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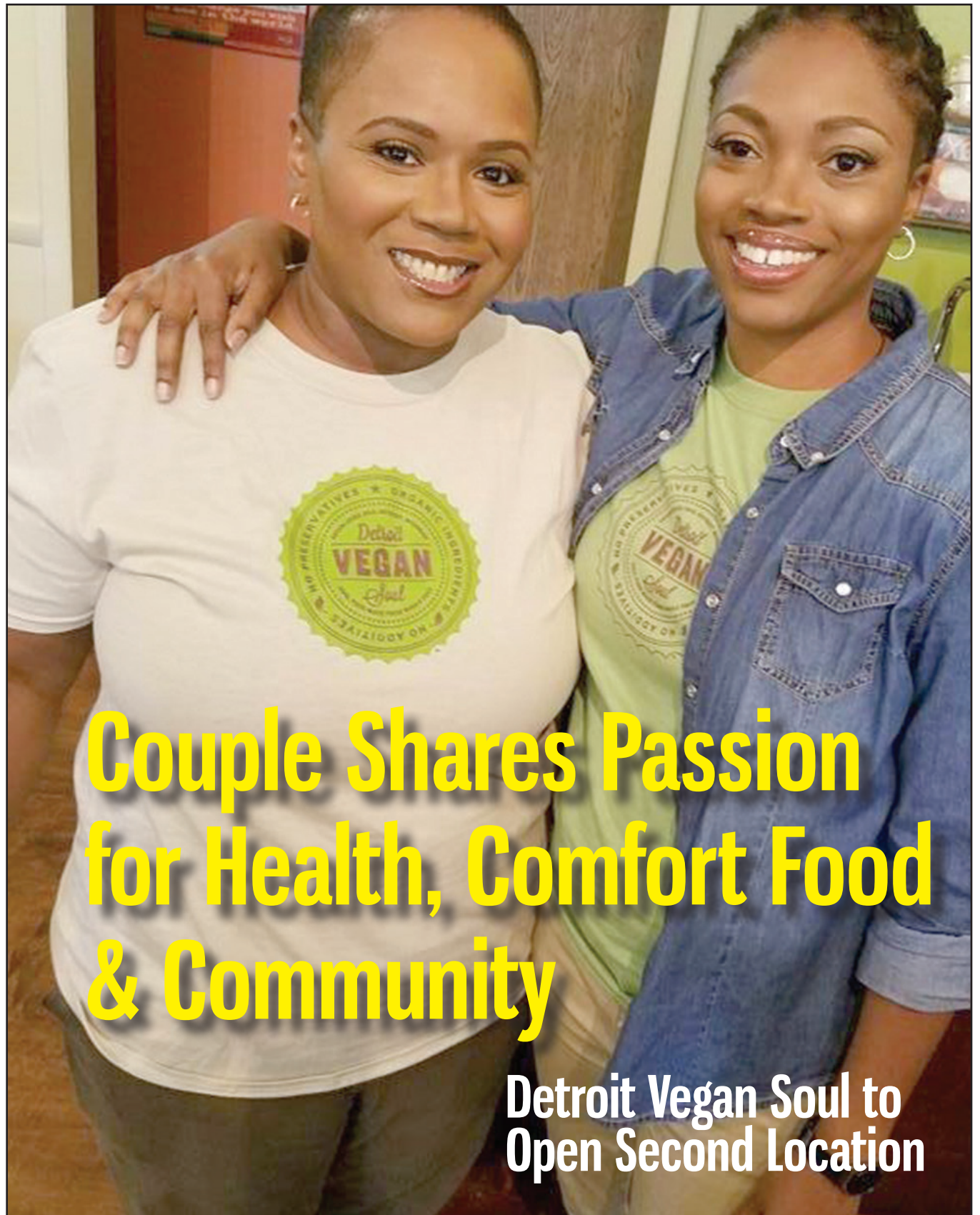
Our Guide to the Best LGBTQ Events

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VOL 2532 • AUGUST 10, 2017  
ISSUE 1027

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# Lesbian Couple Shares Passion for Health, Comfort Food and Community

## Detroit Vegan Soul to Open Second Location

BY DAVID RYALS

During the past four years, Detroit Vegan Soul has become a staple in West Village among eaters who are looking for a healthy, high-quality meal. Some of its most famous customers are Stevie Wonder, Wu-Tang Clan members, MC Hammer and former President Bill Clinton.

Successful co-owners Kirsten Ussery-Boyd, general manager and Erika Boyd, executive chef, have established one of the most beloved vegan restaurants in the downtown and Metro Detroit areas. Even PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) was impressed and gave DVS the number one spot on a list of best vegan soul food restaurants across the country last year.

“Thanks to Detroit Vegan Soul, diners can enjoy all the lip-smacking flavor of classic soul food—minus the cruelty and cholesterol,” PETA Executive Vice President Tracy Remain told Daily Detroit.

On Aug. 12, Ussery-Boyd (38, a North Carolina native) and Boyd, (43, a northwest Detroit native) will open their second location in the Grandmont Rosedale neighborhood.

And they will do it again as a couple. They met 13 years ago at a party and both had the mutual desire to start a business. They had romantic chemistry immediately. They soon discovered a big shared passion was health. Both women came from families plagued by bad health.

Through tons of research, they decided that switching to a plant-based diet would be the healthiest thing for them to break out of the familial cycle. With this knowledge, mutual desire and lifestyle change came the culmination of a unique idea to open their own restaurant.

When the U.S. Supreme Court passed the Marriage Equality Act in 2013 they tied the knot. As an ambitious lesbian couple they have grown stronger together with their flourishing business. And because of their success, they were recently given a \$60,000 Motor City Match grant, and with it they bought a building last year to open their second location, roughly the same size as their first location, a 1,200-square-foot space. They plan to hire another 20-25 employees.

The opening of a second location comes at a time when people are starting to make healthier food choices. Research shows that Metro Detroit is still one of the unhealthiest cities in America. What another Detroit Vegan Soul location brings is jobs and a stable, healthy alternative inside a 2.5-mile area

“Detroit Vegan Soul was born out of our own personal journeys to break the cycle of disease in our families.”

– Kirsten Ussery-Boyd

flooded with fast food eateries. They partner with local food providers such as The Brinery, Earthworks, Keep Growing Detroit and D Town farms, which provide their seasonal organic produce and they give them their food waste for composting to help them fertilize their farm.

