth and LGBTQ youth of color. The schools on this list openly discriminate against LGBTQ youth and many of these schools have requested or received Title IX exemptions for no other purpose than to discriminate, expel and ban LGBTQ youth from campus. It is shameful and wrong."

Campus Pride created the Shame List in order to call out the harmful and shameful acts of religion-based prejudice and bigotry.

"Families and young people deserve to know that this list of schools are the worst for LGBTQ youth. They are not loving, welcoming, safe spaces to live, learn and grow - and nobody wants to go to a college that openly discriminates against anyone," Windmeyer said.

Students who find their campus on the Shame List are encouraged to reach out to Campus Pride and consider filing a formal complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. Prospective students and families who are looking for LGBTQ-friendly campuses are encouraged to check out the Campus Pride Index, a free online search database.

The twelve Michigan colleges listed in the Pride Index include: University of Michigan-Dearborn, Grand Valley State University, Western Michigan University, Oakland University, Eastern Michigan University, Michigan State University, Michigan Technical University, Washtenaw Community College, Delta College, University of Michigan-Flint, Northern Michigan University and Grand Rapids Community College.

Find each university profile, the Shame List and more at www.campusprideindex.org.

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Getting Rocks Off for Jesus

Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

PG Friends: I'm sitting in on a meeting of Gay Bashers for Jesus Anonymous with – unknown to the bashers gathered here – my pocket-size recorder, surreptitiously “taking notes.”

I'm calling my self Big Bruiser Bruce. (Yeah, sure you are, Mary!)

I'm disguised as a GB4J: sporting a pair of \$350 Gucci sunglasses (sorry, I can't resist a touch of glamour), wearing polyester aqua-blue slacks with a forest green God Hates Fags wife-beater T-shirt. Holy hot stuff!

Oh, yes: sandals with red-white-blue argyle socks. I'm probably the best dressed GB4J bashee here. I hope it doesn't blow my cool. Or, hee hee, blow anything.

(Note: For readers who don't know about Fundygelical outreach programs, GB4JA is designed: 1) to alleviate guilt of those who, by word, deed, or half-thought, have been caught red-handed “casting the first stone,” and 2) to reorient such red-faced holy hurlers in more effective ways – less antithetical to passive/aggressive evangelism – to win homospecials-by-choice to the redeeming message of heterosuperiors-by-circumstance faith.)

“I loved the sinner and hated the sin in a very special way. I organized block-party gay-bash stonings. Just a few guys after brewskis. No big rocks. Just pebbles, marbles, vegetables, day-old hot-cross buns. At first it was alota laughs.”

We're sitting in the basement of the Greater New Faith Temple-Church-Cathedral-Tabernacle of God's Last Days Rapture. There are 60 heterosuperiors huddled at ten tables, decorated with lilies of the valley, Scofield Bibles with

Holy Land Gift Shop picture maps, bowls of chocolate-covered Grabass-A-Gay Goobers, and gilt-framed pictures of Donald Trump.

Nearly all participants are butch guys. (Occasionally deep-kneeing me to my immediate right is Spud). Among the biblical beer-breath dudes there are two roller derby “big namer” bimbos at the Step Four Table. Rollers Rita. Ella M. Hotwheels.

If I may vouchsafe an opinion to the tape recorder: I estimate the collective intelligence at each table is in the ballpark figure of, bottom-of-the-ninth, IQ 83.5. My participant-observer presence as Studly, at Step One Table, ups that count by 30 points. Private transcription . . .

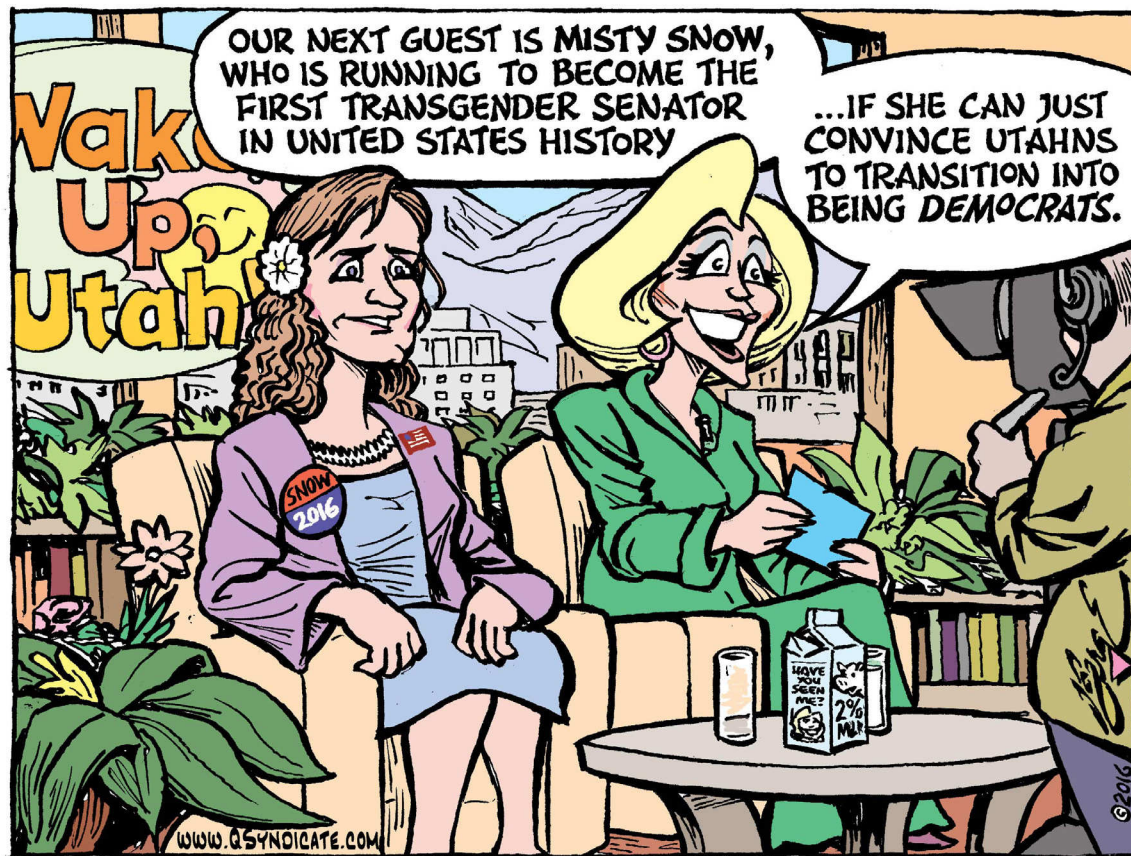
SPUD: “I knew I had a problem when I became aware that the first thing I wanted to do after church was beat up a fag. The urge just took over my whole life. I found myself spending all my evenings going to gay bars, all my days going to steam baths. I had one thing on my mind.

“Are you ready for the Second Coming? I'd ask. I wouldn't take no for an answer. I twisted a few arms to get what I wanted. But, it was too damn time consuming. Honestly, I suppose I'm getting too old for bar ministry.”

BIG RED: “I hate to admit it, but six of my seven kids are, well, gay. The seventh is a married cross dresser. I gay bashed by kicking them all out onto the street; which, now that the cost of suburban living has skyrocketed. Turns out it was a big theological mistake.

“With my reduced income I can't tithe 10K to my mega-church like

See Alexander: Rocks Off, next page



Viewpoint



BY LUKAS L. AYERS

What We Can Do To Increase Awareness and Understanding of PrEP

A little over four years ago the FDA approved, for the first time, a medication used as a prophylaxis against HIV transmission. Truvada, commonly known as PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), is a once daily pill comprised of two longtime medications used to treat HIV, Tenofovir and Emtricitabine. If taken daily, the pill reduces the risk of contracting HIV via intercourse by more than 90 percent and more than 70 percent via injection drug use. If someone had said five years ago that there would be a pill to prevent HIV, many would have considered this person delusional. Now, it's here! At last we have a reliable, effective tool in preventing the spread of HIV transmission that goes far beyond what condom use alone can do. Truvada physically blocks the virus from replicating itself within an HIV-negative host, leaving the virus to die off. Why then isn't this drug flying off pharmacy shelves? How come I repeatedly

find myself explaining to non-LGBTQ focused health practitioners, heterosexual colleagues in the healthcare field and heterosexual friends and family members what Truvada is and its revolutionary importance?

In 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported over 44,000 individuals newly diagnosed with HIV and another 20,000 diagnosed with AIDS. Yet, that same year, there were less than 3,500 PrEP users nationwide, despite the drug being on the market for nearly two years already. Due to HIV disproportionately affecting gay and bisexual men, particularly Hispanic and African-Americans, it makes sense for advertisements and advocacy for the drug to be aimed at these populations. However, HIV is not a 'gays-only' disease. HIV does not discriminate. In fact, of those 44,000 newly diagnosed HIV cases in 2014,

See Ayers: PrEP, next page

We have a real chance at being the generation to completely eliminate new cases of HIV/AIDS in the United States.

► **Ayers: PrEP**

Continued from p. 10

24 percent or nearly one fourth were through heterosexual contact.

Due to the incredibly high efficacy of PrEP in protection against contraction of HIV, most private health insurers and all state Medicaid programs now cover the drug. It is exponentially cost beneficial for these health plans and government health agencies to pay for one drug as prevention rather than paying for lifetime treatment of HIV/AIDS. To increase accessibility to the drug even further, individuals insured by an employer, Marketplace or private commercial plan are eligible for copayment assistance programs that completely eliminate out-of-pocket costs to the patient. In a world where 'Big Pharma' can increase the price of a drug more than 400 percent overnight, PrEP is a welcomed and fresh example of health plans, state governments and pharmaceutical industry leaders coming together to do what they are in existence to do: help and protect the health of their consumers and citizens.

