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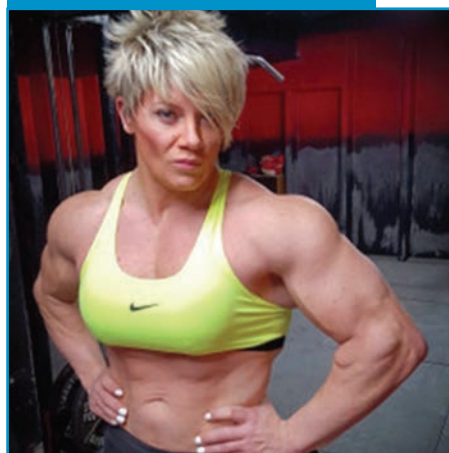
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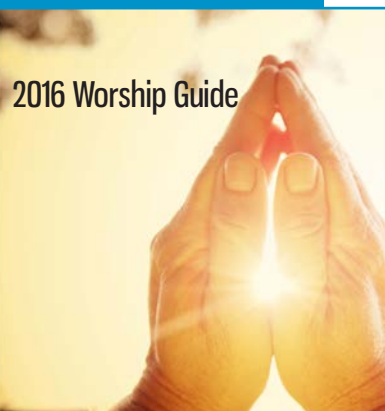
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NEWS

4 Churches Drop Lawsuit Challenging State's Transgender Law

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

Four churches have withdrawn a federal lawsuit that claimed a Massachusetts state law prohibiting discrimination against transgender people in public restrooms violated their constitutional right to religious freedom.

The conservative Christian group Alliance Defending Freedom sued in October on behalf of the churches, saying they would be forced to open changing rooms, shower facilities and restrooms based on perceived gender identity and not on biological sex. It said that because the new law also prohibits covered entities from making statements intended to discriminate, it would force churches and pastors to refrain from religious expression regarding sexuality that conflicts with the government's view.

On Monday, the group said it voluntarily dismissed the lawsuit after Democratic state Attorney General Maura Healey's office revised its written guidance on the law, "which now protects the freedom of churches to

express views consistent with their faith and operate their facilities in a manner that doesn't violate their core religious beliefs."

Healey spokeswoman Emily Snyder said the lawsuit was unnecessary because state law has long provided that religious facilities are exempt from the public accommodations law for religious services and other religious functions. She said Healey's office clarified language on its website in response to the lawsuit and sent a letter to the Alliance Defending Freedom saying that religious facilities may qualify as places of public accommodation when they host public, non-religious functions.

"This law provides critical protections for transgender people who were without full protection and equality under the law for too long," Snyder said.

The churches that filed the lawsuit are Horizon Christian Fellowship, in Fitchburg; Abundant Life Church, in Swansea; House of Destiny Ministries, in Southbridge; and Faith Christian Fellowship, in Haverhill.

One Million Moms Lashes Out Against Zales Over 'Love and Pride'

BY BTL STAFF

In their latest anti-LGBT crusade, One Million Moms targeted Zales Jewelers for releasing a "Love and Pride" collection and an advertisement depicting two women getting married, according to a South Florida Gay News report.

"Zales is using public airwaves to subject families to the decay of morals and values, and belittle the sanctity of marriage in an attempt to redefine marriage," OMM wrote in a blog post. "Even though homosexuality is unnatural, this advertisement is pushing the LGBTQ agenda."

In the post, titled "Zales Attempts to Normalize Sin," OMM suggests that Zales "should be ashamed" for "glorifying sin," claiming "it is not a retailer's job to introduce

so called 'social issues' such as this to our children."

In the past, OMM has spoken out against H&M, Mattel and Cheerios for their LGBT-inclusive practices. Most recently, they are campaigning against Target for allowing "men entering women's restrooms," referring to allowing transgender persons to have access to whichever bathrooms they identify with.

"Millions of Americans strongly believe marriage should be between one man and one woman," they wrote. "It is obvious that Zales would rather take sides than remain neutral in the culture war."

OMM encourages readers to stop shopping at Zales and to reach out and urge the company to take the commercial down.

6 Months Later, 49 Killed at Pulse are Remembered in Orlando

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Relatives, friends and survivors of the Orlando nightclub massacre stood outside Pulse where candles were lit behind stars with the names of each of the 49 patrons who were killed.

They hugged each other outside the shuttered gay club in the early morning hours Monday to mark the six-month anniversary of the massacre.

Many wore black and others wore rainbow-colored "Orlando United" T-shirts and ball caps.

At 2:02 a.m., the exact time gunman Omar

Mateen started shooting inside the club, they read the names of each of the deceased patrons.

Dozens of other patrons were seriously injured in the June 12 massacre, which was the worst mass shooting in recent U.S. history.

Two other services were planned in Orlando for the Pulse victims later in the day.



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LGBT Detroit Moves Out of Midtown, Hosts Holiday Event at New Location

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

DETROIT – Curtis Lipscomb, executive director of LGBT Detroit, could not say “thank you” enough on Saturday night to his staff, his family and his friends.

At the organization’s 14th Annual Holiday In December gala, Lipscomb - a self-proclaimed “homo without decorating genes” - told around 50 or so supporters in attendance that “this loveliness came together with help from great people. We’ve been working literally up until an hour before the event to make this space safe and clean for our guests,” he said about hosting their longest-running fundraiser for the first time at LGBT Detroit’s new location on Greenfield Road between Seven and Eight Mile. The space is nearly triple the size of its former facility in Midtown Detroit, expanding from 1,200 square feet to 3,500 square feet. This will help LGBT Detroit increase the number of people the organization plans to serve.

“We didn’t obtain this space through a grant. We didn’t obtain this space through a foundation. The people got this space. You need to understand that. The people got this space,” said Lipscomb, pointing to longtime supporters of LGBT organizations, like Howard Israel and Henry Grix, that helped make it possible. “The people said they wanted a brave, safe space. The people got what they wanted. You should applaud yourselves because you made this happen.”

A local couple - Cecil Branch and his wife, Felicia - have known Lipscomb for many years and offered their help. The Branch family has guided him through the process of acquiring the structure built in 1961, which LGBT Detroit should have an official certificate of occupancy for before the end of the year.

“These are our consultants. They know what it takes to manage four walls and a roof. Cecil is big time. As a facilities manager he operates 60 Comerica banks. He said, ‘I’m going to help you get this space together,’ and he has,” said Lipscomb. Props were given to several others including Lewis Jones, a Home Depot employee, who offered expert advice and friendly rates to help LGBT Detroit complete construction.

The walls throughout the space were adorned with pieces of artwork for sale hung



New LGBT Detroit staff members with executive director Curtis Lipscomb at the 14th Annual Holiday In December gala: program facilitator Sharron Fincher, social media coordinator and LGBT Detroit Leadership Academy graduate Devon Brooks, and program coordinator Charlie Dickerson. BTL Photo Kate Opalewski

personally by LGBT Detroit sponsors Toney Hughes Sr. and Jr. of the Sherwood Forest Art Gallery in Detroit. Homemade food was prepared by administrative assistant Lawrence Pennymon’s partner.

Entertainment was provided by Ozie Cargile, a composer of classical and symphonic music. During his performance, he expressed his gratitude for the organization, explaining his need for a more intellectually stimulating environment. A place where “you can go and talk about issues and meet like-minded people.”

Cargile said he found what he was looking

for.

“LGBT Detroit, I am very proud to say, quite literally changed my life,” he said. “For many years I have known about my sexuality, but it really wasn’t until this year that I found the courage to completely embrace that in every aspect of my life.”

Lipscomb’s good friend Ramon Morton traveled in from Gary, Indiana to celebrate.

“We talk all the time. We’re not just impacted here, but we have friends across the nation and we need to come together and figure out how we share our resources to make life better for not just someone on Greenfield, but

from your road. Ramon has shared strategies and advice. We’re gonna need it. Times have changed and we need to stick together,” said Lipscomb. “I’m glad the people said they wanted this space because now we have a fight to prepare for.”

Part of that fight, he said, is LGBT Detroit’s work to “further improve the physical well-being of our movement.”

In collaboration with the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute, LGBT Detroit will develop a Cancer Action Council. In an effort to reduce rates of cancer incidence, late-stage diagnoses, and cancer deaths in



LGBT Detroit executive director Curtis Lipscomb on Dec. 10 with event coordinator Christine Burkett who grabs attention in her custom-made African print dress designed by Yemisi Bamisaye of Detroit. Bamisaye owns Classic Expressions Fabric Store in Royal Oak. BTL Photo Kate Opalewski



Longtime friends and supporters of LGBT Detroit, Felicia and Cecil Branch. BTL Photo Kate Opalewski



Ozie Cargile became involved with LGBT Detroit about a year ago. The talented musician has volunteered his time to share with young professionals what it means to be a composer of classical and symphonic music. BTL Photo Kate Opalewski

minority populations the council will target Detroit and areas within Wayne County by identifying specific needs in those populations with cancer.

The project is led by Hayley Thompson, Ph.D., leader of the Population Studies and Disparities Research Program at Karmanos.

As LGBT Detroit settles into their new space, the organization will continue to provide services in partnership with the Michigan Department of Community Health, University of Michigan's Public Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Educational programs offered

“ We didn't obtain this space through a grant. We didn't obtain this space through a foundation. The people got this space. You need to understand that. The people got this space. **”**

– Curtis Lipscomb, executive director of LGBT Detroit

through those partnerships aim to help reduce the spread of HIV and AIDS. LGBT Detroit also offers programs to help reduce tobacco use.

Beyond Saturday night's fundraiser, Lipscomb encouraged LGBT Detroit supporters to become reoccurring donors as the organization continues to grow.

“Your time, your talent and your treasure. Think about that,” he said. “That is what we value at LGBT Detroit.

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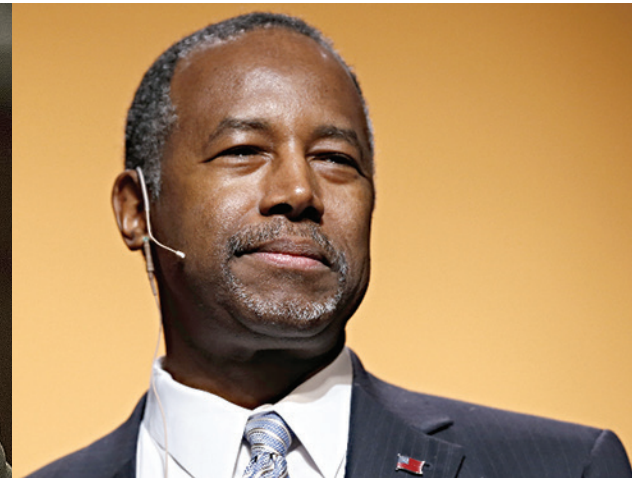
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HHS Nominee Tom Price (AP Photo)



Secretary of Defense Nominee General James Mattis (AP Photo)



Secretary of HUD nominee Ben Carson (AP Photo)

Trump Nominates Defense, HHS, HUD

BY LISA KEEN

“Horrifying” is the term one LGBT health activist used to describe President-elect Trump’s choice to head up the Department of Health and Human Services. Another characterized Trump’s choice for Secretary of Housing and Urban Development as “disasterous.” But there’s less worry, so far, over his announcement last night that he is nominating a life-long bachelor, General James Mattis, as his Secretary of Defense.

Here are the basics on Trump’s most recent nominees:

Secretary of HHS: Tom Price

The position: This department can have enormous impact on the access LGBT people have to non-discriminatory health care and benefits and on the funding of medical research into HIV and breast cancer, two illnesses that disproportionately affect this population. Under the Obama administration, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued regulations stating that the Affordable Care Act’s prohibition on sex discrimination in health coverage and care includes a prohibition on discrimination based on gender identity. It did not take a position whether the ACA’s regulations covered discrimination based on sexual orientation. Instead, it said it would cover instances “where the evidence establishes that the (sexual orientation) discrimination is based on gender stereotypes.”

The person: U.S. Rep. Tom Price, R-Ga., is a strong supporter of repealing the ACA. He has earned the lowest possible score (zero) from the Human Rights Campaign’s Congressional voting scorecard for four out

of his six terms in the House (and only a 10 on the other two).

The concerns: Darryl Cummings, a spokesperson for the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center, the largest LGBT health provider in the country, called the choice of Price “horrifying.” “Price is opposed to the very idea of government-provided health and human services,” said Cummings. “Further, Price has a long record of hostility towards the LGBT community, so I sadly expect a very, very rocky road ahead for those of us who actually care about the health and well-being of historically marginalized and underserved communities in the United States. Price represents a major setback from the progress made under President Obama.”

Carl Schmid of the AIDS Institute said Price has been both a fiscal and social conservative. “On the budget front, we are very concerned about the funding for our domestic HIV program,” said Schmid. LGBT health groups are also concerned about the potential for loss with the ACA, about HHS giving states more waivers to states to deny some Medicaid benefits, and a refusal to fight discrimination in health care. The new HHS could also rescind efforts to fund educational programs and social research, and it could propose significant tax cuts to both HHS programs and entitlements.