Ussery-Boyd spoke with BTL about the new location, their role in Detroit’s LGBTQ community and more.

### How did Detroit Vegan Soul come about – what was the inspiration?

Detroit Vegan Soul was born out of our own personal journeys to break the cycle of disease in our families. We were getting into juicing, fasting and experimenting with vegetarian food but Erika’s father passing of prostate cancer was the pivotal moment for us. He never smoked or drank, but had a horrible standard American diet. It prompted us to delve deeper into the relationship between food and disease prevention and how food can reverse diet related diseases such as diabetes and cancer. We watched documentaries, read books, took in as much information as we could. When Erika began veganizing family recipes there was no turning back. We became vegan, felt amazing and wanted to help others transition. Detroit Vegan Soul was born. We started out with meal delivery, catering and pop ups all while we were working other jobs. We got a lot of support and followers and, not to make it sound easy or simplistic, but a year later we were working on opening our first restaurant.

### What are your projections and hopes for your second location?

We anticipate our second location being even busier than the first. In the neighborhood where we have opened there aren’t currently any other healthy options. The neighborhood is super excited for us to be open. The



Successful co-owners Erika Boyd, executive chef and Kirsten Ussery-Boyd, general manager have established one of the most beloved vegan restaurants in the downtown and Metro Detroit areas.

community is so welcoming and we’re excited to be there.

### Since the restaurant’s inception, in what ways has it impacted Detroit and the Metro area?

We like to think that we’ve played a big part in the rejuvenation of Detroit’s neighborhoods. Detroit has always had wonderful, close knit neighborhoods but the commercial corridors had emptied out over the years. Agnes street, where our first location is located in Historic West Village neighborhood, was empty. After we opened, it was a domino effect. Now there’s another restaurant, coffee shop, and cycle shop offering spin classes on the block. Down the street on Kercheval more restaurants and businesses are coming. It only takes one business to be the first to take a chance and the buzz from its success attracts others. We hope to have the same affect in Grandmont Rosedale where our second location is. There are already awesome businesses there. Our opening will help bring more traffic for them, create buzz, and attract more businesses to take a chance in one of Detroit’s best kept secret neighborhoods. But above all, we want to help Detroiters get healthy. Detroiters have high rates of diabetes and cancer and die too early from diet-related diseases. This has been documented in recent studies. We know that a plant-based diet can completely change peoples’ trajectories and we want to be that first step along their journey. We want to show that plant-based food isn’t something to be afraid of. It’s delicious and filling. With southern fried tofu, who needs chicken.

### As a lesbian couple, how have you impacted the LGBTQ community in the Detroit area?

We’ve been able to give jobs to LGBT people, in particular youth. That is so important for our community and important to us. Our employees know they can be themselves when they come to work. They don’t have to hide or act macho when they’re not. They get opportunities to advance in our restaurants they might not have at other places that may not want to give them a chance because of their perceived sexual orientation or because of their lack of experience. We’ve really been able to help people stabilize their lives.

### Tell us about the support you received from J.P. Morgan Chase as a result of their commitment to the LGBTQ community.

As an LGBT owned business, it’s been wonderful to know that the funding community supports us and has not withheld opportunity. We were able to get a loan for our build out through their Entrepreneurs of Color fund. We are out as a couple and we never had to hide that during the process, which is a good thing because we wouldn’t participate in anything that would force us to hide who we are.

The first 32 guests to arrive at Detroit Vegan Soul, 19614 Grand River, on Aug. 12 will receive a ticket to dine-in when the doors open to the public at 1 p.m. After that, guests will be put on a wait list. On Aug. 15, the restaurant will start regular business hours of 12-8 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. For more visit [www.detroitvegansoul.com](http://www.detroitvegansoul.com).

# Ferndale Mayor to Run Unopposed Again

## Dave Coulter Talks Issues, What He's Proud Of, and Why He's Still the Best Person for the Job

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Dave Coulter's political career dates back some 15 years. Coulter was elected as an openly gay man to the Oakland County Commission in 2002, defeating a 20-year incumbent by 86 votes. He would go on to serve four terms on the commission and serve, for a time, as the Democratic minority leader.

Coulter left the commission in 2010 to run for a seat in the Michigan Senate. However, he was defeated in the primary. In January 2011, Coulter was appointed – not elected – mayor of Ferndale. But that November he did win election to the office by a whopping 84 percent. Two years later, he faced formidable challenger Craig Covey. Covey had crafted his career contrary to Coulter's. He was elected to the Ferndale City Council on his second try and ran for mayor in 2007. In 2009, he won re-election before stepping down to run for the Oakland County Commission in 2010. But that bid was unsuccessful and Covey wanted to sit behind the mayor's desk once more.

Coulter bested him in a four-way race taking 47 percent of the vote to Covey's 33 percent. Then Coulter ran unchallenged in 2015 as he does again this year as will Councilmembers Melanie Piana and Greg Pawlica. Nevertheless, the popular politician and the director of external affairs with Children's Hospital of Michigan sat down with BTL to share what's on his mind leading up to this year's election and talk about the city he calls home.

### What does running unopposed for the second time mean to you?

I hope it means that people are satisfied with the progress that we've made in the city and confident in my leadership. It feels a little strange because when you're an elected official you're sort of hotwired to campaign. So I was ready to. But I appreciate the fact that folks seem to have confidence in me.

### After six years in office, why do you feel you're still the best person for the job?

I'm working hard every day to try to

make Ferndale a more welcoming and successful city. And there are lots of things I want to continue to work on. I'm energized by that challenge and there's a lot more I want to do.



but everyone's perspective is respected and I'm proud that we accomplish things

*“I'm working hard every day to try to make Ferndale a more welcoming and successful city. And there are lots of things I want to continue to work on. I'm energized by that challenge and there's a lot more I want to do.”*

### How has Ferndale changed during your time as mayor?

The biggest difference is the economy in Ferndale and nationally is very different. We were in a recession when I became mayor and mostly we were looking for ways to cut the budget and save money. Now we're able to do things like invest in our parks and roads and downtown. That makes a huge difference to the success of a city. I've been just as committed to making sure that Ferndale is a welcoming and inclusive community so I'm proud that we formally adopted a welcoming city ordinance directed at immigrants in the past year. And we've taken a number of steps to make sure that all people feel welcome in Ferndale.

