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WORLD AIDS DAY

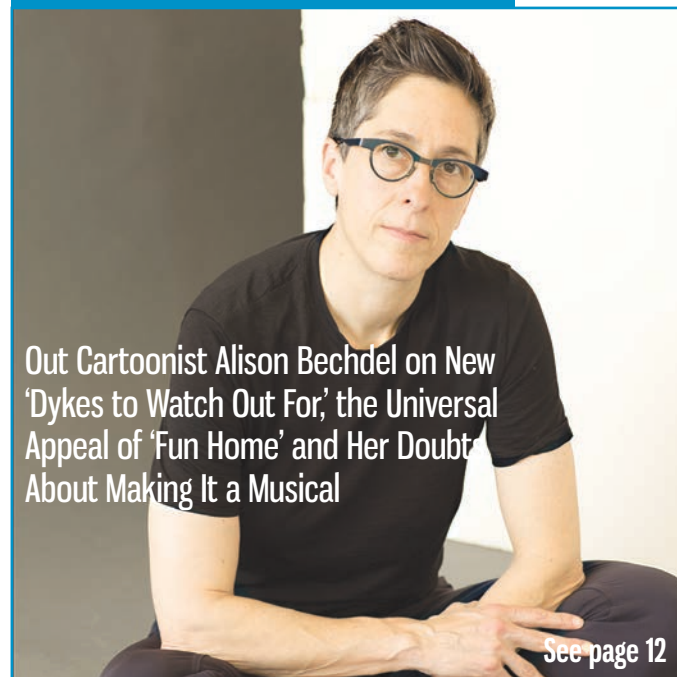


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VOL. 2448 • DECEMBER 1, 2016
ISSUE 992

PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP

20222 Farmington Rd., Livonia, Michigan 48152
Phone 734.293.7200

PUBLISHERS

Susan Horowitz & Jan Stevenson

MEMBER OF

Michigan Press Association
National Gay Media Association
National Gay & Lesbian Chamber
Q Syndicate



EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief
Susan Horowitz, 734.293.7200 x 12
susanhorowitz@pridesource.com

Entertainment Editor

Chris Azzopardi, 734.293.7200 x 24
chrisazzopardi@pridesource.com

Senior News Editor

Kate Opalewski, 734.293.7200 x 10
kate@pridesource.com

Assistant Editor

Shelby Clark Petkus, shelby@pridesource.com

News Writers

Todd A. Heywood
Jason Michael
AJ Trager, ajtrager@pridesource.com

CREATIVE

Webmaster & MIS Director
Kevin Bryant, kevinbryant@pridesource.com

Contributing Writers

Charles Alexander, Michelle E. Brown,
Emell Derra Adolphus, Todd Heywood,
Gwendolyn Ann Smith, Amy Lynn Smith

Cartoonists

Paul Berg, Dave Brousseau

Contributing Photographers

Andrew Potter
Alexander Godin

ADVERTISING & SALES

Director of Sales
Jan Stevenson, 734.293.7200 x 22
jan@pridesource.com

Sales Representatives

Ann Cox, 734.293.7200 x 13
anncox@pridesource.com

Donelle Kremke, 734.293.7200 x 16
donelle@pridesource.com

National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media, 212.242.6863

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NEWS

Lansing Sends Message to Vulnerable Communities in Wake of Election

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

LANSING - In response to recent incidents of hate speech, bullying and violence related to the presidential election, various leaders in the Lansing area came together to create the Lansing Takes Action movement.

Erika Brown-Binion, director of the Refugee Development Center in Lansing said this is “a direct response to the need to spread the message of inclusiveness and welcoming. We are in uncertain times with regards to policies in the upcoming administration. We need to take a stand and make our voices heard as a collective to ensure that refugees and immigrants, minorities, LGBTQI - our most vulnerable - are protected and welcomed. The purpose of the LTA group is to have a common space where one can share perspectives, ways to take action, events and other avenues to stand up for the most vulnerable.”

The RDC is a vital mid-Michigan nonprofit organization serving refugees since 2002, which offers critical educational and social support services for refugee newcomers in the greater Lansing area. The RDC’s mission is to help meet the basic needs of arriving refugees and to provide ongoing support leading to the self-sufficiency of newcomers. The organization serves hundreds of refugees from all over the world including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Afghanistan, Burma, Bhutan, Iraq and Syria.

“1,700 refugees from 41 countries were

served by the RDC in 2015. We seek to ensure that refugees know they are welcomed and supported in this community,” said Brown-Binion. “This is why we believe in and support the LTA movement.”

Around 50 Lansing-area organizations are a part of this group online including the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, Michigan Disability Rights Coalition, the LGBT Resource Center at Michigan State University, the Fair Housing Center of Southeast and Mid Michigan, and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing, to name a few.

Their goal is to be receptive to and inclusive of all Lansing residents who feel vulnerable.

The LTA website reads: “We are you. People who believe in the good of our community. People who are in fear and need support. People who want to help. People who are in a position to advocate and stand up. Lansing is - and always has been - a welcoming community. It will continue to be so. Lansing stands for inclusion, and acceptance, and mutual respect. There are allies here. There are supporters here. Whoever you are. Wherever you came from, whoever you love, there is a place for you here. No matter your skin tone, or your language, or your gender, or your choice of religion, there is a place for you here.”

For more information, email contact@lansingtakesaction.com or visit their website www.lansingtakesaction.com for a list of resources.

Save the Date: EQMI 2016 Fall Reception

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT – There are so many amazing people in the community to celebrate: allies, activists, change agents, and the next generation of leaders. On Dec. 2 Equality Michigan will be honoring them all and celebrating the wide diversity of the full LGBTQ movement during their 2016 Fall Reception - A Political Mixer.

The event at 6:30 p.m. at DTE Energy, 1 Energy Plaza in Detroit welcomes straight-laced corporate leaders to the radical Trans Sistas of Color Project; from Democratic lawmakers, to prominent Republican leaders and everyone in between.

“The one thing we all have in common is a commitment to LGBT rights and a desire to practice the politics of addition in order to

see those rights protected under the law,” said EQMI executive director Stephanie White.

A short awards program will honor the Catalyst Award winner U.S. Congressman Dan Kildee, the Henry Messer Youth Award winner Aiden Ramirez-Tatum, the MacAllister Activist Award winner Detroit Police Officer Danielle “Dani” Woods, and Change Agent Award winner Greg McNeilly.

The powerhouse evening of political mingling, cocktails, fine cuisine, and live entertainment is black tie optional. Also featured is Grammy-nominated, Detroit-based producer Brandon Williams with his jazz trio. Tickets for the event presented by DTE Energy and AT&T and Consumers Energy can be purchased online <http://bit.ly/eqmi2016>.



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Trumping HIV

Advocates, state officials worry, wonder what a Trump administration will do with HIV funding

BY TODD HEYWOOD

Despite extraordinary achievements in addressing the 35-year-old HIV crisis in the U.S., the future of billions of dollars in federal support funds for people living with and at risk for the virus could be in jeopardy when a Republican Congress and president are sworn-in this January.

That money is a lifeline for approximately 1.2 million Americans as well as a funding source for prevention initiatives which are helping to reduce new infections.

How the new GOP controlled government will fund and address HIV in the U.S., and with international aid, is unclear.

"It's a little bit hard to know exactly what a Trump administration will do," said William McColl, health policy director at the Washington D.C.-based AIDS United. "There's very little information about what particularly Trump believes about HIV."

Key among the issues, said McColl: The future of the Affordable Care Act and the funding of the Ryan White CARE Act.

"We know they are going to move forward on repealing the ACA," said McColl. "That's not very helpful to people living with HIV."

Republicans, including President-elect Donald Trump, campaigned on a platform to repeal the ACA. That could result in millions of recently insured Americans being dumped off insurance rolls. So far the GOP has not produced any solid plans on what they would replace the law with, although Trump himself has said he would be interested in retaining some aspects of the law, such as the pre-existing conditions coverage rule. That requires insurers to provide insurance to a person regardless of a pre-existing condition, such as HIV infection.

"They're not going to have the teeth to enforce that, or the premiums will be so high it won't be worth spending the money," McColl said of potential conservative alternatives to the ACA.

Pence's Shadow

Also casting a shadow over the conversation – the role of Vice President-elect Mike Pence. The former Indiana governor and congressman has a long history of antipathy, if not outright hostility to LGBT people and HIV issues in particular. His campaign website from his successful 2000 bid for Congress contained the following statement on HIV:

"Congress should support the reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act only after completion of an audit to ensure that federal dollars were no longer being given to organizations that celebrate and encourage the types of behaviors that facilitate the spreading of the HIV virus. Resources should be directed toward those institutions which provide assistance to those seeking to change their sexual behavior."

In other words, Pence wanted to fund reparative therapy for people who engaged in same sexual behavior. Pence also was sitting as governor when the largest outbreak of needle borne HIV happened. Months into the crisis, which ultimately resulted in over 180 new cases of HIV in a community that had traditionally reported five cases a year, Pence finally approved a needle exchange program – after much "prayer," as national media outlets reported.

Trump has announced Pence will oversee the administration's domestic policy agenda. While Pence's call for full funding for the Ryan White CARE Act, which provides the majority of public HIV care dollars in the U.S., is notable to a point, the current GOP Congress has passed legislation cutting Ryan White funding. Right now there are two separate funding bills providing dramatically different cuts to programming including elimination of Title X family planning dollars.

President Barack Obama had sought \$2.3 billion for the program.

The growing political involvement of people living with HIV will play a crucial role in protecting HIV funding on federal and state levels and addressing HIV criminal laws.

Michigan HIV Efforts

If significant cuts, or outright elimination, of Ryan White funding happens, it could have a devastating impact on Michigan's HIV efforts, state officials said.

Last fiscal year, Michigan appropriated millions for HIV prevention and care services including drugs, said Jennifer Eisner, spokeswoman for Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Thirty-five percent of the funding, \$18.7 million, comes in from Ryan White funding from the feds. That funding has remained "flat for the past several years."

The state puts up \$9 million in state budget dollars in required matching funds to access the federal dollars. That money comes from the Michigan Health Fund Initiative. That fund was targeted in 2013 by former GOP national committeeman and former State Rep. Dave Agema, R-Grandville. Agema proposed eliminating the fund – the sole source of Michigan's HIV funding match dollars – and shifting the funds to support airport upkeep. Agema is a retired airline pilot.

The remainder of that funding is expended in the AIDS Drug Assistance Program. ADAP accounts for \$21.5 million in spending, of which \$12.5 million is obtained through federal appropriation. The remainder of the cash is garnered through drug rebates provided by pharmaceutical companies providing HIV medications.

"State funding alone would not be sufficient to cover the current HIV Care expenditures," Eisner said. "With the tremendous advances in HIV care, life expectancy of those living with HIV will continue to increase requiring continued and increased funding overtime."

The Michigan Legislature is highly unlikely to appropriate more dollars to address HIV in the state.

McColl said he is more hopeful that the Ryan White program could be spared significant cuts or reductions – although it has already been hit by budget deal sequestration cuts which have held the budget stagnant.

"We do hear a fairly strong commitment to Ryan White programs," McColl said. However, the GOP has nationally indicated a distaste for "single disease programs," he said.

Sean Strub, a longtime HIV advocate and executive director of the Sero Project, said what will happen in addressing the epidemic under a Trump administration remains unclear, other than basic suppositions.

"The short answer is that I don't know what the impact of a Trump administration will be on HIV generally, other than the assumption we are all making about less funding, more hostile environment, dangerous and repressive new initiatives," he said in an email.

But he said national efforts to modernize HIV-specific criminal laws on a state by state basis have been met with bipartisan support. He said he expects that the growing political involvement of people living with HIV will play a crucial role in protecting HIV funding on federal and state levels and addressing HIV criminal laws.

"We've already seen such a tremendous upswing in the engagement of PLHIV (People Living with HIV/AIDS) in the political processes, as evidenced by the increased number of people participating in AIDSWatch, turnout for HIV is Not a Crime conference, interest in and growth of networks of PLHIV," Strub said. "The heightened threat of a Trump administration will only make that engagement so much more critical."

Trump Disavowal of White Supremacists Doesn't Quiet Concerns

ATLANTA (AP) - Donald Trump's disavowal this week of white supremacists who have cheered his election as president hasn't quieted concerns about the movement's impact on his White House or whether more acts of hate will be carried out in his name.

Members of the self-declared "alt-right" have exulted over the Nov. 8 results with public cries of "Hail Trump!" and reprises of the Nazi salute. The Ku Klux Klan plans to mark Trump's victory with a parade next month in North Carolina. Civil rights advocates have recoiled, citing an uptick in harassment and incidents of hate crimes affecting blacks, Jews, Muslims, Latinos, gays, lesbians and other minority groups since the vote.

The president-elect has drawn repeated criticism for being slow to offer his condemnation of white supremacists. His strongest denunciation of the movement has not come voluntarily, only when asked, and he occasionally trafficked in retweets of racist social media posts during his campaign.

Further, Trump has named Stephen Bannon, the conservative media provocateur who shaped the final months of Trump's campaign, as a White House chief strategist who will work steps from the Oval Office. Bannon's appointment has become as a flashpoint for both sides.

Trump's detractors and his "alt-right" supporters broadly agree on one thing: It may not even matter what Trump himself believes, or how he defines his own ideology, because his campaign rhetoric has emboldened the white identity politics that will help define his administration.

"Those groups clearly see something and hear something that causes them to believe he is one who sympathizes with their voice and their view. ... Donald Trump has to take responsibility for that," said Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, a black Democrat. He was among 169 members of Congress who signed a letter opposing Bannon's White House appointment.

White nationalist leader Richard Spencer said he believes Trump, Bannon and the "alt-right" are "all riding in the same lane." Spencer explained that neither Trump nor Bannon is a movement "identitarian," Spencer's preferred term for his racially driven politics. But Spencer said Trump's election validates Spencer's view that America must reject multiculturalism and "political correctness" in favor of its white, Christian European heritage.

Spencer's group, the National Policy Institute, drew headlines for their recent gathering where some attendees mimicked the Nazi salute as they feted Trump. Spencer told The Associated Press the salutes were "ironic exuberance" that "the mainstream media doesn't get."

But at the Anti-Defamation League, which tracks incidents of anti-Semitism, Oren Segal said it is part of a disturbing postelection atmosphere tied to Trump's 17-month campaign.

Before, Segal said, it wasn't "surprising" for the ADL to get calls about a swastika, the Nazi insignia, defacing public or private property. "What's surprising now," he said, "are the references to the campaign" in the incidences. "Make American White Again' ... 'Go Trump' with the swastika," he said. "That is unique."

Trump was asked about the rash of incidents during a postelection interview on CBS' "60 Minutes." Trump said he was "saddened," and he looked into the camera and said, "Stop it." But Trump has steadfastly defended his hiring of Bannon, who previously led Breitbart News and in July described it as a "platform for the alt-right" - just a month before he took the job running the Republican nominee's campaign.

Jared Taylor, editor of the white supremacist magazine "American Renaissance," said Trump bears some responsibility for his pitched rhetoric, which included describing Mexican

immigrants as "rapists" at the outset of his campaign and proposing a ban on all Muslim immigrants. But Taylor said Trump is still unfairly maligned as a white supremacist and racist because he "cares about Americans already here."