Signs of hope: Rep. Price worked with then-Rep. Tammy Baldwin in 2006 to introduce a bill – pre-ACA -- to encourage health care insurance coverage for the nation’s many uninsured.

Secretary of Defense: General James Mattis

The position: The Department of Defense is the federal government’s largest employer,

with over 2 million military and civilian personnel. Under President Obama, Defense Secretary Robert Gates supported the move to repeal a policy of banning openly gay military personnel. His successor, Leon Panetta, supported extending benefits to the families of gay service members. And the current secretary, Ashton Carter, announced that transgender people may serve openly in the military.

The person: James Mattis is a retired four-star Marine general and a 44-year veteran of several wars, beginning with the Gulf War. A longstanding law requires that a Defense Secretary have been out of uniform for at least 10 years, and Mattis has been out only three years, so he’ll need Congressional approval of legislation to allow an exception of that requirement.

The concerns: Some interpret words he helped author as suggesting he thinks allowing gays, transgender people and women to serve has a negative impact on the military. In a book called “Warriors and Citizens,” he and his co-author wrote: “We fear that an uninformed public is permitting political leaders to impose an accretion of social conventions that are diminishing the combat power of our military.”

Signs of hope: Mattis has earned the praise of both Gates and former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mike Mullen, who supported repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. And Panetta likes him because, as he told the Washington Post, “You wanted Jim Mattis in the room because he speaks truth to power.”

Secretary of HUD: Ben Carson

The position: HUD’s mission is to ensure there’s safe and affordable housing for

American citizens and to protect consumers from unfair and discriminatory practices. Under President Obama’s first HUD Secretary, Shaun Donovan, the department announced that, although the Fair Housing Act (FHA) does not explicitly cover sexual orientation or gender identity-based housing discrimination, such discrimination may be covered by the FHA in other ways. It also announced \$9.1 million in grants to address the housing needs of people with low-incomes living with HIV/AIDS.

The person: Ben Carson, a pediatric neurosurgeon by profession, was a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination. As such, he endorsed the National Organization for Marriage’s statement endorsing the First Amendment Defense Act. And he said that supporting marriage equality was like throwing the word of God “into the garbage.”

The concerns: The Human Rights Campaign predicted that Ben Carson’s “hateful views” could, in the role of HUD Secretary, “have disastrous effects on LGBTQ people.” It noted that Carson likened marriage between same-sex couples to bestiality and pedophilia.

Signs of hope: Carson apologized for comparing same-sex marriage to bestiality and pedophilia, telling CNN, “I love gay people. I love straight people. So this was really, I think, on my behalf, somewhat insensitive and I certainly apologize if I offended anyone, because I was not in any way comparing gays with people who engage in bestiality or sexual child abuse.” He also said, during his brief stint as the frontrunner in the Republican presidential nomination race, that he believes “our Constitution protects everybody regardless of their sexual orientation.”

List of Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality Grows in Michigan

BY BTL STAFF

More than 10 Michigan companies have earned a top score of 100 percent and the distinction of “Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality” on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s 2017 Corporate Equality Index.

They are Ally Financial Inc., The Dow Chemical Co., Dykema Gossett PLLC, FCA US LLC, Ford Motor Co., General Motors Co., Herman Miller Inc., Kellogg Co., Steelcase Inc., Stryker Corp., and Whirlpool Corp.

Included on the list is Lear Corporation, a leading global supplier of automotive seating and electrical systems, and the only Tier 1 automotive supplier to receive a perfect score on the latest CEI.

“We truly value diversity and inclusion at Lear, and I am extremely proud to have received this recognition for our efforts. We aspire to be an employer of first choice where all employees can reach their full potential,” said Matt Simoncini, Lear’s president and chief executive officer.

The national benchmarking tool on corporate policies and practices pertinent to LGBT employees spans nearly every industry and geography. The number of employers rated from the first CEI to the present has expanded from 319 to 887. The nation’s largest employers have demonstrated through their actions that LGBTQ people are not just tolerated, but fully welcomed in their workplaces and communities.

The criteria for scoring includes public commitment, organizational LGBT competency, employment benefits, and equal employment opportunity policy.

“In 2016, the LGBTQ community was subjected to unprecedented attacks – from state lawmakers plotting to undermine our historic gains, to tragic, unimaginable experiences of violence, to those who pledged to roll back our rights from the highest offices in the land. And yet, during it all, the unstoppable beat of progress towards greater equality in the places many LGBTQ Americans spend most of their daily lives – their workplaces – didn’t just remain steady, it sped up,” said Chad Griffin, president of the HRC Foundation.

“These businesses know that LGBT equality isn’t just the right thing to do, it makes them stronger in our global economy. Ensuring fairness in the workplace is a value and increasingly a policy norm, and not just in the U.S. Now, more than 90 percent of CEI-rated businesses have embraced both sexual orientation and gender identity employment protections for their U.S. and global operations.”

Notable Progress

- Seventy-three percent of this year’s rated businesses afford transgender-inclusive health care coverage. 2017 represents the greatest increase – an additional 136 participants – between any two consecutive CEI reports. The second-greatest increase was when this requirement to earn 100 went into effect, when 121 additional participants earned credit between the 2011 CEI report and 2012 CEI report (85 to 206 total participants with coverage).

- Eighty-six percent of businesses have inclusive diversity training.

- A record 382 major employers submitted gender transition guidelines – the vast majority of which were adopted from the HRC Foundation’s template guidelines (available at www.hrc.org/workplace).

- Forty-six percent of CEI-rated employers offer employees question options to voluntarily disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity on anonymous surveys or confidential HR records.

- Eighty-eight percent of CEI-rated employers have an employee resource group or diversity council that includes LGBT and allied employees and programming. Seventy-three percent of all rated employers have employee groups, 26 percent have diversity councils and 19 percent of all rated employers have both. Of those companies with an officially-recognized LGBT employee group, 96 percent reported being expressly for LGBT and allied employees.

- Sixty-six percent of CEI-rated businesses met the standard of demonstrating at least three efforts of public commitment to the LGBT community – marketing, advertising and recruitment efforts, philanthropic contributions to LGBT organizations, LGBT diverse supplier initiatives and public policy weigh-in – and have inclusive philanthropic giving guidelines.

Read the entire report online:

www.hrc.org/campaigns/corporate-equality-index.

Boston Students Walk Out of Classes to Protest Trump

BOSTON (AP) – More than 200 Boston students walked out of classes and marched to the City Hall and Statehouse to protest President-elect Donald Trump’s policy proposals.

Boston Public Schools administrators said Monday they marked 282 high school and middle students absent for skipping afternoon classes. About 56,000 students attend the city’s public schools.

The protesters were calling on Mayor Marty Walsh and Gov. Charlie Baker to commit to protecting the rights of all immigrants, minorities, women and the LGBTQ community.

Several dozen students sat on the floor in front of Baker’s office, demanding to speak to the governor.

Baker was in the building when the students arrived but left without seeing them.

Walsh and School Superintendent Tommy Chang say they understand the students’ concerns, but would rather they stayed in school.



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The Strength to Be Yourself

How transgender bodybuilder Janae Marie Kroc is helping to lift transgender athletes to new heights

BY EMELL DERRA ADOLPHUS

In the annals of history's hard bodies, bodybuilder Matthew "Kroc" Kroczaleski will always be known as one of the strongest men in the world. After serving time in the marines from 1991 to 1995, and as part of presidential security duty under President Bill Clinton, Kroc went on to set records in powerlifting and trademarked "kroc rows"—a tough-as-nails series of high intensity, heavy weight dumbbell rows that would even make Terminator-era Arnold Schwarzenegger quiver.

Yet even as the "manliest of the manly men," as Kroc once put it, Kroc had strength but never felt strong until last year when transitioning into her true self as Janae Marie Kroc.

"The funny thing is, I had two strong desires from a young age: One was a passion for strength training. The other one was always the feeling that I was supposed to be a girl," says Kroc, 43.

In July 2015, Kroc was outed as transgender. Rather than to continue to deny the truth, Kroc decided to start the journey to become Janae, a journey she had struggled with since childhood.

"I grew up in a very masculine environment. I was the oldest of three boys. My mom was a complete tomboy. I had no female friends. And I grew up in a small rural area where it was very close-minded," Kroc remembers. With two seemingly opposing desires, Kroc put the journey to becoming Janae on hold. The decision, Kroc explained, was made easy growing up in an intolerable environment in rural Michigan.

"I remember being 5 or 6 years old and being terrified that someone would find out how I felt. I couldn't say anything about it, knowing it wouldn't be received well. So it was just something I thought about constantly, nonstop all day, every day. And I really wasn't able to start exploring (becoming a woman) until many years later."

After initially telling the mother of her three sons about her desire to transition and not receiving support - "She was supportive at first, but that didn't last very long," says Kroc

Kroc, who spends time living as both genders, still considers herself transgender but tends to lean toward non-binary and gender fluid when it comes to pronouns.

- Kroc went back to repressing her feelings and did not start to revisit them until about 10 years after their marriage ended.

Once she was outed, Kroc said she wanted to take control of what would happen next. "At that point I started estrogen therapy and decided to transition," says Kroc.

As part of her transition processes, Kroc had already an orchiectomy (as a result of testicular cancer), facial feminization surgery, and dropped 70 pounds of muscle to mimic society's views of a "feminine" frame. But then she quickly gained 50 pounds of muscle back after she began missing the strength she had worked so hard to gain.

"I was really missing the gym," says Kroc, who decided that big and strong will just have to be a part of Janae's package.

Kroc, who spends time living as both genders, still considers herself transgender but tends to lean toward non-binary and gender fluid when it comes to pronouns.

"Some days I am more masculine. Some days I'm more feminine," says Kroc, who now says she just wants to enjoy the perks of being at peace with who she is.

"At this point I am training hard," says Kroc, who is also writing and working on a documentary about her life as a powerlifter. "The challenge now is kind of juggling everything and finding a balance with it."

She adds, "The best thing about being 100 percent 'out' now is being involved with all these things that I have wanted to be involved with."

And now Kroc feels stronger than ever.

Follow Adolphus on Twitter @EmellDerraAdolf.



Kroc, who spends time living as both genders, still considers herself transgender but tends to lean toward non-binary and gender fluid when it comes to pronouns. Photos courtesy of Janae Marie Kroc

Next North Carolina Governor Says He Can Carry Out Agenda

BY GARY D. ROBERTSON

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) – North Carolina’s incoming Democratic governor said Dec. 7 he’s optimistic he’ll be able to repeal the law limiting state and local LGBT protections, vowing to pull back the conservative agenda of a Republican-dominated legislature.

Roy Cooper told The Associated Press in an interview - two days after Republican Gov. Pat McCrory conceded - that he wants to assemble issue-specific bipartisan coalitions on such matters as education, renewable energy, criminal justice reform and ending House Bill 2. That law known as HB 2, signed by McCrory, also directs transgender people to use restrooms in schools and government buildings corresponding to the sex on their birth certificate.

Republicans still will command veto-proof majorities in the House and Senate in 2017, so Cooper will be hard-pressed to block Republican legislation. Just a few GOP lawmakers now say they want the bill repealed, but Cooper believes more would be willing as the fallout of a national outcry continues to impact the state.

Opposition from major business CEOs, entertainers and sports organizations has dealt a blow to North Carolina’s business-friendly image, leading companies to pull back on expanding in the state.

Citing the law, the NBA moved its All-Star game and the NCAA and Atlantic Coast Conference sent championship events out of North Carolina.

“I believe that most or all of the legislators understand the severe economic impact of House Bill 2 that it’s having on us and that something needs to be done,” Cooper said in the phone interview.

GOP legislative leaders continue to defend the law, saying it provides privacy and protection for children using restrooms and locker rooms.

Noting an argument raised by some, the U.S. Justice Department and others contend the threat of sexual predators posing as transgender persons to enter a bathroom is practically nonexistent.

Meanwhile, backers of the law say the economic impact has been negligible compared to the state’s entire economy, which is benefiting from the recovery.

The law was passed in response to a Charlotte City Council ordinance approved last February that expanded non-discrimination rules for LGBT people in the use of public accommodations. The ordinance would have allowed people to use restrooms aligned with their gender identity.

State Senate leader Phil Berger, House Speaker Tim Moore and McCrory floated possible deals earlier this year in which the legislature would agree to repeal much of HB 2 if Charlotte repealed its ordinance. Charlotte leaders rejected the deals and litigation continues challenging and defending the law.

Berger said Wednesday he didn’t know whether changes to the law now would be made.

“That is just going to be a very difficult thing to deal with. I think it is something that there needs to be conversations about,” Berger said in an interview. “As to how we deal with it, I don’t think anybody knows the answer to that.”