### What are you most proud of having accomplished so far?

I'm proud of the teamwork that the council and staff and I do to keep the boat rowing in the same direction. We all come at issues with different perspectives

for our residents with many voices at the table.

### What's the biggest issue facing Ferndale residents right now?

We have a parking problem downtown and we're going to break ground in the next six months on a parking and development project in our downtown that I'm very excited about. We're going to continue making improvements to our parks, which I think are the cornerstone of our strong neighborhoods, and because housing values have shot up so high in Ferndale we're going to look at an affordable housing policy to make sure that folks who want to live here don't get priced out of the city.

### What does the future hold for you? Can you foresee a day when you'll no longer wish to sit behind the mayor's desk?

I take the years two at a time and that's how I'm approaching this election. I'm just honored to have the opportunity to get to do it another term.

*Learn more about Dave Coulter's commitment to a modern, sustainable, welcoming and successful government in Ferndale at [www.davecoulter.com](http://www.davecoulter.com).*

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RAINBOW



## Gavin Grimm Case Sent Back to Lower Court

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS, WASHINGTON BLADE

The case of a transgender teenager who challenged his Virginia school district's bathroom policy has been sent back to a lower court.

The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond made the ruling in the Gavin Grimm case on Aug. 2. The Associated Press reported the 4th Circuit was scheduled to hear oral arguments next month.

Grimm filed a federal lawsuit against the Gloucester County School District's policy prohibiting students from using bathrooms and locker rooms that don't correspond with their "biological gender."

The U.S. Supreme Court was scheduled to hear oral arguments in the Grimm case on March 28. The justices remanded it to the 4th Circuit after President Trump rescinded guidance to public schools that said Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 requires them to allow trans students to use restrooms based on their gender identity.

Grimm in June graduated from Gloucester County High School.

## New Support Group for Transgender Individuals and Allies

The transgender community in the downriver area will have an opportunity to connect one another during a Wednesday night support group beginning on Sept. 20. The group will meet at 7 p.m. at St. Phillip Lutheran Church, 1790 Fort St. in Trenton. Paulette Niemiec, a licensed counselor in the state of Michigan will facilitate conversation every Wednesday. Niemiec, a transgender woman, has 15 years of experience in field of mental health and psychology. For more information, contact Pastor Branden Hunt or Mike Bennet at 734-676-7141. Connect with TGMI at 855-345-8464 or call Niemiec directly at 800-842-2954, ext. 122.

# Motor City Sisters: 'We Are the Nuns of Our Community'

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

They describe themselves as an order of 21st century nuns dedicated to the promulgation of universal joy and the expiation of stigmatic guilt. But odds are the Motor City Sisters are unlike any other nuns you've ever seen.

"We use the imagery of a nun because we all know that nuns in the Catholic Church are the ones who get things done," said Sister Estee Louder Harder Faster, who founded the order in 2014.

This imagery is used, she said, to bring the gay, straight and transgender communities together in an effort to raise money for the community as a whole. According to Sister Estee, that mandate comes with very little limitation.

"We'll work with anybody who needs help," she said. "We'll walk dogs, feed the homeless. We'll do anything to bring the community together. If you're having a party, we'll mix and mingle with your guests or sell shots or raffle tickets. Whatever you need us to do. We'll help raise funds."

The first such order, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, was founded in San Francisco in 1979. Today, there are orders in 40 cities across the globe. The newest is in Berlin, Germany.

"You can tell where a sister is from by what she's wearing on her head," explained Sister Estee. "We're the Motor City Sisters so we wear a coronet that looks like a hubcap. It's modeled after a '65 Cadillac hubcap."

Sister Christy Anny was first introduced to the sisters in Chicago several years ago.

"I thought, how cute, a bunch of guys dressed as nuns," she recalled. "I later learned a little about the organization, but there were no sisters here in Detroit. About two years ago I saw the sisters at Motor City Pride and knew I had to join. It combines my love of drag, giving to my community, promoting human rights, having fun and



The Motor City Sisters spreading their love and joy in Palmer Park during this year's Hotter Than July. BTL Photo: Jason A. Michael

using humor to expose hate, bigotry, and complacency that chain the human spirit."

But joining an order is not as easy as filling out a membership application or paying dues.

"It's a process of progression that includes learning about the sisters and completing a novice project," said Sister Christy. "The process is aspirant, postulant, novice, and fully professed sisters (or guard). In my case, my novice project was a show called Stars of the Holiday that last December raised \$1,000 for the Ruth Ellis Center."

The show would go on to win Best Produced Show at the Performers Awards of Detroit.

"My favorite thing about being a sister is just really being able to go out there and help and be incognito in a way," said Sister Gin-ja Lox. "People don't know who I am out of face. So just to be able to go out and do good for the community and be incognito about it. I remember one time it was me and another sister and we broke up an argument outside of a bar. It was someone who had just lost their partner of 25 years. And of course they were intoxicated and we were able to simmer down the argument and get them both cabs and get them both home safely. But it was really letting that person who had just lost his partner cry on my shoulder for about 20 minutes. That was really all the person needed."

Despite the goodwill they promote, there may be those, particularly those raised

**“** My favorite thing about being a sister is just really being able to go out there and help and be incognito in a way. People don't know who I am out of face. So just to be able to go out and do good for the community and be incognito about it. **”**

– Sister Gin-ja Lox

Catholic, who take issue with the concept of such radical and secular nuns. But the sisters are unfazed.

"We are the nuns of our community," said Sister Christy. "Catholic nuns aren't in our community providing safe sex kits at the bar, helping other charities raise money, educating our community, and telling people to let go of guilt and stigma. Yes we employ the fabulous attire of Catholic nuns. If that offends anyone, they can be offended and we will keep on our mission."

Sister Gin-ja agreed.

"There's many different religions within the sisters," she said. "We don't conform to a certain religion. But we're definitely not making fun of Catholics as much as we're taking that imagery of the nuns, because everyone knows that it's the nuns that help people."

## SAVE THE DATE

### Transtastic Night to Remember

The Motor City Sisters will host "Transtastic Night to Remember" on Aug. 13 at Menjos Complex, 928/950 W. McNichols Ave. in Detroit. Funds raised will benefit the order and the Ruth Ellis Center. Visit the event page on Facebook [gaybe.am/aE](http://gaybe.am/aE) for details. For more information on the Motor City Sisters.