Regardless of health and economic benefits, PrEP is useless unless at-risk individuals are taking it. Despite many Americans' views, these 'at-risk' individuals include more than gay or bisexual men; heterosexual men or women not regularly using condoms during intercourse with partners of unknown HIV status, people who have injected drugs in the past six months and have shared needles, people who work in or have participated in drug treatment in past six months, and HIV-negative men or women who have an HIV-positive partner. The fact is, anybody can be at

risk of contracting HIV; particularly in today's world of online dating and hook-up apps where sex is only an iPhone away.

It remains a challenge identifying at-risk individuals until we start having consistent, open, honest conversations with each other and our healthcare providers about sexuality and sexual health. We need greater education and understanding among all medical and healthcare professionals on the uses, benefits, costs, and risks of Truvada, not solely LGBTQ-focused providers. Advertisements and outreach campaigns should not be solely aimed at the LGBTQ community, but also at heterosexual and injection drug use populations, especially in the 20-29 years of age demographic which accounted for 36% of new cases in 2014. We must continue ensuring affordability and accessibility to the drug, especially for low-income groups and those on Medicaid. We need to eliminate the stigma of PrEP users and stop attacking someone's decision to exercise added caution and protection regarding their sexual health and wellbeing. In doing so, we have a real chance at being the generation to completely eliminate new cases of HIV/AIDS in the United States. The science and the facts are clear: Truvada can help save lives and stop the spread of HIV. But, we all need to do our part. HIV/AIDS is not a 'gays-only' disease; we can't wait around for a 'gays-only' solution.

For more information on PrEP, please visit <https://start.truvada.com>, men.prepfacts.org, or www.whatisprep.org.

Lukas L. Ayers resides in Ferndale and is a current Master of Public Health student focusing on public health promotion and education, striving to reduce and eliminate health disparities.

► **Alexander: Rocks Off**

Continued from p. 10

I used to. My better half tells me to call our kickouts back home. What in hell does she know? She's a gosh-darned, unsaved, feminist Wiccan. Oh, well. Live and learn."

BRUNO: "I loved the sinner and hated the sin in a very special way. I organized block-party gay-bash stonings. Just a few guys after brewskis. No big rocks. Just pebbles, marbles, vegetables, day-old hot-cross buns. At first it was alota laughs.

"We 'stoned' about a – hahahahaha – 'baker's dozen' of fruit-loopers. Unfortunately – and that's why I'm here – we pelted a

pastor's son by mistake. God, who would have thought? You know!

"Come on, who knows they're gay at 14? He was, well, cute. Too damned cute for his own bubble-butt good, i'd say."

ZEL DIPSON: "I swear I'll never, NEVER Gay Bash again! Criss-cross my heart. I made the mistake of pinching a drag queen in the unisex john at Men's Country. She was a holy terror in high heels.

"See, I got two black eyes. What's worse, my Viagra ain't workin'. No siree, guys. Those bitches cain't fight fair. No how. I've had it. Amen! GB4JA! Over and out for Jesus!"

Charles@pridesource.com

Creep of the Week

Laura Ingraham

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI



By now, even if you don't follow any kind of sportzball, you have heard about Colin Kaepernick, the San Francisco 49ers player who refused to stand during the National Anthem before a game.

His reasoning is pretty compelling. "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color," he said. To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder."

A fair point! Because that is the sad reality of racism in America. Naturally, Kaepernick's protest was widely respected and elicited thoughtful debate across the country.

Ha ha. No. Actually, Kaepernick hates the police and wants to kill Whitey. At least that's the word on the street. A street where everyone who lives there is white. Although maybe a few lawn jockeys here and there for, you know, decoration.

See, white people in America are really delicate flowers who can't handle being reminded of the total fucking atrocities committed against people of color in this country for, like, ever. Oh and saying, "But I didn't own slaves!" is not a get-out-of-racism-free card.

So, yeah, some people are really upset with Kaepernick because they fetishize the flag and that song about the flag to the point of absurdity. Like declaring that a totally valid protest is making Betsy Ross turn in her grave and why doesn't that guy just get back to being a gladiator for our entertainment already.

Oh, and bravo to soccer player Megan Rapinoe who knelt during the National Anthem before a recent game in solidarity with Kaepernick.

"Being a gay American, I know what it means to look at the flag and not have it protect all of your liberties," Rapinoe said. "It's important to have white people stand

in support of people of color on this."

Right on. Almost makes me want to watch some soccer.

Not so right on is Laura Ingraham's response to Kaepernick's protest. She Tweeted on Aug. 30, "Good Q: What would have happened if Kaepernick [sic] disrespected the rainbow flag bef the game?"

Which is actually not a good question at all because not only did she spell his name wrong, the comparison is illogical. As many people on Twitter have already pointed out.

Writer John Howell Harris responded,

It's a consistent conservative trope: liberals/progressives hate America because they have the audacity to point out ways that America is not "great." Of course, it's okay when Donald Trump does it.

"b/c gay people have a nearly 300 year history of subjugation & institutionalized oppression of black people? Is that the Q?"

Now that is a good question.

Ingraham, who has called for people to start wearing adult diapers in order to protect themselves from the possibility of sharing a public restroom with a trans person and has said that being against marriage equality "doesn't say that you're anti-gay people or you don't like gay people," is obviously not expecting an answer to her rhetorical query. She's posing the question in order to accuse liberals of choosing gays over America, because you can't be pro-LGBT and love your country. Nor can you raise issues that make white people uncomfortable, which means anything related to racism, which is over because Obama, obviously.

It's a consistent conservative trope: liberals/progressives hate America because they have the audacity to point out ways that America is not "great." Of course, it's okay when Donald Trump does it.

The truth is, America is a country with great ideals. It's a shame that we still have yet to live up to them.

Both Sides Remain Divided on LGBT Rights Ahead of Session

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) – Advocates on both sides of Indiana’s debate over the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender residents remained divided and were unable to make recommendations Aug. 30 to a committee of lawmakers considering the topic ahead of the upcoming legislative session.

Lawmakers sought public input on the possibility of adding LGBT civil rights protections into state law after failed efforts to do so last session. Lawmakers began considering the issue after Indiana faced strong opposition to a religious objections law critics said would lead to discrimination against gay people.

Advocates of LGBT rights want to make it illegal to deny housing, jobs or service because of sexual orientation or gender. But opponents say that would deny their religious rights by essentially forcing them to condone same-sex marriage.

With no apparent middle ground, committee chairman Republican Rep. Greg Steuerwald said the panel wasn’t likely to return to the topic any time soon and would watch how the issue plays out in the courts.

Roughly 50 people attended the hearing, where most of the conversation involved the use of public bathrooms, a topic that has become a national flashpoint.

Earlier this month, a federal judge temporarily blocked the Obama administration’s directive for school districts on allowing transgender students to use the bathroom facilities corresponding with their gender identity.

“Transgender people just want to use the bathroom like anyone else,” Korvin Bothwell, a transgender man, said at the hearing. “I’ve been using public bathrooms all my life, and nothing has happened.”

But opponents raised issues of safety, including the potential of male predators lying about their gender identity to gain access to women’s bathrooms.

“My rights and my privileges are not protected, and are being eroded every day,” said Janet Smith, who is Christian.

Some lawmakers were frustrated by the lack of progress.

“I didn’t come here today to talk about bathroom facilities,” said Rep. Linda Lawson, a Hammond Democrat.

Republican state Sen. Travis Holdman of Markle said little new was discussed, which would likely stall possible legislation.

Last session, the Senate stopped a debate over extending civil rights protections to gay Indiana residents, with certain religious exemptions. Protections for transgender people weren’t included.

The debate was led by Republicans after widespread opposition to Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which appeared to some as an allowance for religious business owners to discriminate against LGBT people.

Soccer Star Rapinoe Kneels During National Anthem

CHICAGO (AP) - U.S. soccer star Megan Rapinoe knelt during the national anthem Sunday night before the Seattle Reign’s game against the Chicago Red Stars “in a little nod” to NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick.

Kaepernick’s refusal to stand for the national anthem to protest racial injustice and minority oppression came to public notice when he remained seated on the bench before a preseason game against Green Bay. On Thursday night in San Diego, he and safety Eric Reid knelt during the anthem before a game against the Chargers.

“It was very intentional,” Rapinoe told American Soccer Now after Seattle’s 2-2 tie in the National Women’s Soccer League game. “It was a little nod to Kaepernick and everything that he’s standing for right now. I think it’s actually pretty disgusting the way he was treated and the way that a lot of the media has covered it and made it about something that it absolutely isn’t. We need to have a more thoughtful, two-sided conversation about racial issues in this country.

“Being a gay American, I know what it means to look at the flag and not have it protect all of your liberties. It was something small that I could do and something that I plan to keep doing in the future and hopefully spark some meaningful conversation around it. It’s important to have white people stand in support of people of color on this. We don’t need to be the leading voice, of course, but standing in support of them is something that’s really powerful.”

Seattle Seahawks cornerback Jeremy Lane showed his support for Kaepernick by sitting on the bench during the national anthem at a preseason game in Oakland.

The 31-year-old Rapinoe has played for Seattle since 2013, after a stint with



U.S. soccer star Megan Rapinoe, right, “in a little nod” to NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick who refused to stand for the national anthem to protest racial injustice. AP File Photo

“Being a gay American, I know what it means to look at the flag and not have it protect all of your liberties. It was something small that I could do and something that I plan to keep doing in the future and hopefully spark some meaningful conversation around it. It’s important to have white people stand in support of people of color on this. We don’t need to be the leading voice, of course, but standing in support of them is something that’s really powerful.”