But white supremacist imagery was a common sight at Trump rallies. Pepe the frog, a cartoon character appropriated by the white supremacist movement on social media, appeared on dozens of T-shirts and signs. The "Make America Great Again" motto was seen by some as a call back to the nation's simpler, whiter, past. While the businessman's campaign never actively courted votes from the movement, it did recognize the long-term fears that some whites feel about immigration.

Taylor insisted, "There's nothing Ku Klux Klan about any

of this."

But, in fact, Trump drew Klan backing.

As part of his prolific Twitter use, he has retweeted white nationalist accounts and a famous quote of Benito Mussolini, the 20th century fascist leader of Italy, saying "It is better to live one day as a lion than 100 years as a sheep."

In February, Trump declined to repudiate former Klan leader David Duke during a CNN interview. Afterward, Trump blamed the move on a faulty earpiece, only to come back days later and offer an explicit condemnation.

He has several times fallen back on the excuse of

See White Supremacists, page 11







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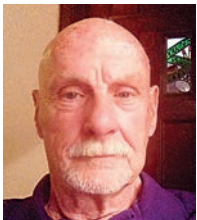


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Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Diary of Maybe Days to Come

July 4, 2020: Dear Diary, another same-sex couple has been “relocated.” My neighbors two doors down. The boys who did a wonderful job of gentrifying that old house on Wells Street.

Didn’t really get to know them, but they always waved. Said hello. Just gone! Last week, two others. Tom and Martin. Belonged to my block club. Gadabouts, but great gardeners. Just disappeared. Very strange.

Within days their condoplex – furniture, everything! – was “appropriated” by Theocratic America Party members. Last night there was a parking lot burning of their books and antique CD collection. Rare albums of Garland, Streisand, Frank Sinatra (whoever he was).

Come to think of it, as much as I didn’t like them – too secretive, if you ask me – Margo and her longtime partner Ella, in their mid-70s, also seem to have vanished. A nosy neighbor at Cafe & Pot whispered to me that they were taken away in a black van about 3 a.m. Screaming.

I mind my own business. Or at least I try to, dear diary. But something’s going on, not only in this small town, but our capitol as well. Anyone with half a brain could see it coming. 2020: All same-sex marriages voided, constitutionally made illegal. 2021: Gays and lesbians must declare themselves homosexuals and register for one-year of mandatory, church/state sponsored reparative therapy.

If caught afterward in the slightest compromising behavior – say holding hands – LGBT people are subject to further RT for as long as it takes, and – a money maker for the state! – at their own expense.

2021: All homosexuals must get listed with 3-D photo, fingerprints, sex contacts on the America First Homosexual Watch List.

2022: Homosexuals are barred from teaching, practicing law, medicine, acting on stage or hologram touch-and-feel videos, wide-screen movies. New Hollywood’s in a panic!

And! “All known, avowed, militant ‘homos’ (Theocratic America derogatory term for non-curable sexual deviants) must wear a rainbow armband, and observe a weekly 6:30 p.m. body WiFi monitoring curfew.”

July 15, 2023: Dear Diary, today I learn at a TA-sponsored church picnic that recalcitrant homos are being relocated to Canyon Center West. My friend Martha (sworn to hush-hush to these cursive writing written diary pages) has several suspect acquaintances. She received a smuggled-out postcard: “Having a trying time. Overcrowded. Bad ass place. Health concerns. Miss family. Prayers. D. L. ‘Bro’ Jones.”

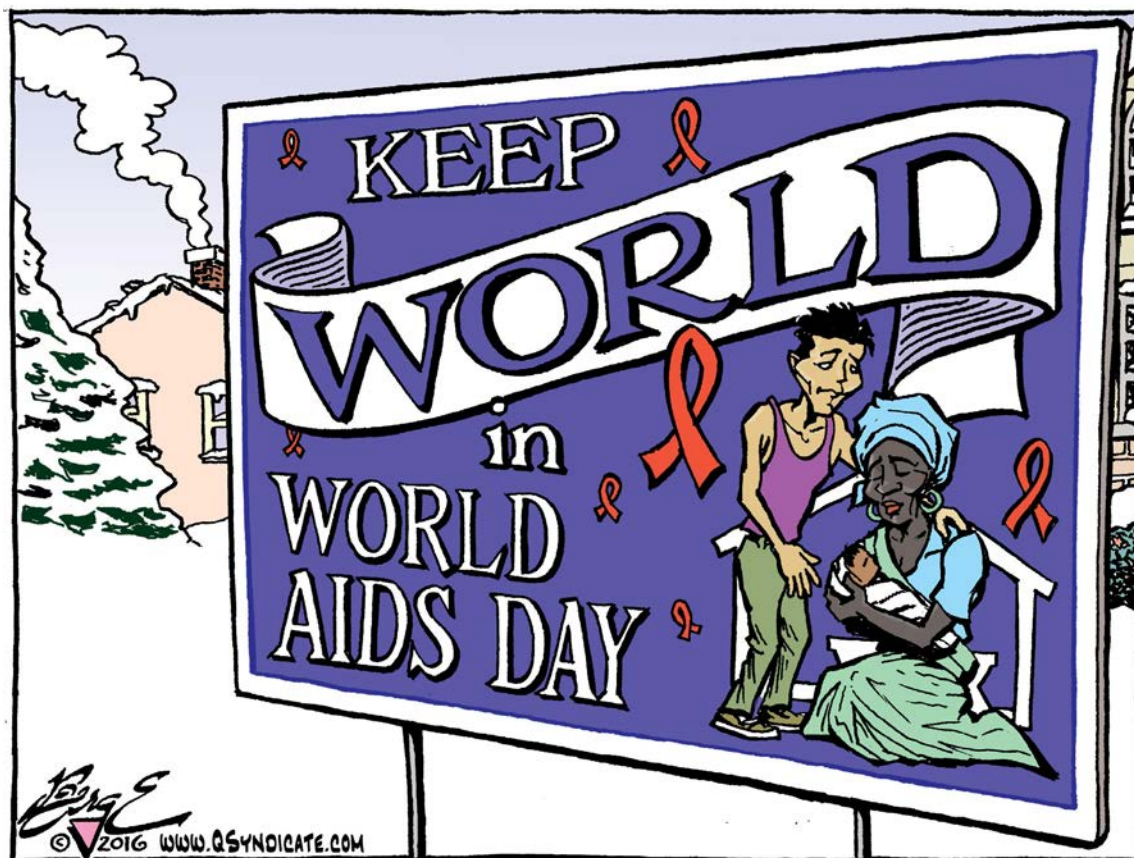
2024 Easter Sunday: Theocratic America Party President spoke on Total Fox All Channels America about the concessions we have to make during TA’s 10 Year Plan. Asked for a “unity of vision,” a need to “be vigilant for any behavior or opinion, covert or otherwise, that’s unpatriotic, anti-state, going against political and/or America’s theocratic good. It’s the duty of every thinking citizen to report any abomination of loyalty.”

Oct. 31, Halloween: Picked up the Banner of Victory, unfortunately our only news source. This item caught my eye: “Washington, D.C. has become the first zone to be ‘homo free.’ This thorough ‘cleansing’ is the result of thousands of undercover reports, well-coordinated psychological efforts, low-visibility, rapid roundup strategies.

“RT accounts for much of this outcome – so much so that, as approved therapy for brain rewiring, it will be used – along with mind altering religious techniques – for other anti-America First asocial tendencies.

“Those ‘homos’ not responding to RT are relocated to fasting and penance camps in an off-limits Grand Canyon concentration area. ‘Rest assured,’ the President stresses, ‘no government tax monies are used to support these aberrant lifestyle incarcerations. Many may perish. Sadly, that’s their choice. God and country come first! Homos come last. If at all.’”

Charles@pridesource.com. Originally published in 2014



Positive Thoughts



A Sense of Community

BY JEFF BERRY

Community is a word I often hear bandied about at various HIV meetings, conferences, and gatherings, but it’s sometimes a loaded word that often means different things to different people, and its definition depends on the setting or context in which it’s used. Community can be based on geography, such as the actual community of Hollywood, Florida, or it can be used to describe those who share a common history, or social, economic, and political interests. Then there is the psychological sense of community, defined as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together.”

All of our various communities are in flux right now with an overall general increase in awareness of social injustices that exist in our society, and the realization that positive change needs to occur. Some communities have recently come under attack, both literally and figuratively, in the midst of a very divisive political climate. A direct attack on our brothers and sisters at Pulse nightclub in Orlando was devastating, and touched all of us deeply, and is beyond the realm of understanding. But even in the darkest moments, hope rises up, as seen with the lines of people that grew to be blocks long, waiting to donate blood; the makeshift

memorials of flowers and candles that instantly began popping up; the tales of grace and heartbreak that emerged from those who survived. And the faces and stories behind the 49 members of our community who we lost but are not, and will never be, forgotten.

When recently summoned for jury duty at the Circuit Court of Cook County in Chicago, I spent a day with 41 other individuals while being questioned by the judge and lawyers for the plaintiff and defendants in a civil suit. I really didn’t want to be selected because I would have had to cancel a vacation I had been planning for months, but as the day wore on I was fascinated by the process of jury selection, and quite impressed by the knowledge and wisdom of the judge overseeing the case. He kept stressing to all of us in the room how we are the only country in the world in which civil cases are left to 12 members of a community to decide, after weighing all of the facts. He used the word “community” several times throughout the day, and after being in the same room all day with the other prospective jurors, all of us sharing personal details about our lives, education, and work history, I felt a strong sense of community. Yes, we were all very diverse and had different backgrounds, but we were coming together to work towards a common cause, one that I believe benefits us all.

In July I was extremely fortunate to be able to attend the International AIDS Conference in Durban. Shortly

See Positive Thoughts, page 11

Student Questions UM's Support of Homophobic FDA Blood Donor Policy

BY DANIEL ANTHONY

Daniel Anthony wrote the following letter to University of Michigan Vice President for Student Life E. Royster Harper after she distributed a letter to the student body on Nov. 9 reminding them to donate blood to the American Red Cross for the 35th annual Blood Battle with Ohio State University.

Dear Vice President Harper,

Last week, I received an email from you reminding students of the 35th annual Blood Battle with Ohio State. In your email you encouraged students to sign-up to donate blood, helping "us win and ... save lives". I'm responding to you now to say that even though I am a healthy able-bodied young man, I will not be donating blood. I will not because I cannot, and this is because I am a gay student at the University of Michigan.

In your letter, you informed me that throughout the drive's existence, the University of Michigan has collected enough blood to save the lives of over 644,000 people. This grand accomplishment is something we should be proud of: These are lives that matter. Yet, I can't help but feel that we can improve the manner in which we conduct this meaningful public health initiative.

As you are probably aware, under the current FDA regulations the Red Cross cannot legally accept blood from a "man who has had sex with another man during the past 12 months." Gay men are not alone in these regulations.

They also apply to any "female who has had sex during the past 12 months with a man who has had sex with another man in the past 12 months." Consequently the FDA requires blood from these groups of people to be deferred unless a person of this group abstains from sex for 12 consecutive months. This directly "defers" the donations of all sexually active gay men, bisexual men and any heterosexual or bisexual women who have had sex with gay or bisexual men.

I am aware that donating blood saves lives. I am aware that HIV disqualifies any infected individual from donating blood. I am aware that majority of newly diagnosed HIV cases are within the gay demographic. I am aware that "window periods" make detecting the disease less certain. I am aware that the FDA and the Red Cross take the health of the people receiving blood donations very seriously and consider their treatment of policy very thoughtfully and conservatively.

But I am also aware of research that suggests that an individual sexual risk assessment is just as effective as the prohibitory and generalizing policy that the FDA has adopted; that HIV can be prevented through the use of safe sex and, even, medication; and that it is mandated for healthcare professionals to screen donated blood for HIV prior to transfusion.

I would like to contextualize the FDA's policy within our own university's policy on nondiscrimination. We, as a university

My health, my lifestyle and my merit are questioned primarily on the basis that I am gay.

community, claim that: "The University of Michigan is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status in employment, educational programs and activities, and admissions." Yet, because of my sexual orientation, I am not offered the same opportunity to help my school or my community through participation of this historic blood drive. Instead I am "deferred."

Yes, I am "deferred" along with those whom, according to the Red Cross, "have ever used needles to take drugs ... not prescribed by (their) doctor ... have ever taken money, drugs or other payment for sex...(or) in the last 12 months have been in juvenile detention, lockup, jail or prison for more than 72 hours." This bears the offensive implication that, because of my sexual orientation, I am inherently hazardous to my community.

In other words, my health, my lifestyle and my merit are questioned primarily on the basis that I am gay. Therefore, it seems to me that as a healthy, monogamous and responsible person, I am being unfairly and unnecessarily "deferred" from one of the cornerstones of my university's history.

This Annual Blood Battle presents me with two choices: For 12 consecutive months I can rebuke a part of my identity in order to donate blood, or I can live freely while accepting the systematic discrimination which the University of Michigan perpetuates annually.

Neither of these options are ideal. So, perhaps the 35th Annual Blood Battle presents our university community with an opportunity to follow-up on our self-attributed "leaders and best" character. Perhaps we can speak out against this implicit discrimination. Perhaps we can unite to change our tradition into a wholly inclusive process.

Your email reminds me of this.

Sincerely,
Daniel Anthony

Creep of the Week

Betsy DeVos

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

School sux, amirite, guys? Pencils, books, teachers' dirty looks. Ugh. Who needs it?

I mean, the very idea of public education funded by tax dollars sprang from the mind of some lunatic named Thomas Jefferson, who I'm pretty sure is best known for "moving on up to a deluxe apartment in the sky."



Betsy DeVos

Not to mention public education's biggest flaw: it isn't driven by profit. I mean, who is getting rich off of this scheme? And if nobody's getting rich, then what's the point?

Which is why I'm so excited that Donald Trump has tapped Betsy DeVos, super mega zillionaire and major hater of public schools, to head the Department of Education.

Now, if you live in Michigan you probably already know DeVos (not personally, because you are probably a peasant she'd never talk to). The DeVos family fortune comes from Amway, the direct marketing company that hawks vitamins, make-up and household cleaning agents. You know, that shit your crazy cousin sells and is always trying to get you to sell, too, but insists is not a pyramid scheme.

The DeVos family, which basically owns the GOP in Michigan, has been kicking public education in the groin for years in the Great Lakes State, pushing for public education dollars to be funneled into religious, charter and for-profit schools instead. Betsy and her family are big fans of vouchers, which parents could use toward tuition at a school that won't teach your kid to read, but will teach your kid that Jesus used to ride on dinosaurs.

But why do so many right-wing conservatives hate public school so much? Because public school is the perfect mix of right-wing triggers like government (always incompetent!) taxes (always bad!), unions (always thugs!), thinking (always dangerous!), and the separation of church and state (not a thing!).