>> [www.motorcitysisters.org](http://www.motorcitysisters.org)

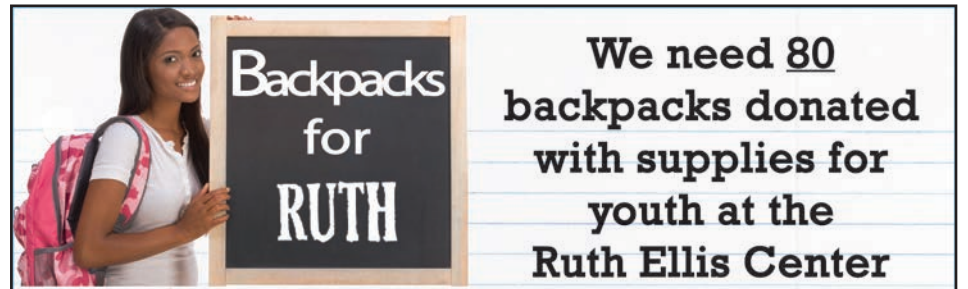
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# Panic! Panic! As Metaphor



## Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

**B**e prepared. What follows will likely upset you. What occurred to me that prompts this metaphoric recounting PG sent me into a total panic when it happened this past Monday. One way or another, I guarantee it will upset you. For several reasons that you are metaphorically part of.

I had just returned from Chase Bank to my campus art studio. I was depositing a check at the bank for a few art items I had sold months ago.

I had come to the bank after spending an hour or so at the nearby Barnes & Noble Wi-Fi online service. Sitting to my right as I checked my email was a young man, too old to be a student. He was dozing, falling asleep. His cell phone lay directly in front of him, perhaps six or seven inches away.

As I finished checking my email and Facebook pages, it occurred to me it might be well to lightly poke this guy, waking him to tell him that his cell phone was in easy reach of being grabbed while he dozed. He nodded. Grunted. Placed the cell phone in his pocket, and went back to sleep.

I returned to my studio, called my artist friend Jon Strand, chatted for several routine minutes with him, and focused my attention on further detailing an already highly-detailed art piece I was working on. Once in this alpha mode I spent a good hour or so detailing, detailing, detailing.

Suddenly it struck me. Sort of casually at first. Where did I put my laptop and its case? Not expecting anything to be out of the ordinary, I looked in the usual studio spots. I looked and looked and looked. Oh gawd, where is it? Where? Where?

I checked throughout the apartment/studio complex. Downstairs. No! Upstairs. No! In the overnight safety cabinet. No! No! No!

I became beside myself with panic. Panic! Did I leave it at the bank? Did I leave it under the Wi-Fi table? My intense panic screamed birth certificate! Passport! Check books! (Oh no! Oh no!)

My iPad. My art images. My finished PG columns. On and on and on!

It was all I could do to keep my wits – a semblance of sanity – and a what, oh what to do focus.

I was all set to run – Run! Do not walk! – to the Barnes & Noble and Chase Bank hoping that some honest person would find my internet treasure and life-sustaining items and turn them in. (Please! Please! Let that be true.)

As I opened my front door, I came close to collapsing in relief and – thankful, thankful – exuberant joy – I found my computer on the porch bench where I had absentmindedly left it.

I was something of a gladly redeemed, nervous wreck for about an hour. What if? What if? What if? But out of the panic – and a writer's need to share – a metaphor series suggests itself. Give it focused, wide awake consideration.

Among my items carried with my computer units were these: birth certificate, passport, checks, personal contacts, freedom-of-speech thoughts, and writings.

And, this metaphor from panic. What if my LGBT birthright is taken from me? What if my international mobility and respect are voided? What if my banking privileges are rebuked or denied? What if my personal information becomes a source for tracking and rounding up our local and national rainbow community?

It's happened once before. It can happen again. Maybe it's not too late. Or, maybe it is.

If I've upset you, let's say, at least you've had advance warning. Do something. Don't panic. Get involved!

Connect with Charles Alexander at [Charles@pridesource.com](mailto:Charles@pridesource.com)



## Viewpoint



BY LA JAMISON

## Conversion Therapy & 'Ex-Gay Ministry': A Republican Revival?

**L**GBT issues have always been a part of political battles in some form. However, conversion therapy (and “pray the gay away” type therapies called “ex-gay” ministry) really hasn't been in the news much in the last few decades except for four real noteworthy events;

**1973** – The American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association after much research and clinical trials declared that homosexuality was not fit to be called a disorder which it was called in the 1950's and virtually all mental health professionals saw conversion type therapies as dangerous.

**2013** – As a direct result of a Lisa Ling 2-part report on Our America called “Pray the Gay Away,” the largest ex-gay ministry in the world, Exodus International, closed its doors and some of its leading members “came out.”

**2015** - The Obama Administration pushed for the banning of conversion therapy used on minors.

Powering against this were two high profile political voices. First, Sarah and Todd Palin and their involvement in a pentecostal church that practiced conversion therapy in their counseling. Now, as of the present, we have a supreme court judge Neil Gorsuch and Vice President Mike Pence who are not supportive of any of the gains LGBT people have made for

their rights. This has allowed a rebranded Exodus International, called the Restored Hope Network, to gain momentum and other ex-gay ministries are popping up.

Many people don't know the difference between conversion therapy or ex-gay ministry or their techniques. Having experienced both, let me take you behind the curtain (spoiler alert: you aren't going to find Oz there).

“Conversion therapy” takes a non-faith based approach. It began in and around the 1920's with speculations from Sigmund Freud and surgeries from Eugene Steinach. Steinach performed operations where he implanted gay men with straight men's testicles stating that this would help the “organic” component of homo-eroticism. Throughout history, scientists have tried different things to change a gay man to straight from electric shock and other methods of pain and torture. Some people even received lobotomies. These are extreme methods that aren't as popular today.

More popular has been reparative therapy which is based off the teachings of Elizabeth Moberly and the late Joseph Nicolossi. This is the idea that the person who classifies themselves as homosexual is

See next page



► **Viewpoint**

Continued from p. 8

really trying to “repair” feelings of inferiority largely due to a separation from the father, over identification with mother or female models, and disjointed connection with male peers.