– Megan Rapinoe

the French team Olympique Lyon. A standout at the University of Portland, she made her name with the senior U.S. Women’s national team in 2006. Known for her creativity on the field, she has played in two Women’s World Cups and two Olympics.

She injured her knee last December during training and required surgery, but

was able to come back and play in the Rio Games. The United States, which had won three straight gold medals in the sport, was eliminated in the quarterfinals by Sweden.

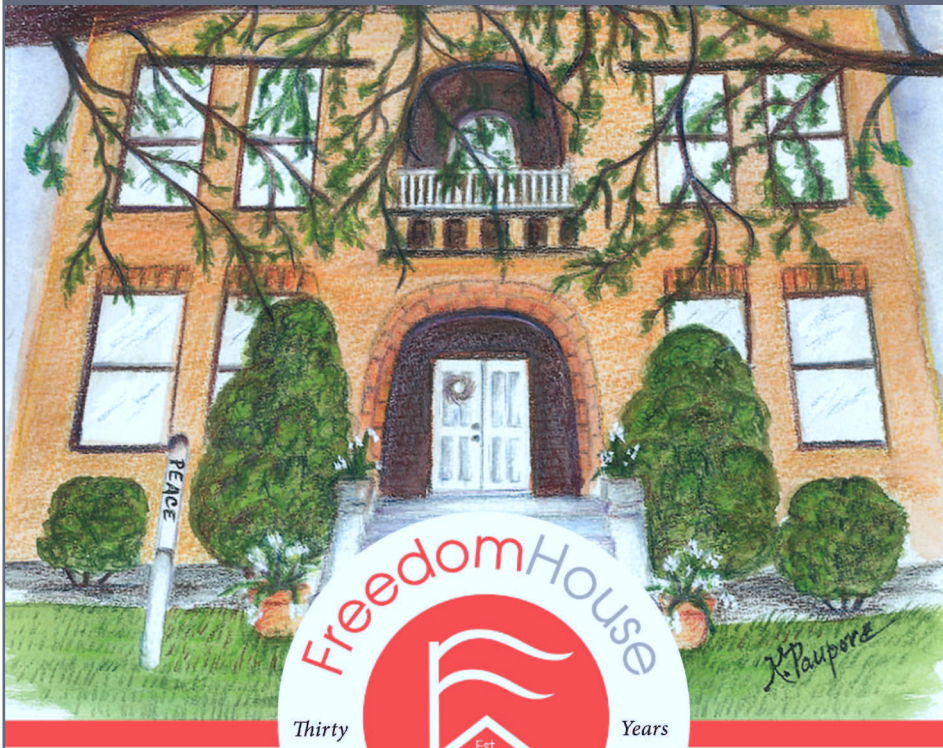
Since coming out in 2012, Rapinoe has been devoted advocate for LGBT rights and has worked with the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and other organizations.

Rapinoe also has been vocal about pay equity, and was among five national team players who lent their names to a complaint filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission alleging wage discrimination. The players claim that members of the team make in some cases up to four times less than their male national team counterparts.

She has frequently spoken out on Twitter, delving into politics and even calling out NWSL when a match was played on an extremely narrow field earlier this summer.



San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, middle, kneels during the national anthem at a preseason game recently. Chris Carlson / Associated Press



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Justice Dept. Wants Pulse 911 Case Kept in Federal Court

BY MIKE SCHNEIDER

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) - The U.S. Department of Justice on Friday appealed a ruling involving whether hundreds of 911 calls recorded during a massacre at a gay nightclub in Florida can be released.

In its filing, the Justice Department said that it was appealing U.S. District Judge Paul Byron's ruling last week that the federal court lacks jurisdiction and the matter should be handled in state court. Assistant U.S. Attorney Sean Flynn said he will ask for an order halting any further proceedings until the federal appeals court in Atlanta has ruled.

During a hearing in state court on Friday, a Florida judge indicated that the recordings wouldn't be made public anytime soon because of the need to hold hearings on various legal questions.

The Justice Department appeal was the latest twist in the fight between news media groups, the city of Orlando and the Department of Justice over the release of hundreds of 911 calls, as well as communications between gunman Omar Mateen and the Orlando Police Department on the night of the June shooting. Mateen died after being shot as SWAT team members breached a club wall and rescued patrons following a more-than-three-hour standoff.

The media groups, including The Associated Press, say the recordings' release will help the public evaluate the police response, but the city claims the recordings are exempt under Florida's public records law, and that the FBI insists releasing them may disrupt the investigation. Mateen opened fire at the nightclub in a rampage that left 49 people dead and 53 hospitalized in the worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

Earlier last week, the city released nine of the hundreds of 911 calls, but none came from patrons trapped inside the club.

Circuit Judge Margaret Schreiber on Friday requested three hearings on the legal fight, all of them for later in the month. At the first hearing, the judge will consider whether to dismiss a complaint filed by the city of Orlando against the media groups.

The second hearing will look at whether the 911 calls, and the communications with Mateen, fall under any exemptions to Florida's public record laws because they are part of an active criminal investigation or contain criminal intelligence. The judge asked attorneys for the city to determine how many exempted calls there are and what the reasons are for not releasing them.

A third hearing, yet to be scheduled, will answer whether any of the calls would be exempted because they record the killing of a person. Under Florida law, those are exempt from being made public without a court order.

Darryl Bloodsworth, an attorney representing the city, described the calls as "disturbing" and said the family members of the victims should have a say before a decision is made about their release.

The media groups filed a complaint in state court about 10 days after the shooting, seeking the release of the recordings. Less than an hour later, the city filed a complaint in state court, asking that the recordings be declared exempt from public records law.

In a legal maneuver, the city filed an amended lawsuit, naming the U.S. Department of Justice as a defendant, and DOJ attorneys moved for the case to be transferred to federal court, where Florida's Public Records Act isn't applicable. The federal judge sent it back to state court.

An attorney for the media groups, Rachel Fugate, said the legal maneuvering had caused delays in moving the case forward.

"It's sad because usually those things are done within a matter of weeks," Fugate said.

Transgender Litigation Moving Quickly Through Courts

BY LISA KEEN

The legal rights of transgender people continue to dominate LGBT legal news these days, as several cases make their way toward the U.S. Supreme Court and stimulate public discussion.

Last month, in one of the most prominent of cases, a federal district judge issued an order that prevents the University of North Carolina from implementing a new state law that bars transgender people from using a public restroom that matches their gender identity.

LGBT legal groups and the U.S. Department of Justice filed lawsuits against the new law, H.B. 2, after it was signed into law in March. The law has three parts: Part 1, which restricts how transgender people can access public bathrooms; Part 2, which prohibits local non-discrimination laws against sexual orientation or gender identity discrimination by public contractors; and Part 3, which prohibits local non-discrimination laws against sexual orientation or gender identity discrimination in public accommodations.

A trial on those challenges to the law is set for November, and three transgender plaintiffs at the University of North Carolina sought an injunction at that school to retain the pre-HB2 status quo until the court can rule on the overall lawsuit.

On Aug. 26, U.S. District Judge Thomas Schroeder (an appointee of President George W. Bush) issued a preliminary injunction against the enforcement of Part 1 (regarding bathroom access).

Schroeder noted that "no party has indicated that the pre-HB2 legal regime posed a significant privacy or safety threat to anyone in North Carolina, transgender or otherwise." Therefore, he said, his injunction simply returns to the pre-HB2 scheme

until the court can rule whether Title IX's prohibition on discrimination based on "sex" includes "gender identity."

Schroeder said the transgender plaintiffs challenging HB2 "have made a clear showing that they are likely to succeed on their claim" that the bathroom access portion of the HB2 violates Title IX.

Schroeder also noted that existing state laws that prohibit people from indecently exposing themselves to others or peeping into or entering a bathroom designated for someone of the opposite sex are "straightforward and uncontroversial."

"For transgender users, however, it is not clearly so," wrote Schroeder, and most appear to have been accommodated at educational institutions on a case-by-case basis, "with educational institutions generally permitting them to use bathrooms and other facilities that correspond with their gender identity...." He noted the state had "not offered any evidence whatsoever" to illustrate any problems with the existing means of accommodating transgender persons.

"Rather, on the current record, it appears that some transgender individuals have been quietly using facilities corresponding with their gender identity and that, in recent years, State educational institutions have been accommodating such students where possible."

On Aug. 29, Lambda Legal and other groups challenging HB2 said they would ask the Fourth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals to extend that injunction to apply to all transgender people in North Carolina.

Other transgender litigation

• Texas Attorney General Ken

Paxton has filed yet another lawsuit against a pro-LGBT policy of the Obama administration. On Aug. 23, he filed a complaint with the U.S. District Court for Northern Texas, challenging a new Health and Human Services regulation that interprets the word "sex" to include gender identity. On Aug. 21, in another Paxton-led lawsuit, a federal judge granted 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.

• On Aug. 16, U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts rejected a request by lawyers for a school district in **Virginia** to extend the deadline for their petition of appeal. In that case, *Gloucester v. Grimm*, the school district seeks to overturn a federal appeals court decision that said the Title IX prohibition of discrimination "on the basis of sex" in schools includes discrimination based on the gender with which a student identifies. In the petition it filed Aug. 29, the Gloucester School Board said the high court should hear the case to resolve "the current nationwide controversy" over transgender access to bathrooms.

• On Aug. 15, a federal magistrate judge in **Chicago** heard arguments on preliminary issues in a lawsuit by parents and students at a Cook County high school who want to block a transgender female student from using the girls' locker room and girls' restrooms. The case, *Students and Parents for Privacy v. U.S. Department of Education*, is awaiting a trial before a federal judge for the Northern District of Illinois. The magistrate will recommend to that judge whether to grant a preliminary injunction to stop the transgender student's access until after the trial.