McCrory conceded nearly a month after election night totals had Cooper leading by some 5,000 votes from 4.7 million cast. That margin doubled as counties counted provisional ballots and a partial recount saw no tabulation mistakes. In a belated victory rally Tuesday night, Cooper reaffirmed his commitment to doing away with the law, which he hammered McCrory on repeatedly during their campaign.

“With this election, North Carolina is on its way to repairing

its reputation,” Cooper said to cheers, with many supporters holding small flags with a symbol for gay rights. “Let’s finish the job and repeal House Bill 2.”

Leaders of the Human Rights Campaign and Equality North Carolina, who met with McCrory inside the old Capitol a week after he signed HB 2 to express their opposition, held a news conference Wednesday outside the same building to celebrate Cooper’s victory.

Their groups endorsed Cooper and targeted McCrory for defeat with a massive get-out-the-vote effort focused on the estimated 255,000 gays, lesbians and bisexual and transgender people in the state who are voters.

“It is crystal clear that the people of North Carolina want this legislation gone,” Equality NC executive director Chris Sgro said, and “I believe that leadership needs to work with Roy Cooper to let the full repeal come up for a vote as soon as possible.”

On other issues, GOP lawmakers would still have the power of legislation and appropriating funds. Cooper told the AP he would also promote his policy agenda through executive orders and department rule-making.

He takes office on Jan. 1.

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Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Turn Again, Time in Your Flight!

I turned 80 in May of this year. I have lived 62 of those years as a member of Detroit's rainbow community. I suspect I shall do so for the remainder of life. (So please mark your desk calendars accordingly. Item in italics: Charles, gayly tenacious into his 90s.)

As a friend of mine who would call me up yearly on my birthday put it, "Ah, yes, Charles, you're living proof of the old adage, "May babies are gay babies." Or, as the Coffee Table Book of Astrology, admonishes, "Taurus is the Sign of Sexual Deviancy."

I was born on a Tuesday, 1936, at 7:49 a.m. in Detroit's Harper Hospital, where I also worked right out of high school training as an O.R. Tech. It was while scrubbing in a Harper operating theater that I had the unquestionably unique experience of assisting Dr. Leonard Heath, the foresighted straight gynecologist who brought me into the world.

Dr. Heath seemed pleased to get reacquainted. I was delighted. (Unfortunately, he couldn't remember my face, and I couldn't place his. Sometimes 'family' reunions are like that.)

Notable gays born on my birthday are actor Katharine Hepburn, and 19th Century nurse Florence Nightingale. (Other famous Twelvers – who may or may not be LGBT: Yogi Berra, George Carlin, composer Burt Bacharach, artist Frank Stella.) Needless to say, I'm in pretty good company.

At my advanced age I find that quite often I'm out of touch with who's who these days in entertainment, sports, theater, film, the gay bar scene. Regularly I check the daily Free Press birthday listings, and find that many times I haven't a clue who the celebs are. (Then again, I'm sure they've never heard of me – that is, outside of Michigan!)

I've lived long enough to know how things were for us gays and lesbians 'back then'. As a teenager I was painfully aware that I was a sexual deviant, marked for watching and monitoring by society, religion, government, psychiatry, the law. A fairy. A queer. A sissy. A fag.

To survive I pretended to be straight, went by a nickname, told no one where I worked, lived a tiresome lie to parents, friends, teachers, and clergy. I got by. Sometimes barely.

As a gay teenager I also believed the variant saying shared among us for a future that seemed decades and decades away, "Nobody wants you when you're old and gay." We believed there existed a place we jokingly dreaded to go to. It was called the Wrinkle Room. "Don't ever grow old, Mary; if you can help it!"

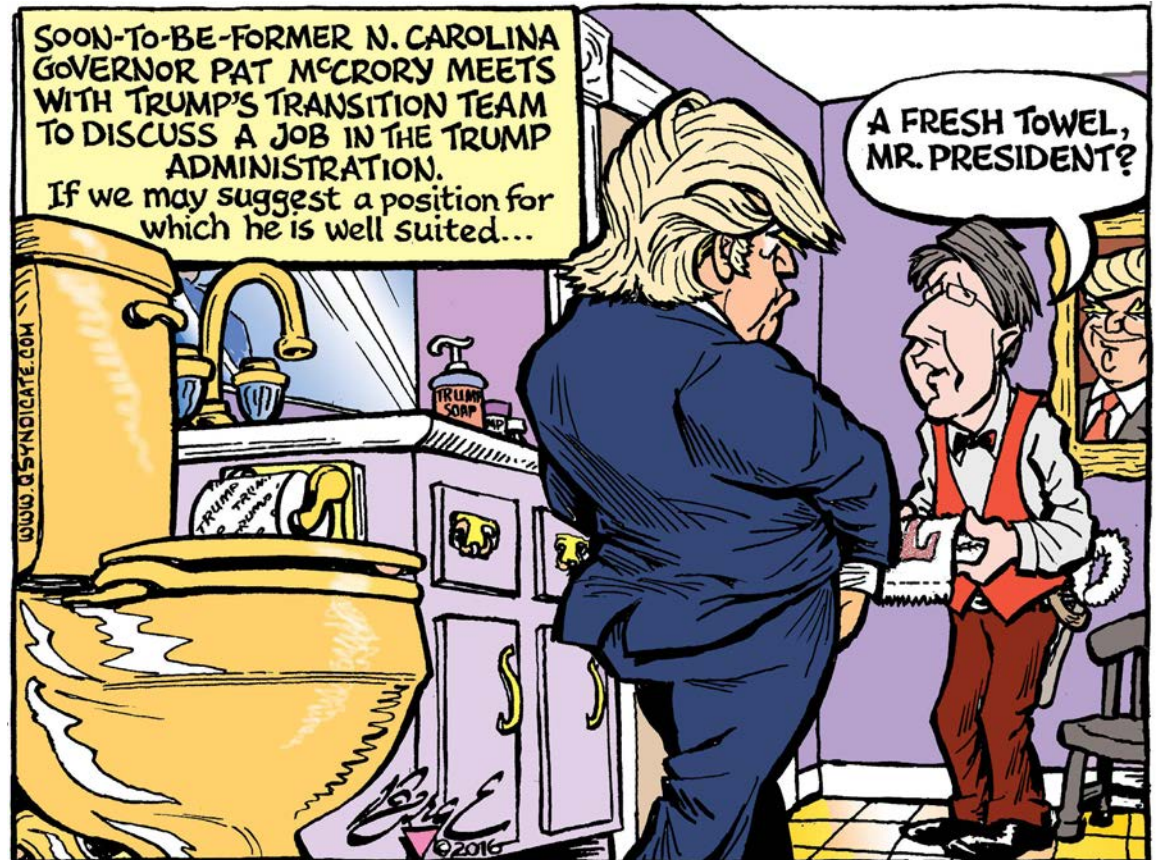
Standing at age 18 in the heart of Detroit's downtown gay, four bars community, if some all-knowing Wizard of Osmosis told me there would someday be LGBT organizations, newspapers, churches, same-sex marriages, gay/lesbian children adoptions, big name celebrities willing to be open about who they really are, I would have said, Man, you've got to be crazy! That's really weird.

Also, by the way, if someone warned, "In your lifetime thousands upon thousands of gay men will die of a devastating, scary virus. Be prepared!" I'd shrug, "Yeah, sure, Doc. You've got to be kidding. That's too far out. A genocidal plague, no way."

Looking back on my own gay life – the dozens and dozens of wonderful, creative LGBT friends I have been privileged to know, work with, study and learn from, love and be intimate with – the art and writing creativity my orientation has engendered – today I consider myself most fortunate, truly blessed.

If, indeed, being gay were a choice to be made rather than a natural biological orientation, I wouldn't hesitate to make that choice. I say that with pride, experience, and – given these trying political times – determined, on-going, fight-back, up yours Donald slash Pence conviction!

Charles@pridesource.com



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

Transmissions

Doing It for Ourselves

Our President-elect is stacking the deck against us. This in spite of his claims that he would be a supporter of LGBTQ rights, and a past history of the same.

But it is more likely that the vice president-elect is the power behind this throne, and he has a long history of anti-LGBTQ actions, including taking money earmarked for HIV treatment and using it instead to fund life-destroying "conversion therapies."

The new cabinet includes Sen. Jeff Sessions, who wanted to see same-sex marriage barred under the Constitution and preferred that hate crime bills not include LGBTQ people.

In the Department of Education, it's GOP donor Betsy DeVos, who like Pence is an advocate for conversion therapy. I doubt we'll see the DoE do much to support trans students from here on out.

And, a possibility in the Department of Homeland Security is Milwaukee Sheriff David Clarke. There is plenty one can say about him, but I'll just leave this one quote from Clarke on his podcast "The People's Sheriff" in June to make his views on people like me

as clear as the finest crystal:

"Folks, more evidence that transgender persons suffer from mental disorders more than physiological disorders. Too often in this assault on the First Amendment, and this very totalitarian attitude from the left that any freakish lifestyle, any marginal lifestyle, is now considered part of the norm, and they're shoving it down our throats. So if you're not careful when you engage in this conversation, they'll look for the trap, and they'll catch you saying something that's clumsy or not well articulated, and then they'll just attack you -- they'll attack you with it. 'Transgender phobic' and all this other nonsense."

I don't consider myself a pessimist, but I cannot feel a sense of creeping dread from these and other cabinet choices. That dread, I should note, goes far beyond just things transgender, as I look at some of the most virulent racism, xenophobia and outright fascism that I've seen in all my years now moving into 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. I truly worry just how bad things will get, and if we'll survive long enough to steer this ship to calmer waters.

What's more, I've had to hear my so-called allies on the left hand-wringing about trans rights, and trying

See next page

► Transmissions

Continued from p. 12

to pin their failure to beat Donald J. Trump on myself and other transgender people. I refuse to be their scapegoat, but I know they'll nevertheless be lukewarm at best when it comes to defending trans rights over the next few years.

So I'm sure you can understand that I cannot help but envision all or most of the trans rights gains we have seen over the last eight years crushed by this incoming administration in one way or another.

With this in mind, I am now in the midst of getting my paperwork together for my passport. While I've been perfectly willing to skate along with little more than a driver's license and Social Security card declaring my correct gender -- and only the former being fully updated with the correct gender marker -- this administration has forced my hand to get my paperwork in order as soon as I can.

Passports are one of many things that were improved during the Obama Administration, making it far easier to update the gender marker. As it stands now, one can get a full 10-year passport with appropriate certification from a physician stating that one has had appropriate treatment for a gender transition. And while I am not planning any big trips in the immediate future, a passport still stands as a valuable identity document, and proof of your citizenship.

It's plenty possible that these rules will be wiped away once the president-elect and his cabinet begin their reign.

I mentioned that I am not a pessimist, even though I am rushing around to get a passport in order and secure myself against some potentially dark years ahead. I'll tell you why, too: even though we face some difficult times, I am seeing our community step up.

Not only our various trans and LGBT organizations seemingly coming out of an eight-year hibernation -- or at least a two-year hiatus since the Obergefell v. Hodges decision that legalized same-sex marriage -- but a generation of activists are stepping back up to the plate, joined by more than a few new faces. We see the dangers and are preparing to push back as

I don't consider myself a pessimist, but I cannot feel a sense of creeping dread from these and other cabinet choices. That dread, I should note, goes far beyond just things transgender, as I look at some of the most virulent racism, xenophobia and outright fascism that I've seen in all my years now moving into 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. I truly worry just how bad things will get, and if we'll survive long enough to steer this ship to calmer waters.

much as we can. As a generation before me said: we're not going back into the closet.

What's more, there has been a new movement that has formed just days after the election, and it is where I turned for advice on securing my passport. Started as a hashtag on Twitter, #translawhelp has since evolved into translawhelp.org, and serves as an online database of legal resources for the United States trans community. More than this, they have been helping transgender people in need to cover the costs of these documents, and have worked to put trans people in touch with lawyers and others willing to help out on an urgent basis.

I hope that this is the start of something bigger, and we see a future of solid advocacy for the trans community. I also would like to think that the spirit of community Trans Law Help and others are engendering will help the trans community become stronger, and more resilient, during the years to come.

Perhaps, if we cannot look to the Trump administration or a wishy-washy Democratic party, we shall be able to help ourselves.

Gwen Smith will have to handle her other paperwork, too. You can find her at www.gwensmith.com.

Creep of the Week

Brian Brown

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI



NOM President Brian Brown can't wait to get the anti-gay engine restarted. In fact, Brown has such a raging boner for hurting LGBTQ people that he's taking his fight global.

They're baaaaaack. The National Organization for Marriage, that is. Though, they never really went anywhere. They were just stuck in place for awhile during the Obama administration. But now that the United States has elected a bigoted rage-baby to be our next prez, NOM President Brian Brown can't wait to get the anti-gay engine restarted.

In fact, Brown has such a raging boner for hurting LGBTQ people that he's taking his fight global.