Not to mention the fact that the federal gov't wants to protect LGBTQ kids. The Education Department's Office of Civil Rights under President Obama is doing things like fighting anti-LGBTQ

Public school is the perfect mix of right-wing triggers like government (always incompetent!) taxes (always bad!), unions (always thugs!), thinking (always dangerous!), and the separation of church and state (not a thing!).

discrimination and advocating that trans students be treated like human beings.

Now DeVos is not such a big fan of LGBTQ folks. In 2004, Betsy and her husband Dick were major players in the successful effort to get an anti-gay marriage amendment into Michigan's constitution. They donated \$200,000 to the effort.

The DeVos family has given lots of money to rabidly anti-gay groups like the National Organization for Marriage, Focus on the Family, Heritage Foundation and the Family Research Council, of which Betsy's father is a founding member.

The reason why the "public" part of education is so crucial is that it is supposed to be free for all children. Dismantling the public school system would mean leaving the most vulnerable to fend for themselves. And LGBTQ students are in that category.

"True educational equity requires schools that serve the most at-risk students, including students of color; students with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning students; and English-language learners," GLSEN Executive Director Eliza Byard said in a statement. "Vouchers and tuition tax credits do not advance this cause. As we have seen over the past eight years, federal civil rights oversight of education is essential to ensure that all students in this country have real access to opportunity."

DeVos claims she wants all kids to have a good education. Unfortunately, what she's unleashed in Michigan is absolutely not accomplishing that.

But hey, maybe DeVos won't totally strangle public schools and squash all efforts to make life easier and education better for LGBTQ students. Unfortunately, the signs are bad at this point.

Trump Appointments: A Troubling Trend Emerges

BY LISA KEEN

President-elect Donald Trump's selection of a Secretary of Education who is affiliated with the far right, anti-LGBT leadership in Michigan continues a troubling trend.

First came his "Chief Strategist" Steve Bannon, who referred to progressive women as "a bunch of dykes" and published numerous essays referring to "faggots." Trump's Chief of Staff Reince Priebus was opposed to allowing same-sex couples to marry, and his Attorney General nominee Jeff Sessions has opposed every effort in the U.S. Senate at ensuring LGBT citizens have equal rights and protection from discrimination. Then last week came Education Secretary nominee Betsy DeVos, who was a lead supporter of an anti-same-sex marriage ballot initiative in Michigan, and South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

So far, Trump has not nominated any openly LGBT people or LGBT friendly people for his top administration positions.

Here's a quick look at his initial appointments of special concern to the LGBT community thus far:

Chief Strategist Steve Bannon

The position: This is a new position so nobody knows yet how much control and/or influence Bannon will have over the new president.



Bannon

The person: Bannon is a Harvard Business School graduate and chairman of Breitbart Media, which publishes a political website Bannon called the "platform of the alt-right," an ideology closely linked to white supremacist positions. Bannon told the Wall Street Journal

it was also a platform for "proponents of restrictions on gay marriage." He took over as the Trump campaign's CEO less than three months before Trump won the electoral vote for president.

The concerns: He blamed the unpopularity of conservative women political figures like Sarah Palin, Michelle Bachman, and Ann Coulter on a concerted effort at character assassination by "a bunch of dykes." And Breitbart's website, under Bannon's leadership, has included frequent essays by a self-identified "screaming queen" who argues

"Chief Strategist" Steve Bannon, who referred to progressive women as "a bunch of dykes" and published numerous essays referring to "faggots."

such things as, "gays should pipe down and get back in the closet" and giving straight people "permission to say gay, faggot and queer."

Signs of hope: Bannon told the Wall Street Journal that Breitbart is also a "platform" for "the conservative gay community" and Breitbart Senior Editor Joel Pollak says Bannon seeks out talent "regardless of distinctions of race, gender, religion, sexuality, or any other kind" and notes that the website includes "gay writers."

Chief of Staff Reince Priebus

The position: Traditionally, this is the president's gatekeeper: the person who decides what issues and people get the president's attention. The current COS, Denis McDonough, helped usher in the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."



Priebus

The person: Priebus, as Chairman of the Republican Party, toed the party line on opposition to marriage

equality.

The concerns: The Republican Party platform developed under Priebus' tenure as chairman is perhaps the most hostile as any past platforms to the LGBT community. He has said he does not believe gays deserve the civil right of marriage equality. And Jimmy LaSalvia, founder of the now defunct GOProud, said Priebus refused to meet with the conservative gay group for fear of angering the anti-LGBT Family Research Council.

The thread of hope: On Meet the Press in May 2012, Priebus said he thinks gays "deserve equal rights in regard to, say, discrimination in the workplace...and hospital visitations...."

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos

The person: Betsy DeVos is a long-time donor to right-wing causes and was a leading supporter of a 2004 ballot campaign against marriage equality in Michigan. DeVos is married to Dick DeVos Jr., the retired CEO of the Amway corporation (now called Alticor), against which activist Fred Karger organized a boycott because of the family's donations to various anti-LGBT



DeVos

efforts around the country.

The concerns: DeVos could reverse the Obama administration's position on Title IX and could issue a different interpretation of the requirements of the Equal Access Act.

The thread of hope: Betsy DeVos pushed back against an even more extreme anti-LGBT right-wing activist Dave Agema in his bid to become Republican National Committeeman for Michigan in 2014. Agema called gays "filthy," claimed they were responsible for most murders in large cities, and said the Russian government's prohibition on gay "propaganda" was a common sense policy. DeVos said the comments reflected badly on Republicans and called for Agema's resignation. "Leaders have a responsibility to create an inclusive, welcoming party," DeVos told the Detroit News.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions



Sessions

The position: This is the position charged with seeing that U.S. laws are enforced and that all Americans have access to the fair and impartial administration of justice. The current Attorney General, Loretta Lynch, has filed suit against the state of North Carolina for enacting an anti-LGBT law (HB2). She also joined the Department of Education in interpreting Title IX as covering gender identity. Her predecessor in the Obama administration, Eric Holder, announced the administration would enforce but not defend the Defense of Marriage Act as constitutional.

The person: U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions as a 20-year history of opposing equal rights

for LGBT people. As senator, he has opposed every measure seeking to protect LGBT people and supported every measure seeking to diminish their rights. With the exception of one vote, he has opposed every openly LGBT judicial nominee.

The concerns: Sessions can be expected to undo the DOJ's interpretation of Title IX as including discrimination based on gender identity. He is also likely to withdraw the federal government's lawsuit against North Carolina and could even support the state's position.

The thread of hope: None identified as yet.

U.N. Ambassador: Nikki Haley



Haley

The position: This position represents the U.S.'s position and interests on issues affecting the global community. The current Ambassador, Samantha Power, led a Roundtable Strategy Session on International LGBT Rights at the U.S. Mission headquarters.

Her predecessor, Susan Rice, led efforts to have the U.N. Human Rights Council to adopt a resolution to decry "violence and discrimination...against individuals because of their sexual orientation and gender identity."

The person: South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley opposed marriage equality and defended her state's ban on marriage for same-sex couples even after the 4th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals struck down a similar ban in Virginia.

The concerns: The rumor mill floated openly gay Republican Trump delegate Ric Grenell as a possible choice for this position. The selection of Haley suggests there is now very little prospects for an openly gay person to be part of Trump's cabinet.

The thread of hope: During her response to President Obama's 2016 State of the Union address, Haley said the Republican Party would "respect differences in modern families," a statement many interpreted a sort of acceptance of same-sex marriages. And she said of a North Carolina-style HB 2-like bill in the South Carolina legislature, "I don't believe it's necessary." "We're not hearing of anybody's religious liberties that are being violated, and we're again not hearing of any citizens that feel like they're being violated in terms of freedoms."

► White Supremacists

Continued from p. 7

merely retweeting when asked about his controversial social media behavior. In February, he retweeted a message from the account of a neo-Nazi, which came shortly after he retweeted false crime statistics that dramatically overstated the number of whites killed by blacks.

“Bill, am I gonna check every statistic?” he asked Fox News host Bill O’Reilly at the time. “All it was is a retweet. It wasn’t from me.”

While Trump is quick to blast his foes on Twitter - in recent days that includes The New York Times and the cast of the Broadway musical “Hamilton” - he has yet to proactively condemn racist acts his win has inspired. His eldest son, Don Jr., has used Twitter to liken Syrian refugees to a poisoned bowl of Skittles candy, and he has posted images of Pepe. And Trump’s rise to political celebrity came as he peddled the falsehood that the nation’s first black president, Barack Obama,

was born in Africa, not in the United States.

In an interview Nov. 26 with The Times, Trump did denounce the white supremacist movement when asked, saying “I condemn them. I disavow, and I condemn.” But he has yet to convene the traditional news conference held by a president-elect in the days after winning where he could potentially face more pointed questions about it.

The ADL’s Segal called Trump’s answers when questioned an important step to “allay any illusions” white supremacists have about their place in a Trump administration.

But Ben Jealous, a former national president of the NAACP, went a step further, saying Trump should “pull a George Wallace.” The segregationist Alabama governor ran for president on white identity politics but years later publicly apologized for his views.

Trump “shouldn’t just disavow the worst behavior of others,” Jealous said, “but take accountability for the worst behavior he’s engaged in himself.”

Fidel Castro Leaves Legacy of Oppression, Say Many LGBT Cubans

BY BTL STAFF

Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro’s death has many LGBT activists reflecting on a history of repression under his regime.

“I would never be happy about anyone’s death — anyone,” Herb Sosa, a Cuban-American who heads the Miami-based LGBT group Unity Coalition, told the Washington Blade. “But the long-awaited passing of one of the Castro monsters that have imposed nearly six decades of oppression, pain and death to so many Cubans does bring a certain closure for many.”

Castro, who died Nov. 25 at age 90, led the rebellion that overthrew right-wing dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959. He became prime minister of the island nation, then president, leading a communist government.

Cuba decriminalized same-sex sexual relations in 1979, but other actions under Castro’s rule were not beneficial to LGBT citizens. For instance, in the 1960s he “sent thousands of gay men and others deemed unfit for military service to labor camps known as Military Units

to Aid Production,” the Blade notes. And in the 1980s and early ’90s, the government quarantined people with HIV in sanitariums.

In 2010, in an interview with a Mexican newspaper, Castro apologized for his regime’s treatment of LGBT people. He had been out of power for two years then, having passed the reins of government to his brother Raúl. Raúl’s daughter Mariela has emerged as an advocate for the rights of LGBT Cubans in recent years. She has won praise from some corners, but James Kirchick, writing in The Daily Beast, described her work as an “ersatz gay rights crusade.”

“No matter how much better life for gay Cubans might have improved from the days of forced labor camps, it’s all occurring within the context of a totalitarian society whose citizens cannot vote, are denied basic freedoms like the right to speak or protest freely, and cannot form organizations independent of the government,” Kirchick wrote.

There are others, including some LGBT activists, who have lauded Cuba’s government for providing free education and health care, while

fighting poverty and discrimination, the Blade notes.

“Pain, emptiness, commitment are very intense and difficult feelings to separate,” gay Cuban blogger Francisco Rodríguez Cruz, who supports the Castro family, told the Blade. “It’s like going through the story of my life.”

And some gay and AIDS activists who visited Cuba earlier this year noted a thriving gay scene and reported that the government-run health care program has benefited Cubans living with HIV. The U.S. had banned travel to and trade with Cuba in 1961, but President Obama moved to normalize relations with the nation about two years ago.

Nevertheless, much remains to be done to advance human rights, including LGBT rights, in Cuba, activists say. “Fidel Castro’s death invites us to remain calm and to focus on our activism to achieve change in Cuba, as opposed to rejoice over his death,” Nelson Gandulla Díaz, president of the Cuban Foundation for LGBTI Rights, told the Blade.

“Fidel is gone, but Raúl remains,” he added. “The fight continues.”

► Positive Thoughts

Continued from p. 8

after my arrival I was invited by Barb Cardell of Positive Women’s Network-USA (PWN-USA) to participate in a demonstration against HIV criminalization during Tuesday’s opening plenary. We arrived at the convention center early that morning in order to get seats towards the front of the room, a strategic move, I was told, when one is planning a demonstration. I had my chant memorized and my Stop HIV Criminalization T-shirt ready to go, so I felt prepared. Edwin Cameron, the final speaker, stepped up to the podium to give the Jonathan Mann lecture. (Mann was a prominent HIV researcher and activist who pioneered the idea of a link between human health and human rights, and died at age 51, with his wife, in a plane crash in 1998.) Cameron, a judge on the Constitutional Court of South Africa, who is well known for his activism on AIDS and gay rights, is a tall, lanky man with a soft-spoken demeanor, and an eloquent speaker who is living with HIV. As he began talking, the auditorium fell into a hush.

“At the start of a very busy conference, with many stresses and demands and anguishes, I want to start by asking us to pause quietly for just a few moments. “It has been 35 years since the Western world was alerted to AIDS.

“So let us pause, first, in remembrance of those who have died: those for whom treatment didn’t come in time; those for whom treatment wasn’t available, or accessible; those denied treatment by our own failings as planners and thinkers and doers and leaders.”

— Edwin Cameron speaking at the International AIDS Conference in Durban

The first cases of a baffling new, terrifying, unknown syndrome were first reported in the northern summer of 1981...

“These last 35 years, since then, have been long. For many of us, it has been an arduous and exhausting and often dismaying journey.”

My eyes started tearing up.

“Since this first report, 35 million people have died of AIDS illnesses – in 2015 alone, 1.1 million people. “We have felt the burden of this terrible disease in our bodies, on our minds, on our friends and colleagues, on our loved ones and our communities.

“AIDS exposes us in all our terrible human vulnerability. It brings to the fore our fears and prejudices. It takes its toll on our bodily organs and our muscles and our flesh. It has exacted its terrible toll on our young people and parents and brothers and sisters and neighbors.” Then I began to cry.

“So let us pause, first, in remembrance of those who have died: those for whom treatment didn’t come in time; those for whom treatment wasn’t available, or accessible; those denied treatment by our own failings as planners and thinkers and doers and leaders; those whom the internal nightmare of shame and stigma put beyond reach of intervention and help.

“These years have demanded of us a long and anguished and grief-stricken journey. “But it has also been a journey of light – a journey of technological, scientific, organizational, and activist triumph.”

By then I was sobbing, uncontrollably, almost to the point of wailing out loud – it took all I could at that moment to suppress my emotions that came bubbling up to the surface from almost 30 years of living with HIV, and nearly a quarter of a century working in the

field. It was as though someone finally gave me the permission to feel all that sadness, shame, neglect, and anguish. It was okay, and I was going to be okay.

Cameron went on to highlight the stunning achievements made by doctors, researchers, but most of all the advocates, to whom many of us with HIV owe our lives. I felt a true sense of community in that moment, and the sense that great things can be achieved when we all come together to achieve a common cause. So the next time you hear the word “community,” think about how wonderful and amazing communities are, and the potential they have and what they can truly accomplish. Changing the world can seem daunting, next to impossible. But true change in our community starts with us, one person at a time. We only have to take the time to reach out, take our neighbors by the hand, and lift each other up.