Christian College Settles Lawsuit Brought by Professor

WENHAM, Mass. (AP) - A professor at a Christian College in Massachusetts who filed a lawsuit saying the school retaliated against her for criticizing its stance on gay workers has settled and agreed to step down.

The Salem News reports that Gordon College announced Thursday

that philosophy professor Lauren Barthold will step down from her tenured faculty position at the end of the upcoming semester when she finishes a research fellowship residency.

The college and the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, which filed the lawsuit on Barthold's

behalf, released a joint statement saying the two sides agreed to keep the terms of their resolution confidential.

Barthold said in the suit that she was demoted and threatened with termination for speaking out against what she called the college's "discriminatory" policy against LGBTQ people.

Equality Michigan Award Recipients Announced

BY BTL STAFF

Equality Michigan recently announced the first two of four awards, this year's Henry Messer Youth Activist Award winner, Aiden Ramirez-Tatum, and the Catalyst Award winner, Congressman Dan Kildee (D-Flint).

Ramirez-Tatum has been a pro-equality advocate, was president of his high school's Gay-Straight Alliance and has worked to advance GSA organizing across Michigan through his work as a facilitator with the Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health's Building a Movement in Michigan GSA project. He has also served as a member of MOASH's MY Voice Council to create safe and inclusive environments in sexual health clinics and health education classrooms.

Ramirez-Tatum is a member of the Michigan Department of Education's HIV Materials Review Panel. He has been a leading advocate supporting the Michigan State Board of Education's Guidance on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments for LGBTQ Students and is currently attending the University of Michigan as a social work masters pre-admit and plans to work with at-risk LGBTQ youth.

"Equality Michigan is proud to honor Aiden for his incredible work and to hold him up as an example of what engaged young people can accomplish for our community and the fight for full equality," said EQMI Executive Director Stephanie White.

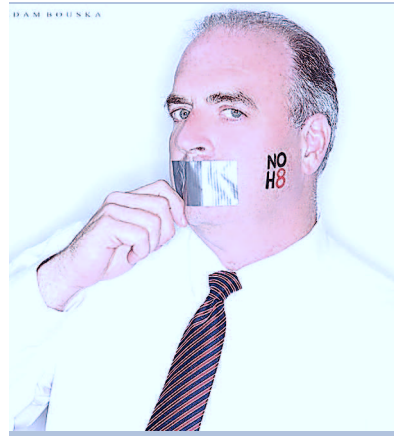
Kildee has represented Michigan's 5th Congressional District since 2013. During his time in office, he has been



Aiden Ramirez-Tatum is Equality Michigan's 2016 Henry Messer Youth Activist Award winner. Photo courtesy of EQMI

a pro-equality ally "second to none." He serves as the Vice Chair of the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus and has championed the Equality Act, which would extend civil rights protections to LGBT Americans in employment, housing and public accommodations. He was a strong supporter of marriage equality and frequently spoke out against anti-LGBT rhetoric and legislation at the state and federal level. In addition, he has worked to advance a number of important pieces of pro-equality legislation in Congress including the Student Non-Discrimination Act, the Global Respect Act, the Every Child Deserves a Family Act, and the Restore Honor to Service Members Act.

"Congressman Dan Kildee has been a pro-equality champion in Washington, D.C. and in Michigan," said White.



Congressman Dan Kildee is Equality Michigan's 2016 Catalyst Award winner. Photo courtesy of EQMI

"Equality Michigan is pleased to recognize his exemplary service to the LGBT community and to the state of Michigan. We can only hope that more policymakers at every level of government will look to Congressman Kildee as an example of what it truly means to be an ally to the LGBT community."

EQMI will honor these award recipients at the Fall Reception on Oct. 1 at DTE Energy Headquarters in downtown Detroit. Join more than 200 people for a powerhouse evening of political mingling, cocktails, fine cuisine, live entertainment, and a celebration of the achievements of the policymakers, businesses, and community activists who have helped make 2016 such a dynamic year of political battles for LGBTQ equality.

For more information, or to purchase tickets,

► MERGE

Continued from p. 7

"The only common practice I see is that all of these companies have ERGs, but are they given the tools to be truly impactful? Or after marriage equality, are employers easing up on the focus? Is it a company culture issue? For workplace equality advocates, marriage equality was a huge step, but it was only the beginning. We have no protections in the state for LGBT employees. We have faith that our business and advocacy community will push to get that changed, but first, all must be on one accord," Heard said.

"MERGE is trying to make that happen, and the chamber will be more than happy

to continue these conversations and help create best practices for any company that wants to develop an ERG or scale their current ERG," he added.

Networking opportunities are made possible during MERGE social events. This month's mixer is scheduled for Sept. 8 at 5:30 p.m. on the patio at Como's at 22812 Woodward Ave. in Ferndale.

Coming up, MERGE will be represented during an Out and Equal conference in October this year in Orlando, Florida.

"We are excited about the work that is happening.



Bill Peters of Ford GLOBE.

There are some dedicated individuals stepping up to provide leadership and advance LGBT equality," said Andrea Shorter, director of community relations of Out and Equal. "People spend a majority of their waking hours at work whether it's in the office, online or remotely. We need to be authentic and treated and supported in an inclusive manner. Our overall quality of life depends upon that. MERGE is doing some good, critical work in Michigan. We are cheering them on."

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Photo: Webster Public Relations

MY 11 MINUTES WITH **DOLLY PARTON**

Queen of Country on Inspiring Gay Family Members to Come Out, Her LGBT Kinship and 'Queer' Introduction

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

There are no angel wings.

Instead, Dolly Parton scoots into a drab backstage garage on her own two legs like a unicorn dream: knee-length canary yellow dress, rhinestones, more rhinestones, and a glow that can apparently turn even an industrial underground into heaven on earth.

But something's off. Something is missing. Angel wings, I think.

Which, of course, you expect from a beaming Dolly Parton, even as she literally just stands in front of you. Her presence alone radiates her own healing power as she greets a mishmash of fans one by one, all of them basking in her shine.

Moms, dads, kids. An elderly woman in a wheelchair. Me, a gay man.

This woman – a country queen, a “backwoods Barbie,” the self-proclaimed fairy godmother – has united us all merely by existing. And if it wasn't already evident, it certainly is in her midst: Dolly Parton is the only religion we may ever agree on.

For over two transcendent hours during her “Pure & Simple” tour, in support of her 43rd studio album of the same name, the Goddess of Goodness emerges as something too precious for this world. During her song “Little Sparrow,” the stage goes dark as screened-in birds take to the sky alongside Dolly's silhouette – or, in this case, the Grand

Rapids, Michigan arena she was setting aglow. Add “bird whisperer” to the long list of Dolly’s accomplishments, which is seemingly endless: 100 million albums sold worldwide; 25 certified gold, platinum and multi-platinum awards; 25 No. 1 songs on the Billboard Country charts, a record for a female artist; seven Grammy awards and 10 Country Music Association awards; one of only five female artists to win the CMA’s Entertainer of the Year Award; an Oscar nomination for writing the title song to one of her many films, “9 to 5,” and obviously, a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

An angel, though?

Parton demurs. “I don’t know if I’d go that far! I don’t think I’m all that!” she says, as humbly as you’d expect, laughing the squeakiest of laughs.

Our 11-minute chat is peppered with that trademark Dolly charm (I conclude the interview by thanking her for bringing joy to my life and she responds like my mother: “Love you too!”). And yes, 11 minutes. “I don’t know where you got that odd number,” she squeaks again in her godly Southern accent, acknowledging the bonus minute her manager, Danny Nozell, has graciously given us. “He’s saying you’re getting a li’l something extra!”

Read on as Dolly blesses us with an extra 60 seconds of divinity, along with a look back on her introduction to the gay community, that time she may have gotten a contact buzz from Willie Nelson’s grass and, like any paragon of virtue, helping her own family members come to terms with their sexuality.

Growing up in the Great Smoky Mountains, did you know any gay people?

If I did, I didn’t know they were at the time! (Laughs) We were just mountain people, and I did not know at that time – I sure did not.

What was your introduction to the gay community then?

As I started to be a teenager there were a couple of guys downtown that everybody was sayin’ were queer, ya know? I know they often said that about anybody who was odd or different – “they’re just queer, just strange and odd” – but the way they would talk about these two guys they would say, “Well, they’re sissies, they’re girls.” I was a teenager then. But in my early days we did not know (what gay was). It didn’t take me long to know that people were different and that was always fine with me ’cause I was different too, and I embraced and accepted them and I *knew* them. I knew them well. But no, in my early days I did not know. But I know a lot of them now! I have a huge gay and lesbian following and I’m proud of ’em, I love ’em and I think everybody should be themselves and be allowed to be themselves whoever they are,

whatever they are.

How big is your gay circle these days?

You know what, I have so many (gay) people in my companies. And later on, I did find out I have many gays and lesbians in my own family. We accept them, we embrace them. Oh, there are some in the mountains who still don’t know quite what to make of it or how they should feel about it, but they’re ours and they’re who they are and we know they’re wonderful and they’re like us. We love the fact that they are who they are and we nurture that. We don’t try to make them feel separate or different. We embrace it.

Because you’ve always been so LGBT-affirming, are you a safe place for them to open up about their sexuality?

Yes! Actually, I’ve had many people through the years who I have helped to feel good about themselves. I say, “You need to let people know who you are and you need to come on out. You don’t need to live your life in darkness – what’s the point in that? You’re never gonna be happy; you’re gonna be sick. You’re not gonna be healthy if you try to suppress your feelings and who you are.”

I have a couple of transgender people in my company who are on salary with me, so I am totally open for that. And a lot of people feel like they *can* come to me... and they do! Whether it’s about being gay or whatever, a lot of people do me like they used to do my mama and come to talk to me about things. Hopefully I’m able to help. I think I have.

When were you first aware of transgender people?