Ex-Gay Ministry takes some elements today from the reparative therapy model but comes at it solely from a traditional faith model. It sees homosexuality as a spiritual problem. A sin that is equivalent in function as alcoholism or gossip but lands you in the deepest recesses of hell both here and in eternity.

If I could compare it to anything, think about

the native Americans and how the Puritans had them leave who they were behind. They had to cut their hair (something sacred in their culture), be re-educated and practice Christian traditions, change their names, and over-all look and talk like an English American. Ex-gay ministry tries to change you into a straight talking, walking Christian male.

**Treatment Samples**

*These samples are from my experiences and others I have met and are not necessarily approved by or done by everyone who run these therapies.*

Ex-Gay Therapy	Reparative Therapy
Bible Study/Scripture Memorization	Counseling
Weekend Camps or Intensives	Treatment Camps (Weekends)
Healing Prayer (See Leanne Payne’s Crisis in Masculinity)	Use of Gestalt-like therapy also called “Psycho” drama
Ex-Gay Weeklong Retreats	Gender imitation
Straight mentors	Same sex activities
Abstinence from gay porn	Abstinence from gay porn
Abstinence from masturbation	Reduction from gay supporting media
Reduction and elimination of all gay contacts	Becoming what you desire in other men—cure your envy.
Engaging in same sex activities	Learning self analysis techniques
Healing family relationships	Boundary setting w/family
Books and videos on the subject	Books on the subject of change
Accountability Partners for abstinence	Risk taking exercises
Sensory deprivation	Same sex touch both clothed and unclothed
Laying on of hands for prayer	Learning sports
<b>More Severe Forms</b>	<b>More Severe Forms</b>
Exorcisms	Electric Shock
Boot Camp-like live in programs	Cutting off of gay friends
Cutting off from gay friends	Naked holding
	Physical pain reminders

LA Jamison is a Cum Laude graduate from Eastern Michigan University with a B.S. in Literature, Language and Writing for Teaching and Communications. His book, “Discoveries in the Closet: A Young Man’s Struggle with Faith and Sexuality,” is available online at Amazon.com.



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# Creep of the Week

## Linda Harvey

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI



Harvey is employing the “gays and lesbians are predators” narrative. You know how gay kids are, they just wait to infiltrate an unsuspecting group of kids their same sex so they can persuade them all to join Team Gay.

girls because otherwise “same-sex hook ups” are too tempting.

Let’s allow Harvey to elaborate.

“What happens is any time there is any kind of same-sex environment – I do not mean same-sex homosexuality, I mean boys together doing things together, girls together,” Harvey says. “It attracts the people that would take advantage of them, and then it will be someone of the same sex, so access is what these people want.”

Okay, first of all I need to point out that Harvey says she doesn’t mean homosexuality, but “boys together doing things together” sounds pretty gay.

Secondly, Harvey is employing the “gays and lesbians are predators” narrative. You know how gay kids are, they just wait to infiltrate an unsuspecting group of kids their same sex so they can persuade them all to join Team Gay.

Harvey then goes on to say that “so many kids are into pornography” and seems to imply that this is especially true for LGBTQ kids, which is what makes them so dangerous.

“Those may be the people that your kids are in a sleepover with or at camp with,” says Harvey, “these kids who are already highly sexualized and nobody may know it, but it’ll come out in the middle of the night.”

On the one hand, this is ridiculous and insulting. LGBTQ kids are not creepy predators. If a lesbian teen signs up for an all girls robotics camp it’s because she likes robots not because she’s hoping to “reprogram” the girls around her.

On the other hand, if you remove the whole predatory subtext, then Harvey has a point. OF COURSE LGBTQ youth meet other youth and form relationships, sexual or otherwise at places like camps and schools. That’s how ALL youth meet other people. It’s called a social life. Apparently that’s yet another thing that Harvey believes LGBTQ youth don’t deserve.

It’s August, which means Summer will be over soon. If you’re a parent, chances are that your kids spent part of their time off from school at a Summer camp. There are so many to choose from: performing arts camps, sports camps, science camps, yoga camps, Space Camp. There’s even Plantation Camp in California where “everyone lives outside without electricity and works on a sustainable farm.” I tried to go to their website, but it wasn’t working. Go figure.

Anyway, regardless of what kind of camp you sent/are sending your kids to, I just wanted to give you a quick heads up: they’re gay now.

One day you’re sending your totally 100 percent heterosexual child off to have a camp adventure and the next you’re picking up your totally 100 percent homosexual child. Because that’s totally how sexuality works.

And we may have never known any of this were it not for Linda Harvey bravely speaking the truth on Molly Smith’s right-wing radio show.

Harvey and Smith, who is the president of Cleveland Right to Life, discussed how going to camp puts kids at risk for gayness. Smith, referring to an article written by Harvey, says, “Same-sex hook ups can become a daring adventure at camp outs and sleep overs. Opportunity is everywhere where students of the same sex gather or socialize and is one of the reasons homosexuality has traditionally been taboo at schools camps and youth organizations.”

Got that? The reason why people are against LGBTQ students being able to live their lives openly and without fear of harassment and discrimination is because if we start treating LGBTQ students decently then all of the straight kids will want to try it out. And so we need to keep boys away from boys and girls away from

## OUTFest: 'Pride at its Best'

An estimated 4,000 people came to Ann Arbor for OUTFest last weekend. The three-day event hosted by Jim Toy Community Center in the Kerrytown District offered an array of activities for the LGBTQ and allied communities.

"In Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Washtenaw County, we are incredibly lucky to have so many elected officials, businesses and neighbors who love us, support us, celebrate with us, and fight for us. But we also know that at the state and federal levels, the LGBTQ community is still under constant attack - with our rights being denied or rolled back almost daily," said Travis Radina, president at JTCC.

"Pride is an opportunity for our diverse queer community to come together and celebrate what binds us, to reflect on our history, to be visible and proud of who we are, to encourage and embrace those who are still struggling to find acceptance, and to unite around the challenges that still lie ahead. This year's OUTFest was a powerful display of our community's diversity, unity, strength and resilience. It was Pride at its best, and I'm incredibly grateful to all of the dedicated volunteers and generous sponsors who made it possible."

Visit [www.jimtoycenter.org](http://www.jimtoycenter.org) for more information.



