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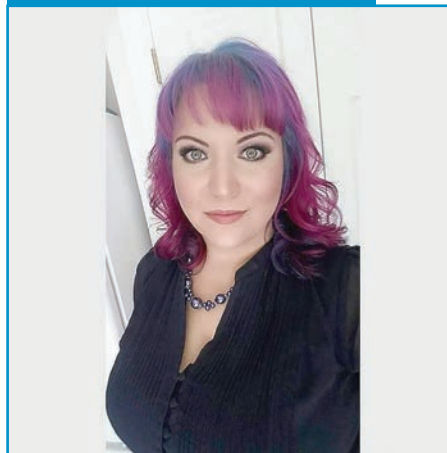
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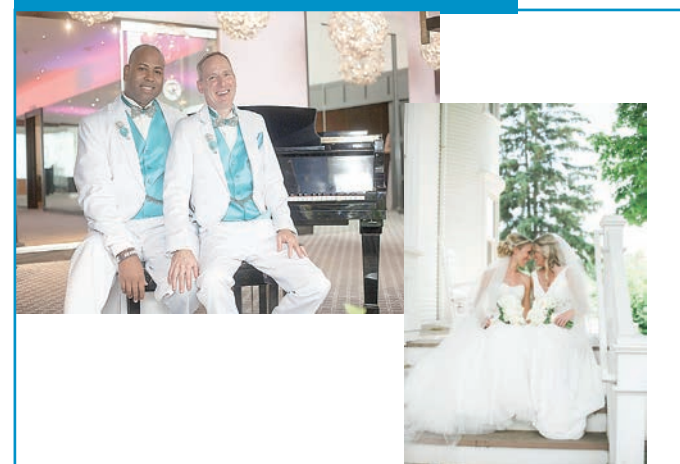
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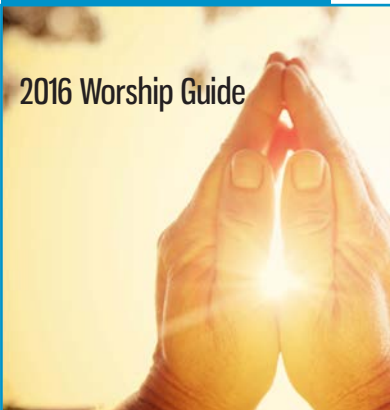
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20222 Farmington Rd., Livonia, Michigan 48152
Phone 734.293.7200

PUBLISHERS

Susan Horowitz & Jan Stevenson

MEMBER OF

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



EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief

Susan Horowitz, 734.293.7200 x 12
susanhorowitz@pridesource.com

Entertainment Editor

Chris Azzopardi, 734.293.7200 x 24
chrisazzopardi@pridesource.com

Senior News Editor

Kate Opalewski, 734.293.7200 x 10
kate@pridesource.com

Assistant Editor

Shelby Clark Petkus, shelby@pridesource.com

News Writers

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

CREATIVE

Webmaster & MIS Director

Kevin Bryant, kevinbryant@pridesource.com

Contributing Writers

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

Cartoonists

Paul Berg, Dave Brousseau

Contributing Photographers

Andrew Potter
Alexander Godin

ADVERTISING & SALES

Director of Sales

Jan Stevenson, 734.293.7200 x 22
jan@pridesource.com

Sales Representatives

Ann Cox, 734.293.7200 x 13
anncox@pridesource.com

Donelle Kremke, 734.293.7200 x 16
donelle@pridesource.com

National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media, 212.242.6863

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NEWS

US Changes HIV Website Name: AIDS.Gov is now HIV.Gov

Officials with the CDC announced on Dec. 1 – World AIDS Day – that AIDS.Gov, the official portal for all things HIV related from the U.S. government, was changing its name to HIV.Gov.

They said in a blog post the decision was made, in part, because, “Today, twice the number of people who come to our website from internet searches use the term ‘HIV’ rather than ‘AIDS,’” officials wrote. “In addition, the majority of the social media conversations we participate in focus on the term ‘#HIV.’ Changing our name to HIV.gov will improve our ability to help our users find the information they need.”

But that’s not all the post revealed about shifting policy in the department. While it has been known for years that those on successful treatment – defined as an undetectable viral load – were highly unlikely to be able to transmit the infection, officials have gone a step further.

“Viral suppression improves health outcomes for people living with HIV (PLWH), reduces HIV-related deaths, and prevents transmission of the virus to others,” the blog post reads.

That’s a key development since activists and prevention educators have been saying the science shows undetectable means uninfected. In fact, the results of a partial European study that includes same-sex male couples as well as heterosexual couples found no linked transmissions from the person living with HIV and their HIV-negative partner. That was after over 10,000 acts of condomless sex.

Researchers last year, in reviewing and announcing their findings, said the possibility of transmitting HIV while virally suppressed was “near zero.”

Right-wing Anti-gay Activist Wants Trump to Defund HIV Prevention for MSM

Linda Harvey, the head of Mission America – an anti-gay hate group according to the Southern Poverty Law Center – has a dream.

“Will CDC continue to treat homosexual behavior as a respectable identity instead of what it actually is – high-risk, unnecessary deviance that no one needs to engage in?” she asks in a screed on the conservative website World Net Daily.

Her answer is for Rep. Tom Price, a Republican lawmaker from Georgia who is Donald Trump’s nominee to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, to defund HIV prevention efforts targeting men who have sex with men. Why? Well of course, she opines, any “rational” person in America knows that

no one is “born gay,” so having anal sex is bad. Apparently, in Harvey’s world, only men who have sex with men have anal sex – and based on her latest screed, all men who have sex with men have anal sex – and that is the reason they get HIV.

Maybe if she spent a little time reviewing more than the gay content on the CDC website she might be aware that in 2012 the National Survey of Family Growth found that anal sex is quite popular among heterosexual persons ages 15-44. According to that report, 44 percent of straight men and 36 percent of straight women had engaged in anal sex at least once with a partner of the opposite sex.

Harvey wants the CDC – the federal agency that is supposed to protect the public health – to condemn all gay sex and promote a strict abstinence-only agenda.

The Boogie Man Has No Teeth

The proverbial boogie man of Gaetan Dugas, the reputed “Patient Zero” of the HIV epidemic in the U.S., has been cleared. That mythology dates back to the 1987 release of Randy Shilts book “And the Band Played On.” In a press release from the book’s publisher at the time, the role of Dugas was trumpeted “the Patient Zero of the epidemic,” claiming Shilts had found the man.

As it turns out, Shilts was right on the man’s identity, but not much else. Dugas was identified in complex – and ultimately revoked – transmission studies from the CDC as Patient O as in the letter O, like Oh. He was not “Patient Zero.” He was just one guy linked sexually to several others with HIV.

But then science came into play. Now, using genetic sequencing and with knowledge of the rate at which the virus mutates, scientists have been able to confirm that long before Dugas was dancing in the bars of San Francisco or prowling the halls of various bath houses in the U.S., HIV was here.

This is pretty much common knowledge to anyone with a passing understanding of the history of HIV in the U.S. However, it is important because this mythology was used in official government documents here in Michigan to justify criminalizing people with HIV.

On page 27 of the House Republican Task Force on AIDS report from 1988, lawmakers cited the Shilts’ book and the story of Dugas, calling his actions “wanton,” and calling for a criminal law. Later that year Michigan adopted one of the first HIV-specific criminal laws. Of course, the law criminalizes only alleged exposure through sex, ignoring needle related exposures; and courts have declined to allow medical evidence to prevent prosecutions of a person with an undetectable viral load to be admitted into evidence.

- Stories filed by Todd A. Heywood

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What Next? The Election, Asylum & LGBT Rights

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

As shock dissipates a month after the election, social justice organizations and civil rights groups are beginning to have more focused conversations about a variety of issues, such as what happens next for LGBT asylum seekers, as well as immigrants and people of color?

A conference call on Nov. 29 hosted by the LGBT Freedom and Asylum Network addressed what community members can expect in terms of action by the government, implications for individuals who are seeking sanctuary in the U.S., and priorities for activism.

On Jan. 20, the White House, Senate and House of Representatives will be in the hands of the Republican Party. President-elect Trump has made headlines with statements about deporting undocumented immigrants, excluding Muslims from immigration to the country, and building a wall along the Mexican border. He and his cabinet members of choice have angered LGBT people and allies by supporting “conversion therapy,” opposing same-sex marriage, and opposing transgender rights.

To be clear, the president has the authority to set the number of refugees accepted annually by the U.S. President Barack Obama has raised it from 70,000 in 2015 to 85,000 in 2016 to 110,000 for 2017. Trump could reduce that number for future years.

This call, facilitated by LGBT FAN committee member Siobhan McGuirk, outlined some of the information people need to know if they are an LGBT asylum seeker or if they work or volunteer with them.

Speaker Sharita Gruberg, Senior Policy Analyst with the Center for American Progress opened the conversation with positive news.

In the days following the election, CAP worked together with a polling company to get a better sense of what happened and what voters’ priorities really were.

“Surprisingly, the majority of votes were in favor of ending family detention and also still in favor of comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship,” said Gruberg, pointing to the 85 percent of people polled who supported this.

“It isn’t just a left/right issue and the majority of voters still believe it’s the right thing to do.”

When asked about favorability of updating anti-discrimination laws to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation, Gruberg said 93 percent



of Clinton voters and 75 percent of Trump voters support this.

“What happened feels like an attack and it feels like the country doesn’t value LGBT people or immigrants, but there’s still - even among people who voted for Trump - still this support for these populations. It’s important going forward to focus on that and lift that message up,” she said. “Americans still want to do the right thing. These are values we still hold dear. It does not mean it won’t be a tough road ahead.”

If Trump Stays the Course

Gruberg explained that “we don’t know exactly what’s going to happen, but we have some indication.”

For example, Trump vowed to deport 3 million ‘criminal’ undocumented immigrants. (Note: It is not illegal to enter the U.S. without documentation.)

“There are not that many in this country. So we fear if this is the target number, who are they planning on going after? We’re worried about who gets caught up in that,” she said, pointing to Kris Kobach, the conservative Kansas secretary of state who advised Trump

on immigration policy during the campaign.

Kobach is responsible for Arizona’s anti-immigrant law, SB 1070, which requires police to determine the immigration status of someone arrested or detained when there is “reasonable suspicion” they are in the U.S. without documentation.

“This is one of the most racist immigration laws we’ve ever seen. We are worried what an immigration policy under him would look like,” said Gruberg.

The Trump administration told CNN in November that there will be a database similar to the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS), which disproportionately targeted Arabs and Muslims during the Bush era. During the campaign, Trump said he planned to suspend the Syrian refugee program and threatened to deport those already here, but his actual proposals for a comprehensive refugee resettlement program are still unknown.