I remember watching the news when I was a girl and they (were talking about the) first operation that somebody had. That’s the first time I ever heard about that, and so that was many, many years ago. But yeah, I’ve known a lot since then, though.

Throughout your career, gay people have leaned on you for musical moral support while also absorbing your sage wisdom. But what have you learned from the gay people in your life?

I certainly know that the gay people I know are the most sensitive and most caring of all. I think they go through so much that they have to live with their feelings on their sleeve. They’ve had to go through so much that I think they’re very emotional and tenderhearted and more open to feelings, so I’ve just learned the same things I try to learn from everybody. I know they’re good people and I’ve tried to learn from that as well. They’re very creative, most of them. And I think that also comes from just embracing the fact that they’re different. Most of the gays

See Dolly Parton, page 18



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Dolly Parton and interviewer Chris Azzopardi at Grand Rapids' Van Andel Arena on Aug. 6, 2016. Photo courtesy of Webster Public Relations

► Dolly Parton

Continued from p. 17

I know just want to make the world a more beautiful place like I do.

After 50 years of marriage, what inspired your new self-proclaimed "friends with benefits" song, "Outside Your Door"?

Well, I'm married, but I'm not dead! I'm a romantic, fantasy person and I've felt *all* of those feelings. I've been through *everything* in my life. And when I don't write about myself, I write about other people that I know and their relationships, and people I know who don't know how to express themselves. So I gather my ideas from everything. And hell, you don't get too old to fantasize!

There's a 20-minute intermission during your "Pure & Simple" show. What do you do for those 20 minutes?

It takes every bit of my time! I fly back to my bus right after intermission, and I go back and I change. I take a little breather to cool off for a minute, and then I change clothes – that's the only change I do (during the show). Then, I change my hair, change my wig, and I touch up my makeup. And by the time I'm done with all that it's time to go back on.

What if you have to pee?

Oh, I take a pee break and drink a little bit of water. But yeah, it's just a pee and pray break! (Laughs)

You jokingly mentioned during the show that you should run for president. Say you were elected – what would be your first order of business?

I would just resign! That'd be my first order if I got elected – I'd say, "No, I don't want it, I don't want it!" (Laughs) But no, I don't know what I'd do. I don't even think on those terms. I'd make this world a better place, I'll tell you that.

During the show you hysterically joked about how you could get a contact buzz from Willie Nelson's tour bus. Where do you get your sense of humor and sharp wit?

Oh, that comes from both sides of my family. My mama's people were hysterical; my daddy's people were hysterical. They just had a different sense of humor, and that's how we got through everything, with our sense of humor. And as a writer I just think funny. I try to find things to laugh about and so anyway, I just say whatever I say.

What's the closest you've gotten to Willie and his weed?

Oh, I know Willie really well! I sang with him on my last album. We did a duet together called "From Here to the Moon and Back" and I was singing – well, I was trying to sing and I said, "Willie, I'll tell you, you're the worst person I ever tried to sing with. I mean, you're brazen! I can't keep up with you! I'mma need a sack of your grass! I'mma need something!" But he laughed so hard. But anyway, I love him, but he's

Willie and that's OK.

He smoked in the studio with you there is what you're saying?

Oh, yeah! Willie smokes at the drop of a hat! I probably had a contact high from that too!

You've been singing "I Will Always Love You" since the early '70s. What does that song mean to you now that it didn't mean to you when you first wrote it?

Well, you appreciate things more as you get older. That song is just the gift that keeps on giving. It's always getting licensing in my publishing company; somebody's recorded it and we're signing off on that. And so the fact that people are always calling me and always wanting rights for (the song for) a wedding – I actually rewrote it as a wedding song; it makes a beautiful song – it just makes me appreciate the fact that I've been able to write something that's been that meaningful to so many people through the years. So, it does touch me. And it turned out to be the perfect song to sing to my fans – it's the song I like to dedicate to the fans. Not the sad parts, but the good parts – especially the line of, "I will always love you" for letting me do this.

Chris Azzopardi is the editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service. He can proudly say Mariah Carey once called him a "daaahhhling." Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).



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Happenings

OUTINGS

Thursday, Sep. 8

Michigan Chamber Regional Meeting 4 p.m. Pizza and Politics will feature Mich. Supreme Court Justice Joan Larsen, Donna Lasinski and Stu Sandler, co-founder of Grand River Strategies and Political Consultant. Event is free. Michigan Chamber of Commerce, 3050 Jackson Road, **Ann Arbor**. 517-371-7640. bhantler@michamber.com

Men's Film Group 6:30 p.m. 18 and up Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. mensgroup6@gmail.com www.goaffirmations.org

Parent Support Group 7 p.m. Dr. Melissa Farrell, LCP and Roz Keith facilitate ongoing group for parents of trans youth to better understand what it means to be transgender. Event is free. Stand With Trans, 5725 Walnut Lake Rd, **West Bloomfield Twp.** 248-661-5700. laura@temple-israel.org

Rehearsals for Metro Detroit LGBT Chorus 7 p.m. New members welcomed year round. One Voice Chorus, 1589 W. Maple Road, **Birmingham**. detroitonevoice@yahoo.com <http://onevoicechorus.net>

Friday, Sep. 9

Sanford Biggers: Subjective Cosmology, + Matthew Angelo Harrison + It's Your Party 6:15 p.m. Talk with curator followed by an opening reception. Bigger and his band moon Medicin, a multimedia concept group will perform. Tickets \$12 for non-members. MOCAD, 4454 Woodward Ave., **Detroit**. 313-832-6622. <https://www.facebook.com/events/308472612825995/>

Saturday, Sep. 10

Upper Peninsula Rainbow Pride A day of music, games, food and fun for the whole family. Kids games in the afternoon and a drag show in the evening for adults. Upper Peninsula Rainbow Pride, **Marquette**. www.Uprainbowpride.com/

TGMI Port Huron Chapter Support Group 1 p.m. Event is free of charge. Transgender Michigan, 932 Military St., **Port Huron**. 800-842-2954 ext. 11. <https://www.facebook.com/>

events/1753550841580505/

Motor City Bears 6:30 p.m. A gay male, social and fund raising activity group for Bears and admirers, established in 1994. Meet and greet starts at 5:30 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

MIC Legends Show 9 p.m. No cost, but tips from the first round of acts will go to MIC, plus there will be a 50/50 raffle. Memorable MIC members bring back their drag alter egos. A surprise mystery performer is scheduled to perform. Motown Invitational Classic, 1641 Middlebelt Rd., **Inkster**. www.mictournament.org

Sunday, Sep. 11

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, Sep. 13

Care To Dance? 7 p.m. Learn to urban ballroom. Sisterhood Social Excursions, 8670 Grand River Ave., **Detroit**. www.meetup.com

Wednesday, Sep. 14

FTM Detroit 7 p.m. This discussion provides trans men an opportunity to discuss a fuller image of transition within their larger life including deconstruction of doubt, male privilege, vulnerability and more. Attendance restricted to FTM/transgender men, anyone who identifies on the transmasculine side of the spectrum. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Thursday, Sep. 15

Gender Non-Conformists 7 p.m. A social and support group for genderqueer, genderfabulous, transgender, gender-exploring folks and all those who transgress gender binaries. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Friday, Sep. 16

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

Saturday, Sep. 17

15th Annual Tour de Troit 9 a.m. A 25.6 or 60 mile ride with police escort; sweeper- and SAG-support; three mechanic "pit stops;" and one rest stop that includes a snack and mechanical support. Tickets: \$60. Tour de Troit, Vernor Hwy, **Detroit**. <http://www.tour-de-troit.org/tourdetroitride>

Faith Allies for Trans Lives: Stand Up For Justice Conference 9 a.m. Conference and training to build statewide faith network dedicated to justice and the full inclusion of LGBT people in congregations. Tickets: \$20-\$40. Inclusive Justice, 200 W St Paul St., **Brighton**. 301-512-9632. <http://www.inclusivejustice.org/>

Smart Recovery 10 a.m. Smart Recovery offers people with any type of addiction a place to learn how to change unwanted behaviors through cognitive based methods. This is a non-12 step program, led by Smart Recovery trainers, and does not require abstinence. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Coming Out Over Coffee 10:30 a.m. A casual discussion group covering all aspects of coming out and the effects it may have on your life. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Jeffrey Montgomery Memorial Service 11 a.m. Equality Michigan, Wayne State University, **Detroit**. <http://equalitymi.org/>

Memorial for Jeff Montgomery 11 a.m. Event is free. May need money for parking. Equality Michigan, 495 W Ferry Ave, **Detroit**. 313-537-7000. <https://www.facebook.com/events/553110648226137/>

Alcoholics Anonymous Brownbaggers 1:30 p.m.



uprainbowpride.com.

Tourist Park is located at 2145 Sugar Loaf Ave. in Marquette.

Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Men's Discussion Group 6 p.m. Group for gay, bisexual and transgender men ages 18 and up. This group frequently offers holiday parties and outings such as movie nights in addition to regular meetings. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

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. 18

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

Northville Heritage Festival 10 a.m. Live entertainment, games, pancake breakfast, parade and more. Visit website for full activity list. Northville Chamber of Commerce, 195 S. Main Street, **Northville**. 248-349-7640. tracisincoc@northville.org <http://www.northville.org/>

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee 2 p.m. Barefoot is also sponsoring a clothing drive for the Ruth Ellis Center in Detroit. Tickets \$20. Barefoot Productions Theatre, 240 N. Main St., **Plymouth**. 734-

Editor's Pick

3rd Annual Up North Rainbow Pride

The third annual Pride Fest will be held Saturday, Sept. 10 in Tourist Park in the Upper Peninsula. This year's festival will feature vendors, a rally at the Marquette Commons at 11 a.m., a Pride Walk, drummers, games, a shoe kick contest, belly dancers and hula hoopers, a speech by the vice-mayor, and a feature performance by Hunter Wade.