David and Brandon Lewandowski-Scott of Troy had a "nice time" celebrating pride with their daughter at OUTFest.



State Rep. Yousef Rabhi, U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell, Ann Arbor City Council Member Kirk Westphal, Washtenaw County Commissioner Conan Smith and Washtenaw County Commissioner Jason Morgan



Photos courtesy of Nikki Joly Jackson Pride Center

## First Jackson Pride Celebration Draws Large Crowd

Jackson Pride Center Director Nikki Joly said last weekend's parade, festival and flag raising in Jackson was another step in the right direction for the city.

"It's a celebration of the freedoms that we've gained," said Joly, who confirmed more than 1,000 people came together at Horace Blackman Park. Pariis Wilson organized a successful Miss Jackson Gay Pride drag queen pageant and a Drag Queen Extravaganza Show.

The Jackson Police Department provided extra staff, but Joly said there were no problems.

"We had one protestor and that was this cute little guy who stood in the back of his truck reading from his bible," she said, adding that they are having a stand down meeting this week and will start talking about next year's pride celebration soon.

Visit [www.facebook.com/jxnmpride](http://www.facebook.com/jxnmpride) for more information.



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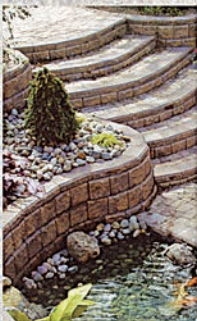
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# Transgender Michigan Celebrates 20 Years

## Pride in the Park Reflects on Milestones in Transgender Movement

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Rachel Crandall Crocker said she feels “wonderful” about this year’s Transgender Pride in the Park. The largest gathering of transgender and gender non-conforming people and their allies in Michigan happens on Aug. 12 from 12-6 p.m. at Donald Red Geary Park in Ferndale.

“I can’t believe it’s been 20 years,” said Crandall Crocker, the executive director and co-founder of Transgender Michigan. She started the organization in 1997 with her wife, Susan Crocker, to provide advocacy, support and education while serving to create coalitions in the state of Michigan to unify and empower transgender and gender non-conformist communities.

Her expression, “Wow,” speaks volumes when asked how things have changed in two decades. Without minimizing the Trump administration’s recent attacks against the transgender community, Crandall Crocker said she is proud of what TGMI has accomplished.

“Things were a lot different 20 years ago. Almost nobody heard the word transgender. Nobody had ever met any of us,” she said, noting that’s why one of the issues the organization focuses on most is education. “I mean, originally we had to ask people if we could educate them. Now, people request the education.”

Crandall Crocker said this is why TGMI started chapters as far reaching as Sault Ste. Marie so transgender people and their friends and families could connect with one another. As of today, there are 14 regional chapters and seven special interest groups including ally outreach, FtM (female to male), older adults, prison outreach, spirit and faith outreach, outreach for transgender people with disabilities and youth.

TGMI receives thousands of calls each year from all over the country on their helpline, which Crandall Crocker said most people use to come out.

“People who have known who they are forever, but didn’t feel safe coming out,” she said.

Crandall Crocker understands that with progress and increased visibility over the years backlash is to be expected. But just like transgender people stood up for their rights 51 years ago, she said today, transgender people will do the same.

This month marks the anniversary of the riot at Compton’s Cafeteria in 1966. Dr. Tim Retzlaff, who teaches LGBTQ



Rachel Crandall Crocker speaks out during a July 30 rally in Royal Oak to support transgender troops in the military. BTL Photo: Alex Godin. Right, RJ Watson and his brother, Eric Watson of Westland support the T in LGBT with pioneering transgender activist Grace Bacon. BTL Photo: Kate Opalewski

studies and U.S. history at Michigan State University, said, “The story, vitally excavated by historian Susan Stryker, reminds us that queer resistance to police harassment did not begin at Stonewall. As we grapple with renewed attacks specifically targeted at transgender people, it is particularly important to remember that those who transgressed and transcended gender norms in the past often bore the brunt of societal hatred and were also at the early forefront of battling that hatred.”

This historic Transgender Pride in the Park will also commemorate the 40th anniversary of Crossroads, founded by Grace Bacon in 1977. It is one of Michigan’s earliest transgender organizations, and one of the first in the country.

When asked what is the most concerning issue for transgender people right now, Crandall Crocker said unemployment.

“It’s still so hard for a trans person to find any jobs, even at Wendy’s. Without employment, people aren’t making any money and so they can’t afford a place to live or find a place to live partially because of discrimination,” she said.

Matt Helms, Director of Special Projects and Research in the Office of Mayor Mike Duggan said leaders in the LGBTQ community were “assured” during a roundtable on July 20 that “he would look into their concerns that transgender individuals are being turned away from homeless shelters in Detroit, in violation of the city’s nondiscrimination laws.”



Helms could not go into specifics beyond that because he said, “We don’t know yet what the examination of the issue will find.”

Until then, Crandall Crocker said, “It’s really important that we have allies. We’re nothing without our allies. We need to let the world know that we’re supported, even by people who aren’t like us.”

When Crandall Crocker spoke during a July 30 rally in Royal Oak to support transgender troops in the military, she told attendees that 300 people attended last year’s Transgender Pride in the Park. That’s a big deal when she looks back on the first event when 12 people were in attendance. This year, she said she wants 500 people to come.

At that same rally, Crandall Crocker set the tone for the celebration.

“If you think you’re not good enough to be an activist, you’re wrong. We are all good enough and we are all good enough to change the world,” she said.

Beyond TGMI, Crandall Crocker – an activist herself – also established the International Transgender Day of Visibility, which is recognized in countries like Russia and Africa.

“Some transgender people are living in the middle of nowhere with little to no access to anything,” she said. “It can be so lonely out there. We are here for people who just want to talk.”

Ferndale Mayor Dave Coulter, among others, will speak during Transgender Pride in the Park.

“Elections have consequences, and for the LGBTQ community and transgender people

in particular, this administration has had a harmful agenda. Our response can’t be to meet hate with hate, but rather to resist these attacks like we did at the rally, with positive determination to support one another,” he said.

Coulter’s presence is a big deal for Crandall Crocker. She said, “The mayor being there helps to legitimize everyone’s identity. We’re really excited about that.”

And considering the way some people think, she said “If the mayor is welcoming us, then we must be real.”