Jeff Berry is the editor in chief of *Positively Aware* magazine, and Director of Publications at *Test Positive Aware Network* in Chicago. Find him on Twitter @PAEditor. This column is a project of *Plus, Positively Aware, POZ, The Body and Q Syndicate, the LGBT wire service*. Visit their websites -- <http://hivplusmag.com>, <http://positivelyaware.com>, <http://poz.com> and <http://thebody.com> – for the latest updates on HIV/AIDS.



Catching Up with

ALLISON BECHDEL

Photo: Elena Seibert

Out Cartoonist on New 'Dykes to Watch Out For,' the Universal Appeal of 'Fun Home' and Her Doubts About Making It a Musical

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

For all her newfound commercial clout, it might seem strange that Alison Bechdel recently returned to her less-mainstream roots.

Even though her self-proclaimed “tragicomic” novel “Fun Home” has become a Tony Award-winning commercial smash, and is currently on its first national tour (playing now through Dec. 11 at Detroit’s Fisher Theatre), Bechdel couldn’t ignore her despair when Donald Trump was elected president. Attempting to process the startling outcome, the Vermont-based graphic novelist sat down to draw the iconic characters from her popular “Dykes to Watch Out For,” which was first published in 1983 in a feminist newspaper, WomaNews, before being widely syndicated to outlets across the U.S.

Bechdel hadn’t revisited her popular strip’s lesbian clan in eight years. Within that time, she released two graphic novels: 2006’s “Fun Home,” about her father’s gay secret and her coming out, and its 2012 companion piece, “Are You My Mother?” In 2014, Bechdel was the recipient of the prestigious MacArthur “Genius” Grant.

Recently, the 56-year-old artist talked about getting back to the lesbian characters that first endeared her to LGBT audiences decades ago. Moreover, she discussed her doubts about “Fun Home” becoming a Broadway musical (“I’ll take your option money, but good luck!”), the next-level catharsis she experienced when it did, and the pressures of critical and commercial success.

Are you a fan of musicals?

Honestly, I really have not been. I didn’t quite understand the whole culture around musicals, and there are just people who are so passionate about musicals. That was not me. You know, I sort of thought of musicals as “Guys and Dolls” and people bursting into song inexplicably, but I also understood that there are beautiful musicals out there. I was a big fan of Sondheim, but somehow didn’t think of Sondheim stuff as musicals in the traditional sense.

Do you have a new appreciation for musicals now that “Fun Home” is one?

Absolutely, yeah. It’s an amazing form, or it can be in the right hands. I’m just thinking about the sort of stock Broadway musical where there’s a conflict, but things end up all happy. That’s not so interesting. But the amazing emotional depth you can get in a musical is really interesting to me, and I was excited to see that happen with “Fun Home.”

What was your first thought when you heard “Fun Home” was getting the musical treatment?

My first thought, honestly, was, “That’s impossible.

Yes, I'll take your option money, but good luck." I did not know much about musicals or the stage at all, and it just seemed like a crazy, complex book. Of course, they left out large parts of the book as one has to do, but in the early days, I just couldn't imagine how that would be put on a stage. Also, because it's just so dark and so sad, it seemed like the antithesis of a musical.

Because of the emotional depth you explored in your book, did you have trepidation about how it might be portrayed on stage?

If I had known more about musicals when I said yes to that project, I would've had a lot of trepidation, but I didn't quite know what I was getting into. I also knew that Lisa Kron would be writing the book (for the musical), and I was a great admirer of hers and really trusted her to get it right as much as she could.

Were you consulted during its evolution?

I had pretty much zero to do with what you see on stage, and didn't have any official involvement in making that show.

How difficult was giving up control of your source material?

It was a leap of faith. I trusted Lisa, and (composer) Jeanine Tesori came on board. I also had trust in her. When I say I wasn't involved, it wasn't that they kept me out – I just didn't have any formal role. But they would meet with me periodically and pick my brain about ideas about the book and my process writing it. So, I felt very connected to them even though I didn't know what I was doing or what I was telling them. (Laughs)

"Fun Home" opened off-Broadway in 2013 at New York's Public Theater. When did you first see it, and what was your initial impression?

The whole process took years, but the first thing I saw or heard was at the end of 2010. I got a script in the mail and a CD with music on it from a workshop they had all done that I didn't see. Up until then, it just seemed like a fantasy that may or may not happen one day. But when I heard those songs, I was just blown away. It was really powerful, and very few of those actually made it through to the final musical. There were so many songs that came and went, but I knew that they had something really magical happening.

Do you remember the experience of seeing this stage interpretation of your life?

That too went through an amazing transition. At one point the stage set was an exact replica of my home studio, where I spend all my time, and that was really freaky. It was like I was looking in the window at myself working. But that got abandoned at one point and the set became a much more stripped down, sort of imaginary space. But it was pretty freaky all around, watching this musical about me and my family.

Do you have a favorite song from the musical?

It's really hard to pick. I know that sounds corny, but I love all of the songs. Of course "Ring of Keys" is just incredible. You know, I'm not really a big song person. Some people just don't have that part of their brain, and I think I'm one of them. (Laughs) It's funny to me to see how that song has caught on in the culture, to see just how it's gripped people, especially young people. Children just love that song. I mean, little kids who don't even know what it means are singing it on YouTube – it's crazy.

"Fun Home" is the first Broadway musical with a lesbian lead, which is groundbreaking. Did you ever think we'd have a lesbian lead on Broadway and the lesbian lead would be you?

No, I never did! (Laughs) Not that Broadway ever took up any space in my brain at all, but yeah, it's pretty surprising all around.

How do you process the mainstream appeal of "Fun Home" and its resonance beyond the LGBT community?

I guess it's just really a picture of what's been going on in the culture, and my story and the play came along at this particular juncture when people were finally open to hearing a queer story that's also a human story. There was finally space for that. I think if the play had come out a little sooner, if the book had come out a little sooner, it might not have caught on the way that it did, but somehow people were ready for it.

What do you think it is about the musical and the book that is resonating on such a universal level?

For one thing, it's about a family. Everyone's got a family, of one fashion or another. Also, I think it's about a family with secrets, and most families have some kind of secret. I think people relate a lot to that, to the catharsis of having a secret brought out in the open. I've heard stories of people from all different kinds of permutations – not just gay family members, but all kinds of issues: mental illness, affairs, double lives. I think it's a great relief for people to see this secret cracked open.

What have been some of the most memorable responses you've heard regarding the book over the years?

God, you know, it's hard to hang onto those. Whenever I go to the show – I've seen it 15 or so times – people will recognize me in the audience afterwards, and I hear the most incredible stories, and people are sobbing. I get so caught in those exchanges – it's really intense – that I can't remember the details. So, I'm sorry I can't give you a good anecdote, but I've had amazingly intimate encounters with audience members.

Of the three characters representing your life at various stages in the musical, do you have a

See Alison, page 14

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▶ Alison
 Continued from p. 13

favorite Alison Bechdel?
 (Laughs) I don't. To me they all sort of fuse into a whole, and they're bound up. I couldn't single one out. I do think it was a really interesting choice to have the adult Alison telling this story because that wasn't really technically part of the book at all. That was part of Lisa Kron's genius, and it's an odd role. She's just mostly observing the action. The adult is having memories of her childhood and her young adulthood and her family, and they're playing out before her as she's trying to write about them, trying to make sense about them. So in a way, she's kind of a passive observer, but she's really not; she's actually very actively engaged with these memories of her former self. I think it really pulls everything together in an amazing way.

Is there something you get out of somebody else's interpretation of your life versus the way you presented it in the book?

Yeah, I feel like this play has been such a gift to me from a real kind of healing or catharsis that I thought I was getting from writing my book. But there was another level the play went to that's much more emotional. Before, I was talking about the emotional power of musicals, and I felt ... it sounds so trite to say healed, so I don't want to say that. It was just such an amazingly respectful look at my particular family, the way that they stuck to my story and the details of the character. They invented a lot of stuff – they invented almost everything the character said because there wasn't much dialogue in my book – but somehow it felt very accurate to what I had written.

Did you worry about the way they might portray your father?

I hadn't considered the ramifications of that, and then in these early versions that I saw – different workshops and stuff – he would go from being a super negative character to being a little too soft. It was very interesting to see how that got calibrated in the end. It's a very delicate

FOR A WILD MOMENT I ENTERTAINED THE IDEA THAT MY FATHER HAD TIMED HIS DEATH WITH THIS IN MIND, AS SOME SORT OF DERANGED TRIBUTE.



AND I'M RELUCTANT TO LET GO OF THAT LAST, TENUOUS BOND.



A scene from Alison Bechdel's graphic novel "Fun Home," which became a musical in 2013.

balance to make him sympathetic enough to care about and also threatening enough for the story to work.

So you were seeing these drafts of his evolution?

I was seeing actual actors portraying him in different ways, reading the same lines in many cases but with really different emotional resonances. Some lighter, some darker.

What intersections do you see between graphic novels and musicals?

There's a way the combination of music and drama is sort of like the combination of pictures and text. Very different too. But the way those two planes combine to create something greater than the sum of their parts is very similar.

What kind of influence does the mainstream appeal of "Fun Home" have on your current work?

I feel a bit like there are more eyes on me than there used to be. (Laughs) I used to be able to work free of that sense of anyone waiting for my work. So, I feel like there's a little added pressure now, but I'm trying to use that in a positive way, like to motivate me.

How's the fitness memoir coming along, then?

an episode and kind of dragging them all out of storage.

I can't think of a better and worst time.

I know. (Laughs) I don't know if I'll keep it up, but I'm definitely writing at least one episode. I'll put it up online. I'll do it for my local alternative weekly and put it on my website.

Why did this feel like the right time to revisit these characters?

When I wrote the comic strip, I did it in some ways just for myself to figure out what was going on in the world. I always found the world so confusing and baffling, and by using my characters and having to talk through stuff that was happening in the world, I could find my own way. I felt like – I'm so confused at what just happened to our country that I needed to sit down with these characters and figure it out, so that's what I'm doing.

Will you continue working with these characters?

I might not have time, but maybe I'll have to keep going.

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

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Kate Shindle stars in the Tony Award-winning play "Fun Home." Performances run through Dec. 11.

'Fun Home' Star Discusses 'Important Piece of Theater'

Tour Coming to Fisher Theatre Stars Former Miss America Kate Shindle

BY JENN MCKEE

Kate Shindle – star of the touring production of "Fun Home," which plays from Nov. 29 to Dec. 11 at Detroit's Fisher Theatre – has always been a bit of an overachiever.

After her junior year at Northwestern University, where she studied sociology and theater, she was crowned Miss America and toured the country for a year, stumping for her chosen cause: AIDS prevention and education. After returning to Northwestern to finish her program, she moved to New York and, within a year, earned a spot in a Broadway production ("Jekyll & Hyde").

Since then, thanks to her immense talent and hard work, her career has continued to grow. She played Sally Bowles in "Cabaret," both on tour and on Broadway; she played Elle Woods' rival, Vivienne Kensington, as part of the original Broadway cast of "Legally Blonde: The Musical"; and she wrote a 2014 book titled "Being Miss America: Behind the Rhinestone Curtain."

These days, Shindle spends her time working as president of the Actors' Equity Association – during our interview, she shared the breaking

news that off-Broadway theaters had just agreed to higher salaries for actors and stage managers – while also getting comfortable in "Fun Home." The Tony Award-winning stage musical adaptation of Alison Bechdel's bestselling graphic memoir – with book and lyrics by Lisa Kron, and music by Jeanine Tesori – tells the story of Bechdel's fraught path of self-discovery. We see her as a child, growing up in a funeral home (which she and her siblings dubbed "the fun home"), struggling to connect with her tortured father, and beginning to identify as a lesbian; we see her as a college student, acting upon her sexual instincts and coming out to her parents; and we see her as a middle-aged comic artist and writer, struggling to reconcile the memory of coming out to her parents just a week before her closeted father steps into traffic and is killed.

I read that when you saw "Fun Home," you felt like it was a show you wanted to be part of. What is it about the show that sparked that response?

It was obvious to me that it was an important piece of theater, and it's important because it tells the story, in a very human way, of this one family

that's dealing with things that don't get talked about. I've never gone through coming out, and I understand from hearing other people's stories that it can be difficult in many circumstances, but it seems far more so when you're in a small town, or really anywhere where you feel like you have to lie about who you are. Alison Bechdel's experience with that was so different from her father's, and that seems to be something that we as a society need to listen to.

Seeing a show is different from seeing it from the inside. What observations regarding the material do you have after making that transition?

The further I go into the world of this piece of theater, the more I appreciate the construction of it. What Jeanine and Lisa did is pretty amazing, especially considering that the source material – if you look at it on the surface, you wouldn't immediately think, "Oh, this should be a musical." I don't think Alison even thought that. But she trusted Lisa. ... And now it's this 100-minute work of theater that's really lean and mean about storytelling. ... I'm really excited to tour it.

“We’ve been giving our speech for Broadway Cares at the end of the show, and for me, it would be crazy to be touring this show at this moment and not acknowledge what it means. I think audiences across country can unify around the idea that people deserve their rights, and people deserve dignity and respect, and when that doesn’t happen, bad stuff occurs, like the things that happen in this show.”

- Kate Shindle in the wake of presidential election

Did you meet Alison during the casting process?

I met Alison three weeks into rehearsal, at a party. She has really been, as far as I can tell, an absolute dream for everybody to work with. She’s supportive, but doesn’t necessarily want to put herself in the middle of the process. One of the things that’s really benefited this show is, (Bechdel) knows what she’s brilliant at, which is her work, and she knows when to hand it over. And that’s not an easy thing to do, particularly with something so personal. She’s always ready to support the show and do interviews, so she really does what she can to be a positive force. She came to our opening night in Cleveland. I was so flattered by her kindness, and so impressed with her warmth.

Do you feel an even greater sense of urgency about telling this story in the wake of the presidential election?

We’ve been giving our speech for Broadway Cares at the end of the show, and for me, it would be crazy to be touring this show at this moment and not acknowledge what it means. I think audiences across the country can unify around the idea that people deserve their rights, and people deserve dignity and respect, and when that doesn’t happen, bad stuff occurs, like the things that happen in this show. ... I think our cast and our production team, which is about 40 people, and lots of people around the country strongly feel like we cannot go back to the world that killed Bruce Bechdel. We just can’t.

PERFORMING

Fun Home

“Fun Home” comes to Detroit’s Fisher Theatre Nov. 29-Dec. 11. Tickets are available for purchase at all Ticketmaster locations, by phone at 800-982-2787, and online at www.broadwayindetroit.com or www.ticketmaster.com. Tickets can also be purchased at the Fisher Theatre Box Office. Ticket prices start at \$39. >> For more information on the production, visit www.FunHomeBroadway.com

To play Alison in “Fun Home” you had to cut your hair really short, and in an interview you talked about making this change in your appearance in stages. Now that you’ve had it a while, has it made you see or think about yourself differently?

No, not really. I know it sounds cliché, but the older I get, the more excited I am about what’s inside, and the less worried I am about what’s on the outside. Yes, I’m an actor, so I have to care what I look like in the mirror a little, but honestly, I’m so much better than I was in my 20s. The rest is just a haircut. And that’s been liberating for me. I’m pretty happy, and it’s nice to say that out loud. I’m happy, and hair grows back. I can safely say that I wouldn’t ever have gotten my hair cut this short if not for this show, but wow, what a good reason to do it.