“With what’s happening in Syria, the U.S.’s role as a beacon of protection is more important than ever. We really can’t allow for the advances we’ve gotten under the last administration to be scaled back,” said Gruberg.

This includes resources for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services where adjudicating asylum cases has become a major problem with a backlog in the federal immigration court system of more than 500,000 cases.

“Congress appropriates money for how many immigration judges we have and judges have been stagnant for years. USCIS is working on increasing the number of officers for the screening process but can’t keep up with the demand. We worry that the next administration won’t prioritize the number of people processing claims and will slow things down even further. This is a big problem,” she said.

The Associated Press reported in July 2016 that 18 judges have been added since the beginning of the year and there are now 277 judges hearing cases. Approximately 100 other judge candidates were in the process of being hired at that time. A pending budget proposal would allow the court to have as many as 399 judges on staff.

Another concern, said Gruberg, is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. This American immigration policy allows certain undocumented immigrants to the U.S. who entered the country before their 16th birthday and before June 2007 to receive a renewable two-year work permit and exemption from deportation.

“It’s popular. Over 700,000 young people have benefited from this. They can go to school now, they can get jobs and cars. They have been in the U.S. for such a long time and are contributing to the economy as citizens in every aspect but legal status. If he just yanks away all of that from such a large number of people who are so integrated into their communities, there would be a backlash, but it’s still too soon to say what that looks like,” she said.

For now, Gruberg said, “It’s up to everyone to

INFO

Stronger Together: A Guide to Supporting

LGBT Asylum Seekers www.lgbt-fan.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Stronger_Together_FINAL.pdf, is the first ever guidance for providing services to LGBT asylum seekers produced by LGBT FAN in partnership with The National LGBTQ Task Force and The Human Rights Campaign

really support immigrants. Draw a line in the sand that we won't stand for allowing raids or targeting or profiling people and the types of enormous deportation machines that Trump seems to be envisioning with Kobach."

Ways to Help on the Ground

While everyone has due process rights and there are legal systems in place to protect asylum seekers and refugees, the question remains: how do we continue to best serve these groups of people while they await permanent residence status?

One word of advice offered by McGuirk was for asylum seekers and their advocates to try and stay informed of any changes to the system, which are often made with little warning or publicity. Claimants should make sure to use the correct forms obtained from government websites, fill them out with as much detail as possible, and triple check that they are being sent to the correct location. This may help to avoid important documents from getting lost or misplaced in the system. As efforts to criminalize and police people of color and immigrant populations are likely to increase, McGuirk also encouraged people to research and know their rights, drawing on existing resources produced by immigrant rights advocacy organizations. McGuirk also stressed that issues that might not immediately seem relevant - such as the availability of affordable housing, and labor protections such as anti-discrimination laws and a suitable minimum wage - have a significant impact on LGBTQ immigrants.

"Generally speaking, safe, affordable housing is the largest unmet need for these populations. While we need to pressure HUD at the federal level, most decisions about where housing resources and funds go are made at the local level, specifically as the local continuum of care. Ours here in Detroit, which we

are a part of, is the Detroit Continuum of Care," said TJ Rogers, program manager at Freedom House in Detroit, a temporary home for indigent survivors of persecution from around the world who are seeking asylum in the U.S. and Canada.

"Otherwise, the Office of Refugee Resettlement needs to offer additional funding for extended services," he said. "Funding is appropriated by Congress. While some municipalities are threatening to reject ORR funding, it is more important than ever that elected officials be contacted and urged to continue to support ORR funding and the efforts to help new arrivals become stable and self-sufficient for the long-term. The providers work miracles out of shoestring budgets, but funding is not sufficient, and they only work with what they are given."

Throughout the call, coalition building was mentioned frequently by Beni DeDieu Luzau of the LGBTI Caucus of the Refugee Congress, which McGuirk agreed is a way to "share available resources and remain united in our efforts."

Luzau said "the reality now in this work in LGBT movements and refugee and asylum is that everybody does not have the same chance in terms of resources. Last time we were at the Congress I just heard from an activist telling me that 'I'm not going to do this thing anymore because of poverty.' ... I am asking myself where are the resources, refugees have a lot of resources. It is good to have people go and advocate for increasing funding for refugee resettlement, but where is that funding [going]? The activists on the ground are not [receiving] this funding, and the realities between the office and the ground are totally different. I'm an activist on the street, I'm talking about what I know. Last time we had, when we were at the Refugee Congress, the Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Bob Kerry, giving an explanation about how they are working with the Department of Labor to assist LGBT refugees to access the jobs. But

the reality is [that if] you go to San Diego [you will] see how many transgender people have been rescued from human trafficking, who do not have jobs. And the big people are sitting in their offices looking at it through the windows, which is not the reality on the ground..." he said.

"How are we going to go together to push for the change when we don't have the same chances in terms of resources. I have to attend meetings for LGBT, I have to do this for the LGBT movement, spending out of my own pocket. But we are people who arrived as refugees, we don't have enough resources... And how are you going to have this movement growing when the refugees and asylum seekers [can]not advocate for themselves because of poverty?"

Some positive movements have already started in cities like Chicago, Seattle, New York and Los Angeles where people are stepping up to reaffirm their commitment to supporting immigrants within their communities.

"If your city doesn't already have pro-immigrant policies in place, push for them," said McGuirk.

There is also a sanctuary campus movement - endorsed last month by the American Association of University Professors - gaining momentum. Dozens of universities are already committing to support undocumented immigrants enrolled or seeking education in their programs. Adopting sanctuary campus status would mean that a university administration would strive to protect such students in the event that Trump's actions threaten those currently enrolled.

McGuirk stressed that commitments to protect and defend undocumented people sent a reaffirming message "that they belong and we will look out for them no matter what happens."

LGBT FAN has compiled a list of resources provided by several regional organizations for reference. Log onto www.lgbt-fan.org for more information or connect on Facebook www.facebook.com/lgbt.fan.

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Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Christmas Un-corked!

I hate to play the Gay Grinch Who Stole Christmas, but there's a movement afoot by the Southern Comfort Baptists to do away with all suspected gay references in Christmas carols and holiday traditions.

Unless we act with a united front (and a well-padded backside), "Don we now our GAY apparel" is doomed. "God rest ye, MARY gentlemen" is a goner. Gold frankincense & myrrh (along with patchouli) are out. Mince pie and sugar plum you-know-whats are things of the past.

Rainbow ribbons and wrapping paper are taboo. Red stockings for the chimney will be minus silver belles or D&G designer fur trim. Dancer, Prancer and Cupid are dead ducks. (Substitute: Butch, Bouncer, Bimbo.)

For readers who are in the dark about the Southern Comfort Baptists - a boisterous offshoot of gay bashing, Disney boycotting, 15-million-strong Southern Baptists - the SCBs swarm like a plague of biblical locusts. And they're two-fisted when it comes to minding other people's business or sampling other people's Texas Tea.

Every neighborhood has one or two Southern Comforters livening things up way into the wee-wee Sabbath hours. (I passed one leaning against a lamppost and singing the doxology to my neighbor's calico just the other morning. The cat has yet to return. Saved or unsaved. Neutered or otherwise.)

Southern Comforters are headquartered in Myopic Flats, Texas, home of the world-famous batter-dipped, low-cal Gila Burger. ("The burger with a bite to die for!") They broadcast over radio station TPARTY-AM, and their TV program, "The Church Key Hour," is syndicated worldwide. (Sarah Palin, who likes peeking through an occasional narrow-minded keyhole, is thinking about converting. Again.)

The Southern Comforters perform what they call brinkmanship baptism. ("We don't sprinkle. We dunk, count to 10 very slowly, and ask God for a miracle.") They don't smoke weed, boogie down, play Bridge, skinny-dip, practice Feng Shui, eat kosher mayonnaise, or play kissy face on the first and last date.

Their motto: "One taste of 100-proof heaven goes a long, long way."

More than likely you've seen a controversial full-page ad the Southern Comforters took out in National Expirer tabloid recently (appearing next to Lady Gaga's 'candid camera cuties'). SANTA: A GAY AGENDA PLOT! Homos put the X in X-Mas!

Are There 'Toys' Under Your Tree? Is Your Sock 'Hung' by the Chimney with 'Care?' Beware! The GAGs are coming.

In case you're too busy to speed-read the scandal sheets at checkout counters, Santa really got a few below-the-belt punches from these burning bush holy rollers: "It's bad enough the Gay Agenda Gang (GAG) has shoved TV's Burt & Ernie, Tinky Winky, and Ellen down our collective throats, but the real Trojan Horse is Old St. Nick himself!

"It's true! Santa, who wears a leather belt and boots, sports a beard and a big beer belly, is what GAGs call a card-carrying 'bear.' His red suit is color-coded to convey a deep-seated message. (Years ago, gay men wore bright red ties. And, those unmentionable color-coded hankies!)

"Be forewarned. Sitting on Santa's ample knee and telling him you're naughty or nice - when God knows you're a loathsome, rotten, stinking sinner - is an invitation to disaster and damnation. Repent before it's too late. Santa, and all he stands for (which includes same-sex marriage), is anti-American, anti-family values, anti-Republican, and a GAG plot to boot. "Amen."

PS: The less said about Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, the better! Mary Christmas, PGers!

Charles@pridesource.com and Facebook too!



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

Transmissions

Deadnames

On Dec. 2, a fire broke out in a warehouse building in Oakland, California. Its tenants knew the building as Ghost Ship; it housed an artists' collective. That's not uncommon in the Bay Area, where affordable housing is scarce. What's more, the residents were able to find welcoming, supportive community within the walls of Ghost Ship.

The fire at Ghost Ship ended up being the deadliest fire in Oakland's history, claiming the lives of 36 people. Three of those people were trans Feral Pines, Cash Askew and Em B.

The fire was national news, supplanting the latest tantrums of the President-elect. These reports, while usually fairly sensationalist and often quick to blame Ghost Ship's victims for their own deaths, never once spent a lot of time focusing on what the building held prior to becoming Ghost Ship, or did any dwell on previous tenants of the building. This is more respect for the identity of a building than the three trans victims

of the fire received.

Much of the coverage stripped away the identities of the trans tenants of Ghost Ship. Hard-won names were ignored, and pronouns that were incorrect for these three lives were applied.

In a rare turn of events, the Alameda County Sheriff's Department, when releasing their final list of names on Twitter, clarified the names of Em B and Feral Pines - albeit it still to names closer, but unlike what their friends know them as.

Their experience is not an uncommon one when it comes to media coverage of trans lives.

First and foremost, the process of updating your identity documents - such as your driver's license, social security card, passport, or birth certificate - remains a burdensome one. Even with some streamlining over the last decade at both the state and federal level, these updates can still require letters from

See next page

► Transmissions

Continued from p. 9

medical professionals, a court-ordered name change, and other paperwork, each of which comes at some cost.