The festival will continue with a performance by the Peninsula Arts Appreciation Council, Diversion and then an amateur drag show at 7 p.m. until an afterglow party at Wild Rover for those 21 years of age and older.

A full schedule of events can be found at <http://www.uprainbowpride.com>.

404-6889. www.justgobarefoot.com

Monday, Sep. 19

Alcoholics Anonymous 5:45 Serenity 5:30 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

New Member Night 7 p.m. Washtenaw County's original mixed LGBT chorus. Opportunity to join LGBT chorus group. No commitments, just see if we're the right group for you. All are welcome -LGBT & allies. No sight reading skills or audition are required. Out Loud Chorus, 1400 W. Stadium Blvd, **Ann Arbor**. 734-265-0740. outloudchorus@gmail.com www.olsonline.org

Sexual Addicts Anonymous 7 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Tuesday, Sep. 20

Show Your Support for MIC Every Tuesday, Julianos 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

Narcotics Anonymous 7 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Transgender Life Support 7 p.m. An open discussion group for people identifying as transgender and their allies. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Wednesday, Sep. 21

Senior Koffee Klatch 1 p.m. A discussion and networking group for people 45 years of age and older. Various discussion topics, social outings and potlucks are incorporated throughout the year. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Middlepath Meditation 6 p.m. Guided meditation covering various topics and methods followed by silent meditations. \$5 suggested

donation. No registration needed. This is a drop-in event. Michigan Pagans, 224 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-548-1415. www.bostontearoom.com

LGBT Cancer Support Group 6:30 p.m. This LGBT support group provides social and emotional support for LGBT persons with cancer, their partners, LGBT family members and friends. Gilda's Club Metro Detroit, 3517 Rochester Road, **Royal Oak**. 248-577-0800. www.gildasclubdetroit.org/calendar/lgbt-cancer-group-19/

Newly Single 7 p.m. A support and discussion group for those who are newly single and are coping with the loss of a relationship. The group offers support, resources, skill building opportunities and social events. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Thursday, Sep. 22

Detroit Design Ball | DDF 2016 5:30 p.m. Fashion shows, green carpet bike experience, DJ Thornstryker, dance performances, creative market, craft cocktails and wine, aerialist performers and more. Tickets \$15-\$19. Detroit By Design, 2934 Russell St, **Detroit**. 734-658-9248. www.eventbrite.com/e/ddf-2016-detroit-design-ball-ballet-of-the-streets-tickets-27354025627

All Genders Film Night 6:30 p.m. A social group to view and discuss films that relate to the unique challenges in the LGBTQ community. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Voices 2016 7 p.m. Guests will enjoy a strolling dinner, complimentary drinks, a silent auction, and short program. This signature event provides critical funding to support Ruth Ellis Center's annual operations while also celebrating their dedicated and generous supporters. The Center serves runaway, homeless and at-risk LGBTQ youth. The VIP reception begins at 6 p.m. Tickets will be available for purchase on June 10 online. Check back for a special guest announcement. Lear Corporation, 130 Atwater St., **Detroit**. 313-656-6000. www.ruthelliscenter.org/voices

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Editor's Pick

Disney's Little Mermaid

Join Stagecrafters and Ariel in the latest production of Disney's "The Little

Mermaid." Ariel lives fathoms below in a magical kingdom and dreams about living in the world above. She makes a costly deal with the evil sea witch to leave her fins behind so she may join Prince Eric, a human, on the shore. The haunting love story will capture hearts with classic songs including "Kiss the Girl," "Part of Your World" and the Calypso-infused "Under the Sea."

Based on the Hans Christian Anderson story and the Disney film produced by Howard Ashman and John Musker. Written and directed by John Musker and Ron Clemens. Learn more at www.stagecrafters.org.

"The Little Mermaid" runs from Sept. 9 through Oct. 2. Stagecrafters is located at 415 South Lafayette in Royal Oak. Tickets \$25.

MUSIC & MORE

Comedy

Cobb Great Hall "Whose Live Anyway?" Tickets: \$30. Wharton Center for the Performing Arts, Michigan State University, 750 E. Shaw Lane, East Lansing. 7:30 p.m. Sep. 15. 800-WHARTON. www.whartoncenter.com

Live Nation "Lewis Black" All ages. Tickets: \$39.50-69.50. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 7 p.m. Sep. 16. 734-668-8397. www.michtheater.org

Concerts

Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra "Opening Night with Jon Kimura Parker". Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Sep. 10. 734-761-1800. www.a2so.com

Blind Pig "Gold Panda" Tickets: \$15. Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. 9 p.m. Sep. 15. 734-996-8555. www.blindpigmusic.com

Blind Pig "Basement with Eskimeaux and Ovlov" Tickets: \$15 in advance, \$18 at the door. Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Sep. 13. 734-996-8555. www.blindpigmusic.com

Good Show "of Montreal and Ruby The Rabbitfoot" Tickets: \$15. Majestic Theater, 4120-4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 8 p.m. Sep. 16. 313-833-9700. www.majesticdetroit.com

Live Nation "Pink Droyd" Tickets: \$12. Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit. 9 p.m. Sep. 16. www.saintandrewsdetroit.com/

Live Nation "Butch Walker" Tickets: \$25. Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit. 9 p.m. Sep. 9. www.saintandrewsdetroit.com/

Live Nation "Laith Al-Saadi" Tickets: \$25-\$49.50. The Fillmore Detroit, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 7 p.m. Sep. 17. www.thefillmoredetroit.com

Live Nation "Amanda Shires" Tickets: \$15. The Shelter, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit. 8:30 p.m. Sep. 17. 313-961-8961. www.livenation.com

Live Nation "The Heavy" Tickets: \$16. The Shelter, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit. 6 p.m. Sep. 9. www.saintandrewsdetroit.com/

Live Nation "Revivalists" Tickets: \$20. The Shelter, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit. 8:30 p.m. Sep. 8. www.saintandrewsdetroit.com/

Majestic Cafe "Mystic Braves" Tickets: \$10. Majestic Cafe, 4120-4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 8 p.m. Sep. 11. 3138339700. www.majesticdetroit.com

Majestic Cafe "Sick of It All, Comeback Kid, Friend or Foe, S.N.A.F.U." Tickets: \$18. Majestic Cafe, 4120-4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 7 p.m. Sep. 9. 313-833-9700. www.majesticdetroit.com

Masonic Temple "Explosions in the Sky" Tickets: \$25-\$27. All ages welcome. Cathedral Theatre, 500 Temple St., Detroit. 8 p.m. Sep. 15. www.themasonic.com

MotorCity Casino Hotel "Chante Moore and Tony Toni Tone" Tickets: \$40-\$55. Sound Board, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 8 p.m. Sep. 16. 800-745-3000. www.soundboarddetroit.com

The Ark "Plainsong" Tickets: \$15. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Sep. 13. 734-761-1800. www.theark.org

The Crofoot & The Majestic "Uncle Acid & the deadbeats" Tickets: \$20. Majestic Theater, 4120-4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 7 p.m. Sep. 12. 313-833-9700. <http://tktwb.tw/2b7pPbd>

The Majestic "EOTO" Tickets: \$18. Majestic Theater, 4120-4140

See Happenings, page 26



RoosevElvis
by Helen Murray

The TEAM's RoosevElvis

Directed by **Rachel Chavkin**
Thursday, September 29 // 7:30 pm
Friday, September 30 // 8 pm
Saturday, October 1 // 2 pm & 8 pm
Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre

On a hallucinatory road trip from the Badlands to Graceland, the spirits of Elvis Presley and Theodore Roosevelt battle over the soul of Ann, a painfully shy meat-processing plant worker, and what kind of man — or woman — Ann should become. Set against the boundless blue skies of the Great Plains and endless American highway, *RoosevElvis* is a playfully pointed new work about icons, gender, and nobodies and somebodies, which the *New York Times* calls "a spirited and insightful commentary on two archetypes of American masculinity." Once described as "Gertrude Stein meets MTV," the TEAM's work crashes American history and mythology into modern stories that illuminate the current moment.

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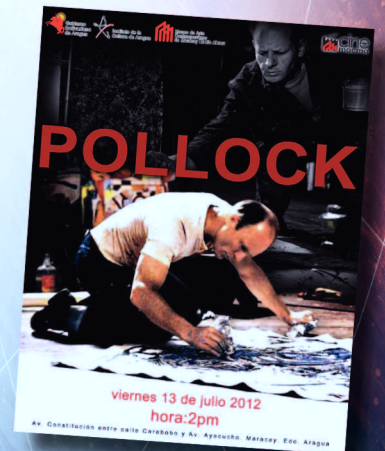
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The Frivolist: 5 Things You Need to Do If Someone You Love Is Deeply Depressed

BY MIKEY ROX

September is National Suicide Prevention Month.

As someone who has experienced the devastation of suicide in mourning the loss of friends who have taken their own lives, it's important to me to recognize this annual awareness campaign. In addition, like many of you, I've battled with my own demons and depression over the years, which has included suicidal thoughts. While no one can or should tell another how to think or feel, it's critical to remember, however – especially in down times – that suicide is preventable. Someone loves and misses you this very moment, and help is available – whether you believe that or not. Furthermore, if you know someone who is deeply depressed because you've recognized the warning signs, it's your humanitarian responsibility to reach out and offer an ear that will listen, a shoulder to cry on, or a hand to hold. Here are a few other ways to help.