“Fun Home” was the show that collected five major Tony Awards the year before “Hamilton,” but “Hamilton” has become so larger-than-life, I’m wondering if you feel like the down-side of that mainstream success is that shows like “Fun Home” are forgotten, or maybe overlooked.

“Hamilton” has been such a great thing for our community. Yes, there are times when “Hamilton” has taken up all the oxygen in the room, but at the same time, they’re raising the bar for what can be achieved on Broadway. Some are concerned about it turning into a theme park, but really, it’s opened the door to giving a completely new, original piece of work a chance, and now, 15 people will be trying to do something like “Hamilton.” They may not be as good, but it’s exciting that “Hamilton” is acting as a catalyst in that way. Plus, another thing that’s incredibly important as “Hamilton” spreads out across the country: the first tickets went on sale to subscribers. So, guess what? Subscriptions are up. Where that show will play, people may subscribe just to see “Hamilton,” but they’ll also probably see other great work, too. So the “Hamilton” effect is by and large a positive one.



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Rising Above

BY LAWRENCE FERBER

Activist Cleve Jones has lived an extraordinary life, filled with world-changing friends and figureheads from Harvey Milk to Dustin Lance Black. Portrayed by Emile Hirsch in the Gus Van Sant-directed MILK, Jones founded the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt (the story of which is recounted in the documentaries Common Threads and Showtime's The Last One) and co-founded the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. He also, literally, picked up Milk's bullhorn and carried on the LGBT icon's fight for equality and social justice, working with a wide array of entities and causes including labor union UNITE HERE.

Jones revisits a wide array of incredible life moments and people - from Milk himself to Sean Penn - in his new memoir, *When We Rise* (Hachette; \$27), which also served as partial inspiration for the upcoming ABC miniseries of the same name (written by Dustin Lance Black, and co-starring Guy Pearce as Jones, it charts the modern LGBT rights movement).

Alternately funny, heartwarming, revealing, tragic, and inspiring, Jones' page-turning, fast-moving book chronicles coming out when American society was barely aware of homosexuality and, if so, hostile to it; his extensive youthful travels; sexual and romantic exploits during the free-loving 70s; the horrific first wave of AIDS that consumed friends and lovers (some of the people in *Rise* also figure into David France's must-read AIDS crisis history, *How To Survive A Plague*, also released on November 29); his own positive diagnosis and struggles with the virus; making MILK; amusing celebrity encounters in Hollywood; helping marriage equality happen; and his present life in San Francisco's Castro district and the changing face of the city as the real estate crisis displaces populations and longtime institutions.

Filmmaker Rob Reiner (a co-founder of AFER, which was instrumental in the successful same-sex marriage rights effort) helped plant the seed for *Rise*, suggesting Jones write a book about his extraordinary life. Jones did just that, largely during late night sessions at Dustin Lance Black's dining room table. Via telephone, Jones elaborated on the book, activism, and what we can do to ensure progress keeps heading in the right direction.

This is your second book, the first being 2000's *Stitching A Revolution*. How did their processes differ, and how do they compare?

"Stitching was written with a neighbor of mine at the time, Jeff Dawson. I wasn't real proud of it, I have to say. It's a good book, I'm not ashamed of it at all, and it wouldn't have happened without Jeff - I was still recovering from many years of illness, frail and fragile. He did long, long interviews with me that were recorded, transcribed, and I crossed out what I didn't want included. But I always thought, I want to do another and write it myself, in my voice. Also, that earlier book had almost no sex in it! Sex is a part of my life, and there was nothing sexy about *Stitching*. So when Rob Reiner gave me that nudge I thought, if I'm going to do it, I'll do it myself."

Was *When We Rise* easy or difficult to write once you got started? You certainly had a lot of extraordinary life material to work with, and the book is filled with so many recognizable names and events.}

"Well, I'm a storyteller. My mom used to tell me, 'you sure can talk,' and other people have suggested that talking might be my only legally marketable skill. I know I have these great stories because of luck. I met the most amazing people through my life's journey, and I've witnessed the most amazing things. I didn't write this as a history book, and it's not even really an autobiography. It's a collection of memories from various times in our history, and I hope conveys what it was like to live in them. Admittedly, I thought *Rise* was going to be different than it turned out, but one of the things I realized as I started writing was I wanted to tell the stories from my youth before AIDS came. I wanted younger generations to hear about what it was like growing up in a time when being gay was illegal, when we were lobotomized and sent to prison simply because we were homosexual."

What can you say about the upcoming *When We Rise* miniseries?

"I am not supposed to talk about it yet. You can probably pull together that it's not based solely on my book or life. There are stories included in my book in the miniseries, and it's using my title of course."



Cleve Jones speaking in front of the U.S. Supreme Court during the marriage battle.

Getting back to sex, you do share how carefree that was before AIDS, the role it served on a deeper level. At a certain point in the book, you stop talking about your sexual experiences so much - did the sex actually stop during that time?

"It didn't stop, but everything changed, and the innocence of it. Maybe it seems odd to use the word 'innocence' about people in bathhouses, but there was an innocence to it. What was I was trying to convey was, I really remember my 40th birthday. I went to bed the night before when I was 39, and the next day when I woke up I was 80. I wanted to show how dramatically everything changed,

from this romantic adventure where anything was possible, our bodies were strong and beautiful, to this different reality and the sexuality that had been so much a part of our solidarity, bonding, enthusiasm, and energy was profoundly altered in a tragic and brutal way."

We just finished a genuinely terrifying election cycle. How close are we to Briggs Initiative-style bills popping up again?

"Well, this was also part of my motivation to share these stories. To remind folks that nothing is permanent. What Trump unleashed upon us is not just going away. There's a

“If the rallying cry for my generation was ‘Silence Equals Death,’ the rallying cry now must be ‘Treatment Equals Prevention.’”

tendency, particularly among the USA and young people, thinking that once you achieve a goal the fight is done and you have that forever and ever. That’s not how life works. Everything can be taken away in the blink of an eye. I met someone who had a real impact on my youth, Christopher Isherwood, who told me these wonderful stories about Berlin and how a lot of LGBT people thought they were free during the Weimar Republic. Then we saw what happened. People need to always be vigilant and ready to fight.”

Let’s talk about a couple of current issues and fights LGBT activists are taking on. What do you think about Gays Against Guns?

“That has not taken root [in San Francisco] yet. I’m sure glad they’re doing it, and we should all be supporting those efforts. The statistics on gun violence rarely include the horrific suicides, and suicide remains a huge issue for our community. We lose a huge number of people to suicide every year, and suicide by gun is the most lethal way to attempt it. I know people who had second thoughts after taking the pills or walking out on a bridge or pulling the razor out, and they survived, but I don’t know anyone who survived a bullet to the brain. If we could reduce the availability of firearms, I think we would reduce the number of people we lose each year to suicide.”

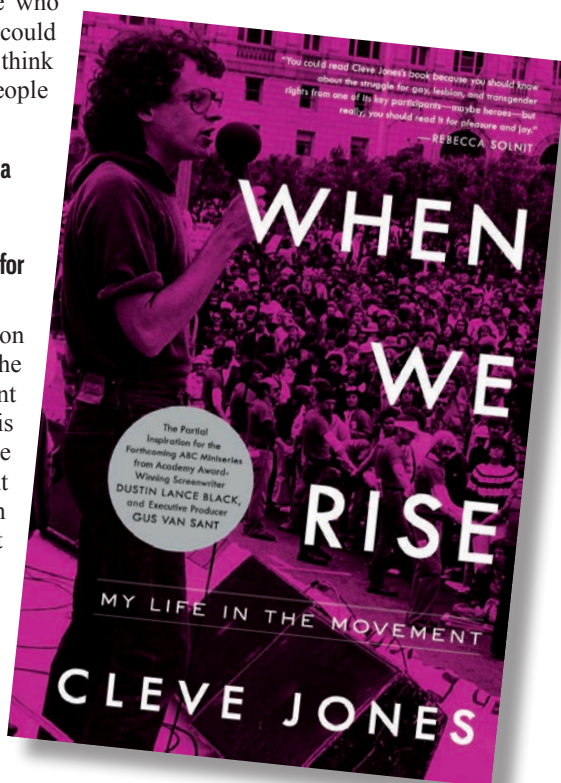
For a couple of years now you’ve been a vocal advocate for access to PrEP and medications that keep HIV viral loads undetectable and, as a result, low risk for transmission to others.

“If the rallying cry for my generation was ‘Silence Equals Death,’ the rallying cry now must be ‘Treatment Equals Prevention.’ The science is pretty crystal clear on this. People like me who are HIV-positive but successfully treated and have an undetectable viral load cannot transmit the virus. People who are negative and engage in high-risk behavior can prevent HIV infection if on PrEP. What people need to do is push their local and state government to make these meds available. The cost will come down eventually, but our larger war against the pharma industry’s greed

should not dissuade people to push for access to these drugs now. In San Francisco, we’re taking a lot of bold steps to break down two main barriers: cost and stigma. Unfortunately, that stigma has really been exacerbated by the disinformation campaign waged by the AHF and shaming of young people. I hate this. They’re subjected to a lot of shame and blame and I hear it coming from even some of my own friends. When people asked me about my status, I used to say, ‘yes, I was infected a long time ago before we knew anything about it.’ Today, I just say ‘I’m positive.’ I feel like I was using that previous explanation as a way to distance myself from the younger people who are getting infected right now, but that’s wrong. We need to tell them how beautiful they are, how much their lives matter, we love them, and we need to listen to them instead of yelling.”

Finally, is there any boldface name or icon you haven’t yet met but really want to?

“Yes! I would die to have lunch with Bette Midler!”



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COMPILED BY KATE OPALEWSKI

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7:30 a.m.

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond Mobile Unit Site offers HIV, Hep C testing and more at St. Andrew's Church Breakfast Program at 306 N. Divison and Catherine, Ann Arbor. Contact Lemont Gore at 734-572-9355 or email lemont@hivaidresource.org for details.

<http://breakfastatstandrews.org>

8 a.m.

World AIDS Day Detroit Giving Breakfast. Tickets are \$50.

The Garden Theater, 3929 Woodward Ave., Detroit.

bit.ly/2g0qVJM

8 a.m.

Free walk-in testing at Kent County Health Department Personal Health Services at 700 Fuller NE, Grand Rapids. Contact April Hight at 616-632-7171 or email april.hight@kentcountymi.gov.

www.accesskent.com/Health/health_department.htm

9 a.m.

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond HIV testing. Free by appointment or walk-in at 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Suite 230, Detroit.

www.miunified.org

10 a.m.

Film Screening: "How to Survive a Plague." Shown at various times throughout the day until 4 p.m. Email gsc@oakland.edu or call 248-370-4336 for more information.

Oakland Room, Oakland University Gender and Sexuality Center.

www.oakland.edu/csa/gsc

10 a.m.

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond HIV testing. Oakland University School of Nursing Room 2054, Human Health Building, 433 Meadow Brook Rd., Rochester.

www.miunified.org/Home

11 a.m.

You Matter condom campaign. Rapid HIV testing at St. Clair County Community College in the student activity center on campus at 323 Erie St., Port Huron. Call Chris Czubachowski at 810-987-5300 or email cczubachowski@stclaircounty.org.

<http://www.sc4.edu/>

11:30 a.m.

World AIDS Day Detroit Symposium. An education symposium that is a youth-focused education and awareness event. Free, but tickets are required and reservations may be made for groups or individuals by calling 313-757-1733.

The Garden Theater, 3929 Woodward Ave., Detroit

bit.ly/2g2S7YT

12 noon

Free HIV testing. Every Thursday until 5:30 p.m.

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<http://www.s3safesexstore.com>

1 p.m.

Walk-in HIV/STD Testing Thursdays at Washtenaw County Public Health through 4 p.m.

Washtenaw County Public Health, 555 Towner St., Suited 1103, Ypsilanti

www.ewashtenaw.org

1 p.m.

University Health Service anonymous rapid HIV Testing. Testing until 3 p.m. at the University of Michigan. Call 734-763-1320 to schedule an appointment (walk-ins are taken if the schedule allows). Free for UM students. \$20 for others.

Wolverine Wellness, Suite 2110, 2nd floor, Ann Arbor

www.uhs.umich.edu/hivtesting

5:30 p.m.

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond free HIV and STD testing every Thursday until 8:30 p.m. Last client taken 30 minutes before end of testing session. All are welcome. Testing together (for eligible couples/sex partners) is offered by appointment. For additional information, contact Clarence Peebles at 313-446-9820.

Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale

www.goaffirmations.org



6 p.m.

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond client dinner followed by a celebration service at 7 p.m. at the Church of the Good Shepherd at 2145 Independence Blvd. in Ann Arbor. For more information, call 734-572-9355 or email lgolson@miunified.org.

www.miunified.org

7 p.m.

World AIDS Day Detroit Winter Wonderland Fundraiser. Tickets are \$15-50. Enjoy themed musical performances, a silent auction, and sweet treats from metro Detroit's finest. Proceeds benefit HIV/AIDS awareness and services in Michigan. Open to all ages. Secure parking at 25 Alexandrine St. Call 313-757-1733 or email mcameron@worldaidsdaydetroit.com with questions.

The Garden Theater, 3929 Woodward Ave., Detroit

www.eventbrite.com/e/winter-wonderland-world-aids-day-2016-tickets-29047096648

7 p.m.

Sacred Heart Rehabilitation Center's AIDS care program will host a candlelight vigil at Borchard Park on the corner of Court Street and Michigan Avenue in Saginaw. Free and open to the public. Contact Tom Brubaker at 989-776-6000 Ext. 6514 or email tbrubaker@sacredheartcenter.com.

www.sacredheartcenter.com/index.html

See World AIDS Day Calendar page 26

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Survival Guide

BY LAWRENCE FERBER

David France's Oscar-nominated 2012 documentary, "How To Survive A Plague," brought to light how AIDS activists, through the coalitions ACT-UP and TAG, helped push medical breakthroughs forward by becoming part of the process. Constructed from hundreds of hours of incredible archival video footage, a technique since coined "archival vérité," the documentary proved powerful, resonant, and helped reignite interest in that terrible yet profoundly important chapter in LGBT history.

Four years later, France – a journalist who covered the AIDS beat since its early days for publications like the New York Native, NY Magazine, and Newsweek – has authored an even more expansive, intimate, dramatic, and elegantly penned book of the same name.

Released on Nov. 29, "How To Survive A Plague: The Inside Story Of How Citizens and Science Tamed AIDS," traces HIV from its insidious, mysterious emergence in NYC to the game-changing and lifesaving 1990s protease inhibitor breakthrough (plus, in the epilogue, beyond). It's a gripping, engrossing read, the most essential text of its kind to date, and to a degree rights some of the mistakes made in the late Randy Shilts' 1987 account of the early AIDS years, "And The Band Played On" – for one thing, a holistic view of Gaetan Dugas, aka Patient Zero, who was recently vindicated of his status as "villain" who brought AIDS to North America – while telling the stories of key players in the epidemic and activism, from the scientists to the activists and allies, politicians, celebrities (Rock Hudson for one), and of course, the afflicted.