Likewise, there are always judges and others who will decide to make name and gender changes all that more difficult, rejecting our identities as a morality-based statement or because they are just plain mean-spirited.

This, by the way, is part of what makes the notion of people using a trans identity to assault people in bathrooms such a ridiculous argument. Transgender people have to work very hard to forge their identities in this society. It's simply not that easy.

Police and rescue personnel may only have the identification papers – such as the driver's license – of a transgender person, and report that name. Or they feel that it is somehow more “accurate” to use a legal or “wallet” name and gender over the ones a person chose, and that which all those knew them as.

This is compounded by the media, who simply use the information they were given, without doing any further due diligence. In some cases, too, it's not just shoddy reporting or a ham-fisted attempt to be “accurate,” but a deliberate stripping away of transgender identities in an attempt to “spice up” a story.

When the former name of a transgender person is used in such a way, we in the community tend to refer to it as “deadnaming.” The term is perhaps a bit overstated, but it is certainly applicable.

I changed my name nearly 25 years ago, and today I have to take a moment to remember what it once was. There is no connection to it, no sense of recognition that one might associate with one's name.

That said, no one wants to be called something they are not. Consider what it might feel like, to you, to have a name you do not associate with yourself used as a weapon against you, as a way to delegitimize your very being? That is what it is to use the “deadname” and incorrect gender for a trans person.

Having transitioned so long ago means there is no real record of me with that name or gender

Likewise, there are always judges and others who will decide to make name and gender changes all that more difficult, rejecting our identities as a morality-based statement or because they are just plain mean-spirited.

to be found on the World Wide Web. While I'm sure someone would find it easily enough if they really were determined, it's not so casually stepped over. I like it that way.

Recently, however, I've ended up having to sort through paperwork as I apply for a United States passport prior to President-elect Trump taking office. My birth certificate still has that old name on it, and a gender I left behind decades ago. It's almost foreign to see it and have to present it as proof of my identity, given that it honestly is not my identity. It is, rather, something alien to me.

Yet I too must deal with the fact that, no matter how buried my former name may be, no matter how many identity documents I update, no matter what I do, there's still that chance that someone will try to use an identity I rejected a quarter-century ago. Maybe they'll be police who are “being accurate,” or maybe it will be journalists who want to tell “my whole story” to the public. Then again, it could just as well be someone setting out to deliberately harm me.

I've said it many times before: when we talk about fighting for our rights, the number one right we need to fight for is the right to exist. That's not just a reference to our staggering homicide rate, but to the very notion of our identities being respected and seen as legitimate.

Let our “deadnames” rest in peace, and let us live as ourselves.

Gwen Smith is what she answers to. You'll find her at www.gwensmith.com.

Creep of the Week

Jesse Lee Peterson

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

When racist white people who lurk on World Net Daily claim they have black friends,



they're probably referring to Jesse Lee Peterson, a black man who doesn't seem to like black people much. And that's his prerogative!

Nobody can make him like black people, but I'm not going to applaud his bigoted ideas as some kind of moral courage.

Basically Peterson apparently thinks that black people are whiny babies who are mad for no reason and want everything for free. In his book, “The Antidote: Healing America From the Poison of Hate, Blame and Victimhood,” he claims the civil rights movement is “dominated by hustlers, media hacks, politicians, community organizers, and the like who scheme to create wealth without sweat.” That “wealth” is, of course, food stamps and welfare. Who among us could forget those black activists in 1961 staging a sit in at “whites only” lunch counters in order to protest the fact that the government wasn't picking up their milkshake tab?

In the same book Peterson basically says the reason O.J. Simpson became a murderer is because he had a gay dad who couldn't teach him to “be a man.”

So when Peterson said on news radio WINA's “The Schilling Show” that LGBTQ rights were “evil” and are basically ruining everything, it was hardly his first time bashing gays.

Speaking to host Rob Schilling on Dec. 15, Peterson bemoaned the advancement in LGBTQ rights over the last eight years, proclaiming it an attack on “man and woman.”

“(T)he children of the lie, they are pushing for no gender. They don't want you to identify as a man or as a woman,” he said.

The “children of the lie” refers, duh, to LGBTQ people and their supporters. And apparently the Homosexual Agenda now includes mandatory androgyny. I wish right-wingers would stop adding to our agenda. First we wanted to destroy “traditional marriage,” now we want to destroy “man and woman?” I'm still trying to fit in going to the gym a few

times a week and making sure my kid isn't late for school in the morning. It's really hard to keep up.

What it all comes down to is, of course, bathrooms. Turns out the battle for civilization will be fought in a public restroom stall, most likely with the words, “If you sprinkle when you tinkle, be a sweetie and wipe the seatie,” in black Sharpie on the wall.

“We need to realize that once you give evil power by letting it have its way, it will destroy you. It will destroy you personally, it will destroy your family, it will destroy your community and your country, and that's what it's been doing especially in the last eight years,” Peterson says. “It's just been out of control, to a point that they are pushing men and women that are confused about their identities to go into whatever bathroom of choice. That's not even common sense, you know that has to be evil.”

I wish right-wingers would stop adding to our agenda. First we wanted to destroy “traditional marriage,” now we want to destroy “man and woman?” I'm still trying to fit in going to the gym a few times a week and making sure my kid isn't late for school in the morning. It's really hard to keep up.

Ah. So if something isn't “common sense,” it must be evil. Got it. Thank goodness “common sense” is never shaped by faulty logic and/or prejudice.

Look, going to the bathroom isn't evil. It's a necessity for anyone who isn't dead. If a trans man or woman uses the restroom that best corresponds to their gender, penises and vaginas everywhere don't suddenly transform into the rippleless geography of Barbie and Ken. Just like marriage equality didn't ruin the sanctity of marriage, trans people emptying their bladders and bowels isn't going to ruin the sanctity of public restrooms. But please, regardless of your gender identity, wash your hands and don't forget to flush. That's just common sense.

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
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Making Salons the New Safe Space for Transgender People

Activist discusses traumatic experiences, how stylists can find confidence with trans clients

BY SHELBY CLARK PETKUS

In a tumultuous time that is quickly being dubbed the “Trump era,” safe spaces – controversial to the right, but pivotal to the left – are being discussed nonstop. Mia Catherine Smith, a transgender stylist based out of North Carolina with 22 years of “behind the chair” experience, had been percolating an idea for safe salon spaces though before even this election: Safe in my Chair. The project, which has quickly found national and international success, aims to train stylists and barbers so that they’re equipped to help trans clients that find their way to their chair by accessing SafeInMyChair.com.

“Safe in my Chair has a two fold purpose,” says Smith. “It’s basically a resource for transgender people to find a safe environment: a safe salon and a safe stylist or barber, so they can feel good about themselves. A lot of times when you walk into a salon being transgender, you’re aware that not everyone is going to be accepting – that not everyone ‘gets it.’ I have vetted these people on the list and made sure they understood my message.”

Smith’s goal comes from a multifaceted history: she was outed in a salon as a teenager, but has also found her truest self in the salon.

“Being both transgender and a stylist, it’s been a passion most of my life – and for most of my life, the place where Mia truly exists is in the salon. I’ve had both really bad and really good experiences ... I was outed publicly in a salon in a very small town. I was the quarterback of the high school football team and I was a senior, and we were undefeated – and I was the shit,” she says sardonically.

“I sat down to get my hair cut in this small town salon, and the stylist said, ‘You have amazing eyes. Women would kill to have these eyes; with just a little mascara...’ And I paused and I just went with it and I said, ‘Well, it’s funny you mention that, because I feel like a woman inside.’ And she said, ‘What, like one of those fag crossdressers?’ as loud as she could, at noon, on a Saturday, in a packed salon. And I was mortified.”

“The ‘Mark’ in me wanted to slap the shit out of her,” Smith confesses, “but the Mia in me wanted to crawl inside of a cave. I spent over an hour crying in my car in the parking lot; the quarterback of the team crying in the car – over a haircut.”

“I had one (experience) where I went in and asked for a feminine hairstyle. She (the stylist) asked why, and I said, ‘Because I’m

transgender and I’ve always known I was.’ She said very publicly, ‘Oh I don’t do that shit, sweetheart. That’s just sick, you fetish freak.’

“If I can prevent somebody else from being put in that situation, I will do whatever I possibly can. And when people hate, it’s not that they’re hating the person – they’re hating their lot in life, or their lack of education or their standing. It’s very rarely directed at the person who ends up taking the brunt of it. I just want people to understand that love wins – you can’t fight hate with hate. Fighting hate with hate is like trying to put a coat on in the middle of summer to cool off. It doesn’t work.”

Forging connections between hair stylists and trans clients is crucial, especially in light of how critical hair growth or length often is for those transitioning.

“A lot of transgender people cut their own hair, and a lot of that comes from a fear of the salon,” notes Smith. “Besides your spouse and your doctor, getting your hair cut is another very intimate experience – it’s a very ‘in your space’ experience. And many transgender people suffer from PTSD. A lot of women have been traumatized – some of them have been attacked, raped, and mentally, physically and verbally abused, so it’s difficult for them to trust people they don’t know. What Safe in my Chair does is give them a resource to know that this person is safe, this person is going to care for them and accept them without judgment and open their chair and their heart.”

That intimacy, both physically and emotionally, is affecting, with Smith noting emotionally, “... It’s a very powerful thing when that trans client is turned around in the chair for the first time; sometimes you get to be the very first person in the world to see them as authentically real. It’s a moment that only happens once, when they see their true authentic selves, and you get to share in that. Sometimes that stylist is the only other person in the world who knows that trans client’s secret. The bond between them is unbreakable, and every trans client should have that ally – and this site gives them that ally, gives them someone that says, ‘My chair is warm and and welcoming, come in – I understand and I will help you.’”

This project also does much more than benefit trans women and men seeking a safe space to groom their authentic selves; stylists who get listed get to “connect with a new client base, as well as broaden their skill set” says Smith.

Part of the process of getting vetted for the



Kristen Canon Mason, is the owner of the Balance & Beauty Collective, a salon dedicated to diversity in the Flint area.



Mia Catherine Smith is the founder of Safe in my Chair.

Safe in my Chair salon list is to first partake in Smith’s training, where she works on the mental and emotional skills necessary for dealing with trans clients.

“Safe in my Chair training is basically a four hour skillset training. A stylist goes to school and gains technical knowledge and technical skills – years with scissors in hand, clippers in hand – but basically what I do is give them skills you don’t learn in school. I work on their tactfulness, their compassion. I give the stylist tools that will allow them to listen and to understand. I specifically teach listening skills to understand, not to respond. Too many people listen these days and they’re

already thinking of a response and thinking of a retort (instead of listening).