Now, I know what you're going to say: "But Trump vowed to protect LGBTQ people from hateful foreign ideologies! He said it himself at the Republican National Convention." 'Tis true! But he also said he'd jail Hillary Clinton and now he says, "We don't care." So I don't know, maybe a lot of the things he says are, what's the word for it? Oh yeah, craven bullshit lies.

So, yeah, I don't expect to see Trump don a rainbow cape and come to the rescue of LGBTQ people any time soon.

Anyway, back to Brown who announced on International Human Rights Day (because of course) the formation of the International Organization for the Family (IOF). According to Brown, IOF is "a coalition of allies to take the worldwide lead in fighting for marriage, religious liberty, parental rights, the truth of gender and other issues central to the pro-family movement." In other words, it's a coming together of smaller hate groups across the globe to form one big hate group. Like Voltron, only instead of fighting evil space robots he fights lesbian moms and gay newlyweds and transgender people trying to pee in privacy instead.

"With the advent of IOF," Brown wrote in a message on NOM's blog, "NOM will be able to focus all our efforts here in America, where we have tremendous opportunities to reshape the

culture and legal climate for marriage. We look forward to working with President-elect Trump, the Congress and our allies in Washington and the states to pursue a wide ranging agenda on behalf of our issues."

Now, I don't know if Trump will actually work with NOM to dismantle LGBTQ rights because I'm not sure Trump cares that much (Note: not giving a shit is not the same thing as being pro-LGBTQ no matter how many times he spits that acronym into a microphone). But it really doesn't matter. Congress is full of NOM's friends as are many state governments. We will no doubt see a sustained effort to erode LGBTQ gains. Most likely transgender and genderqueer people will be hurt the most as "the bathroom wars" continue to rage. Whether you're the butchest gay man or the most lipstick of lesbians, this is your fight, too.

And make no mistake, people will die. If not here in the U.S. then certainly in countries where being LGBTQ is already criminalized and punishable by prison or death. By stoking the flames of hate across the globe IOF is just asking for blood on their hands.

You may recall the 2014 "kill the gays" bill introduced in Uganda, inspired in part by anti-gay American evangelicals who visited the country and lectured on the evils of homosexuality. The death penalty portion of the bill was changed to life in prison, by the way, which is hardly an improvement. This is but one example of what IOF will likely spur under Brown's leadership.

LGBTQ people and our allies must remain vigilant. What Brown and his anti-gay ilk aren't counting on is that their fight to take away our rights will be much harder than their fight against us ever gaining them in the first place. Be the resistance you want to see.

Michigan Non Profit Resource

Have You Experienced Discrimination?

If you or someone you know has experienced discrimination, intimidation, harassment or violence because of sexual orientation, gender expression or gender identity,

contact Equality Michigan's Department of Victim Services at :

report@equalitymi.org or call 1-866-962-1147

Equality Michigan is working with state legislators to update the Ethnic Intimidation Act to include proper protections for the gay and transgender community.

To get involved in the movement for better hate crimes law, contact policy@equalitymi.org.

Hundreds more resources can be found at
www.PrideSource.com

From 'Oops' to DOE Chief, Rick Perry is Pick for Energy

(AP) – Former Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who famously forgot the Energy Department was one of the agencies he pledged to eliminate, is President-elect Donald Trump's choice to become energy secretary, two people with knowledge of the decision say.

Perry is likely to shift the department away from renewable energy and toward oil and other fossil fuels that he championed as Texas governor.

Perry, 66, left office in January 2015 after a record 14 years as governor and then launched his second ill-fated bid for the Republican presidential nomination.

He was a harsh critic of Trump, even calling the billionaire businessman a “cancer to conservatism,” but Perry lasted only three months in the race for the 2016 nomination before dropping out.

Perry later endorsed the Republican nominee and said he'd be willing to work in a Trump administration.

In his first presidential run, Perry flamed out after a series of missteps.

The best-remembered one came during a presidential debate in 2011 when he couldn't remember, despite repeated attempts, the third of three federal agencies he had promised to eliminate if elected. He finally muttered “Oops.”

The one he forgot was, ironically, the Energy Department. The two others were Commerce and Education.

Perry has drawn criticism from some environmental activists because he is on the board of Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, the company trying to build a 1,200-mile Dakota Access pipeline that would carry crude oil from North Dakota to Illinois. The pipeline has sparked protests that have made national headlines.

Perry also serves on the board of another energy firm, Sunoco Logistics Partners.

He has been a vocal skeptic on climate change since before his first run for the White House. During his governorship, though, Texas became a major producer of wind powered-energy.

Perry for years used economic incentive funds controlled by his office to offer tens of billions of dollars to wind producers and other companies promoting alternative energy.

This year, Perry joined the board of a stem cell company where he underwent experimental back surgery before running for president in 2011.

Perry had previously blamed chronic back pain for his “oops” moment and other gaffes that sunk his once-promising campaign, hinting that the procedure carried out by the Houston-based biotechnology company Celltex Therapeutics didn't help him overcome it.

But the former governor told The Associated Press this fall, after joining the company board, that his health was good and he was a big believer in adult stem cell therapy.

Perry recently demonstrated his fitness with a brief appearance on this season's “Dancing with the Stars.” He was the second contestant eliminated.

Report: LGBT Students Still Face Discrimination at School

BY REGINA GARCIA CANO

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) – Many public schools are still hostile environments for LGBT students, an international human rights organization concluded in a report released Dec. 7.

The lengthy report from Human Rights Watch was based on interviews primarily with current and former high school students, parents, administrators and teachers in Alabama, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas and Utah. It documented several challenges lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender students face, including in-person and online bullying, limits on LGBT student groups, exclusion of some topics from curricula and discrimination by classmates and school personnel.

“In every state we visited, we heard stories of students who were insulted, cyber-bullied or attacked, and teachers who allowed discrimination and harassment because they see it as normal behavior,” said Ryan Thoreson, a fellow in the nonprofit's LGBT Rights Program.

Thoreson said the five states provided a regionally representative and legally diverse sample.

Thirty-one states, including the five in the report, have not enacted laws to specifically protect against bullying on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, according to the report. While some districts and schools in Alabama, Pennsylvania, Texas and Utah have worked on comprehensive bullying policies, administrators in South Dakota cannot because of a state law that prohibits school districts from naming any protected classes of students in such policies.

“This makes it much more difficult for

teachers to know how to intervene when they see that bullying happening, (and) for students to know that's off-limits, that's not OK,” Thoreson said. “Only South Dakota and Missouri have laws ... that prohibit school districts from putting their own protections.”

The report includes policy recommendations at the state level to make schools more inclusive, but the proposals will almost certainly face resistance from Republican-controlled legislatures in states like Texas and South Dakota, which have approved measures that allow discrimination against transgender students.

“I do not accept the bifurcation of gender and sex,” said Jim Bolin, a Republican state representative in South Dakota who worked as a teacher for 32 years and voted in favor of a failed bill to require transgender students to use bathrooms corresponding to their sex at birth. “The notion that gender is different than sex I believe that's a false belief.”

One of the report's legislative recommendations calls for sexual education “that is medically and scientifically accurate, is inclusive of LGBT youth, and covers same-sex activity on equal footing with other sexual activity.” Proposals to state and federal departments of education, school administrators and Congress are also included.

Human Rights Watch interviewed almost 360 current and former students from rural and urban districts, as well as more than 140 parents, teachers and administrators.

The students, whose names were changed for their protection, offered stories of physical violence, verbal harassment,

cyberbullying and exclusion from events, classes and extracurricular activities. In many cases, they said, teachers did not intervene and sometimes participated in the harassment.

“My biology teacher my freshman year would bring in kids who were wearing short shorts or weird sweaters and say, ‘You'd better take that off, you're going to look gay,’” a 16-year-old bisexual girl in Alabama said, according to the report. “But she'd say it in front of the whole class.”

The organization also found school policies and practices have made teachers fearful of negative consequences for identifying themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender or for supporting LGBT students.

“There are certainly conservative leaders who have stood up for LGBT students, and our hope is that as we look at this from a purely pragmatic point of view, keeping LGBT kids safe, and keeping all students safe, shouldn't be a partisan issue,” Thoreson said.

South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard vetoed the bill supported by Bolin earlier this year, but supporters of the measure are hoping to get it before voters in 2018. It's likely to be reintroduced during the 2017 session.

Some Republican lawmakers in Texas – a state that's already led a lawsuit resulting in the temporarily blocking President Barack Obama's directive allowing transgender students to use the public school bathrooms of their choice – are backing proposals banning transgender people from doing the same in all Texas bathrooms.

ACLU want Obama to Commute Sentence for Chelsea Manning

LEAVENWORTH, Kan. (AP) – The American Civil Liberties Union and gay-rights groups are lobbying President Barack Obama to commute the prison sentence of a transgender soldier who leaked classified government and military documents.

The ACLU said the letter Monday signed by more than a dozen civil rights

groups considers Chelsea Manning's 35-year sentence unprecedented.

Attorneys on behalf of Manning, imprisoned at Kansas' Fort Leavenworth, made a similar pitch last month for commutation.

Manning was arrested in 2010 and convicted in 2013 in military court of charges related to her leaking of more

than 700,000 secret military and State Department documents to WikiLeaks. At that time she was known as Bradley Manning.

She later filed a transgender prisoner rights lawsuit and has tried to commit suicide at least twice, citing her behind-bars treatment.

Video Company Challenges Gay Marriage Law

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) - The owners of a video company have filed a legal challenge to Minnesota's gay marriage law because they want to shoot weddings for heterosexual couples only.

Carl and Angel Larsen said they will be punished for refusing wedding services to same-sex couples. The St. Cloud couple, who owns Telescope Media Group, filed a lawsuit against the state's human rights commission and attorney general.

The couple's federal lawsuit has the backing of the Alliance Defending Freedom, a Christian legal nonprofit organization, the Star Tribune reported.

The Larsens' lawsuit doesn't respond to specific allegations, but they are hoping to prevent future penalties.

While Minnesota's law doesn't compel religious organizations to perform same-sex marriages, it does ban businesses from denying wedding services, such as cake decorating, wedding planning or other commercial services.

State officials can deploy "testers" to investigate discrimination, and business owners who are determined liable can be found guilty of a misdemeanor offense punishable by fines and up to 90 days in jail.

Arkansas Court Upholds Gay Marriage Birth Certificate Law

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) - Arkansas' highest court on Dec. 8 threw out a judge's ruling that could have allowed all married same-sex couples to get the names of both spouses on their children's birth certificates without a court order, saying it doesn't violate equal protection "to acknowledge basic biological truths."

The state Supreme Court also issued a rare admonishment to Pulaski County Circuit Judge Tim Fox, saying he made "inappropriate remarks" in his ruling that struck down the birth certificate law. Fox had cited the U.S. Supreme Court's decision legalizing gay marriage in his ruling last year that said married same-sex couples should have both names listed on their children's birth certificates, just as heterosexual married couples do, without requiring a court order.

In the state Supreme Court's decision, the justices sided with the state attorney general's office, saying Arkansas has a vested interest in listing biological parents on birth certificates.

"What is before this court is a narrow issue of whether the birth-certificate statutes as written deny the appellees due process," Justice Josephine Linker Hart wrote in the court's majority opinion. "...In the situation involving the female spouse of a biological mother, the female spouse does not have the same biological nexus to the child that the biological mother or the biological father has. It does not violate equal protection to acknowledge basic biological truths."

Cheryl Maples, who sued on behalf of three same-sex couples, said she hasn't decided yet

Jeremy Tedesco, senior counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom, said "any reasonable person" with the possibility of facing such punishments would follow in the Larsens' footsteps.

Human Rights Commissioner Kevin Lindsey said the lawsuit is part of a pattern of litigation nationwide aimed at eroding the rights of the LGBTQ community.

In agreement was Teresa Nelson, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota, who said the lawsuit would open "the door to a vast array of discrimination if the court sides with the plaintiffs."

Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys also represent a group of parents and students from Virginia, Minnesota, in a federal lawsuit that seeks to bar high school transgender students from using locker rooms and restrooms consistent with their gender identity.

This week a federal judge suspended proceedings in the case until the U.S. Supreme Court issues an opinion or resolves a similar case being argued in Washington.

Minnesota's same-sex marriage law was enacted in 2013. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2015 that the fundamental right to marriage is guaranteed to all.

whether to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. The three couples who sued were allowed to amend their children's birth certificates last year under a ruling issued by Fox.

"There's no requirement that DNA be given or that there be a biological relationship to a child to get on a birth certificate for a father, for the non-birth parent," she said. "All you have to do is legitimize the child and you're entitled, if you're heterosexual. This is wrong."

Judd Deere, a spokesman for Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge, said the state is "gratified" by the court's decision.

"If any changes are appropriate it is the job of legislators to do so, not the circuit court," he said.

Associate Justice Paul Danielson dissented and Justice Rhonda Wood concurred in part and dissented in part.

"There can be no reasonable dispute that the inclusion of a parent's name on a child's birth certificate is a benefit associated with and flowing from marriage," Danielson wrote, adding that the U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing gay marriage "requires that this benefit be accorded to same-sex spouses and opposite-sex spouses with equal force."