"My first impulse for going back to this story was Randy had accomplished a sort of historical misdirection," France admits. "He presented AIDS as a San Francisco story, and although S.F. has a story about AIDS, the story of the community's response and literally the epicenter of the global epidemic for 10 or 11 years of those 15 years of plague was New York. Shilts also made mistakes of judgment, he was sex negative, his reporting carried a lot of shame, I think, and then there was the enormous error of Patient Zero. I should also



David France

point out Band's last chapter ends in 1985, so he missed many things happening on the ground that were going to produce something, and because HIV took him away in 1994, he missed the historical long view and ability to look back 15 years later and asses what happened, what it meant, and what his legacy will be for the generations."

The NYC-based France says that he actually attempted to get a book going prior to the documentary's production, but found the publishing world disinterested both due to a cautious, recession-era economy, and, more so, a perception that the tale of AIDS had already been told. "I said, it hasn't been told," he recalls. "It's been wrong in certain ways, and nobody has ever told the story about what was accomplished and what the legacy of AIDS activism was."

In researching his book proposal, France revisited archival videos of ACT UP meetings and demonstrations to place himself back in that era (he had been present for many of these), and, since the book was going nowhere, ultimately realized that, "I could do something with that, because nobody can stop ever



The resistance began with unaccounted-for appearances of posters on the walls and windows of New York City: the Nazis' pink triangle inverted on a black background over the words "SILENCE=DEATH." It took years to gain traction, but the courage of the resistance turned out to be as persistent as the virus itself. This book shows how none of this was inevitable, how it took specific, flawed individuals of vastly different backgrounds to unite against this plague.



stop a fool from making a documentary on a credit card." From there, the documentary was spawned.

The enthusiastic 2012 reception to the Plague documentary, and David Weissman's San Francisco-centric "We Were Here," proved that audiences did in fact hunger to see and learn about these personal stories and AIDS history, and a dearth of information and personal accounts about those first, critical years in fact existed. Greenlit for a book at last, France commenced a whole new wave of research. He was fortunate to access a trove of material from which he could not only reconstruct the past and lives of key individuals like Dr. Joseph Sonnabend, one of NYC's first physicians to focus on patients stricken by the mysterious onslaught of strange, deadly opportunistic infections, and HIV-positive singer Michael Callen, who co-authored an early safer sex advice pamphlet before a virus was even confirmed as the culprit for AIDS (today, there's an NYC LGBT medical center named after him and Audre Lorde), but even recreate their dialogues word for word.

"Starting in 1981, they were smart enough to tape record everything," he explains. "They knew something remarkable was happening, and that history might attempt to discredit what was really happening on the ground or an artificial narrative would be created. The scene where Sonnabend sits down with one of

his patients and says, 'There are people who are going to pervert this for their own means and rewrite this history – we need to keep a record for it ourselves.' That was on tape. Conversations between Callen and his family, on tape. It was incredible for me to discover I could tell these stories with the same kind of archival vérité veracity, going back to the first minutes of the plague."

While France regards the documentary and book as separate works of scholarship thanks to their differences in scope and the individuals featured, there is some crossover. Longtime HIV survivor Peter Staley, who France only grew to know during the documentary and its reception – and who has since found renewed life as a robust activist, educator, and PrEP/treatment-as-prevention advocate – is heavily featured, as is legendary firebrand Larry Kramer, who co-founded GMHC and scribed scathing autobiographical play "The Normal Heart" in the wake of his oyster. France admits that he doesn't let the latter off easy in the book as far as characterization, dubbing Kramer "an essential pain in the ass."

"I don't think he wants to be let off easy," France elaborates. "I think Larry deserves to be treated seriously by history. Not romantically, not angrily, but taken at face value. What he accomplished moves forward the entire AIDS narrative from the first day. If anyone wants to take the experiences and accomplishments of the AIDS movement and write them in another field, they're going to need to know how Larry

Kramer did what he did.”

Dr. Robert Gallo, whose bitter feud with Dr. Luc Montagnier of France’s Pasteur Institute over who discovered HIV led to tragic decisions, chaos and delays in testing advancements (which also figured into Shilts’ *And The Band Played On* and its 1993 HBO film adaptation), is also a major Plague character. France has been interviewing Gallo since the 80s – and as recently as this year – and credits him as a great science mind despite the ugly skirmishes. “He was the person who first suspected a retrovirus,” France says, “and discovered retroviruses. He made every advancement in the discovery process of HIV except for the discovery of HIV itself, and I believe it drove him nuts that somebody could come in and stumble on the virus the way Luc did. He’s still upset he didn’t get the Nobel Prize.”

A few research materials and accounts for Plague’s prominent subjects proved more elusive, however, including a series of diaries kept by outspoken “Kaposi’s Sarcoma Poster Boy” and Sister of Perpetual Indulgence Bobbi Campbell, whose conservative family had all but one volume incinerated following his death in 1984. “That really broke my heart,” France admits. From that

one surviving diary, which ended up in the possession of a nurse, France was able to build some scenes. “The brother who had them destroyed is no longer alive, and I spoke with his widow and kept saying, ‘Do you realize what you took from the historical record?’ It did frustrate me remembering back then that our stories were considered so unimportant.”

One of the most important and revealing accounts committed to the book, however, was France’s own. While he started writing a strict history, “the more I wrote, the more I was realizing I wanted to interpret what was happening and wanted people to know I was making interpretations,” he says. It proved a painful process, and even caused France to consider stopping, but the greater mission and responsibility of bringing back that era, and the almost powerless, disenfranchised status of the LGBT community prior to founding of groups like ACT-UP, proved motivation to keep going and finish.

“It’s just shocking,” France reflects, “and I would think especially for younger LGBT people, who know a modern truth about their connection to civic life in America. We had no connection to civic life then. I did a lot of tracking of polls and opinions on gay people

by Americans during that 15-year period, and that change in attitude I credit to AIDS activists, whose first path was to convince people that they deserved to live. There was humanity to gay people, and once they started getting traction on that, they could begin dialogues.”

Interestingly, Nov. 29 also sees release of a memoir by longtime HIV survivor and NAMES Project AIDS Quilt founder Cleve Jones, “When We Rise,” which chronicles the Harvey Milk protégé’s firsthand experiences before and after the plague era. France, for one, is happy about that coincidence, and hopes there are more such tomes to come.

“We should all be telling stories,” he assures. “There has not been a way to teach the history of the AIDS epidemic in college. We need books for people to carry these stories forward, and that’s what I’m hoping people will start to produce. So our history can go on the same shelf as all those other dark and triumphal histories that make up the American past.”



Anti-LGBT protesters dogged any event that promoted equality and compassion for LGBT people, such as Gay Pride events and AIDS activist gatherings. Gays and lesbians in the 1980s and 1990s came of age in an era of intense stigma; and AIDS, as many Christian fundamentalists gleefully noted, appeared almost as confirmation that the wages of sin are death. Gays and lesbians were surrounded by a culture that emphatically believed that they had asked for this, that mass death was, as conservative National Review put it, “retribution for a repulsive vice.”

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WORLD AIDS DAY EVENT CALENDAR

► World AIDS Day Calendar

Continued from p. 22

Dec. 2

8 a.m.

Free walk-in testing at Kent County Health Department Personal Health Services at 700 Fuller NE in Grand Rapids. Contact April Hight at 616-632-7171 or email april.hight@kentcountymi.gov.

www.accesskent.com/Health/health_department.htm

9 a.m.

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond HIV testing. Free by appointment or walk-in at 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Suite 230, Detroit.

www.miunified.org/Home

2:30 p.m.

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond Mobile Unit Site. Visit the outreach unit and receive free HIV, Hep C testing and more. Contact Lemont Gore at 734-572-9355 or email lemont@hivaidresource.org for details.

Willow Run Party Store, 1278 Ridge Road, Ypsilanti

www.miunified.org/Home

Dec. 3

10 a.m.

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond HIV testing. Appointments only until 2 p.m. Call 734-572-9355. 3075 Clark Road, #203, Ypsilanti

www.miunified.org/Home

1 p.m.

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond free HIV and STD testing every Saturday until 4 p.m. Last client taken 30 minutes before end of testing session. All are welcome. Testing together (for eligible couples/sex partners) is offered by appointment. For additional information, contact Clarence Peebles at 313-446-9820.

Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale

www.goaffirmations.org

Dec. 5

8:30 a.m.

HIV testing by appointment Monday-Friday. Call to schedule an appointment at 734-544-6840. Evening appointments available.

Washtenaw County Public Health, 555 Towner St., Suite 1103, Ypsilanti

www.ewashtenaw.org

1 p.m.

Anonymous HIV Testing. Monday-Friday testing until 3 p.m. at the University of Michigan. Call 734-763-1320 to schedule an appointment (walk-ins are taken if the schedule allows).

Wolverine Wellness, 207 Fletcher St., Suite 2110, Second floor, Ann Arbor

www.uhs.umich.edu/hivtesting

1 p.m.

University Health Service anonymous rapid HIV Testing. Testing until 3 p.m. at the University of Michigan. Call 734-763-1320 to schedule an appointment (walk-ins are taken if the schedule allows). Free for UM students. \$20 for others.

Wolverine Wellness, Suite 2110, 2nd floor, Ann Arbor

www.uhs.umich.edu/hivtesting

Dec. 6

11 a.m.

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond HIV testing until 8 p.m. Call 734-572-9355 for more information. 3075 Clark Road, #203, Ypsilanti

www.miunified.org/Home

Dec. 7

6 p.m.

Michigan AIDS Coalition (MAC-Health) free HIV and STD testing every Wednesday until 9 p.m. Testing includes HIV, Gonorrhea, Chlamydia and Hepatitis C. All are welcome. Last client taken 30 minutes before end of testing session.

Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale

www.goaffirmations.org

5 p.m.

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond HIV testing until 8 p.m. Call 734-572-9355 for more information. 3075 Clark Road, #203, Ypsilanti

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Bono Recruits Julia Roberts, Channing Tatum for AIDS Fight

NEW YORK (AP) – Donate at least \$10 to Bono’s charity (RED) and the singer is giving donors a chance to drink tea with him and Julia Roberts, enjoy a private concert from U2 or party in Las Vegas with “Magic Mike” star Channing Tatum.

Those are three of the “experiences” donors can possibly win after giving money to (RED), which raises funds to fight AIDS. The campaign dubbed “(RED) SHOPATHAN,” in its second year, launched Nov. 22, one week before World AIDS Day on Dec. 1.

“It is a battle now for funding. It’s just a street battle, pitch battle, and we have to keep this stuff in the news or literally those people don’t get the drugs. It’s that simple,” Bono said in an interview with The Associated Press. “We have to just remind people that America has led the war on this tiny little virus and is winning the war, but it is unthinkable, but it is possible, that

if we stall on funding then we start to undo all this good work.”

Other “experiences” that can be earned after donating on Omaze.com/RED include a night out with Neil Patrick Harris; tickets to see Broadway’s “Hamilton” and backstage access with show star Javier Munoz; a Snapchat and jet ski adventure with DJ Khaled; and a studio hangout with One Direction’s Liam Payne.

The campaign returned to “Jimmy Kimmel Live!” for a full show on Nov. 22, where Bono, The Killers, Herbie Hancock, DJ Khaled and Halsey performed, while special guests included Roberts, Tatum, Patrick Harris and Kristen Bell.

Bono sang a re-worked version of Cole Porter’s “Well, Did You Evah!” and the Killers performed Christmas songs.

“The Killers are doing Christmas songs to end all Christmas songs,” Bono said with a laugh, “which



Bono with Julia Roberts in recent appearance on Jimmy Kimmel shot.

actually, believe or not, has me singing ‘if you don’t help people with AIDS you’re going to hell.’”

“I wrote that line,” Kimmel said during the interview about the original song, written with Brandon Flowers of The Killers. “But that’s

true - if you don’t help people with AIDS you are going to hell, and that seems like a good enough reason to help alone. I mean, just think of yourselves.”

Last year’s campaign offered donors a visit to the set of “Game

of Thrones,” walking a red carpet with Meryl Streep and spending time with George Clooney. This year’s offers also include flying to Korea to hang out with K-Pop star G-Dragon and a “VIP Virgin event experience” with Virgin Group founder Richard Branson. Entries close on January 18, 2017.

“This is a really hopeful campaign and we try to be playful, we try not to bring anyone down, but actually the politics behind it is very serious. And the money we raise will keep people alive,” Bono said.

This year marks (RED)’s 10-year anniversary, which Bono said has raised more than \$360 million and impacted 70 million people through HIV testing, prevention, counseling and other services.

“This is a big deal in my life,” he said.

For more information, visit (RED) online <https://red.org>.

Major HIV Vaccine Trial in South Africa Stokes Hope

BY BTL STAFF

VERULAM, SOUTH AFRICA - An article by The Washington Post on Nov. 25 reports after decades of shadowboxing with the human immunodeficiency virus, researchers were encouraged four years ago when a test of a vaccine on 16,000 people in Thailand turned up a previously unknown vulnerability in the resilient pathogen.

The vaccine was only 31 percent effective and wore off over time, so it could not be approved for use in a general population. But the study’s results allowed scientists to exploit the chink in HIV’s armor, reformulate the drug and bring it back for another clinical trial.

Now all eyes are on South Africa, where researchers will begin inoculating thousands of volunteers Monday in the latest - and, some say, most promising - effort to develop a vaccine that prevents the disease. It is only the seventh full-scale human trial for a virus that infects more than 2 million people and kills more than 1 million every year.

“If this study shows efficacy . . . this would be a tectonic, historic event for HIV,” said Nelson L. Michael, director of the U.S. Military HIV Research Program, which led the Thailand study.

Should the vaccine prove to be 50 percent to 60 percent effective, experts say, that would be sufficient for drugmakers Sanofi Pasteur and GSK to begin licensing negotiations with the South African government. While such a rate is well below the acceptable margin for other vaccines, it would still make this one worth producing here - given that nearly 1 in 5 people are infected.

And an agent that works in South Africa could be adjusted later for use against viral subtypes that circulate elsewhere, including in the United States.

“Given that right now we have nothing, we’d be happy if this vaccine were even 45 or 50 percent effective,” said Gita Ramjee, director of the HIV Prevention Research Unit at the Medical Research Council in Durban, which is running two of the 15 trial sites. “Even a modestly effective vaccine like that would have a huge impact here.”

About 5,400 people - who must be HIV-negative, sexually active and between the ages of 18 and 35 - are being recruited. Each will receive five injections over the course of the year and then be monitored for two years.

Half the volunteers will receive a placebo so that researchers can measure the vaccine’s efficacy. But that hasn’t deterred South Africans from signing up. Few lives are

untouched by the disease.

“I don’t want another generation to go through what I did,” said Thembi Dlamini, 29, who this week was being screened at a clinic for participation in the trial.

Her older sister died of AIDS five years ago in a brutal descent. The only silver lining was its brevity: She was gone in just three months, with a stash of HIV medication in her dresser drawer. Her shame was greater than the fear of wasting away.