“I teach them what to say, what not to say, when to say it. How to treat a transgender client differently. A lot of these clients have been through trauma. Transgender clients are high maintenance, there’s no doubt about that. They might have a breakdown in the chair where dysphoria takes over, and I teach the stylist how to diffuse that situation, or just what dysphoria is and what triggers are, and how to sidestep that mine field.

“More than anything, it’s teaching the stylist how to address trans clients and what’s acceptable/not acceptable. Teaching them terminology, teaching them what today’s LGBT community is. There are people who are asexual, pansexual, gender fluid. There are a lot more young folks who are now gender fluid today. Teenagers are very susceptible to emotional issues; a lot of them are going through turmoil anyway, so if you put gender issues on top of that, you’re going to have a really big problem. I want to have a stylist who can make them more comfortable.”

Comfort of both the trans client and the cis stylist is key to creating the bond Smith hopes to see worldwide. “A lot of us have sat in a chair where the stylist stands behind us and doesn’t seem confident, and we don’t want our hair cut by someone who’s not confident. I’m going to *give* stylists the confidence so the client feels so overwhelmingly welcome in the chair that they let their guard down, so they can be their truth, authentic selves. Genuine.”

Making Michigan Salons Safer

After astronomical success vetting and expanding the list – “I have not slept in a week,” Smith admits – she brought on 10 other stylists to help the project. “These 10 have all been chosen because of the impeccable nature of their character – these ladies really know what it means to be kind and accepting and caring. I would never in a million years surround myself with anyone who wasn’t; these girls represent me.”

One of those stylists, Kristen Cannon Mason of the Balance & Beauty Collective in the Flint area, says she feels this movement will find huge support in the state. “Specifically in my area, people tend to think of Flint as such a terrible place to live, but we have such diversity and so many have the heart to stick up for those that need it. I’ve had a hand in educating a big chunk of professionals in the

last 10 years, as well as networking for the last 15, and I know that we have a huge number of open, compassionate people in our area. Our salon specifically made it our mission to be a comfortable place for everyone when we opened, and my team is 100 percent behind this.”

“I have followed Kristen for a long time,” says Smith of adding Mason to the project. “I befriended her as ‘Mark.’ I’m drawn to people who show amazing character with others, and Kristen has shown her ability to communicate with others and express herself and listen to other people’s concerns genuinely.”

Mason notes that, as a stylist with 14 years experience including 10 years as an instructor and four as a massage therapist, she was drawn to Smith’s approach to education. “One of the reasons I could really get behind Mia and the way she wanted to do things was that she’s not about pointing a finger, or saying there’s division, or saying stylists who perhaps don’t understand transgender clients are bad,” she says. “She realizes most of it is due to ignorance or being oblivious. With teaching the last several years, it’s something I bring up in class in cosmetology and especially in aesthetics, because frankly we deal much more with the body and it’s a more personal space. I make sure I have conversations with the students.

“I will say nine times out of 10, if they are

“ I will say nine times out of 10, if they are not prepared to deal with various clients, it’s really not about them not being compassionate or being hateful – it’s literally just ignorance. ”

– Kristen Canon Mason

not prepared to deal with various clients, it’s really not about them not being compassionate or being hateful – it’s literally just ignorance. I really like Mia’s approach to making everybody feel accepted and promoting education and comfort levels. I love the way she’s heading towards things, and I’m just so excited to be a part of it.”

Smith’s approach includes advice to not only the stylists she trains, but to prospective trans clients as well. “My biggest piece of advice is use the list, of course – those stylists have been vetted, have been trained and are certified with my logo. Relax, you’re in a safe place, and let your guard down. It’s OK. You’re the expert, the stylist is there to assist you and coach you, but you’re the lead. No one

knows more about you than you do. Tell the stylist how you feel, talk about your emotions, develop that bond that can’t be broken. Allow them to trust you.”

Smith tearfully admits, “There are times where it’s not going to go well – I wish I could guarantee that for people, but I can’t. I can only promise each one of those people that I’ll never stop fighting for them, or educating others. Education is key. And the transgender client has the responsibility to educate, and sometimes they’re going to get bit and they’re going to get uncomfortable. The fact is they have to help the stylist by telling them everything they possibly can – like talking about their dysphoria triggers – to help the stylist make a decision.”

What’s Next?

Smith’s set her scope to the future, even in her own controversial state. “Being in North Carolina is uniquely different, which (former governor) Pat McCrory has seen to, no doubt. Roy Cooper has changed that a bit in being elected. It’s funny, most of the transgender people just use the bathroom they want to use. It’s not an issue – the law is unenforceable. But it actually rallies people – his law backfired in a very, very big way.”

This sort of hopeful look on anti-trans backlash carried over to Safe in my Chair,

where every state in the U.S. has a member now on the list. “I got responses back proportionate to the population levels in the states, which makes me feel very good that there’s no regional biases. We have members in six different countries, and I have trainings set up in the U.K., Australia and Canada. It’s all coming to fruition and it’s all I’ve ever wanted to do: make sure people have a safe space and feel warm and accepted.”

With the quick success Safe in my Chair is having, Smith hopes to widen the project beyond just safe spaces for trans people.

“I see Safe in my Chair widening its scope from gender protection to being a truly Safe in my Chair for anything,” she shares. “Say that young black woman lives in a small town and there is no predominantly black salon; I want her to be able to call that white salon because she sees them on the list, and they’re safe, and she will not be ridiculed or harassed.

“It’s a common desire – we go to the salon or the barbershop to feel better about ourselves. It’s not a privilege to do these things. It should be a right. It’s ridiculous that it’s not that way.”

For more information on the Safe in my Chair project, visit SafeInMyChair.com. The Balance & Beauty Collective, a salon devoted to diversity, is located at 6197 Miller Road, Suite 2, Swartz Creek; to contact the salon, call 810-412-8308.



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MARRIAGE

Assault on Marriage Equality Under Banner of 'Religious Liberty'

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

It took the work of an entire community across the U.S. and the dedication and time of legal teams in many states, to make history and move the country forward in June 2015 when the Supreme Court ruled to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide.

As right-wing conservatives plot to erode progress, what issues are likely to arise in the next four years?

An online report by Vox said to look for Congress to pass the First Amendment Defense Act – a piece of legislation that Trump has pledged to sign, even though it would do serious harm to the same-sex spouses that he purports to be “fine with.”

The core provision of FADA prohibits the federal government from imposing any “tax, penalty, or payment” on a person who acts according to a religious or moral belief that marriage should be confined to one man and one woman (or that sexual intimacy should be confined to that sort of traditional marriage).

This language, according to the report, goes beyond the protection for religious actors contained in the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the law that fueled *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*. Instead of imposing a balancing test, as RFRA does, FADA provides virtually absolute protection to religious traditionalists who refuse to comply with federal civil rights laws that conflict with their views about marriage and sexuality.

Instead of imposing a balancing test, as RFRA does, FADA provides virtually absolute protection to religious traditionalists who refuse to comply with federal civil rights laws that conflict with their views about marriage and sexuality.

Some of the implications

First, federal anti-discrimination provisions are sometimes enforced through the tax code, according to an analysis by the Public Rights/Private Conscience Project at Columbia Law School. FADA would exempt religious actors from those requirements. For example, group health plans covered by federal law could restrict health care benefits for LGBT or unmarried persons and their dependents. Similarly, companies might adopt discriminatory retirement plans without risking the loss of tax benefits usually associated with such plans.

Moreover, FADA would prohibit the government from denying federal contracts to organizations that discriminate against LGBT employees or beneficiaries. And finally, if FADA is read broadly (but reasonably) to prohibit federal officials from imposing any “penalty” on religious organizations that oppose sexual equality, then the law would block federal enforcement of a wide range of civil rights laws in employment, housing, and public accommodations. The Justice Department

See Marriage, page 16



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MARRIAGE

A 2016 Survey of Contemporary Couples & Current Wedding Trends reveals that same-sex weddings have become more elaborate. The amount that LGBT couples are choosing to spend on those celebrations has surged, too. These days, the average same-sex couple spends \$11,000 on their wedding, according to the survey. Although that's \$4,000 less than the average heterosexual couple spends, it's an 88 percent increase since 2013. The majority of same-sex couples (74 percent) are covering those costs on their own.

With that in mind, many inclusive vendors are invited to the Ultimate LGBT Wedding and Anniversary Expo to help couples with the planning of their special day. Read more online at www.pridesource.com about the event hosted for the seventh year on March 26, 2017 from 12-4 p.m. at MotorCity Casino Hotel by Between The Lines and Pride Source Media Group.

Visit www.btlweddingexpo.com, Facebook www.facebook.com/UltimateLGBTExpo/?fref=ts or follow @BTLExpo on Twitter and @BTLEXPO on Instagram for updates.



Christina and Alicia Wilk were married June 21, 2016.

"We were using all the wedding tools and realized so many didn't offer same-sex labels and same-sex specific vendors. I had to preface every inquiry with 'we are a same-sex couple so we would like to know if you support our love before we give you our money,'" said Christina. "It was almost like coming out all over again and all those emotions of fear, sadness, and hurtfulness rushing back again."

"Brides Celebrate a Perfect 'Just Us' Wedding in BTL Issue 2438 online.



Rev. Jeffrey Seals and Antonio Johnson-Seals were married Jan. 18, 2014.

Even in the faith community, acceptance isn't always automatic. According to Jeffrey, this lack of acceptance is often simply a lack of understanding. So he listens, lets people complain that he and Antonio shouldn't be together because it's a sin, but doesn't debate with them. "You believe what you believe," he says. "But once they're around us, people can see it's a strong love and they want that in their own lives. It's much more show than tell with us."

Read "Conversation Sparked Couple's Relationship, Communication Keeps It Strong" in BTL Issue 2411 online.



Amanda and Jamie Lehman-Faber were married May 29, 2016.

"I guess the old saying is true – opposites do attract. She works in finance and was one of the more recent transplants into New York City. Our instant connection was real despite my love for all that sparkles and shines and her love for the grunge of the East Village," said Amanda. "I always felt like I could be myself with her and knew early on into our relationship, there was no one else I wanted by my side on this journey we call life."

Read "Listless to Blissful: The Non-Traditional Bride(s)" in BTL Issue 2447 online.



Cindy and Amy Hunter were married June 27, 2003.

"I really had to stop and think, 'How do I feel about this person?'" Cindy says. "But Amy was still the same person, and I wanted to go through her experience with her. We stay together because we love each other – that hasn't changed."

Read "Couple's Marriage Proves That True Love Transcends Gender Identity" in BTL Issue 2411 online.