The birth certificate issue was the first major case surrounding gay marriage for the Arkansas court since an unusually public split among justices last year over its handling of a lawsuit over Arkansas' same-sex marriage ban. The court dismissed the gay marriage lawsuit hours after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationwide.

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Photo: Scott Garfield

GOOD THINGS COME
TO THOSE WHO ARE

MEGAN MULLALLY

'Will & Grace' Star on Real-Life Lesbian Advances, James Franco's Pubes & Karen Walker's Return

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Tip one back for Megan Mullally, who's making a move to the big screen in "Why Him?" after a drove of indie roles, including gay-affirming mom Mrs. Van Camp in 2013's "G.B.F.," and a variety of TV stints. But when it comes to the small screen, it's the 58-year-old actress's eight-year role on the groundbreaking late '90s NBC sitcom "Will & Grace," as quippy, martini-swigging socialite Karen Walker, that changed Mullally's life as much as it changed ours.

So, honey, sit back and catch up on all things Mullally. She has a lot to say about that time a female coworker attempted to seduce her, crushing on "the gayest person in the world," witnessing "100 percent" of James Franco's butt crack and the likelihood of a "Will & Grace" reboot (spoiler alert: it's very, very likely).

There are a lot of gays who'd like to chat with you, so I feel very lucky.

I love it. You can say, "Oh my god, she was really boring."

"Why Him?" centers on the awkward situation of bringing home someone your parents are likely to dislike. Have you ever brought a controversial boyfriend home to your parents?

My first boyfriend in college, Brad. My father was an arch-conservative and Brad subscribed to the communist newspaper, so that was not cute. (Laughs) My father wasn't too thrilled about Brad.

You're saying he had a "why him?" moment?

Yeah... and then some.

Having you and James Franco in a movie together is basically a match made in gay

heaven. He has quite the gay resume.

That's funny. I never thought about that! But yeah, totally.

I guess you didn't have a chance to compare your queer credentials.

No, but I'm familiar with straight James, gay James, all of that. I mean, I know him. We got along very well, James and I. Maybe there was something in the air... the gays brought us together.

As someone I consider to be a guru of all things gay, were you able to determine what it is about James that appeals to the LGBT community?

I think because he kind of flirts with them. (Laughs) I mean, he's very cute. That doesn't hurt.

And in the movie, shirtless.

He's also pantsless! His butt crack was 100

percent showing – and, like, a little bit of pubes.

What was it like shooting those scenes?

Um, it wasn't horrible. I was actually a little embarrassed when I walked on the set the first time and was like, "Oh my. Wow. OK." (Sings Bing Crosby) "Getting to know youuuuuu." So yeah, that happened.

You were raised in Oklahoma City. Before you became immersed in the gay community through living in West Hollywood and starring on "Will & Grace," what was your introduction to it?

Oh, that's funny. A couple of things: I did my first summer stock musical when I was 12. I also did another summer stock when I was 14, and I had the biggest crush on this guy named Tommy who was in the ensemble and played a small part. He was the cutest blonde boy in the world, and I just could not

understand why he didn't really pay very much attention to me. (Laughs) We were really good friends, always hanging out. But I was very naïve. Later I was like, "Ohh, wait. Totally the gayest person in the world."

Around that same era, there was a woman who was also somehow involved in this summer stock. She was gay, and I used to go to her apartment and she would get me high. I remember one time I fell out of the chair, I got so high. I, like, hobbled over out of the chair, and she thought it was hilarious. So yeah, she was gay and I thought, "Gosh, she really likes me," and it dawned on me that she probably thought I was pretty cute, but she never made a pass at me.

Even later, when I was 20 or 21, I was doing this musical in Chicago. (Screenplay writer) Pat Resnick wrote the book to the musical, and we were doing it in Woodstock before we moved it into downtown Chicago. There was one night she and the other writers in the musical were all running house together and we were having a party. They said, "Pat wants to talk to you – she's upstairs." I go upstairs, and I was just wandering down the hall and there's this open doorway, and there was nothing in the room but a mattress on the floor and a red lightbulb, and the light is on. So it's a red light, and she's laying on the mattress, and she wasn't, you know, a knock-down, drag-down beauty or anything like that. She literally patted the mattress and was like, "Sit down." She said, "Megan, have you ever kissed a woman before?" And I was like, "No." And she said, "Do you want to?" And I said, "Nooo."

But you have kissed a woman before, right?

I have. And I did like it. Maybe she tried to or something happened or I broke away. She just wasn't the one for me. (Laughs) Later, when it happened, I thought it was quite cute. Different situation, different girl. Better.

There's no denying the influence of "Will & Grace" on generations of LGBT people. For you, what does it mean to hear stories from LGBT people who saw themselves being represented on a barrier-breaking TV show that cultivated visibility?

Words can't really describe what it means to me. All you really hope to do, if you're a performer and if you're not an asshole, if you're coming from a really legitimate, sincere place, is to have a positive impact. So, to have been a part of a show that actually not only helped people come out to their parents, or to come out period, or to not to feel like they were alone – much less in the larger view and maybe, possibly even contributing to an awareness and an acceptance that has resulted in all the strides that have been made, especially gay marriage. I'm not saying "Will & Grace" is responsible for gay marriage (laughs); I'm saying that maybe there was an element that helped in some way.

When accepting other roles, did you ever say

to yourself, "If it's not as good as Karen, I'm not taking it"?

Yeah, and it never is, but you have to work. I feel like I'm really lucky to have gotten a lot of the things that I've done since "Will & Grace." I have "Why Him?," but I also did four other indie movies this year that I really liked. Smaller parts. And just a lot of weird TV shows I've done: "Childrens Hospital" and "Party Down," and Gayle on "Bob's Burgers." Obviously, "Parks and Rec." That role was sort of tailor-made specifically for me, which was great and so fun to do. I mean, rarely is (a role) at the level of a character like Karen, although I think Tammy on "Parks and Rec" is one of those great characters, and Gayle on "Bob's Burgers" is a great character too. I mean, you don't always get an eight-year run at it, and that makes a big difference too.

How many roles came your way that were just like Karen?

I got offered a few, but obviously, I didn't take any of them. They were just a shadow of somebody trying to write something like that, but I never really took any of those parts. I've tried to pick things that I think are well written, basically, and hope that the people involved are really nice and good at their jobs.

In September, the "Will & Grace" cast reunited on-screen for the first time in 10 years for an election-themed episode that received more than six million views on YouTube. And then, recently, you tweeted a pic of yourself and fellow "Will & Grace" stars Sean Hayes, Eric McCormack and Debra Messing eating dessert. Is that what break looks like on the set of "Will & Grace" in 2016?

That was actually over at Sean Hayes' house, but, I mean... what are you asking me? (Laughs)

I'm asking you if the show is coming back and if you're working on new episodes.

Well, OK. All I can say is that there is a very good chance that that might happen. It's not happening right this second. I mean, we're not rehearsing or anything like that. But there is a very good chance that something is going to materialize.

My heart wants to jump out of my body right now.

I know. Mine too! But can't really talk about it or say anything, because you know how it is.

How might a "Will & Grace" revival reflect the strides we've made in the LGBT community since the show's original inception as well as the current political climate?

So speaking theoretically, in a completely made-up world where "Will & Grace" is

See Megan Mullally, page 18

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► **Megan Mullally**

Continued from p. 17

coming back to NBC for 10 episodes – just in that made-up world – it couldn’t be a better time. (Laughs) I mean, it couldn’t *possibly* be better timing. I think more so now than even when we started! And who would have ever – I mean, it’s heinous that it’s because Donald Trump is the president-elect. That’s just a crazy sentence that nobody would have ever thought they’d utter. But having said that, at the same time, that just gives us carte blanche.

I think the first rule of any show – and again, we’re speaking hypothetically – is that it be funny and entertaining. I mean, it’s comedy. If you’re doing a comedy, the first rule is that there be good comedy in that comedy show, so that’s the jumping off point. Then, from there – the show was always very topical. For eight seasons, extremely topical – so much so that (director) Jim Burrows was always telling the writers, “Honey, it’s crazy topical – it’s not gonna stand the test of time.” But I just think that’s what the show is. It’s a very topical, current show. We had a gay marriage on “Will & Grace” in 2000/2001. And I was like, gay marriage?! I mean, it was just really early.

Are you saying it was impossible to even think of the concept of gay marriage at the time?

I was like, “Oh my god, I can’t believe it. You’re having two men get married to each other – that is such a great idea.” Because it was just not happening! It wasn’t something! It wasn’t like every weekend, “Oh no, I’m sorry, I have another gay marriage to go to this weekend.” (Laughs) People just weren’t getting gay-married as much at that point. And the whole thrust of that episode was that they were gonna have a wedding even though it wasn’t recognized by any officiant. There wasn’t any paperwork involved. They were gonna get married and honor their relationship and celebrate their love for each

other. It was such a beautiful episode.

People watching it must’ve been like, “Huh? Two gay people are having a wedding?” It was early! And the thing is, we had a gay marriage on the show, but it still has to be funny, and so that was one of the episodes where Jack and Karen have one of those famous slap fights. There was still a lot of funny stuff going on.

You were 40 years old when you played Karen on “Will & Grace.” Considering the amount of flak Hollywood gets for being ageist, what does fame feel like in your 40s, when most actresses would say they’d least expect it?

Oh yeah, well, I don’t know because I think I’m a little anomalous in that I’ve always been a late bloomer in everything. I didn’t meet my husband (Nick Offerman) till I was 41, and I didn’t have that kind of career success till I was about that same age: 40, 41. A lot of things have come to me late in life, and it even applies to “Why Him?” I have gotten an actual part in a (major, big-screen) movie at the tender young age of 57! It’s all happening so fast! Hope I don’t get into drugs. (Laughs)

It’s just funny: I’ve always been a late bloomer, so that gives me eternal optimism, so I never feel like, “Oh, I’m gettin’ older; I guess everything is gonna stop.” I’m the opposite: “Oh, I’m just getting started.” I really feel like that, and also, I don’t really feel very much like a grown up, which is kind of a problem. (Laughs)

I’m really starting to see the similarities between you and Karen Walker.

(Laughs) That’s the thing that I really love about Karen – she has the ability to be very childlike and have a lot of joy. I think she’s a big optimist too, quite frankly.

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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The Frivolist

6 Tricks to Giving Your Partner the Perfect Gift

BY MIKEY ROX

Choosing the perfect gift for your significant other can be stressful – especially if it's your first holiday together. But there are ways you can sneak a peek at your partner's wish list – without outright asking for it – if you engage in a few spy tactics. Consider these six tinselled gift-giving tricks as Santa's little sleuth to surprise your better half this season.

1. Mine Their Social Media For Data

Social media profiles are full of interesting information about an individual – but you already know that, stalker. Use your data-mining skills for treasure hunts that don't include shirtless summer pics to find out what your babe wants under the tree this year. Perhaps they've shared an item on their Facebook page, tweeted a link, or liked an Instagram photo of something that caught their eye. Browse the businesses they like, and keep an eye on the comments they make on those pages. A little attention to Internet detail will go a long way in unearthing all the things that strike your S.O.'s fancy.

2. Ask Their Friends And Family

I started dating someone new this year, and even though I'm fairly astute in gathering clues to what he'd like for Christmas, I also asked his mother and

brother to gain a more comprehensive perspective. If it's not too awkward, you should reach out to some of your partner's family members too. You may come up with ideas you haven't thought of yet, and your thoughtfulness toward your mutual loved one will be recognized by the family early on, which will help you build a rapport much quicker and easier in the New Year.

3. Be a Great Observer

Whether you know it or not, your partner has been dropping clues for what he or she would like as a gift since shortly after you started dating. You've had countless conversation on your likes and dislikes throughout your relationship, you've talked about childhood memories and holidays past, and you've each pointed out objects and ideas that pique your interest while on vacation or shopping or just walking around town. Take these collective experiences and put the pieces together to come up with a gift that's not only special and memorable but also shows that you listen – which, in all likelihood, will be the best present of all.

4. Choose Memories Over Material Goods

If you're having a hard time thinking of a tangible *thing* to buy, skip the material object all together. Rather, opt for an experience gift – like a quick getaway or an exciting activity – which you two can do together. Not only will

you make a lasting memory out of the experience, you'll prevent one more thing from collecting dust in his or her house before eventually ending up in the attic or – worse – a landfill.

5. Consider Their Needs vs. Wants

We all *want* plenty of things, but are they necessities? If your partner needs things – like, say, a new interview suit or tires for their car – prioritize these over frivolous gifts that serve no real purpose. Sure, these gifts aren't glamorous or even exciting, but your partner will be thankful that they don't have to spring for them – and if they're a decent person in general, they'll recognize that your love for them runs deeper than that video game console.