Dlamini estimates that half her friends are HIV-positive - hardly an outlandish calculation in a country where about a third of the women in her age group have the virus.

For 18-year-old S’phindile Dlamini, another volunteer who is no relation to Thembi, it was a neighbor whom she remembers dying first. In their community, people normally pitched in when someone fell ill. But the more brittle this woman grew, the farther away people stayed and the louder they whispered.

Between them, Thembi and S’phindile also count a niece, teacher and friends among their losses.

Though HIV has faded from the headlines since the development of antiretroviral drugs made the disease manageable, it is still a pandemic. About 36.7 million people

worldwide were living with HIV in 2015, including about 2.1 million who were newly infected, according to the Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says 1.2 million people are infected.

Globally, 18 million people were able to get the medicines they needed to control the virus last year, according to the U.N. HIV program.

South Africa has more than 7 million people living with the virus. In some parts of the country, such as the northeastern coastal province of KwaZulu-Natal, where Verulam is located, estimates place the number of HIV-positive people at nearly 30 percent.

There is no preventive drug and no cure. Yet this is the first new human HIV vaccine study in about a decade.

“We need to test more vaccines,” said Dan Barouch, director of the Center for Virology and Vaccine Research at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston. “In over 35 years of the epidemic, we’ve only tested four different HIV vaccine concepts. We need more shots on goal.”



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Happenings

OUTINGS

Thursday, Dec. 1

World AIDS Day Detroit Giving Breakfast 10 a.m. Tickets: \$50. World AIDS Day Detroit, 3929 Woodward Ave, Detroit. bit.ly/2g0qVJM

World AIDS Day Detroit: Youth Symposium 11:30 a.m. Hear from community leaders, medical providers, and experts on a number of topics related to HIV/AIDS today, including HIV in our community, stigma, discrimination, and PREP. Free to attend. Registration necessary. World AIDS Day Detroit, 3929 Woodward Ave, Detroit . 313-757-1733. bit.ly/2g2S7YT

Affirmations Community Meeting 6 p.m. Discuss what is working and what needs to be changed to make Affirmations more of "your" center. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105.

Candlelight Vigil for World AIDS Day 7 p.m. Refreshments served following vigil. Free to attend. Perceptions/Sacred Heart, 100 N Michigan Ave, Saginaw. www.perceptionsmi.org

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

World AIDS Day Candlelight Vigil 7 p.m. Across from the Saginaw County Govt. Building PFLAG Tri-Cities, 100 N. Michigan, Saginaw. leishashaler@gmail.com www.pflag.org

World AIDS Day Winter Wonderland

7 p.m. Winter dance with food and themed musical performances. Tickets: \$15-\$50. World AIDS Day Detroit, 3929 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. 313-757-1733. mcameron@worldaidsdaydetroit.com www.eventbrite.com/e/winter-wonderland-world-aids-day-2016-tickets-29047096648

Interfaith Service on World AIDS Day 7:30 p.m. Speakers will include Felix and Paula Siris of Gospel Against AIDS, The Rev. Lauren Zinn, founder of Jewbilation, and the Rev. Roland Stringfellow, Pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of Detroit. United HIV Health and Beyond, 2145 Independence Blvd., Ann Arbor. 734-572-9355. www.miunified.org

Friday, Dec. 2

EQMI Fall Fling 5:30 p.m. EQMI 2016 Fall Reception: "A Political Mixer" will bring together community leaders, corporate partners, and state and federal politicians from across the political spectrum. Event is open bar, cocktail party designed to foster relationships. Tickets starting at \$125. Black tie optional. Equality Michigan, 1 Energy Plaza, Detroit. 313-537-7000 ext. 10. communications@equalitymi.org http://bit.ly/eqmi2016

EQMI Fall Reception 6:30 p.m. A political mixer. Equality Michigan and DTE, 1 Energy Plaza, Detroit. 313-537-7000. communications@equalitymi.org http://bit.ly/eqmi2016

Saturday, Dec. 3

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

Free HIV + STD Testing 1 p.m. Unified, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105.

Alcoholics Anonymous Brownbaggers 1:30 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

Noel Night 5 p.m. Horse drawn carriage rides, reindeer run, carolers, music, over 120 performances, dance, children's activities, arts & crafts, shopping, and holiday delectables are all part of the evening's festivities. Over 60 vendors. Free admission. Events happening across Detroit. Midtown Detroit, Inc, Detroit. 313-420-6000. http://detroitmidtown.com/05/noelnight

Perceptions 15th Annual Holiday Gala & Silent Auction 5:30 p.m. Tickets: \$50 per person includes drinks, dinner, dancing, silent auction and more. Performances by Harmony Diversity Choir with MC Miss Ace DeVille. Perceptions, 8390 Midland



attendees the chance to see special programming from over 100 different venues with over 200 performances that are sure to bring the sounds of the season to life.

The 44th Annual Noel Night will be held Dec. 3 from 5-10p.m. Events take place throughout Downtown Detroit, for a full list of times and locations visit <http://www.noelnight.org/>.

Road, Freeland. www.perceptionsmi.org/gala.php

Perceptions Holiday Gala 5:30 p.m. Tickets: \$50 PFLAG Tri-Cities, 8390 Midland Rd., Freeland. 989-891-1429. leishashaler@gmail.com perceptionsmi.org/gala.php

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

Sunday, Dec. 4

Fun Home 7:30 p.m. Winner of Five Tony Awards including Best Musical. Inspired by the life of Alison Bechdel. Not recommended for children under 13. Under 5 not admitted. Tickets: \$15-\$130. Broadway In Detroit, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000. www.broadwayindetroit.com/shows/fun-home

Monday, Dec. 5

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

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, Dec. 6

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

Annual Interfaith Service of Affirmation for LGBTQIA People 7:30 p.m. Featured speakers include: Rev. Dr. Julie Nemereck, Trans activist and Stephanie Lang, LMSW, Stand with Trans facilitator and ally mom. Attendance is free of charge. Transgender Michigan, 2309 Packard, Ann Arbor. 734-395-7133. www.transgendermichigan.org/flyers/20161206InterfaithService.pdf

Wednesday, Dec. 7

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

Dykes on Bikes 6:30 p.m. An organization committed to creating a local community of women motorcyclists and friends of women motorcyclists. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/

support-discussion-groups

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, Dec. 8

City Contracts an Outline of the Process 6:30 p.m. Listen to Jill Ford and Portia Roberson give an outline on what the city is looking for, what projects are currently happening and the importance of being a certified business in the city of Detroit. Free for members. \$10 for non-members. Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce, 4145 Woodward Ave., Detroit. http://bit.ly/2g5JEGV

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

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

Saturday, Dec. 10

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

Holiday In December 7 p.m. Dress in elegant emerald green and black. LGBT Detroit, 1023 Iroquois (at East Jefferson Avenue), Detroit. 313-285-9733. www.lgbtdetroit.org/supportus

Tuesday, Dec. 13

Gamenight 7 p.m. Gay Geeks Social Group, 4636 15 MILE RD Apt. xxx, Sterling Heights. www.meetup.com

See Calendar, page 32

TOM WOPAT & LINDA PURL



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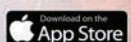
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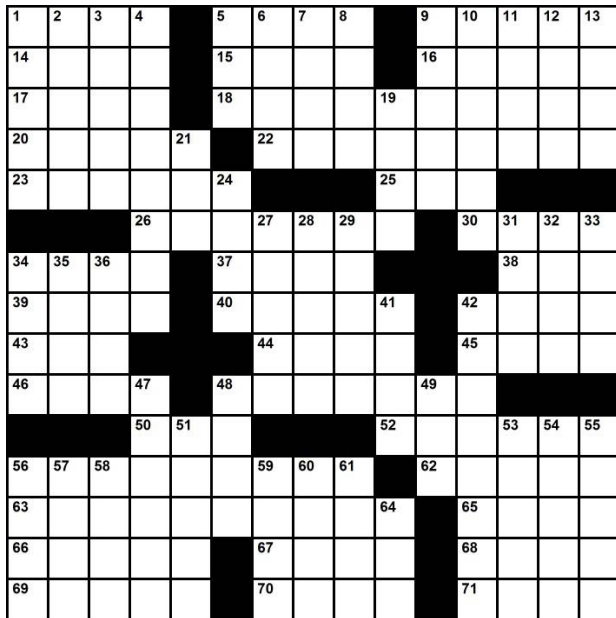
Enjoy a wonderful evening of upbeat and jazzy tunes along with American standards, featuring Tony Award-Nominee Tom Wopat and "Best of New York" (*New York Magazine*) Linda Purl!

Tom Wopat's warm, engaging baritone, lyrical phrasing and far-ranging interpretive skills have made him a favorite with audiences and critics alike. He received Tony nominations for his performances in "A Catered Affair" and "Annie Get Your Gun," and he also appeared on Broadway in "Sondheim on Sondheim," "Glengarry Glenn Ross" and "42nd Street." Wopat will be joined on stage by Linda Purl, a three-time Los Angeles Drama Critics' Choice best actress nominee. Praised by the *Los Angeles Times* as a "gifted song stylist," Purl enjoyed a recurring role as Helen Beasley on "The Office," and her New York stage credits include "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," "Getting and Spending" and "The Baby Dance."

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Q Puzzle



Brothers & Sisters

Across

- 1 Style of Marcel Duchamp
- 5 Showing a tiny opening
- 9 "___ of the Dead"
- 14 Aware of
- 15 "If I ___ a Rich Man"
- 16 Three-card hustle
- 17 Anna Madrigal's daughter

- 18 Responds to Marc Antony
- 20 Like X-rated fare
- 22 Start of a definition of 52-Across
- 23 End of the definition
- 25 Gore and "South Park's" Big Gay
- 26 Post office machines
- 30 Reid of "Josie and the Pussycats"
- 34 Young stud?
- 37 Strong wind, or Dorothy who rode a tornado
- 38 Word after post or ad
- 39 Matthew of "Brothers &

- Sisters"
- 40 With 56-Across, source of the definition
- 42 Rob of "Brothers & Sisters"
- 43 A as in Austria
- 44 River in the land of Colette
- 45 Bette Davis feature of song
- 46 "___ Let the Sun Go Down on Me"
- 48 Give a cocky look to
- 50 Root word
- 52 Not necessarily brothers & sisters
- 56 See 40-Across
- 62 Zellweger of "Chicago"
- 63 Vehicle for cruising
- 65 Chaplin spouse
- 66 Belief summary for Troy Perry
- 67 Part played by Nabors
- 68 Body of soldiers
- 69 Like soap operas
- 70 Room for Marga Gomez
- 71 Cash register section

Down

- 1 Joltin' Joe
- 2 Battery pole
- 3 Cushion under your bottom
- 4 Niles and Frasier
- 5 Leather sticker
- 6 "M*A*S*H" vehicle
- 7 Composer Thomas
- 8 What "let" means to Mauresmo
- 9 Vidal's "Visit to a ___ Planet"
- 10 Like Abe
- 11 From the top
- 12 Colorado neighbor
- 13 Peter by the piano
- 19 Sites for three women in a tub
- 21 To boot
- 24 Twist an arm
- 27 Falcon grabber
- 28 Porn director Francis
- 29 Witherspoon of "Cruel Intentions"
- 31 "Hi, sailor!"
- 32 Wade's legal antagonist
- 33 Deck foursome
- 34 Rep in the 'hood
- 35 Birth state of Langston Hughes
- 36 "Just As I Am" novelist E. ___ Harris
- 41 Big name in soft balls
- 42 Cry from the closet
- 47 Tire patterns
- 48 "A Boy Named Sue" writer Silverstein
- 49 Rhine tributary
- 51 Piss off
- 53 Combined
- 54 Pinko's hero
- 55 "Sailing to Byzantium" poet
- 56 "Before Stonewall" and others
- 57 Drag queen's stocking shade
- 58 Went right with your stallion
- 59 Splits open
- 60 "Lord of the Rings" singer
- 61 Bear market order
- 64 "Breakfast on Pluto" actor Stephen

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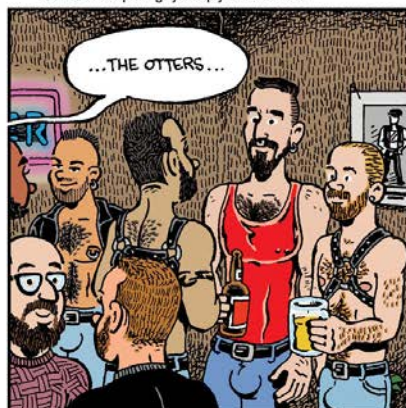
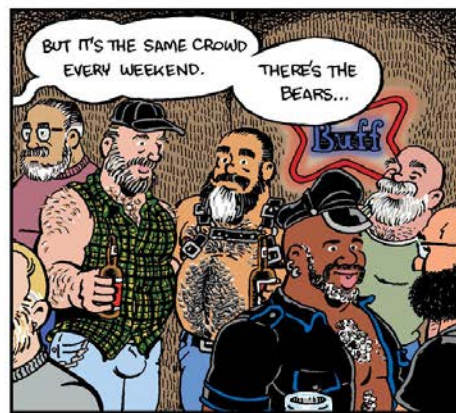
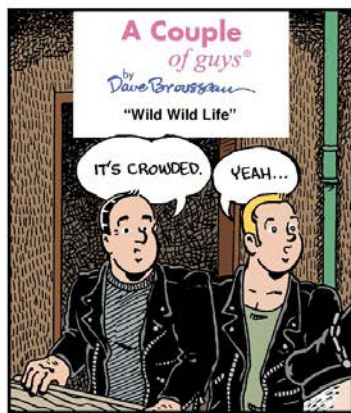
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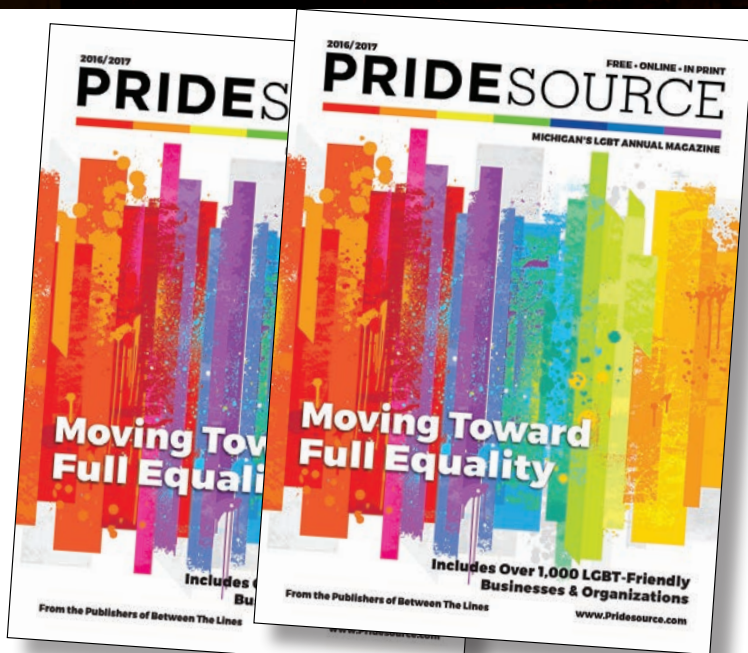
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► Happenings

Continued from p. 30

Wednesday, Dec. 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, Dec. 15

Detroit Elders 5 p.m. Attendance is free. SAGE Metro Detroit, 4750 Woodward, Detroit. 313-833-1300 ext. 15. <https://sagemetrodetroit.org>

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

MUSIC & MORE

Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra "UMS Choral Union: Handel's Messiah" A holiday tradition. Tickets: \$12-\$36. Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. Dec. 3 - Dec. 4. 734-761-1800. <http://bit.ly/2fPor32>

Michigan Center for Early Christian Studies "Panel: Looking Inside Handel's Messiah: A Director's Perspective" Scott Hanoian, music director of the UMS Choral Union, gives an insider's look



Editor's Pick

Annual Interfaith Service of Affirmation

Transgender Michigan and the Jim Toy Community Center Washtenaw faith organizations (Oasis TBLG Outreach Ministry,

First UUC of Ann Arbor, First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor, and many others) will gather to present the Interfaith Service of Affirmation, a night committed to building "one family undivided" and "reclaiming the blessing," an interfaith service of love and support for LGBTQ people and their allies. The event will feature local musicians: Katie Geddes, Rev. Jessie Gutgsell, Brandy Sinco, Laszlo Slomovits and David Vaughn, among others. Featured speakers for the event include Rev. Dr. Julie Nemecek, a transgender activist and Stephanie Lange, LMSW and "Stand with Trans" ally mom facilitator.