Dimitrius and Jeff Mitchell were married Aug. 13, 2016.

"We met the way a lot of people seem to be meeting lately: online," said Jeff. "We talked on the phone for about four to five weeks. You could tell there was a connection. There were so many things we shared in common."

Read "Love is Patient, Love is Kind: Local Couple Details Path to Altar" in BTL Issue 2443 online.

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THE ULTIMATE LGBT WEDDING & ANNIVERSARY EXPO

Zack Ismail and Ken Siver were married March 22, 2014.

After their many years together, Siver and Ismail were among the 300 same-sex couples who were married on March 22, 2014, the one-day window when same-sex couples were legally able to marry in Michigan after U.S. District Judge Bernard Friedman struck down the state's prohibition on gay marriage. "We are so appreciative of Lisa Brown's pro-marriage equality stance and everything she did," Siver says. "But we were very happy to be the first couple married at Affirmations in Ferndale, with state Rep. Jeremy Moss as one of the witnesses." Ferndale Mayor Dave Coulter officiated.

Read "Couple's Great Love Makes History, In More Ways Than One" in BTL Issue 2409 online.



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► Marriage

Continued from p. 13

could not take action against landlords who exclude same-sex couples, hotels that turn such couples away, and restaurants that refuse to serve them.

Even some conservative-leaning commentators have opposed FADA's protection of for-profit businesses and government employees, according to the report. So FADA would undermine civil rights provisions. But even without new legislation, Trump could undo important protections for LGBT people.

On the Anti-Gay Radar

While the majority of Americans support LGBT rights, these gains have produced a strong backlash. The hardline groups promoting RFRAs to justify anti-gay discrimination are the Alliance Defending Freedom, the American Family Association, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, Focus on the Family, and the Liberty Council.

Also, the National Organization for Marriage, which has outlined its wish list

While LGBT people can continue to marry legally, they are still at risk of being fired from their job, denied a loan, evicted from an apartment, or thrown out of a restaurant. Chad Griffin, president of the Human Rights Campaign, told NPR that in the past year, his group has tracked 204 bills in 34 states deemed "anti-LGBTQ."

for Donald Trump's presidency. The anti-LGBT group referred to Trump's victory as a "bright and exciting time" for the organization founded in 2007 to oppose marriage equality around the nation. Beginning in 2017, its goal is to "restore marriage, uphold gender, protect religious liberty and promote families."

First on its agenda is the repeal of marriage equality through the Supreme Court, according to an online report by the Advocate. The group plans to work with the president-elect to appoint justices who would overturn the Supreme Court's decision. Calling the decision "anti-constitutional," NOM claims that equality was "imposed" on America.

That decision, however, has been widely

popular with the American public. In 2016, Gallup found that 61 percent of the American public supported the right of all couples to wed, a record high. In 2010, just 44 percent of respondents said the same.

NOM also stated that the group will push Trump to "rescind the illegal, over-reaching executive orders and directives issued by President Obama," which he has previously claimed that he will do on his first day in office... "FADA is critical legislation to protect people who believe in marriage from being targeted by the government for persecution," NOM argued.

Protecting LGBT People

While LGBT people can continue to marry legally, they are still at risk of being fired from their job, denied a loan, evicted from an apartment, or thrown out of a restaurant. Chad Griffin, president of the Human Rights Campaign, told NPR that in the past year, his group has tracked 204 bills in 34 states deemed "anti-LGBTQ."

Activists are working hard to update the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to expand LGBT protections. Until then, for those LGBT people concerned or worried, it is recommended they visit their local civil rights and social justice organizations – ACLU of Michigan www.aclumich.org, Equality Michigan equalitymi.org, the Know Your Rights Project www.jimtoycenter.org/know-your-rights, Fair Michigan www.fairmichigan.org, and Lambda Legal www.lambdalegal.org/states-regions/michigan – to report any instances of discrimination they are aware of.

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'OVO' MAKES A BUZZ

Marjon Van Grunsven: Artistic Director On a New Cirque du Soleil and Acceptance

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

After performing under the big top for nearly seven years, Cirque du Soleil's "OVO" returns to Detroit transformed in its new arena format.

Artistic Director Marjon Van Grunsven believes the show – complete with acts of hand balancing, foot juggling, aerial acrobatics, contortion, slackwiring, dancing, and trampolining – is "better than ever before," featuring 50 cast members from 17 different countries.

The production, dreamt up by Brazilian movement director Deborah Colker, will be presented at the Joe Louis Arena Dec. 22-25 for six performances only, as part of a global tour in arenas around North America. Colker is the first woman in Cirque du Soleil's 32-year history to craft an entire production from the ground up, from creation and direction to choreography.

"OVO," meaning "egg" in Portuguese, is described by the company as "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."

In April 2007, Grunsven, a native of the Netherlands, joined Cirque du Soleil and toured

as artistic director of the company's first arena show, "Delirium," until it closed in 2008. Then, she was hired as the artistic director of "OVO" and took the show on tour under the big top in 2009 until its closing in 2015. She went on to work as the artistic director for "Quidam" until 2016 before resuming her role with the insect-inspired "OVO."

Grunsven has traveled the globe working as a professional dancer, teacher, choreographer, producer and a certified pilates instructor. She shares with BTL her experiences working with Cirque du Soleil, how being a part of the LGBT community influences her work, and what was involved in the rewriting of the "OVO" script for an arena format.

When you learned Cirque du Soleil was changing to an arena format, did you already know what you would do differently?

Yes! This is like the greatest question you can get as an artistic director. I look and watch and there are often moments I say I wish I could change that or do this differently, but there's never time when you're on tour. You can make small changes, but not big ones. And then I thought, the show is very intimate in a tent, people sit close to it, they feel close to the artists. The arena is such a large environment

so when we change the stage and use a bigger one, I wanted to add projection so when sitting far away, you still feel close because it's such a large set to look at. Then I thought, let's put props inside the house and bring artists on the floor at moments. We have changed the pacing of the show, too. The first and second half are now 50 minutes each instead of 60. It goes faster. There's no time to be bored, really.

There are three characters who really tell the story, the clowns. I dissected their stories, which weren't very many, but they were long, so I said, let's see if we can make them shorter and have them appear more frequently in the show so they are constantly involved. We changed the acrobatic acts. The original flying or cradle act was too difficult technically to bring up in the air in the arena. So we took an act that used to be in one of our previous shows, "Corteo," and reworked this act into our show and brought another completely different act that tells a love story

between two butterflies. This entailed changing music and costumes. Just a few, but it's been great.

We started working on that at the end of 2015 into 2016 and started staging in March and premiered in April. In that moment, it wasn't quite finished yet, but we needed to open the show. And it was really, really hard with the challenges of being on tour to actually make changes, but we did it and I'm very thrilled with the results. It's absolutely exciting and so stunning visually. It's beautiful.

In what way has your approach to Cirque du Soleil shows changed?

I'm just so touched by the eclecticism of the performers, the technicians, musicians, the story, set design - everything that comes together to create magic. We enjoy every second of what we do and you really feel it as an audience. You just get sucked into it. Each show is different, but the goal is the same – trying to create a memento for your audience, something they will never forget. We have 19 shows now. There are more people involved, more creators. Sometimes it had to go fast



Marjon Van Grunsven

and feels rushed, but we put the best people in place to get the best quality on stage every day. In that sense, technology has changed. The competition is completely different than back in the day when we were the only one doing what we did. Many companies in the entertainment field are trying to do the same things. We are challenged all the time and have to try and be better all the time. And we have to learn from our mistakes. We're not the only one doing what we do anymore. Things don't always work and we have to go back to the drawing board. At the same time the creative process is still the same. We just have a lot more because a lot more is going on at the same time.

What is one of your greatest challenges as an artistic director?

To help artists become their characters. Some have theater experience. Some artists come to us completely new, having competed as athletes in the Olympics or as acrobats, for example, and have no clue what it means to be an artist. My task is to tell them what the story is about, what it should be like for them and for the audience as an experience. It takes time to sit with them, play with them, workshop with them, rehearse, give them notes, or watch videos of the night before together. Slowly, but surely, they completely get sucked into the story and become artists. It takes time, attention and focus as an artistic director to find ways to inspire them. Each one is different. I have to get to know them a little bit more to come out of their shell, let's say. But when that happens, they see their colleagues doing it and want to be like them. It's just fantastic.

How do you explain the message behind "OVO"?

It's interesting because we can go very deep or stay very simple. It's a simple show in the sense that what you see is what you get. It's inspired by the real, actual life of insects. It's a story about love – simple – a ladybug falls in love with a fly, which is absolutely a fantasy of course, but what I love about it. Then you can go into the deeper message of it – it can be about acceptance; when you see the ladybug she's so different. She's so large and happy and great and fantastic. The fly is this really clumsy, tall, skinny dude – kind of – that comes in from another community of insects. Nobody in the community of insects he visits at first accepts him in it or accepts the fact that he likes their sister, the ladybug, so he has to go through all these adventures and tests to prove he's worth the love of the ladybug. And of course, it's a happy ending and everybody opens their insect arms, let's say, to him and welcomes him into the community. They fall in love and it's great. It's simple, it's funny and it's cute and it's really a nice twist on acceptance in real life. It's a fantastic story that tells you that love is important and acceptance is important. And mostly, to have fun is really important, too, so I think that's the simple message of our show.

As a member of the LGBT community, how important is the message of acceptance?

Well, I was married to a woman for several

years so for me, for example, if we go on that side of the story – I'm open to anything: man, woman, dark, light, tall, skinny – for me it's very important to allow yourself to be connected to whatever you encounter on your path. This is something that I do translate into my work as well. The team, staff, cast – everyone is equal. I don't treat any one person different than the other. Everyone should be respectful of each other's cultures and their values and allow time to get to know those and then work with those. When you succeed to create such an environment it can absolutely be very creative and innovative after that. Does it necessarily bring with me the community of lesbian and gay or straight people? I don't think of that all the time consciously, you know? I think it relates and it's just very recognizable for this community and I think our insect community is a perfect example, exactly portraying that. They're all different, but they all live together and they all accept each other and they all fight with each other, but then move on like a family. I think it's really great.

Following a tumultuous post-election period, how important is it for our community to come together through art to support different cultural experiences and perspectives?

This is breaking my heart. What a disaster. I'm not totally into politics that much, but if I think back to what I just told you – if we did not have art, the nation would simply die. Artists are able to express their inner emotions and opinions in a way that really does open one's mind if you are open to it. I hope that this new leader that is being put into position is going to continue to stimulate this form of life as I like to refer to it. And if he does not, then I think lots of riots will erupt on Earth because being an artist is something that human beings are born with. It always existed. This could turn into a very exciting period of our lives if he doesn't support it and stops people entering into the country and therefore stops the multicultural exchange that we worked so hard to establish and be open to. We're going to have a big problem, but I also have great faith in the artists of this world that they will fight and they will be heard and art is going to be even stronger than it was before. I like to see the positive and optimistic side of things. Artists will never be put down and be made quiet or be told that they have to be silent. They will, in fact, get even more creative. No matter what happens, we're going to be OK.