6. Stay In Sync

Couples who are in sync don't have much problem thinking of gifts to give one another. Moreover, couples who are in sync make their own rules at the holidays by forgoing traditional gift-giving tactics by finding interesting ways to show their love and affection. Make ornaments for one another, bid on that coveted childhood wish-list item that they never got, or make by hand (and heart) a piece of art that they'll hang and think of you often. When you're on the same page romantically, there won't be any disappointment when it's time to unwrap all the goodies. It's the thought that counts, after all, and couples recognize that above all else.



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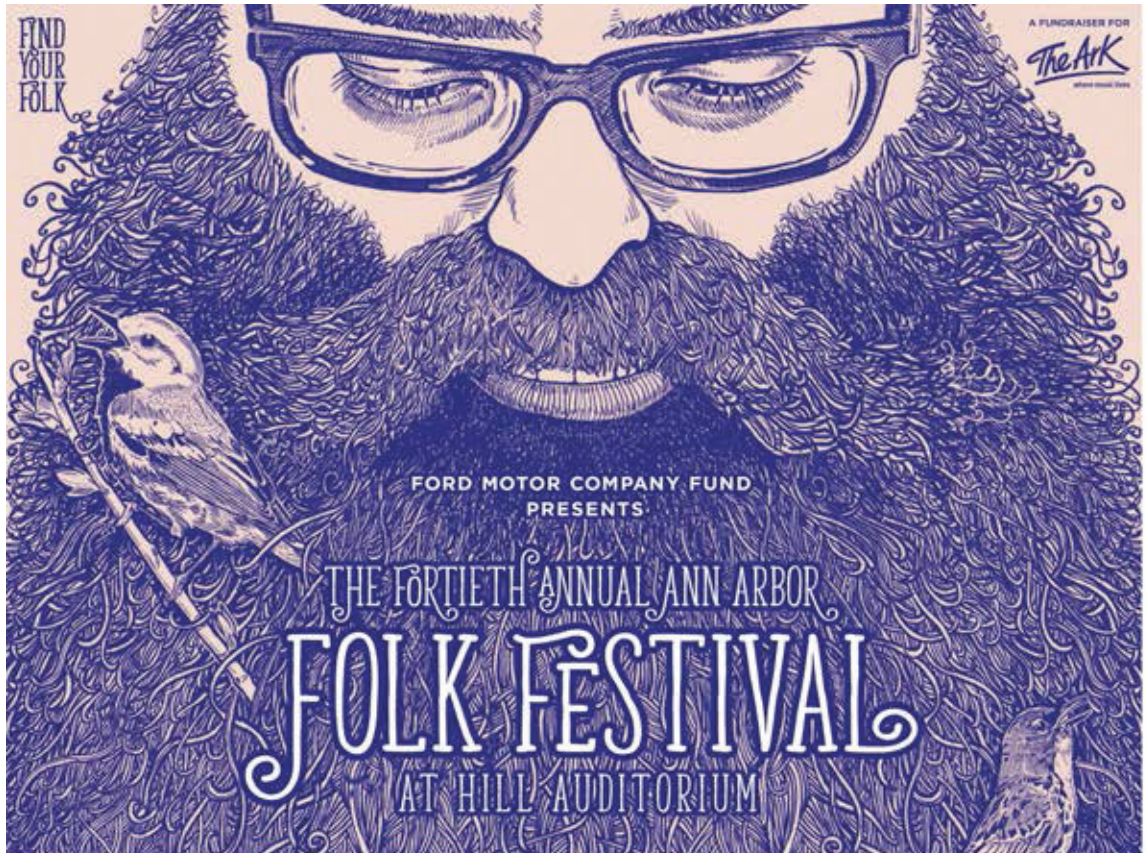
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Happenings

Editor's Pick



An Egg, Some Bugs and a Love Story

Cirque du Soleil returns to Detroit with OVO, its newest touring show in arenas. The production will be presented Dec. 22-25 for six performances only, as part of a global tour in arenas around North America and locally part of the Farewell Season at the Joe Louis Arena at 19 Steve Yzerman Drive. OVO, meaning "egg" in Portuguese, is a headlong rush into a colorful ecosystem teeming with life, where insects work, eat, crawl, flutter, play, fight and look for love in a non-stop riot of energy and movement. Tickets for the show

featured at various times start at \$74 and can be purchased online at www.olympiaentertainment.com. Stay tuned to BTL for a conversation with OVO's Artistic Director Marjon Van Grunsven in the 12/22 issue.

OUTINGS

Thursday, Dec. 15

45+ Club Holiday Party for LGBT Adults 12 p.m. No charge for this event. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 2483987105. lreyes@goaffirmations.org www.goaffirmations.org

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

Friday, Dec. 16

Discussion on depression during winter season 7:30 p.m. Free. Registration required. Mark McMillan, LLMSW, 25600 Woodward Avenue, Suite 215, **Royal Oak**. 248-399-7447. OfficeMgr@crsh.com www.crsh.com/workshops/Depression-and-the-Winter-Season

Saturday, Dec. 17

LGBTQ Self Defense Class 2 p.m. Please RSVP. Class is free, but spots are limited. KGLRC, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. contact@kgllrc.org

Sunday, Dec. 18

PFLAG Ann Arbor 2 p.m. Ann Arbor meeting for Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Free to attend. PFLAG Ann Arbor, 306 N Division St., **Ann Arbor**. 724-741-0659. info@pflagaa.org pflagaa.org

Concert of Holiday Reflection and Celebration 3 p.m. Support Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan. Suggested donation of \$5 or five canned or boxed goods. Please no glass items. Shift Ensemble Detroit, 12935 W. 11 Mile Rd., **Huntington Woods**. shiftensembledetroit@gmail.com www.facebook.com/sedetroit

The Ringwald Sings: Annie in Concert 7 p.m. Tickets are Pay as You Go The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., **Ferndale**. 2485455545. www.theringwald.com

Home for the Holiday 13 Songwriter Showcase & Charity Drive 9 p.m. Annual songwriter showcase features six acoustic artists performing for a good cause! Donations benefit three local homeless charities. Performing is Audra Kubat, Emily Rose, Alison Lewis, Michelle Held, Mark Bolohan and Mike Galbraith. Static Network, 4300 Cadieux Road, **Detroit**. 313-882-8560. info@staticrecords.com www.Facebook.com/events/1481457142161108/

Tuesday, Dec. 20

Womyn's Winter Solstice Celebration 6:30 p.m. Bring unscented candle in a holder, a musical instrument, drum or noisemaker, a thought to cast off, a giveaway, a contribution for the potluck. Lesbian Connection, 306 Clinton St., **Lansing**. 517-256-6543.

Wednesday, Dec. 21

SAGE Metro Detroit Board Meeting 9:30 a.m. SAGE Metro Detroit, 4750 Woodward Ave, **Detroit**. info@sagemetrodetroit.org. <https://sagemetrodetroit.org/>

Thursday, Dec. 22

LGBT Youth Meeting 6 p.m. Meets every Thursday KGLRC, 629 Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-4234. michael@kgllrc.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

LGBTQ Book Club 7 p.m. Meets the 3rd and 4th Thursday of the month. Currently reading "Always Have, Always Will" (Queer as Folk). Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Rd., **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. redbellynegal90@gmail.com www.goaffirmations.org

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

Shen Yun 2017 7:30 p.m. Shen

Yun, acrobatics with orchestra music, consists of 20 pieces depicting 5,000 years of life. Starring Cate Blanchet as narrator. Tickers \$80-\$160. Michigan Falun Dafa Asso., 1526 Broadway., **Detroit**. 888-974-3698. info@ticketingbox.com <http://www.shenyun.com/detroit>

Friday, Dec. 23

Holiday Party 6 p.m. Potluck Transgender Michigan, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 2483987105. www.transgendermichigan.org

Saturday, Dec. 24

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

Smear Lipstick 3 p.m. A

discussion group for self identified feminine lesbian women to identify issues specific to them. The group also does a monthly community service project to increase their visibility in every community. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups

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

Monday, Dec. 26

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

Zumba with Josh 6:30 p.m. \$6 per class. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 2483987105. lreyes@goaffirmations.org www.goaffirmations.org

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

Tuesday, Dec. 27

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

See Happenings, page 27



Madonna, Kesha Get Emotional When Accepting Billboard Honors

BY MESFIN FEKADU

NEW YORK (AP)—The annual Billboard Women In Music event featured emotional and heartfelt speeches about the uphill battles women face in the music industry, including personal stories from top honoree Madonna and pop singer Kesha.

The Material Girl, named woman of the year Friday, was passionate as she spoke onstage in New York about being raped at knifepoint, battling critics, and being called words like “whore,” “witch” and “Satan” throughout her career.

“I remember feeling paralyzed. It took me a while to pull myself together and get on with my creative life – to get on with my life. I took comfort in the poetry of Maya Angelou, and the writings of James Baldwin, and in the music of Nina Simone. I remember wishing that I had a female peer that I could look to for support,” 58-year-old Madonna said at Pier 36, where the audience included fellow honoree Shania Twain, Nick Jonas, Anderson Cooper and dozens of music industry executives.

“People say that I’m so controversial, but I think the most controversial thing I have ever done is to stick around,” Madonna said at another point. “Michael is gone. Tupac is gone. Prince is gone. Whitney is gone. Amy Winehouse is gone. David Bowie is gone. But



I’m still standing.”

Cooper introduced Madonna, his friend, with touching words.

“For me as a gay teenager growing up, her music wasn’t just a soundtrack to my life, her music and her outspokenness, her willingness to stand up, her courage – it showed me as a teenager a way forward, a pathway,” he said.

The event also paid tribute to platinum-selling singer Kesha – who is currently in a legal battle with her former mentor and producer Dr. Luke – with its trailblazer award.

“It’s mind-blowing to be honored like this after the very public year I’ve had. I feel stuck,

and I feel sad. And quite frankly today I feel bloated,” she said, as the crowd laughed. “I didn’t really feel like standing up and getting an award – I didn’t feel worthy of that. But I knew I had to drag myself out of my bed, put on my boots and walk up here (today) and say thank you to you guys.”

The audience applauded loudly.

Then Kesha added in a serious tone: “Most importantly, do not let anyone else ever take your happiness. You are worth it, and thank you for reminding me that I’m worth it, too.”

Twain was given the icon award, while other honorees included country singer Maren

Morris and pop singers Halsey, Alessia Cara and Meghan Trainor, who didn’t attend the event because she is on vocal rest. Fifth Harmony sang in honor of the “All About That Bass” performer.

“It’s an honor – that’s the only thing that comes to mind,” said Grammy-nominated R&B singer Andra Day, who earned the powerhouse award. “It’s humbling. It’s fulfilling. I’m experiencing so much gratitude at the same time because these women are part of the reason that I’m even able to be here.”

The annual Billboard luncheon also honored 100 female music executives, including iTunes and Apple Music’s head of global consumer marketing, Bozoma Saint John, who was ranked No.1. Before she spoke, she received warm words from Lady Gaga via video.

Madonna’s successful year included her top-grossing Rebel Heart Tour, which sold more than one million tickets.

“To the doubters, the naysayers, to everyone who gave me hell and said I could not, that I would not, that I must not, your resistance made me stronger, made me push harder, made me the fighter that I am today, made me the woman that I am today. So thank you,” she said.

‘Moonlight,’ ‘La La Land’ Separate from Award Season Pack

BY JAKE COYLE

NEW YORK (AP)—In Hollywood’s early but rapidly solidifying awards season, two films – radically different in tone and tune – have separated themselves from the pack: “Moonlight” and “La La Land.”

“Moonlight,” Barry Jenkins’ lyrical coming-of-age tale, added to its already hefty haul on Sunday, taking best picture from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association. The group also gave best director to Jenkins, best supporting actor to Mahershala Ali and best cinematography to James Laxton.

Those three awards mirrored the picks last week by the LAFAA’s East Coast corollary, the New York Film Critics Circle. But the New York critics ultimately chose Damien Chazelle’s “La La Land” as the year’s best film, whereas the LA critics had “La La Land” – a colorful ode to the group’s hometown – as runner-up for best picture and best director.

Which film will have the edge in the coming weeks – when the more crucial industry groups begin ringing in with their awards – is an open question. “Moonlight,” which also triumphed at the Gotham Awards, is perhaps the year’s most critically celebrated film.



Across three chapters, it follows a boy growing up black, gay and poor in Miami.

But “La La Land,” starring Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling, is only just hitting theaters (it opens Friday). It has widely been seen as the best-picture front-runner since winning the audience award at the Toronto International Film Festival. While “Moonlight” is bracingly intimate, the song-and-dance “La La Land” is a starry, show-stopping crowd-pleaser.

“La La Land” is also likely to dominate in sheer number of nomination, thanks to its lead performances, high-level of craft and original songs. It was honored by the LA critics for the musical work of Justin Hurwitz, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul.