The interfaith service of affirmation will begin at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 6 at St. Clare of Assisi Episcopal Church and Temple Beth Emeth located at 2309 Packard in Ann Arbor. Attendance is free. For more information, visit www.transgendermichigan.org or call 734-395-7133.

at conducting Handel's Messiah. Held before the Saturday evening performance. Rackham Bldg., 915 E. Washington St. 4th floor, Ann Arbor. 6 p.m. Dec. 3. 734-763-3333. <http://bit.ly/2eVds6R>

Classical

Fort Street Chorale "Fort Street Chorale and Chamber Orchestra present Handel's Messiah December 3 and 4" Incoming director and organist at Fort Street Presbyterian Church, Marilyn Biery, conducts. Soloists are soprano Carol Ambrogio Wood, alto Dorothy Duensing, tenor Pablo Bustos, and bass Steven Henrikson. Tickets are \$20, \$15 for groups of 10 or more. Wheelchair-accessible. Fort Street Presbyterian Church, 631 W. Fort Street, Detroit. 3 p.m. Dec. 4. 313-961-4533. www.fortstreet.org

Fort Street Chorale "Fort Street Chorale and Chamber Orchestra present 38th annual performances of Handel's Messiah" Incoming director and organist at Fort Street Presbyterian Church, Marilyn Biery, conducts. Soloists are soprano Carol Ambrogio Wood, alto Dorothy Duensing, tenor Pablo Bustos, and bass Steven Henrikson. Tickets are \$20, \$15 for groups of 10 or more. Wheelchair-accessible. Fort Street Presbyterian Church, 631 W. Fort Street, Detroit. 3 p.m.

Dec. 3. 313-961-4533. www.fortstreet.org

Concerts

AEG Live "Damien Escobar" All ages welcome. Tickets: \$45 - \$65. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. 7 p.m. Dec. 8. 248-399-2980. <http://bit.ly/2cwr9Jj>

Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra "Holiday Pops" Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Dec. 9. 734-761-1800. www.a2so.com

Live Nation "Steel Panther" Tickets: \$15-\$40. The Fillmore Detroit, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 7 p.m. Dec. 3. www.thefillmoredetroit.com

Dance

The Whiting "The Hip Hop Nutcracker" A contemporary dance spectacle set to Tchaikovsky's timeless music, is a holiday mash-up for the entire family. Tickets: \$32-\$38. The Whiting, 1241 E. Kearsley St., Flint. 8 p.m. Dec. 10. 810-237-8689. www.TheWhiting.com

Shows

Bakers Keyboard Lounge "Bakers

Keyboard Lounge Presents Every Wednesday OGD ft. Sky Covington" Join the Detroit Jazz Greats OGD (Gerard Gibbs, Perry Hughes & Gene Dunlap) ft. Sky Covington for live jazz, drinks and fun. Bakers Keyboard Lounge, 20510 Livernois, Detroit. Oct. 12 - Dec. 28. 313-345-6300. www.theofficialbakerskeyboardlounge.com

A Christmas Carol Step back in time to see Tiny Tim and a handful of ghosts melt Ebenezer Scrooge's frozen heart and show him what Christmas really means. Tickets: \$20-\$42. Fun for the whole family. Meadow Brook Theatre, Meadow Brook Music Festival, 3554 Walton Blvd., Rochester Hills. Through Dec. 24. 248-377-3300. www.ticketmaster.com

A2CT Auditions for Almost, Maine Auditions for John Cariani's Almost Maine, directed by Kat Walsh. General auditions take place offsite. Callbacks are Tuesday, 12/6/17 at 6:30 pm at the Ann Arbor Civic Theatre Studio. Ann Arbor Civic Theatre, Weir Crafts, 6155 Jackson Rd, Ann Arbor. Dec. 4 - Dec. 5. 734-971-2228. www.a2ct.org/audition

Sugar Plum Panto Tickets: suggested \$20 donation. Fun for the whole family. Featuring brand new songs by R. MacKenzie Lewis, "Kick Butt" and "Tick Tock," and classical pieces from the Nutcracker Ballet by Tchaikovsky, and reimagining of modern songs. Theatre Nova Ensemble, The Yellow Barn, 416 W. Huron St., Ann Arbor. Through Dec. 22. 734-635-8450. www.theatrenova.org

Professional

2.5 Minute Ride Tickets: \$20. Matrix Theatre Company, 2730 Bagley, Detroit. Through Dec. 4. 313-967-0999.

2.5 Minute Ride by Lisa Kron Tickets: \$20 adult, \$15 student and senior. Matrix Theatre Company, 2730 Bagley St., Detroit. Through Dec. 4. 313-967-0599. www.matrixtheatre.org

ART 'N AROUND

Affirmations "Gender X Show" Open to all transgender and gender queer artists. Pittman-Puckett Gallery, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. Nov. 12 - Jan. 7. 2483987105. www.goaffirmations.org

Ann Arbor Art Center "Stamped Clay Jewelry Workshop" Come create your own custom clay jewelry. Tickets: \$40 for ages 18 and up. Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 W. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 1 p.m. Dec. 10. 734-994-8004. <http://bit.ly/2f6Ew0a>

Ann Arbor Art Center "Intro to Precious Metal Clay Workshop" Come learn about the unique properties of precious metal clay in this one day workshop for beginners. Tickets: \$135 for ages 18 and up. Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 W. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 10 a.m. Dec. 10. 734-994-8004. <http://bit.ly/2fNS00M>

Ann Arbor Art Center "Simple Ring Making Workshop" Design and fabricate your own rings using copper and brass. All materials provided with entry cost. Tickets: \$85 for ages 18 and up. Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 W. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 3 p.m. Dec. 7. 734-994-8004. <http://bit.ly/2eRfwjt>

Ann Arbor Art Center "Silver Snowflake Earrings Workshop" Join jewelry artist Christine Bossler to make your own set of beautiful and bold silver snowflake earrings. Ages 15 and up. Tickets: \$110. Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 W. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 10 a.m. Dec. 3. 734-994-8004. <http://bit.ly/2g4eTmj>

Ann Arbor Art Center "Art Off The Wall 2016: Holiday Shopping Exhibition" Free entrance event to see a two-floor exhibition featuring unique artwork by over 200 local and regional artists! Get started on the holiday shopping and give one-of-a-kind gifts while supporting local art. Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 W. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. Nov. 18 - Jan. 7. www.facebook.com/events/180790072828520?active_tab=discussion

Lawrence Street Gallery "Think Small 2016" All media and work is 12 inches in any direction or smaller and created by local artists. All work created by area artists. Lawrence Street Gallery, 22620 Woodward Ave, Ferndale. Nov. 30 - Dec. 24. 2485440394. www.lawrencestreetgallery.com

Yourist Studio Gallery "Yourist Studio Gallery Annual Holiday Show and Sale" Join us for dazzling new ceramic art by our Studio Resident Artists and selected students, good company, festive food and drink, and seasonal cheer. Yourist Studio Gallery, 1133 Broadway, Ann Arbor. Dec. 9 - Dec. 11. 734-662-4914. www.youristpottery.com

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.

The Nerd Runs at Williamston through Dec. 18

Williamston Theatre is collaborating with the MSU Department of Theatre on their production, *The Nerd* by Larry Shue. Performances run through Sunday, Dec. 18.

Aspiring young architect Willum Cubbert has often told his friends about the debt he owes Rick Steadman, a fellow ex-GI who saved his life in Vietnam. He has written to Rick saying as long as he is alive, "you will have somebody on Earth who will do anything for you" – so Willum is delighted when Rick shows up at his birthday party. But his delight soon fades as Rick, a hopeless nerd, sticks around and causes one uproarious incident after another, building to a surprise ending.

The cast of *The Nerd* consists of Blake Bowen, Desten Knox, Alex Leydenfrost (*The Gravedigger*, *Panache*), Anne Miranda (*Leaving Iowa*), MSU Alumni Eric Eilersen (*End Days*, *The Dead Guy*) and MSU Graduate Students Kristy Allen and Greg Hunter. The Director is Williamston Theatre's Executive Director and MSU Alumni John Lepard (*The Gravedigger*, *The Lion in Winter*). The production team includes Set Design by Bartley Bauer (*Chapatti*, *The Decade Dance*), Lighting Design by MSU



Graduate Student Christopher Stowell, Costume Design by Holly Iler (Summer Retreat, Rounding Third), Sound Design by Quintessa Gallinat (*Chapatti*, *The Art of Murder*) and Props Design by Michelle Raymond (*Pulp*, Summer Retreat). The Stage Manager is Stefanie Din (*Pulp*, *Chapatti*).

Ticket prices have been raised by \$2 for performances in the 2016-2017 season. Starting opening night, adult tickets prices are \$30 for Friday and Saturday evenings, \$27 for Saturday and Sunday matinees and \$25 for Thursday evenings. Senior citizens (65 and older)

and members of the military receive a \$2 discount on all tickets. Student tickets (with a valid student ID) remain \$10 for all performances. Discounts are also available for groups of 10 or more (booked at least 1 week in advance through the box office). Tickets can be purchased Tuesday–Friday from 12-6 p.m. by calling 517-655-SHOW (7469) or by visiting the box office and ordered online up until 24 hours prior to the performance by visiting www.williamstontheatre.org. Please be aware that payment is required at the time the reservation is made.

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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

Rosie O'Donnell joins the cast of 'SMILF'

Rosie O'Donnell, the American hero who first exposed the nasty misogyny of our incoming President, is coming back to TV when we need her most. She's been cast in Showtime's sitcom



Rosie O'Donnell.
Photo: KathClick

"SMILF" from creator Frankie Shaw (based on her short film of the same name). Set in Boston, the show will revolve around Bridgette (played by Shaw), a single Millennial whose quest for career and satisfying sex crashes headfirst into the complications of also being a young mother. O'Donnell will play Tutu, Bridgette's socially unconventional mother who does her best to be there for her daughter and grandson. Right now this one is in the pilot stages, which means it might or might not come to series. So, fingers crossed – we could always use a "Gilmore Girls" with Southie accents.

'Ocean's Eight' is a 'Carol' reunion and so much more

The all-female "Ocean's Eight," a sequel to the boys club (plus Julia Roberts) heist comedies, is charging full steam ahead, and it's bringing us a lot of anticipatory comfort and joy. On the heels of the all-female "Ghostbusters," this sequel's woman-centered story has yet to arouse the ire of infantile internet misogynists, which is heartening, but the biggest story for queer filmgoers right now is its cast. The film stars Rihanna (who recently, and gloriously, was seen wearing a t-shirt with an image of herself wearing a Hillary Clinton t-shirt, which makes Ri a one-woman "Inception," and we'll stop at "YASSS" with three s's for now, out of journalistic prudence) and some other people named Sandra Bullock, Helena Bonham Carter, Dakota Fanning, Mindy Kaling, and Anne Hathaway. There's even a "Carol" reunion of sorts, with the inclusion of Sarah Paulson and Cate Blanchett, and we hope they play actual girlfriends this time around. To top it off, for in-the-know consumers of alt-comedy and oddball hip-hop, comic actress/rapper Awkwafina (aka Nora Lum) will be making some sort of appearance here, too. Get all the money,

ladies, we're rooting for you. Or, at least we will be rooting for you far off in the dystopic futurescape of June 2018 when this thing finally drops in theaters.

Trans cinema is worldwide

The U.S. now has acclaimed dramatic shows like "Transparent," sweet reality series such as "I Am Jazz," and breakout indie films like "Tangerine," all of which approach the subject of transgender people's lives with care, intelligence and dignity. But in other countries around the world, media that deals with the broad spectrum of trans experience is often still in the "please understand" stage. Not ideal, but it's a start, and it's a hopeful one. Now, Chinese filmmaker Zhang Wei, a writer-director-producer best known for socially conscious dramas like 2014's "Factory Boss," will begin shooting "The Rib" in 2017. The film will deal with the family life of a transgender teenage girl, her decision to transition, and her struggle to be accepted by her devoutly religious mother. No cast has been named yet, but keep an eye out sometime in 2018 for this one if you're the kind of filmgoer who jumps at the chance to see foreign language movies at festivals and arthouses.

'American Gigolo' is coming, eventually

Back in 2014, before the world began falling apart in earnest, there were rumblings about a TV series based on the 1980 classic glamour-noir film "American Gigolo." And then... nothing. Blondie waited and waited for the project to move ahead and license "Call Me" all over again, but those royalty checks didn't materialize. Well, now it's the end of 2016, and it appears that the trick that we were sure flaked on us is back making noise about "bringing pleasure" once again. Perhaps buoyed by the critical success of "The Girlfriend Experience," the series based on Stephen Soderbergh's film of the same name, Showtime is moving its own project an inch forward and has brought in Neil LaBute to direct the first episode of "Gigolo." No cast yet, but we do know that the action has been updated to present day. That means our dreams of early '80s/Giorgio Armani/post-disco elegance have been dashed, but it also might mean that sex work won't be portrayed with a retro mindset mired in silliness, seediness or the creeping homophobia that marred the original film. Now it's on casting to find us a hot dude we can all objectify. Showtime, you may proceed to pleasure us.

Romeo San Vicente thinks DILF should be in more common usage.

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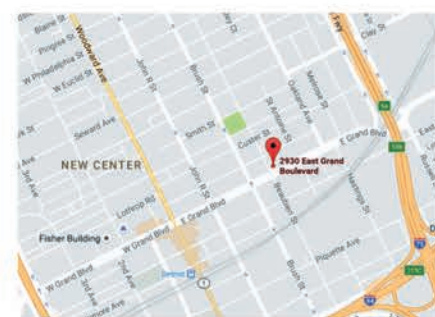
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