Transgender Pride in the Park is free to attend. Participants are encouraged to join in the potluck by bringing a dish to share with hundreds of friends.

Participating vendors include White Stag Workshop, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan, TREES (Transgender Resource, Education & Enrichment Services), Transformative Solutions Counseling Services, Equality Michigan, Pride at Work Michigan, Support the T, Char Davenport, Tracy Hoover, Good to Glow, Workers World Party, GIFT Grand Rapids, Royal Oak First United Methodist Church, Rosemary A. Jozwiak, PC & Associates, Health Emergency Lifeline Programs, Affirmations, Christ the Good Shepherd, and more.

The event is sponsored by Link-Up Detroit, Baker College in Jackson and Wrigley’s Pharmacy in Highland Park.

Donald Red Geary Park is located at 1198 Earle Blvd. at Pinecrest in Ferndale. Connect with Transgender Michigan online [www.transgendermichigan.org](http://www.transgendermichigan.org). The TGMI helpline number is 855-345-8464.

# Kellyanne Conway Says Trans Military Ban Is 'Forthcoming'

BY KAREN OCAMB, LOS ANGELES BLADE

Kellyanne Conway, a senior advisor to President Trump, appeared on ABC News' "This Week with George Stephanopoulos" Sunday and was asked about the series of unexpected Trump tweets posted on July 26 announcing a ban on transgender military service. She confirmed that a tweet is not the same as a policy, that the policy change had been discussed for a "very long time," and the new policy guidance, order and law "obviously are forthcoming."



Kellyanne Conway speaking at the 2017 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in National Harbor, Maryland. Photo by Gage Skidmore

Stephanopoulos noted that Trump said he had consulted with "my generals and military experts," and concluded that "the United States government will not accept or allow transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. military." The reason, despite a Pentagon-commissioned study that said otherwise: "Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail.

The Rand study last year estimated "the number of transgender individuals currently serving in the active component of the U.S. military at between 1,320 and 6,630 out of a total of about 1.3 million service members....25 to 130 gender transition-related surgeries could be utilized a year among active component service members. Additional health care costs could range between \$2.4 million and \$8.4 million, representing an approximate 0.13-percent increase."

Stephanopoulos noted that the Chair of the Joint Chiefs of staff said he's going to wait for an official order from the president before the Pentagon moves forward; the commandant of the Coast Guard said he's backing his transgender servicemembers; and Sec. of Defense General Mattis, who was on vacation, was apparently blindsided by Trump's tweet.

"So what I want to know is specifically which generals and military experts signed off on that tweet from the president?" Stephanopoulos asked.

"Well, first of all, the tweet didn't make policy, the tweet announced policy," Conway responded. "This had been a conversation, discussions had with generals and other stakeholders for a very long time. The president announced it through the form that he does that cuts out the middle man."

The ABC News host persisted: "But which ones signed off on it?"

Conway repeated herself and obfuscated, noting that "the Pentagon is a big place. If you find five or 10 people who say, we had

no idea, 100 people say we had no idea, that doesn't mean that everybody there who needed to know. I don't know when everybody at the Pentagon found out, but the president has made very clear what his policy is.

"The next steps, George, as you know, are to have policy guidance and to put the order out and to work with the stakeholders, obviously General Mattis – Secretary Mattis and others, to implement this new policy," she said.

Stephanopoulos asked again, which generals signed off on the tweet before Trump sent it out?

"I can't answer that because I wasn't in the room when they discussed it with him," Conway said, verbally wiggling a bit. "And I certainly aren't on the National Security Council. But I will tell you, having spoken with the president directly about this and having been involved a little bit in the discussions that the president had consulted for quite a while with different stakeholders, including his generals."

Stephanopoulos did not ask about those stakeholders, which included the Family Research Council, to whom Trump had apparently made a promise about trans servicemembers.

"[Trump] makes decisions based upon what he believes is right, but more importantly, what he committed to, FRC head Tony Perkins told the Christian Broadcast Network after the tweets. Additionally, Trump is "committed, along with the Republican Party platform, that the social engineering that has been in our military that the previous administration foisted upon the military would stop."

"That's what he's doing. He's only doing what he committed he would do," Perkins said.

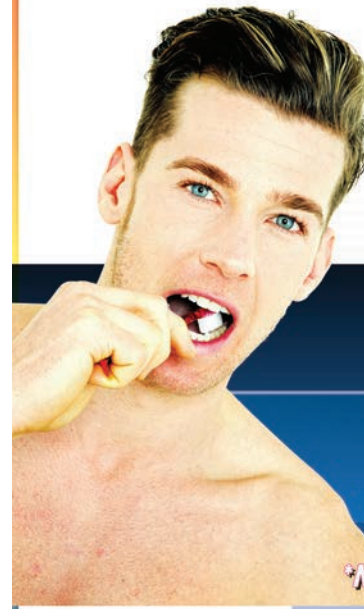
Conway did not put it in those same terms, or identify FRC or any of Trump's Religious Right advisors, but deflects to President Obama.

"What he says in the tweet is absolutely

See Trans Ban page 14

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## Michigan Garden Wedding Venues Among Best in the World

BY BTL STAFF

Harper's Bazaar recently named Zingerman's Cornman Farms and Planterra Conservatory to its list of "The 22 Best Garden Wedding Venues in the World." As the only midwest locations chosen, both venues are honored to be showcased among outdoor spaces from California and New York to Italy and South Africa.

Harper's partnered with the experts at The Venue Report to curate the list of wedding venues, which are described as "22 polished yet pastoral gardens...wish a dose of formality" suited for couples looking to wed in a natural setting. Writer Carrie Goldberg highlights the perks of exchanging nuptials at Zingerman's Cornman Farms in Dexter, as well as Planterra Conservatory in West Bloomfield:



"Cornman Farms features a historic barn, farmhouse, gardens, animal quarters, and space for tents or lawn games. Watch chefs prepare an intimate farm-to-table feast dinner or host an al fresco evening in the garden. With European curved trusses, indoor koi ponds and a dramatic stone archway, the Planterra Conservatory houses a wide collection of lush, exotic botanicals. Providing views of the stars on a clear night and soft, natural light during the day, this venue is practically perfect for any party and promises stellar light for photos."

Kieron Hales, Executive Chef and Owner at Zingerman's Cornman Farms is thrilled with the recognition.