Give a standing ovation for "OVO" when it runs through Dec. 25 at the Joe Louis Arena located at 19 Steve Yzerman Drive, Detroit. Visit www.cirquedusoleil.com for details and tickets which start at \$44.



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Stagecrafters proudly presents "In the Heights," from the creator of Broadway's hit musical, "Hamilton," Lin-Manuel Miranda.

Miranda conceived the music and lyrics, and also the book by Quiara Alegria Hudes. The story is set over the course of three days in New York City's Washington Heights. Characters in a largely Dominican-American vibrant neighborhood are on the brink of change where dreams are big, ambition is strong, and money is hard to come by. A winning lottery ticket could potentially change the livelihood of the community forever. This exhilarating bi-lingual sensation pulsates with Latin rhythms and hip-hop, and electrifies with exuberant street-dance thus deserving of the 2008 Tony Award for Best Musical.

The show is scheduled for Jan. 20-22, 26-29, and Feb. 2-5, 10-12. Tickets are \$23 Friday-Saturday, and \$25 on Sunday. For more information about Stagecrafters, 415 South Lafayette, Royal Oak, call 248-541-6430 or visit www.stagecrafters.org.

Drag Queen Bingo Moves to a New Square

Five15 cafe on Washington Avenue, known for its entertaining and popular Drag Queen Bingo nights, is getting ready to move. The new location will be a vacant corner store attached to Pronto restaurant and operate under the restaurant's liquor license, according to The Daily Tribune.

Gary Baglio, co-owner of Five15, which operates as a coffee shop, book and gift shop during the day, is hoping to be moved in to the new space at Pronto by March or April 2017.

"I want to turn it into a nice cabaret," he said. Pronto will still keep its restaurant, though a redesign is in the works, and supply all food and alcohol to Five15 events.

Baglio said the new location will not change what he does at Five15, but it is bound to quench a long-denied thirst among his customers during Drag Queen Bingo events.

Five15 does about half its business with its cafe and other sales, he added.

The special bingo nights with drag queens have been a steady attraction and drawn capacity crowds since they began shortly after Baglio's business opened in 2007.

"They have sold out for eight years," he said. The new location will increase the size of Five15 from 1,500 to 2,500 square feet, he added.

City Commissioners this week approved a request from Pronto's owners for a change in operations under the terms of their liquor license.

"Five15 is one of the gems of Royal Oak," said City Commissioner Kyle DuBuc.

Police had no objections and expected no extra demand on police services from the location change.

City officials said Pronto's owners were unsure what to do with the vacant corner store



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space at their business.

"I think it is going to be a great addition," said Kelly Allen, an attorney for Pronto.

Carol Hennessey, a longtime Royal Oak volunteer and organizer of the Memorial Day parade and other events, supported Baglio's move.

"Gary has shown much support for the community," she said. "It will really make that corner store look much better than it has."

Former Royal Oak Mayor Jim Ellison Proud to Protect LGBT Rights

Royal Oak's longest-serving mayor, Jim Ellison, stepped down from the City Commission, set to prep for his next political post: state representative. Michael Fournier was sworn in Dec. 12 as the next mayor of Royal Oak.

Ellison, 64, is to become state Rep. Ellison at noon Jan. 1 in Lansing, after tucking more than a quarter-century of experience in local government under his belt. A Detroit Free Press article highlights Ellison's time in office, and during his tenure on key city committees, Royal Oak has seen spectacular growth.

Brushing off the barbs of critics, the largely pro-development Ellison helped

Royal Oak reinvent its sleepy downtown as a drinking-and-dining destination. And he watched it unleash, since the Great Recession, a run of residential construction virtually unmatched by any other metro Detroit community on a new-housing-per-capita basis in 2013-15

(2016 figures were incomplete). Along the way, he chaired the regional committee that launched the Woodward Dream Cruise ... but ask Ellison about his proudest moments and you won't hear about new restaurants and nightclubs, nor about the new stores and bank branches on Woodward that replaced seedy motels and other dated sites, nor about the millions of dollars in new housing.

You'll hear about the issue that jammed Royal Oak with visitors from across southeast Michigan and beyond, many of them ready to wring Ellison's neck but for the heavy police presence. It's the city's human rights ordinance, forbidding discrimination against gays and lesbians, which city voters passed in 2013 after years of rancorous debate.

"I'm very proud that we got that passed - that was always high on my agenda," Ellison said Dec. 12, before his last city meeting.



Jim Ellison

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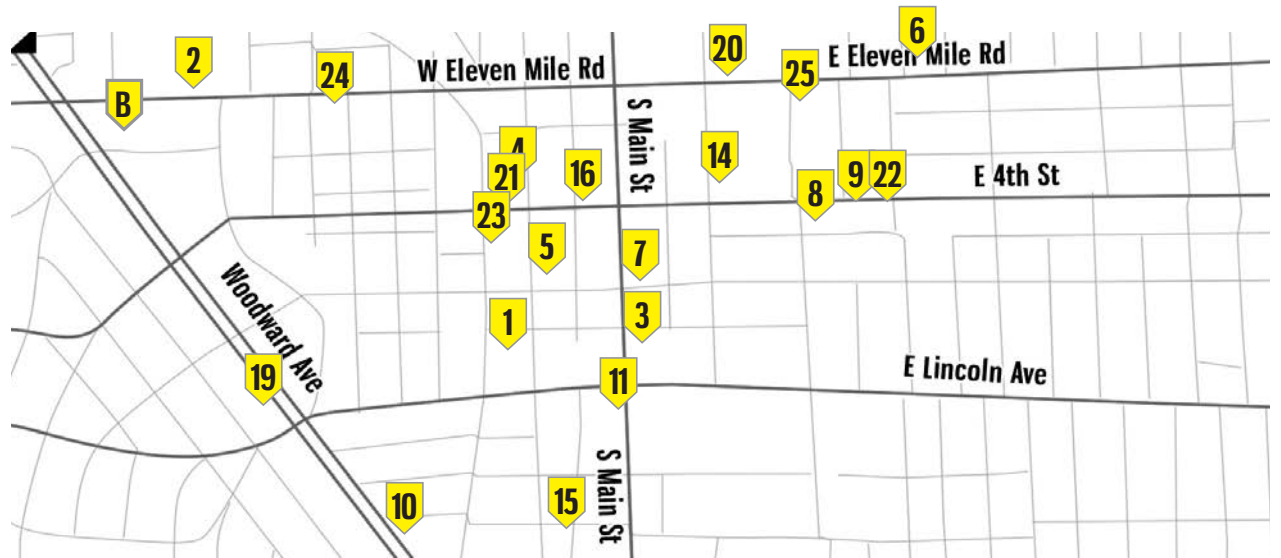
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Photo: Sony Pictures

Chris Pratt and Jennifer Lawrence on Queer Plumbers in Space, LGBT Equality & Beyoncé

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Take it from Chris Pratt, who recently experienced being shipped off to a new world: The future is full of promise for the queer population.

"If you're a member of the LGBTQ community and you're really good at plumbing, then you know, they'll send you, I'm sure," quips one of the hottest actors on earth regarding whether the hibernating pod people aboard the Starship Avalon in his latest action-adventure, "Passengers," are of varied sexual orientations.

"Anyone who's valuable to the homestead company and (who) would be worth money to the homestead company would go," the 37-year-old "Guardians of the Galaxy" star continues, speaking from the Beverly Hills Four Seasons, "so that would include all people from

all – the whole spectrum, anyone who could essentially provide a service that's an old-world service."

Imagine a world of gay plumbers who aren't defined by their sexuality but by their ability to unclog toilets. Or one in which Chris Pratt, as Jim Preston, and his "Passengers" co-star Jennifer Lawrence, who plays Aurora Lane, aren't contemplating anyone's sexuality. Perhaps sexuality will be but a footnote among the more important qualities that characterize persona, even as Jim prematurely wakes up 90 years ahead of schedule.

"Hopefully we're well into the future where none of these things are even a conversation anymore, where they've gone from issues to conversation to hopefully (being) forgotten about, and everybody is treated equally," says Lawrence, 26. "So, yes. Of course I would assume there'd be diversity."

Naturally, director Morten Tyldum shares that sentiment. Not only does he have a gay stepdaughter, the filmmaker was behind the camera for the Oscar-winning "Imitation Game," starring Benedict Cumberbatch as gay computer scientist and famed WWII codebreaker Alan Turing.

"I think, very shortly, it will become a non-issue," Tyldum says. "As Chris said: If he's a good plumber, he would be on the ship. Nobody would care if he's gay, straight, whatever."

That, he notes, was his approach to 2014's "Imitation Game," which was controversial for its absence of gay sex scenes. In an interview with Variety in 2015, the director explained why his Turing wasn't romantically or sexually engaged with another man: "It was not

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► Passengers

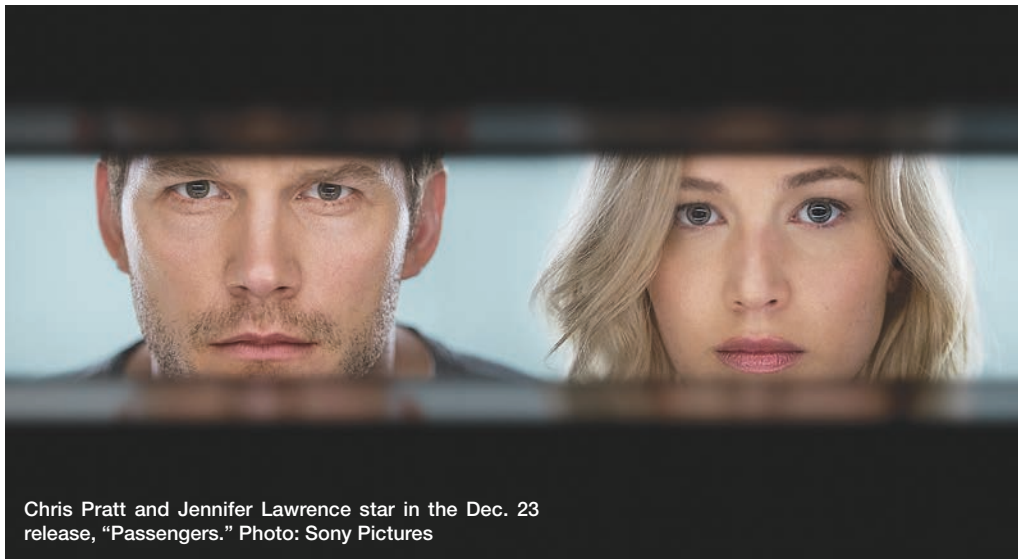
Continued from p. 24

because we were afraid it would offend anybody,” he said at the time. “If I ... had this thing about a straight character, I would never have a sex scene to prove that he’s heterosexual. If I have a gay character in a movie, I need to have a sex scene in it just to prove that he’s gay?”