1. Educate yourself on depression

While you may be able to spot signs of depression in a loved one, are you confident that you're well informed on the matter? Depression is a tricky and sensitive disorder, and it will benefit both you and the person suffering from depression if you educate yourself on the potential causes and effects. For instance, onset of depression may be triggered by a specific event or a series of events, like a string of bad luck, and it also may be linked to a brain-chemistry imbalance not connected to an event, according to Psychology Today. Thus, knowing what you're dealing with before entering the trenches is recommended.

2. Show you care by asking questions

When we're depressed, we experience feelings of loneliness or perhaps that no one cares about our predicament. But that's not the case. In fact, friends and family are often eager to help those who are depressed, and one of the first steps to showing your support in your loved one's time of need is to ask questions.

"Your friend may be so desperate that she's had a suicide plan in action for weeks, or she could just be under a lot of stress at work," writes Therese Borchard at EverydayHealth.com. "She could be having a severe episode of major depression, or just need a little more vitamin D. You won't know until you start asking some questions."

Some questions to ask may include:

When did you first start to feel bad?

Can you think of anything that may have triggered it?

Do you have suicidal thoughts?

Is there anything that makes you feel better?
What makes you feel worse?

Do you think you could be deficient in vitamin D?

Have you made any changes lately to your diet?

Are you under more pressure at work?

Have you had your thyroid levels checked?

3. Provide support without judgment

The last thing someone who's already at their lowest needs is to be judged for how they're feeling or acting. Dealing with a depressed person is not always easy, granted – they're irritable and sometimes lash out – but it's in those moments that you should try to put yourself in their shoes. You don't know what's going through their head, what stresses they're facing that brought them to this breaking point, or the painful physical manifestation of depression they may be experiencing. So, just be there for them – without any restrictions or conditions. Let them talk, vent, cry if they need to – all the while being a soothing, reassuring voice and pillar of strength to which they can cling.

4. Suggest seeking a professional who can help

While providing nonjudgmental support is critical to someone who is depressed, you should together recognize that you, as a friend and likely nonmedical professional, can only do so much. If the depression is mild to severe – that is, it's more than just a "bad week" – suggest seeking professional help. Ask family and friends for psychologist and psychiatrist recommendations – while being considerate to the person in need by keeping them anonymous – and return with those recommendations and your availability to accompany your loved one to the first appointment, if they're open to the idea.

5. Take matters into your own hands if you have to

If your loved one's depression is so severe that you're afraid they may do something drastic, like commit suicide, you have every right to step in and call the proper authorities. Your friend or family member may not like you very much at that moment – in fact, you may become mortal enemy No. 1 for a while – but when the depression is properly treated and that black cloud dissipates, they will recognize that you were acting purely out love and concern and in their best interest. You can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for advice at 800-273-8255, but if it's an emergency situation dial 911.

Reinvestment Fund and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Name Lansing One of 50 Invest Health Cities

LANSING – The city of Lansing was selected in May by Reinvestment Fund and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to take part in the new Invest Health initiative to transform how leaders thrive and drive community access.

Invest Health is aimed at transforming how leaders from mid-size American cities work together to help low-income communities thrive, with specific attention to community features that drive health such as access to safe and affordable housing, places to play and exercise, and quality jobs.

Lansing was selected from more than 180 teams from 170 communities that applied to the initiative. Cities with populations between 50,000 and 400,000 were asked to form five-member teams including representatives from the public sector, community development, and a local hospital. The Lansing team comprises representatives from Sparrow Health System, the Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP), the City of Lansing, the Ingham County Health Department and the Lansing School District. They will work to narrow disparities in life expectancy, heart disease death and violent

crimes by effecting change in the built environment and by creating access to resources.

“We have significant health disparities in Lansing. Depending on where someone lives, life expectancy can vary by as much as 15 years in our county,” said Linda S. Vail, Ingham County health officer. “This is unacceptable. The reason goes beyond healthcare or individual behavior. This project will help us identify and ultimately address the underlying causes.”

Mid-size American cities face some of the nation’s deepest challenges with entrenched poverty, poor health and a lack of investment. But they also offer fertile ground for strategies that improve health and have the potential to boost local economies. The program has the potential to fundamentally transform the way Lansing improves opportunities to live healthy lives by addressing the drivers of health including jobs, housing, education, community safety and environmental conditions.

“With a long history in community development finance, we are excited to help create a pipeline to channel capital into low-income communities through

public and private investments,” said Amanda High, chief of strategic initiatives at Reinvestment Fund. “Our goal is to transform how cities approach tough challenges, share lessons learned and spur creative collaboration.”

Over the next 15 months, Invest Health teams will take part in a vibrant learning community, have access to highly skilled faculty advisors and coaches who will guide their efforts toward improved health, and receive a \$60,000 grant. The Lansing team will also engage a broader group of local stakeholders to encourage local knowledge sharing. Learning from the program will be synthesized and disseminated through the project website.

Lansing’s team will explore a broad range of ideas from land use to economic development. Examples include affordable housing, fresh food retail, financial counseling and job training. Project teams travelled to Philadelphia for a kick-off meeting on June 7 and will meet regularly to share lessons learned throughout the 18-month project.

Learn more at www.investhealth.org.


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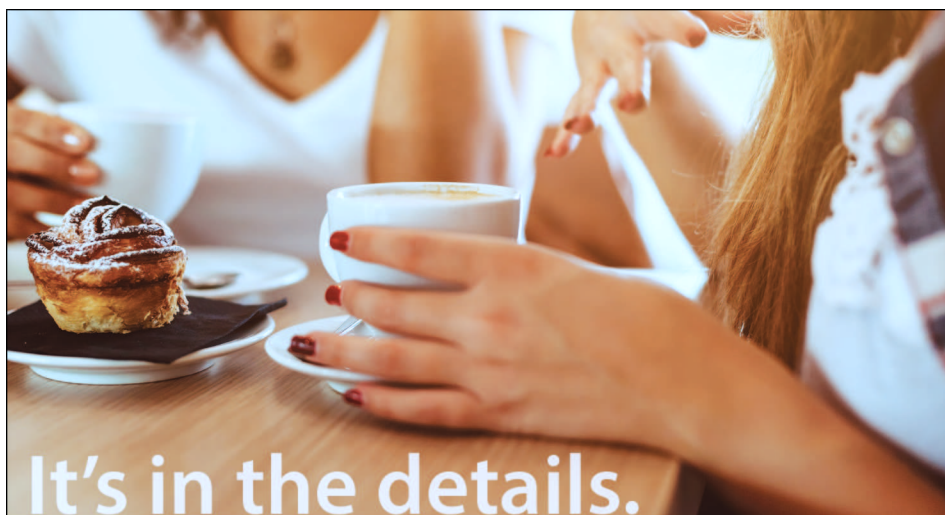
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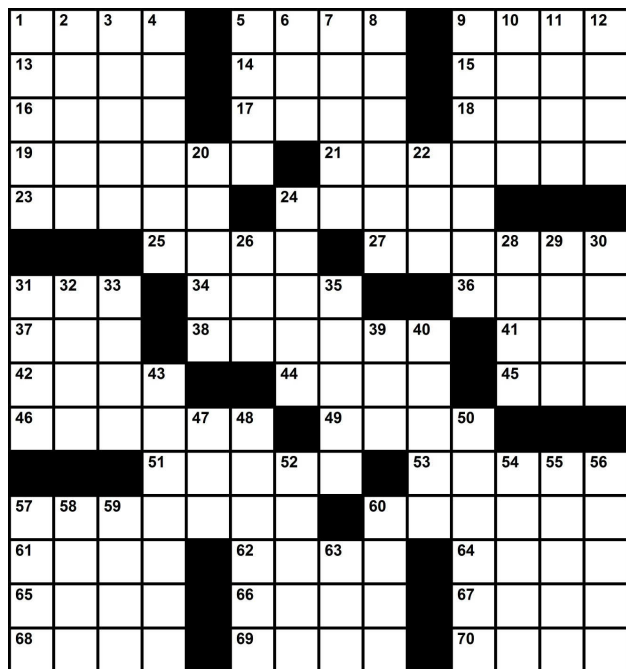
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- 34 Baltic capital
- 36 Alternative to "Go straight"
- 37 Java brewer
- 38 Country with 6 out athletes at Rio
- 41 Beauty that's only skin deep
- 42 Da Vinci's ___ Lisa
- 44 Arsenic's old partner
- 45 Be in debt to
- 46 Country with 4 out athletes at Rio
- 49 Get the seed that was spilled
- 51 Luncheonette lure
- 53 Aida was one
- 57 Country with 2 out athletes at Rio
- 60 See 19-Across
- 61 Kazan, whose desire was a streetcar
- 62 Kind of cut
- 64 Mercury and Saturn
- 65 Resembling, with "to"
- 66 Draft eligible
- 67 "Showboat"'s "Nobody ___ But Me"
- 68 Silence for Copland
- 69 Treat for Rizzo at the Frosty Palace
- 70 Penn of "Milk"
- 7 Very similar
- 8 Song from "Flashdance"
- 9 "Bewitched" actor Dick
- 10 Lump of earth
- 11 What gunners shoot off
- 12 Word to a dominatrix
- 20 Outlying community
- 22 Crack code-cracking org.
- 24 Old enough for sex without arrest
- 26 Title for Alec Guinness
- 28 Erotic opening
- 29 Emulate Alison Bechdel
- 30 Upfront amount
- 31 Bottom lines
- 32 It sticks out in front of a sailor
- 33 A girl named Frank
- 35 Sculptor Nancy
- 39 Dick Button's milieu
- 40 Kind of resistance on a path
- 43 Extremely hard
- 47 Pitching stat
- 48 Private part in a war movie
- 50 Puts one's finger on
- 52 Loy of _The Thin Man_
- 54 "___ told by an idiot" (Shakespeare)
- 55 First lesbian magazine "Vice ___"
- 56 City in the Ruhr valley
- 57 Reverse or neutral
- 58 "It's Not the Size That Counts" star Sommer
- 59 Park of Queens
- 60 Spank one's bottom
- 63 Sushi selection