The only film that has rivaled either in the early awards is Kenneth Lonergan’s “Manchester by the Sea.” The National Board of Review bestowed its top award on the New

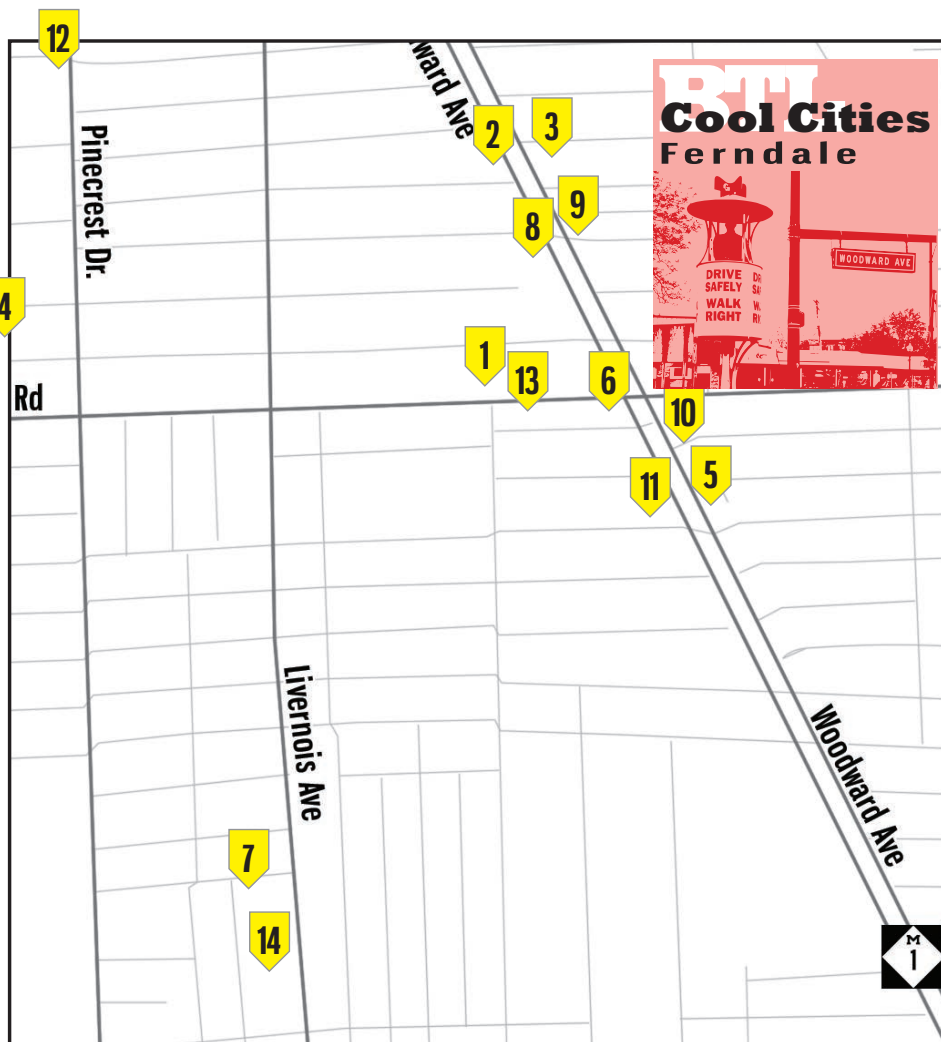
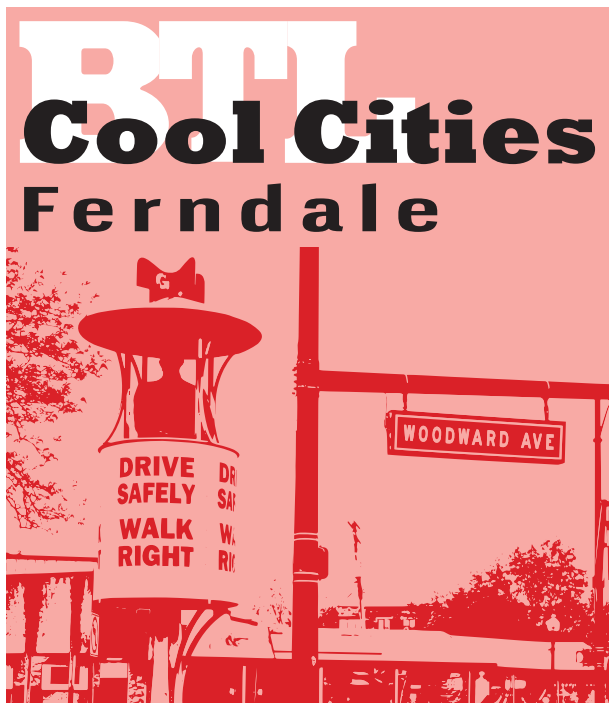
England drama, and the film’s star, Casey Affleck, has been the most common pick so far. (The LA critics, however, went with Adam Driver for Jim Jarmusch’s “Paterson.”)

And despite a crowded best-actress field, including Stone for “La La Land” and Natalie Portman for “Jackie,” the early favorite has been French actress Isabelle Huppert, star of both “Elle” and “Things to Come.” She was the choice of the LA and New York critics, as well as the Gotham Independent Film Awards.

Other films have been singled out elsewhere. The British Film Independent Awards on Sunday gave four awards to Andrea Arnold’s road-trip odyssey “American Honey,” including best film. (It also chose “Moonlight” as its best international independent film.)

Next week, the Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild nominations will be announced, likely giving the current favorites additional momentum.

But a lot could still change, but the Feb. 26 Oscars are increasingly coming into view. They finally have their host, in Jimmy Kimmel, announced Monday. And in “La La Land” and “Moonlight,” the night’s finalists might already be decided, too.



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‘The Santa Land Diaries’ and ‘Season’s Greetings’ 12/16–12/22

FERNDALE – Opening Dec. 16 at Ferndale’s Ringwald Theatre and playing through Dec. 22 is the return of the comedic duo of “The SantaLand Diaries” & “Season’s Greetings” from humorist David Sedaris and adapted for the stage by director Joe Mantello and featuring Joe Bailey and Joe Plambeck.

A young man (Joe Plambeck) arrives in New York with dreams of being a writer for “One Life to Live” and instead lands a part-time job as a Macy’s Christmas elf named Crumpet. From humiliating interview to elf indoctrination to scrapes with miscast Santas and obnoxious customers, the author’s real-life experiences, detailed in “The SantaLand Diaries,” are subversive and funny.

In “Season’s Greetings,” a determinedly



sunny Mrs. Jocelyn Dunbar (Joe Bailey) takes pen to paper recounting the joys and unexpected surprises of the past year, including the arrival of her husband’s illegitimate, gold-digging, Vietnamese

daughter on the doorstep. Twisted, tragic and hilarious in its lurid revelations, Season’s Greetings is an antidote to chipper holiday newsletters.

Tickets are \$10–\$20 and available online at www.theringwald.com. You may also purchase tickets at the box office, which opens 45 minutes before performances. Cash and Visa/Mastercard are accepted at the door. The Ringwald is located at 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale.

Call 248-545-5545 for more information.

Originally reported on
www.encoremichigan.com



Spike and Mike's Sick and Twisted Festival of Animation

The Magic Bag has been hosting the Sick and Twisted Festival since 1992, taking credit for unleashing Beavis and Butthead for the first time to unsuspecting Detroit-area audiences. Other festivals were highlighted by premiers of "The Spirit of Christmas" and "Frosty," early works by "South Park" creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker. In recent years, the Festival has introduced new episodes of "Happy Tree Friends," cutesy animals whose antics lead to often unspeakable violence. Spike Decker and Mike Gribble have been producing and showcasing new animation for almost three decades, a pretty big feat considering that Mike has been dead for nearly 20 years. The Sick and Twisted Festival plays to sold out houses regularly throughout North America. It comes to The Magic Bag in Ferndale on Dec. 22, 29-30. Tickets for the 18 and over event are \$7 in advance. Doors open at 8 p.m. For more information, visit www.themagicbag.com.

Calling All Sponsors for Ferndale Pride

Ferndale Pride is summer's first LGBTQAI festival in the state of Michigan. Free to the public, the event unites community and businesses for the biggest party of the year. Join the organization, this year, on June 3 to feel the love that is Ferndale Pride.

Work already is underway for Ferndale Pride 2017. As the kick-off event to summer, Pride is a great way to showcase a company as a sponsor and proud supporter of the diverse LGBTQAI community. There are new sponsorship options available, including sober spaces, main and DJ stage options, and more opportunities to participate in the children's area.

Pride's street fair is on West Nine Mile

Road, Allen Street and West Troy Street in downtown Ferndale. Pride also hosts parties and events for weeks leading up to the street fair that will bring thousands of participants to Ferndale. There is an information packet available online at www.ferndalepride.com to include sponsorship levels and pay online. Sponsorships allow businesses and organizations an opportunity to promote themselves as well as join Ferndale's biggest party of the year. For more information, contact Julia Music at julia@ferndalepride.com or 248-906-8683.

Support the Ferndale Blues and Music Festival

One of the longest running and most popular winter events in Southeast Michigan is the Ferndale Blues and Music Festival. There is an opportunity to become a part of this great nine-day event set for Jan. 27-Feb. 4. The 16th annual festival held in downtown Ferndale and neighboring communities showcases a large array of musicians and bands featuring music from blues and jazz to rock'n'roll at dozens of local venues. The volunteer-run festival began in 2002 and has gained in prestige and popularity each year. Expenses are kept low, and all proceeds go to the non-profit organization Ferndale Youth Assistance. Thousands of people gather at local bars, nightclubs, restaurants, coffeehouses, churches, schools and community centers. All contributions, donations, and sponsorships are tax deductible. The festival is supported by the city of Ferndale, the Ferndale DDA, Ferndale Area Chamber of Commerce, Ferndale Public Schools, elected officials, and numerous businesses, churches, and media outlets. To become a sponsor, volunteer or show support in other ways, please contact event co-chairs Alyssa Atkinson at 248-259-0058 or at atkinson.a.alyssa@gmail.com or Craig Covey at coveyc@oakgov.com or 248-721-6434. For more information, visit www.ferndalebluesfestival.org.

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Michigan Opera Theatre Concludes 2015-16 Season with Surplus, Milestones

DETROIT – Michigan Opera Theatre concluded its 2015-16 season on strong financial footing, while celebrating company milestones and a successful run of five operas and four dance productions. The company reported both a 23 percent increase in ticket revenue and a 26 percent increase in contributions from the year earlier, resulting in a surplus for the second year in a row.

“With a range of thought-provoking new productions and beloved classics and the tremendous support of our patrons, we are delighted to announce another successful season at Michigan Opera Theatre,” said MOT CEO Wayne Brown. “We are proud to consistently produce high quality operas and to also bring world-class dance presentations to Metro Detroit.”

The 2015-16 season was a landmark year for MOT, marking both the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Detroit Opera House and the launch of the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio young artists program.

Following its founding in 1971, MOT bought and transformed the historic Grand Circus Theatre into the Detroit Opera House in April 1996, making it one of the few opera companies in the U.S. to own its own theater. “Through the support of our community, we have created one of Detroit’s most beautiful cultural destinations,” said MOT founder and artistic director David DiChiera. “As the city continues to revitalize, we are proud to be a thriving focal point in the development that continues around us.”

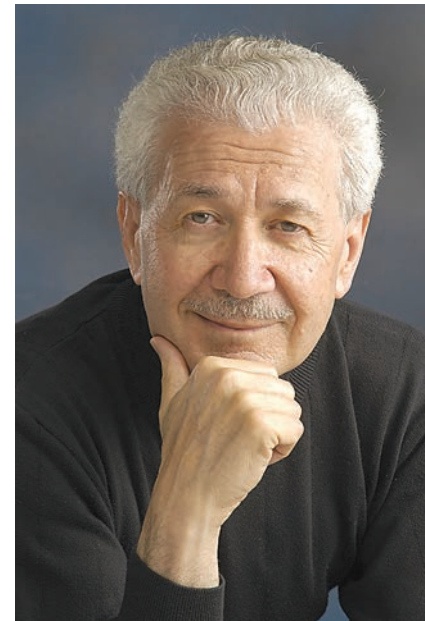
Michigan Opera Theatre’s new Studio program brought five up-and-coming singers and their coach/accompanist to Detroit for a season-long residency of performance and continued training. The program supports the next generation of opera talent and provided the studio artists the opportunity to star in their own full-length opera with the production of Aaron Copland’s *The Tender Land* at the Macomb Center for the Arts and at the Heinz C. Prechter Educational and Performing Arts Center. The studio artists also provided patrons additional opportunities to hear opera with several community concerts throughout southeast Michigan.

The company’s 45th opera season featured five full-length operas, including a heart-

wrenching and powerful production of Mieczyslaw Weinberg’s “*The Passenger*,” a contemporary opera exploring ramifications of the Holocaust. In conjunction with the opera, MOT partnered with more than 60 community organizations to create programs to promote dialogue and understanding of the production’s theme of the Holocaust and man’s inhumanity to man. The opera season also included the company premiere of Giuseppe Verdi’s “*Macbeth*,” perennial favorites “*La Boheme*” and “*The Magic Flute*,” and the community presentation of Copland’s “*The Tender Land*.”