In “Passengers,” Pratt and Lawrence, known for her Oscar-winning performance in “Silver Linings Playbook” and as Katniss Everdeen in “The Hunger Games” franchise, do go at it. But Tyldum, who admits sex scenes in films are “very complicated,” explains this sexy scene is necessary for character development.

“The sex scene in ‘Passengers’ is there because it’s a relationship – it’s between the two main characters – and there’s a sex moment because it’s about these two characters,” he says. “I think to have a sex scene it needs to have a story moment, going from the two strangers to becoming a couple.”

The difference, the director points out, is that “to have a sex scene in ‘Imitation Game’ would be to sort of prove that Alan Turing is gay,” which, like the hypothetical gay pod people, would minimize more qualifying



Chris Pratt and Jennifer Lawrence star in the Dec. 23 release, “Passengers.” Photo: Sony Pictures

human attributes.

For “Counterpart,” an upcoming espionage-themed thriller Tyldum shot for Starz, the filmmaker reveals one of the leads is gay “for no other reason than that person is gay.”

“It’s not made an issue,” he adds. “He just happens to be gay.”

Conversations with his stepdaughter led to him underplaying the gay character’s sexuality both in “Imitation Game” and “Counterpart.” The sex in “Passengers,” on the other hand, builds upon Pratt and Lawrence’s

chemistry. Hypothetically, could a movie this blockbuster-sized involve two queer lovers in space?

“I think that that will come sooner than we think,” he says. “But there’s always going to be the challenge that the more an audience can identify with the character – there’s a bigger group of heterosexuals than gay people, but I think we’ll be seeing more and more.”

Meanwhile, you decide if “Passengers” benefits from a hetero sex scene and – bonus! – two shots of Pratt’s bare bottom. Lawrence

relishes the fact that “we could just keep diving in” – no, she wasn’t exactly talking about sexy time with Pratt. She was referring to the “original script.”

“It’s really rare that you get to be so intimate with filmmaking,” she says, not meaning “intimate” in the way most of us do when we refer to Chris Pratt. “It’s normally an ensemble. I’ve never worked with so few actors before. I was very excited to be stuck in space in Atlanta with them.”

Shot on a 1,000-foot-tall, four-story concourse adorned with eight miles of LED lights, Pratt likens the confined set to a stage play, and says, “It did feel more intimate than anything I’ve ever done.”

What other celebrity would they be keen on sharing such close quarters with?

“Oprah! Beyoncé!” Lawrence blurts. “No, I’d get jealous of Beyoncé after a while and, like, probably rip her hair out.”

Pratt, on the other end, wants “someone really funny.”

“Well, my wife (Anna Faris) is famous, so I’m gonna say, of course my wife. I would take my wife. But I would try to do someone really funny, maybe like George Carlin.”

Unless, of course, you know any famous gay plumbers.

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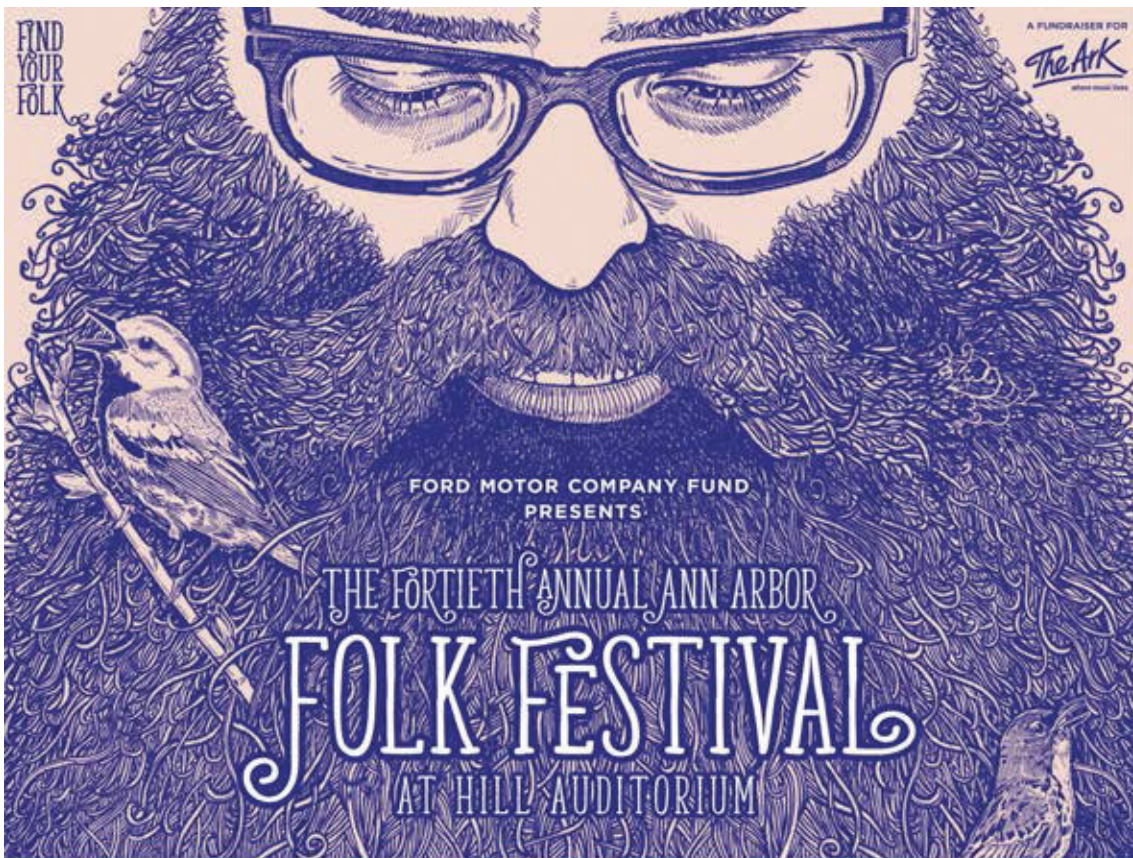
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 ZACH HECKENDORF
 Susan Werner, MC

Saturday, January 28 | 6:30PM
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MARGO PRICE
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 Susan Werner, MC

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#SipTheStory This exhibition has been organized by the Detroit Institute of Arts. Support has been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts. *The Strong Family* (detail), 1732, oil on canvas; Charles Philips, English. Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, Gift of Robert Lehman, 1944.



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Happenings

Editor's Pick

OUTINGS

Thursday, Dec. 22

LGBT Youth Meeting 6 p.m.
Meets every Thursday KGLRC, 629
Pioneer St., **Kalamazoo**. 269-349-
4234. michael@kglrc.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.
redbellyenegal90@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.
Tickets \$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

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

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



the community love to dress to their best for this event, KGLRC believes "that if you're dressed as yourself, then you're dressed to your best, and we hope you come no matter what." Unable to attend? Please consider making a donation to support their work. Tickets from \$35-250 for the event on 314 South Park St. in Kalamazoo can be purchased online at www.eventbrite.com/e/winter-gala-fundraiser-awards-ceremony-tickets-27938896993. For more information, email margy@kglrc.org or call 248-349-4234.

KGLRC Hosts Annual Winter Gala

The festivities continue beyond the holiday at the Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center. Members of the community are invited to the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts on Jan. 28 at 7 p.m. for a fun night of food, drinks and dancing. The KGLRC's annual Winter Gala Awards Ceremony and Fundraiser celebrates accomplishments from the past year, recognizes many exceptional community members, and looks toward the future. Their successful silent auction will happen again with lots of goodies from local businesses up for grabs. A note on dress: While many members of

Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 2483987105.
Ireyes@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

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

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

Saturday, Dec. 31

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.
Ireyes@goaffirmations.org www.
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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

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

New Years Eve Dance 8 p.m.
Tickets: \$55-65. Dinner and
dancing with DJ Carol. Women Out
and About and GOAL, 200 North
Main St., **Royal Oak**. 248-943-
2411. lindacbrin@gmail.com http://
womenoutandabout.net

13th Annual Women's NYE Party
9:30 p.m. Tickets: \$35 in advance
only. Lesbian Connection, 5205
S. Pennsylvania St., **Lansing**.
lansinglesbiansL2L@gmail.com

Wednesday, Jan. 4

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

See Happenings, page 30



Broad Museum Seeks New Home for Kresge Collection

EAST LANSING – Michigan State University's Broad Art Museum is planning to lease a space across Grand River Avenue where it will showcase art from the former Kresge Art Museum, the Broad's new director, Marc-Olivier Wahler, said in an interview with City Pulse Nov. 17.

Wahler called the former Kresge collection "a pillar of the museum." He hopes to secure the space in 2017 "if all goes well." He didn't say how large the space would be and offered no more specific details, but he described the project as "very real."

"We want to open across the street with a new space where we can show this important collection," Wahler said.

The proposed new space not only has the potential to park historic works of art among the burger joints and comic book stores of Grand River Avenue's commercial strip, it would further one of Wahler's top priorities as he begins to make his mark on the Broad: extending the museum's reach into the surrounding community.

It might also heal a lingering sore spot left by the Broad's handling of the



Kresge collection.

"We could attract again people who have been bitter about having donated work to the Kresge and then learning their donation is going into storage," Wahler said.

The new space may contain some contemporary art but would be "90 percent" art from the former Kresge collection, Wahler said.

"We want to engage all these people who were active with the Kresge," he said. "It's a very concrete plan. It's just a question of raising money."

The Kresge Art Museum closed its

doors in July 2011, just before the Broad Art Museum, devoted to the contemporary art favored by major donor Eli Broad, opened in November 2012. By that time, the Kresge had amassed about 7,500 works of art, from Greek and Roman artifacts to Islamic manuscripts to European portraits and landscapes, as well as works by 20th century artists such as Alexander Calder and Salvador Dali.

Wahler said the former Kresge collection is part of what makes the Broad Museum a genuine museum, as opposed to an art center with rotating exhibits.

"An art center is more on the horizontal dynamic, but a museum is more on the vertical – it has roots," Wahler said. "It's very important to give this verticality of thoughts. We have a fantastic collection."

The Broad Art Museum is located at 547 E. Circle Drive in East Lansing. Call 517-884-4800 or visit <http://broadmuseum.msu.edu/> for more information.