Out at Rio

Across

- 1 Differs from Dorian Gray
- 5 Second fruit eater
- 9 Be a master baiter-and-switcher, perhaps
- 13 Lacking potency
- 14 Bartók the composer
- 15 Tennessee Williams "Summer and Smoke" heroine
- 16 Salty white stuff from the Greeks

- 17 Nickel or dime
- 18 Tomato variety
- 19 With 60-Across or 21-Across, country with 8 out athletes at Rio
- 21 See 19-Across
- 23 Glove material
- 24 Will and Grace shared one
- 25 Trojan Horse, e.g.
- 27 Country with 3 out athletes at Rio
- 31 Site for three men in a tub

Down

- 1 Bad and then some
- 2 Susan's "Thelma and Louise" partner
- 3 Weird Al Yankovic song about oral sex?
- 4 Doug Mattis, for one
- 5 Multiple choice choices
- 6 God of Gaius

Find solution to this puzzle at www.pridesource.com

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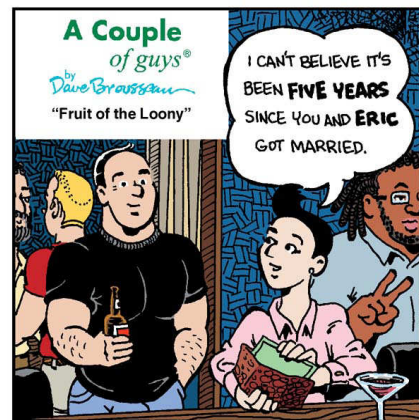
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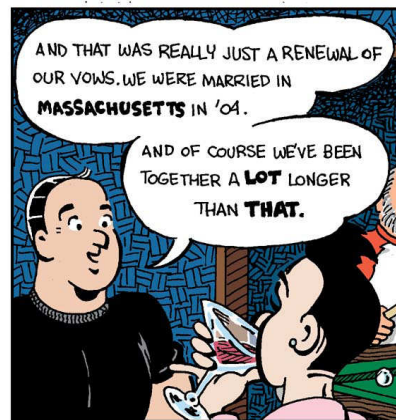
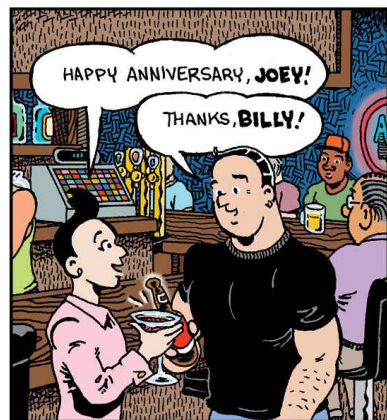
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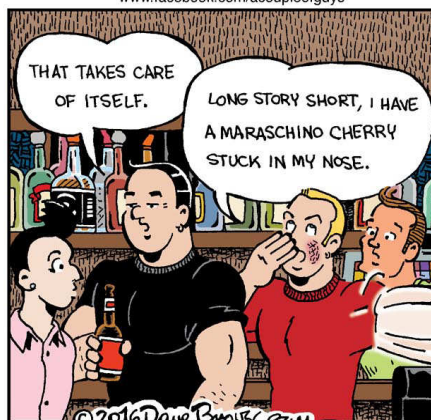
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Michigan Burlesque Festival to Raise Funds for Civil Rights Organizations

BY BTL STAFF

As the Michigan Burlesque Festival celebrates four years of award-winning burlesque performance, the Hastings Street Ballroom/Tangent Gallery features an award-winning cast of performers on Sept. 16-17 at 7 p.m. The star-studded lineup will include two of the 21st Century Burlesque Magazine's Top 50 Burlesque Performers: Chicago's Ray Gunn and New York's Dangrrr Doll. Also headlining will be Grand Rapids' 13-piece burlesque and musical group, Super Happy Funtime Burlesque. Joining them is a cast of more than 50 performers including Italian burlesque performer, Nada Von Darling, and returning emcee Foxy Tann. The festival will include a variety of vaudeville performances, fire performances, acrobatics, comedy and live music. Tickets are available for \$25 online at www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2591747.

"This festival always provides diverse entertainment and never-ending laughter. This year may be our strongest lineup yet," said festival co-producer Mabel Syrup.

A percentage of the proceeds will be donated to specific civil rights organizations.

"The festival has decided to donate to the ACLU and Black Lives Matter because it is an

issue that is important to our society in order to evolve and grow," Syrup said. "We want to help spread the voice for those in Michigan who are ready to see change in the world, and who are tired of seeing inequalities and racial profiling in our communities."

The show doesn't stop with this year's headliners. Local vendors will sell their unique handmade merchandise and a variety of good eats. Pre-show entertainment features performances by the mesmerizing Jadeybug from Sunshine Fire Entertainment, incomparable circus art by The Striped Circus, and an appearance by Detroit's favorite anti-clown, Satori Circus.

Saturday afternoon workshops will be offered with some of the festival performers, including Tassel Twirling with Foxy Tann at 1 p.m., Costume Aesthetics with professional costumer Dangrrr Doll at 2:15 p.m., and Fabulous is a State of Mind with Foxy Tann at 3:30 p.m. Classes will be held at the Hastings Street Ballroom/Tangent Gallery.

The Michigan Burlesque Festival is produced by Mabel Syrup and Valencia Starling of Fancy Pants Arts & Entertainment. For more information, visit www.michiganburlesquefestival.com.

► Happenings

Continued from p. 21

Spelling Bee - Ann Arbor Civic Theatre, Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, 911 N. University, Ann Arbor. Sep. 8 - Sep. 11. 734-971-2228. www.a2ct.org

ART 'N' AROUND

River's Edge Gallery "The Paint is Real: An Art Exhibition" An art exhibition featuring four female artist painters whose style ranges from surrealist to psychedelic impressionist. River's Edge Gallery, 3024 Biddle, Wyandotte. 6 p.m. Sep. 16. 734-246-9880.

Cranbrook Academy of Art "John Glick: A Legacy in Clay" More than 200 pieces represent all phases of Glick's work. Cranbrook Art Museum, 39221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. June 18 - Nov. 30. 877-462-7262. www.cranbrook.edu

Detroit Institute of Arts "Guest of Honor: Gallery of the Louvre" Organized by the Terra Foundation for American Art. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. July 8 - Sep. 18. 313-833-7900. www.dia.org

Detroit Institute of Arts "The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip" Tickets: \$12.50 for adults, \$8 for seniors, and \$6 for youth. Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. June 17 - Sep. 11. 313-833-7900. www.dia.org

Eastern Market "Adorn Detroit" An art fair of art wear. Artists and designers with unique accessories and jewelry

will add their special touch to your individual style. There will be custom fragrances also. Public admission is free, but clothing and accessories will be available for purchase. Shed 5, 2934 Russell St., Detroit. 10 a.m. Sep. 18. 313-833-9300. www.easternmarket.com

Lawrence Street Gallery "About Face by Mary's Muses" Come see the stunning portraits painted by the artists representing Mary's Muses. Lawrence Street Gallery, 22620 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Sep. 9 - Sep. 30. 248-544-0394. www.lawrencestreetgallery.com

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

South Oakland Art Association "SOAA September Speaker Program" Learn about new and familiar products from iconic art art supplier Blick Art. Be prepared to be inspired. Paint Party Royal Oak at Webster's, 2554 Crooks Road, Royal Oak. 7 p.m. Sep. 12. 248-259-6405. www.southoaklandart.com

UDCA Neighborhood Association "UDCA Historic Home Tour" Tour six historic homes built in the 1920s. Tickets are \$18 in advance or \$20 at the door. Detroit Neighborhood, 17139 Oak Drive, Detroit. 10 a.m. Sep. 11. 248-763-8432. www.udca.info

University of Michigan Museum of Art "The Connoisseur's Legacy: The Collection of Nesta and Walter Spink" Former UMMA curator Nesta Spink and U-M professor emeritus Walter Spink.

A. Alfred Taubman Gallery, 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. July 8 - Sep. 25. 7347634186. www.umma.umich.edu

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Catherine Opie: 700 Nimes Road" Contemporary photography. A. Alfred Taubman Gallery, 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. June 11 - Sep. 11. 734-647-0524. www.umma.umich.edu/view/exhibitions/2016-opie.php

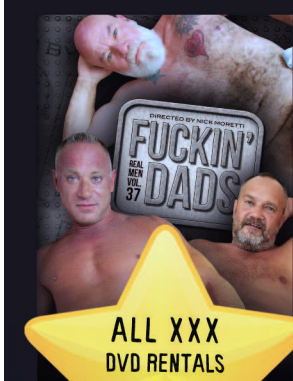
University of Michigan Museum of Art "Manuel Alvarez: Mexico's Poet of Light" Works by Manuel Alvarez. University Of Michigan Museum Of Art, 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. Aug. 2 - Oct. 23. 734-763-4186. www.umma.umich.edu

University of Michigan Museum of Art "Mira Henry: The View Inside" Works by Mira Henry. University Of Michigan Museum Of Art, 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. Aug. 2 - Oct. 16. 734-763-4186. www.umma.umich.edu

University of Michigan Museum of Art "In Focus: Modern Japanese Folk Ceramics" Artist and Poet Ann Holmes. University Of Michigan Museum Of Art, 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. Aug. 9 - Oct. 30. 734-763-4186. www.umma.umich.edu

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

Ypsilanti Historical Museum "Meredith Bixby's Marvelous Marionettes" Puppets will be on display through spring of 2017. Ypsilanti Historical Museum, 220 N. Huron, Ypsilanti. July 10 - Dec. 31. 734-482-4990.



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