MOT’s 20th dance season featured four dance companies, concluding with American

Ballet Theatre’s spectacular production of “*The Sleeping Beauty*” featuring ballet superstar Misty Copeland. The ballet was the beginning of a three-year partnership with the University Musical Society, supported with a generous commitment by the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan to grow the local dance audience. The production included five nearly sold-out performances. It also required the largest supernumerary cast in MOT dance history, allowing more than 100 children and adults to take part in the lavish production. ABT dancers, including Copeland, Calvin Royal



David DiChiera will assume the position of artistic director emeritus at the conclusion of the 2016-17 season in celebration of his legacy.

III and Katie Williams, presented public master classes and interacted with local schools and children’s organizations. The Greater Wayne County Chapter of The Links served as the exclusive community partner for the American Ballet Theatre Residency. The dance season also included performances by BalletMet, Eisenhower Dance, and Dance Theatre of Harlem.

On the administrative side, MOT Board Chairman R. Jamison Williams announced that David DiChiera will assume the position of artistic director emeritus at the conclusion of the 2016-17 season in celebration of his legacy. The board of directors re-elected Williams as chairman, C. Thomas Toppin as secretary and Cameron Duncan as treasurer and also announced the addition of two new members – Peter Oleksiak and Devon Hoover. To see a full copy of the annual report, visit www.michiganopera.org/annualreport.

Originally reported on www.encoremichigan.com

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Editor's Pick



Help Keep Someone Warm This Winter

Affirmations has started their annual Winter Donation Drive. The organization is now accepting winter hats, coats, earmuffs, gloves and scarves of all sizes at their Welcome and Resource Desk. Each Friday, from 5-7 p.m., Affirmations will give out donated winter items as needed through Jan. 27 at 290 W. Nine Mile Road in Ferndale. For more information, call 248-398-7105, email lreyes@goaffirmations.org or visit their website at www.goaffirmations.org.

▶ Happenings

Continued from p. 22

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

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

Wednesday, Dec. 28

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

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. 29

Winter Donation Drive Accepting winter hats, coats, earmuffs, gloves, and scarves of all sizes. Each Friday from 5-7 p.m., Affirmations will hand out these items as needed until Jan. 27. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 2483987105. lreyes@goaffirmations.org www.goaffirmations.org

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

MUSIC & MORE

Michigan Radio "Paula Poundstone" Tickets: \$32-\$60. On sale Aug. 19. All ages welcome. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. 8 p.m. Dec. 17. 248-399-2980. <http://www.axs.com/events/309522/paula-poundstone-tickets>

Concerts

The Ark "Blackthorn" Tickets: \$20. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. 8 p.m. Dec. 17. 734-761-1800. www.theark.org

Trans-Siberian Orchestra "Trans-Siberian Orchestra "The Ghosts of Christmas Eve" Tour" Hear the TSO perform top hits and more. Tickets: \$70-\$229. Van Andel Arena, 130 Fulton W, Grand Rapids. Dec. 22 - Dec. 22. 844-854-1450. <http://arenagranderapids.com/Tickets-Active.php?eventID=2124817>

Film & Video

Spike Decker and Mike Gribble "Spike & Mike's Sick & Twisted Festival of Animation" Tickets: \$7. The Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Dec. 22 - Dec. 30. 248-544-3030. www.themagicbag.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

Olympia Entertainment "Cirque du Soleil: OVO" Tickets: \$30. Joe Louis Arena, 19 Steve Yzerman Dr., Detroit. Dec. 22 - Dec. 25. 800-745-3000. www.olympiaentertainment.com

THEATER

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

A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder Tickets: \$49-\$139. Wharton Center for the Performing Arts, Michigan State University, Cobb Great Hall, 750 E. Shaw Lane, East Lansing. Dec. 13 - Dec. 18. 800-WHARTON. www.whartoncenter.com

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.theatrenewa.org

Civic/Community Theater

David Sedaris's The Santaland Diaries and Season's Greetings Tickets: \$10-20. The Ringwald Theatre,

22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Dec. 16 - Dec. 22. 248-545-5545. www.theringwald.com

Professional

Beautiful - The Carole King Musical No shows on Dec. 24, 25, 26 and Jan. 1 (evening) and Jan. 2. Tickets: \$44-140. Broadway in Detroit, Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. Dec. 13 - Jan. 8. 313-872-1000. www.broadwayindetroit.com

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 "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/1807900772828520/?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

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



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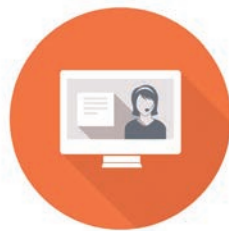
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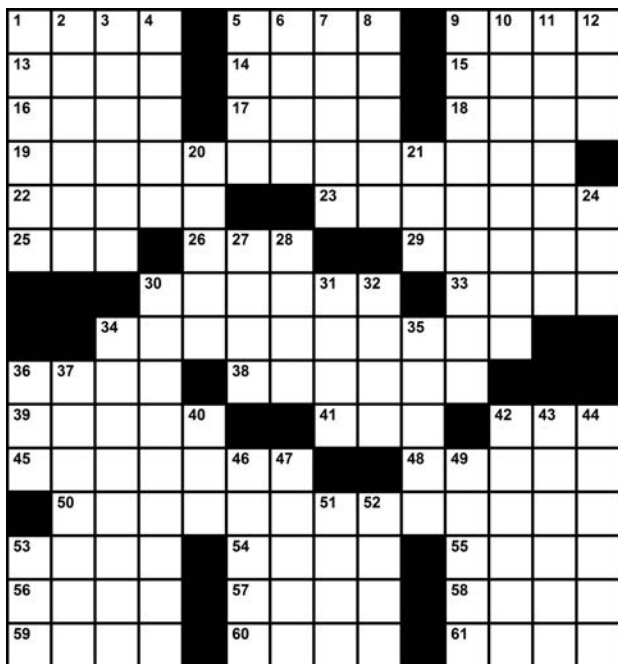
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Q Puzzle



- 34 He played Florence Henderson's husband on 19-Across
 36 Red Skelton's ____ Kadiddlehopper
 38 Family of Mary, Queen of Scots
 39 He played Huxtable
 41 ASCAP alternative
 42 Mineo of "Rebel Without a Cause"
 45 Gave a tongue-lashing to 48 "Bear" that's not a bear
 48 "Bear" that's not a bear
 50 Group with step-kids, like 19-Across
 53 Arc on Bernstein's music score
 54 Tight-assed
 55 It's for skin care
 56 Dorothy's dog
 57 Office slip
 58 "The Children's ____"
 59 Blows away
 60 Dance instructor's topic
 61 They're performing, in "Fame"
- Prada"
 8 Bannon's Brinker
 9 French playwright and activist
 10 Well-versed.
 11 He played a transsexual in "The World According to Garp"
 12 Bloom of "The Producers"
 20 Place where you go straight
 21 Us, to Rilke
 24 Can. province
 27 "A Room of ____ Own"
 28 Like boobs that don't sag
 30 Hats from Kahlo's country
 31 Broadway ticket souvenir
 32 Amsterdam transport
 34 Firm
 35 Eleniak of "Baywatch"
 36 Meas. for Dr. Kildare
 37 Fellatio, for one?
 40 Yokohama moola
 42 Person in the Navy
 43 Closet-emptying cry?
 44 Cake parts
 46 Affleck's "Chasing Amy" crush
 47 Credo
 49 Montgomery Clift's hometown
 51 Edna, for one
 52 Lay an egg
 53 Dupont Cir., on the Metro

Remembering Carol

Across

- 1 Dances like Hines
 5 Mary's little pet
 9 Come together
 13 Small singing bird
 14 "The African Queen" author
 15 Actress Adams
 16 "Tell ____ the judge!"
 17 Verlaine's mother
 18 Erotic opening
- 19 Seventies sitcom starring Florence Henderson
 22 Use the Divine Miss M's name in vain?
 23 Way back when
 25 B. Bean's greatest hits
 26 '50s dance
 29 ____ Hall University
 30 Clearest of head
 33 Candace Gingrich's half-brother

Down

- 1 Wiggle the nose like Samantha
 2 Poet Rimbaud
 3 Paige and Cameron
 4 Snooty types
 5 Star of "Hello, Dalai"?
 6 Like fine wine
 7 Miranda in "The Devil Wears

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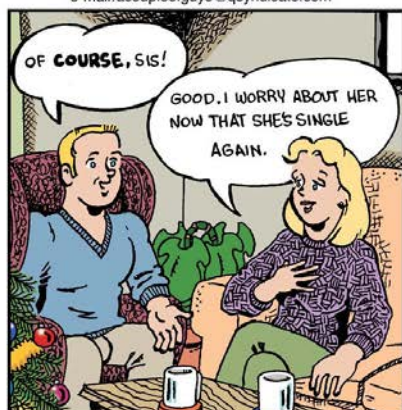
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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

'Riverdale' pushes Archie into the present

Greg Berlanti, the gay producing dynamo whose comic book loyalty has given TV "Arrow," "The Flash" and "Supergirl," is about to debut his next move. It's a bit of a lateral one, firmly planted in comic book history, but minus the superheroes: Archie. The new CW series, "Riverdale," will update the Archie gang in a live-action series that will be part teen drama, part mystery, and much more sexy than you ever remember these characters being (this is the CW, after all). Developing the show with Berlanti is producer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa ("Looking"), and the pair have stated that they look to cinematic influences like "The Virgin Suicides" for the tone of the series, which will star New Zealand actor K.J. Apa as Archie, a racially diverse cast as the rest of the gang, Luke Perry as Archie's dad, and newcomer Casey Cott as Riverdale's gay teen, Kevin Keller. We'll be listening for the slowed-down, minor-key cover version of "Sugar Sugar" to pop up somewhere during the murder mystery montages when the show comes to the CW sometime in 2017.

Get excited about 'Untitled Mother-Daughter/Action Comedy Project'



Chloe Grace Moretz. Photo: Vonora

We kind of wish that "Untitled Mother-Daughter/Action Comedy Project" was the actual title of the latest film from Jonathan Levine ("The Night Before," "50/50"). But we're pretty sure its current generic status isn't going to last. The film, co-written by Kim Caramelle ("Trainwreck"), Katie Dippold ("Parks and Recreation") and Amy Schumer, will star Schumer and Goldie Hawn as the "Mother-Daughter." And while the plot is being kept strictly under wraps, we do know that it will involve "action" and "comedy,"

which is pretty much all we need to know right now to be interested. Mostly, though, we're happy that Wanda Sykes is in it and she won't simply be voicing a prehistoric muskrat. The woman deserves screentime as herself and we are Team Her every step of the way. Finally, it doesn't hurt that the very funny Randall Park ("Fresh Off The Boat") and our O.G. "Oz" crush Christopher Meloni are also on board. When this one finally graduates to a project with a title and it winds up in theaters (2017, they say), it'll be up to you to put two and two together.

'A Wrinkle In Time' adds Rowan Blanchard to cast

Rowan Blanchard, the 15-year-old "Girl Meets World" actress who came out as non-specifically queer earlier this year, has joined the all-star cast of Ava DuVernay's ("13th," "Selma") upcoming fantasy-adventure epic "A Wrinkle In Time." The film, a big budget adaptation of the classic Madeleine L'Engle novel, is about a young brother and sister sent into space to find their missing father, and the cast is a very cool mix of veterans and up-and-comers. "Pan"'s Levi Miller and newcomer Storm Reid will be joined by Blanchard and big names like Zach Galifianakis, Reese Witherspoon, Michael Peña, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Mindy Kaling, Chris Pine and Oprah Winfrey. This is the kind of diversity that flies in the face of traditional mostly-white Hollywood casting and it's a welcome breath of fresh air. And with DuVernay's reputation as a sure-handed filmmaker, it almost feels like an easy bet to say the finished product will be worth your time. Now wait until 2018 to find out.

Chloe Grace Moretz winds up in conversion therapy

Desiree Akhavan has a new project. The acclaimed young writer, director and star of the Sundance hit "Appropriate Behavior" (a semi-autobiographical comedy about a queer Persian woman and her complicated relationships) will tackle "The Miseducation of Cameron Post," and Chloe Grace Moretz is set to star. Based on Emily Danforth's coming-of-age novel of the same name, the story follows a young high school girl in 1993, who is sent to gay conversion therapy after she's caught with the prom queen. Moretz plays Cameron, and "American Honey"'s breakout star Sasha Lane will play her best friend at the conversion therapy clinic. We're not sure of the tone this one will take, if it will veer toward comedic satire or straightforward drama, but it's a topic that's highly relevant right now, since the current U.S. Vice President-elect, Mike Pence, is a firm supporter of gay conversion therapy, which is a form of torture for any LGBT person forced into it. Never forget it.

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