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Editor's Pick

DSO Will Party Like It's 1999



If you don't have plans for New Year's Eve, you do now. Do not miss the opportunity to put on your dancing shoes and walk the purple carpet. The Detroit Symphony Orchestra in partnership with Detroit Public Television will pay tribute to Prince, the iconic legend known for his eclectic work, flamboyant stage presence, extravagant dress and perhaps, most importantly, his out-of-this-world music. Led by guest conductor Brent Havens, who arranged Prince's top hits for orchestra, the DSO together with a tribute band will perform adaptations of the artist's top hits including

"Little Red Corvette," "Purple Rain," "Raspberry Beret," "When Doves Cry" and more. The evening program begins at 8 p.m. followed by the concert at 10 p.m. and a confetti drop at midnight. A breakfast bar and signature cocktails will be served until 2 a.m. Tickets are \$40-75. Packages are available for the Little Red Corvette level for \$500, the Purple Rain level for \$250 and the Raspberry Beret level for \$100. This event, at the Max M. & Marjorie Fisher Music Center on 3711 Woodward Ave. on Dec. 31, will be televised and live-streamed worldwide by DPTV made possible by the Stanley and Judith Frankel Family Foundation. For more information, call 313-576-5111 or visit www.dso.org.

► Happenings

Continued from p. 28

discussion-groups

Thursday, Jan. 5

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

Saturday, Jan. 7

Youth Leadership Program Interviews 5 p.m. Interviews open to youth ages 13-20. The program begins Jan. 17 at 4:30 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 2483987105. lreyes@goaffirmations.org www.goaffirmations.org

MOBIE &

Concerts

Trans-Siberian Orchestra "Trans-Siberian Orchestra "The Ghosts of Christmas Eve" Tour" Hear the best of TSO and more. Tickets: \$34-\$74. The Palace of Auburn Hills, 5 Championship Dr., Auburn Hills. Dec. 27 - Dec. 27. 248-377-0100. <https://www.palacenet.com/events/detail/trans-siberian-orchestra-1>

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://arenagrandrapids.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

Kearsley St., Flint. 8 p.m. Dec. 31. 810-237-8689. Tickets.TheWhiting.Com

Shows

Bakers Keyboard Lounge

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

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

Sugar Plum Panto

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

The Whiting Hosts 2nd Annual New Year's Eve Gala

Dinner, dancing and live entertainment on the stage. Tickets: \$125 for Cash Bar and \$150 for Open Bar. The Whiting, 1241 E.

Civic/Community Theater

David Sedaris's The Santaland Diaries and Season's Greetings Tickets: \$10-20. The Ringwald Theatre, 22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Through 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. Through 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

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

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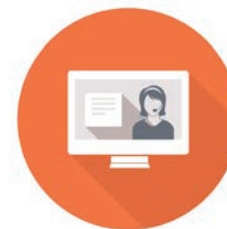
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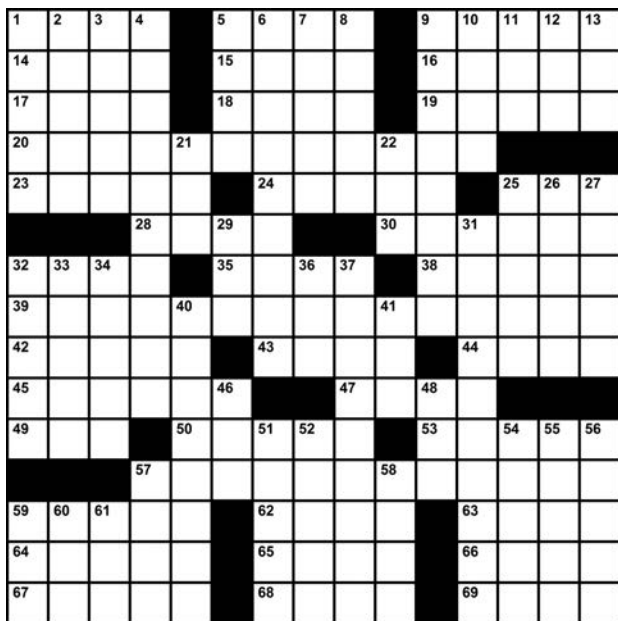
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 44 Lots of bucks
 45 Mexican food brand
 47 Drag queen ___ Phace
 49 Peeples of "Fame"
 50 Up on
 53 President without a first lady Buchanan
 57 End of chant
 59 Risky fellatio partner?
 62 Highsmith title condiment
 63 Hurler Hershiser
 64 Coming from Uranus, e.g.
 65 Singer Fure
 66 Internally pink
 67 You can go down on them in winter
 68 Petrol station choice
 69 It may be grand, to Glenn Burke
- 21 Sex attachment
 22 One of TV's "Bosom Buddies"
 25 Your gardener's tool
 26 Figure skater Sonja
 27 Moon in "Return of the Jedi"
 29 Broadway bio
 31 "Spartacus" extras
 32 Bean of _Desperate Housewives_
 33 Kind of dish
 34 LuPone Broadway role
 36 "Mamma ___!"
 37 Greek tragedy writer
 40 Chickens like Foghorn of cartoons
 41 Eavesdropping org.
 46 1917 US soldiers
 48 Duds in the bedroom
 51 Prop department jewelry
 52 Peter the Great, and more
 54 Many a painting by Frida's Diego
 55 Former NFL player Tuaolo
 56 Beaver State capital
 57 Pine for
 58 "Tell ___ the judge!"
 59 Some women's studies degrees
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 61 Overtime creator

Down

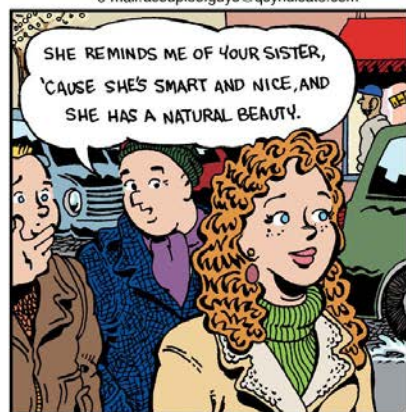
- 1 Acid type
 2 Ripley portrayal Matt
 3 Material for nice stones
 4 Instrument for viewing an angry inch?
 5 Low-quality meat
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 7 Writer Dykewomon
 8 Big tipplers
 9 More like Gomer's Mayberry
 10 Phantom of the Opera name
 11 Fit start
 12 Bonheur's word
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Across

- 1 Cukor's rib donor
 5 Decide not to swallow
 9 Amelie Mauresmo's woman
 14 Threesome that visited Mary
 15 ___ sci
 16 Hunter that comes out at night
 17 Apple that isn't a fruit
 18 What you should take it like
 19 Shopping aids
 20 Start of a Green Day chant at the

- 2016 American Music Awards
 23 There's a single runner
 24 Where to find a date in a hot place
 25 Cyndi Lauper's "___ Bop"
 28 Poses for Bruce Weber
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 35 Hoops for the New York Liberty
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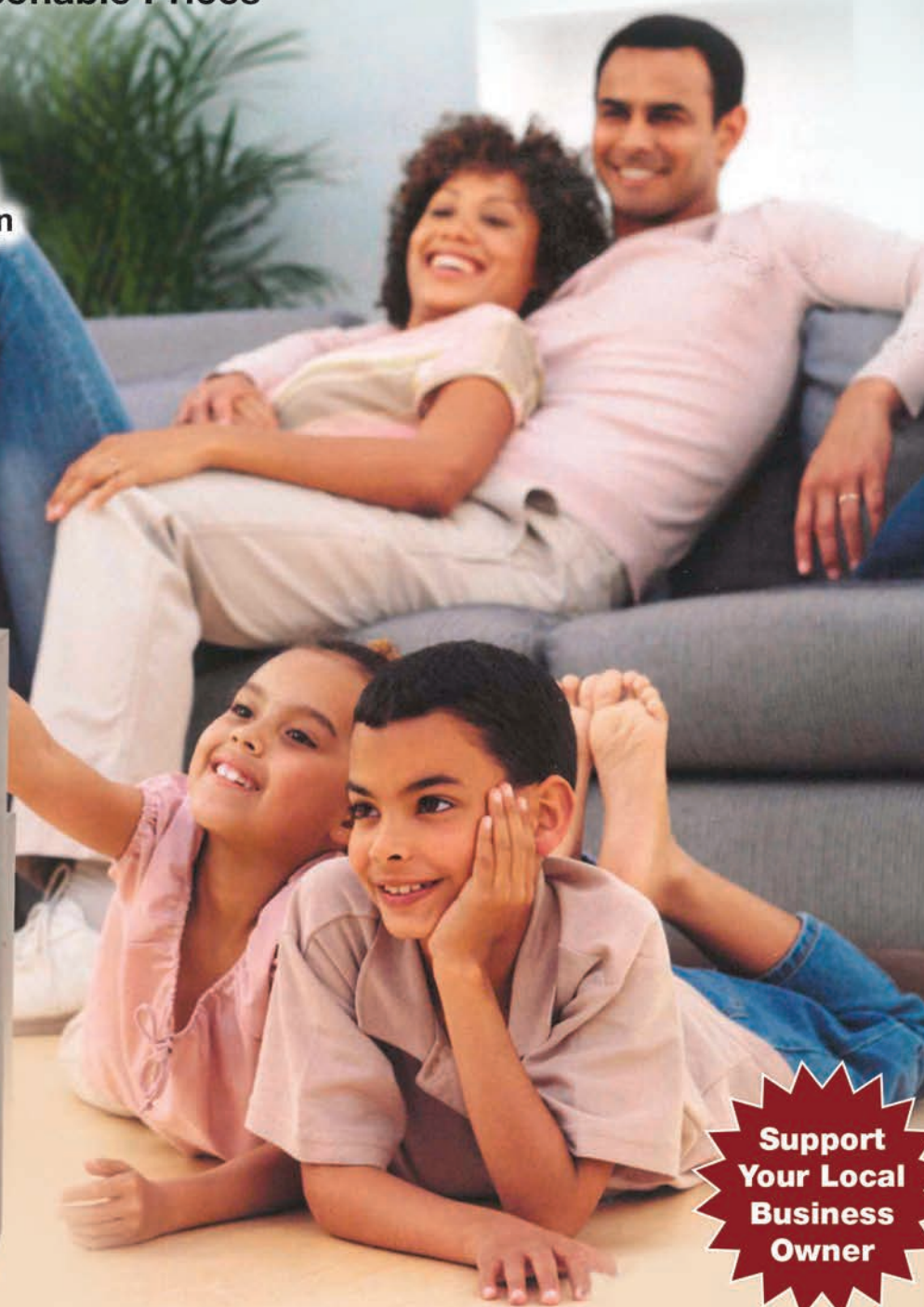
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