"I'm super excited that the four years of work on the grounds of the property has gotten to a stage where we can get nationally recognized and placed on a list with so many beautiful venues, including our good friends at Planterra. To be on a list with them is a real honor," says Kieron, adding that he's very proud of the staff who've worked so hard to improve the grounds, especially the crew that has put in painstaking efforts this year.

David DiVincenzo, Special Events Director at Planterra, shares in the excitement and said it's amazing to see his and his team's vision recognized in the national spotlight.

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For more information, visit [www.zingermancornmanfarms.com](http://www.zingermancornmanfarms.com) or <http://planterraevents.com>.

# House Dems: Trump's Trans Military Ban 'Unconstitutional On Its Face'

BY CHRIS JOHNSON, WASHINGTON BLADE

A group of 53 House Democrats is warning the Pentagon that following through with policy to implement President Trump's transgender military ban would be "unconstitutional on its face."

In a letter dated Aug. 4, Democrats on the House Armed Services and Judiciary Committees say prohibiting transgender people in the U.S. armed forces — "in any capacity" as Trump declared — won't hold up under scrutiny before the courts.

"It is abundantly clear that any effort by President Trump to ban military service by transgender individuals would not only constitute poor policy, but would be unconstitutional on its face," the letter says.

The letter was led by Rep. John Conyers, Jr. (D-Mich.), top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, and Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.), top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee.

Among the reasons cited in the letter for why the transgender military ban would be unconstitutional is because it "categorically excludes an entire group of people from military service on the basis of a characteristic that has no relevance to their capacity to serve."

The letter also deems the proposed policy unconstitutional because it's derived from "a series of arbitrary and capriciously issued tweets," appears to be "based on a raw political calculation"

and was made without consultation of congressional leaders.

Further, the letter asserts concerns about the cost of transition-related care, such as hormone therapy and gender

defy the president on the issue.

"As the respected leaders of our brave armed service members, you have no obligation to implement a hastily considered tweet designed to serve as a 'wedge' political issue; but rather you should honor your own independent duty to support and defend the Constitution of the United States," the letter says.

Last week, Trump announced via Twitter the U.S. military "will not accept or allow" transgender people to serve "in any capacity," upending a policy change in the Obama administration allowing them to come out in the armed forces without of discharge.

But at this time, the Pentagon has yet implement to reverse the change and bar transgender people from military service. It remains if to be seen if any new policy will allow transgender

people who currently in the armed forces to continue their service.

Lt. Col. Paul Haverstick, a Pentagon spokesperson, said he had no updates in response to the letter from House Democrats.

"DOD is awaiting formal guidance from the White House as a follow-up to the Commander-in-Chief's announcement on military service by transgender personnel," Haverstick said.

*This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National Gay Media Association.*



Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) is among House Democrats who say Trump's transgender military ban would be unconstitutional. Washington Blade file photo by Michael Key

reassignment surgery, are bogus because it accounts for "less than 1/10 of 1% of the military's annual budget."

"We believe any serious or credible review of the law and the facts in the present case make it clear that the President's proposed ban on transgender people serving in the armed forces will weaken, not strengthen our military, and is blatantly unconstitutional," the letter says.

Echoing objections in a similar letter signed by 45 U.S. senators, House Democrats urge Defense Secretary James Mattis and Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford to resist Trump on the transgender military ban, strongly suggesting they should

### ► Trans Ban

Continued from p. 13

true, he consults with generals and others about this issue. And, you know, President Obama took late in the game action. I mean, everybody runs around acting like he had a particular policy for all eight years," she said. "He did not. And you know that. He took late in

the game action. And the president is now acting early in his administration because he believes in military readiness and he believes in unit cohesion. This is what he has said. This is what others have said."

Conway ended it there: "And but the policy guidance and the exact order and the final configuration of the law obviously are forthcoming."

Sources familiar with the Guidance

say the new policy has passed muster with the White House Counsel's Office but has not yet been sent to Defense Sec. Mattis.

*This article originally appeared in the Los Angeles Blade and is made available in partnership with the National Gay Media Association.*

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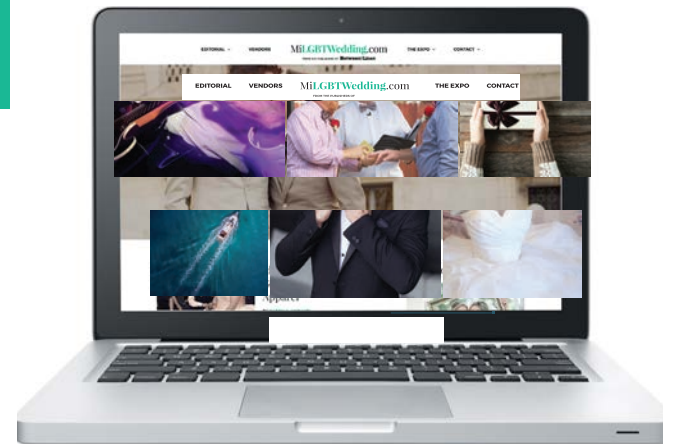
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# Lesbian Couple Succeeds in Love and in Business

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

**T**owanna Jackson and LaShawn Peterson didn't have a traditional engagement proposal.

"I asked LaShawn a bunch of times and she told me 'no' a bunch of times," said Towanna. "She told me one day, 'We can get married,' and I accepted."

Nor did they have a traditional wedding.

After attending their cousin's wedding in Las Vegas last year on Feb. 13, the Peterson-Jackson couple changed clothes and had their own ceremony on Valentine's Day – Feb. 14, 2016 – around 1 a.m. inside the Plaza Royale Wedding Chapel.

"My sister was able to catch a flight and fill the role of best woman, maid of honor and DJ. My cousin and his wife happened to be on vacation and met us at the chapel. We had friends that woke up and watched the live stream," said Towanna, 42, who first spotted LaShawn, 47, online in an LGBTQ Facebook group they were both in.

"I watched her for months," Towanna laughed. They met for the first time in person during a meet and greet hosted by the group in 2012.

"I had never been married before and she had so she wanted no parts of a 'wedding.' She said she would give me whatever I wanted so there was never any pressure to not have a traditional ceremony. She would just take the stereotypical 'groom's' role of nonchalance," said Towanna about LaShawn.

But whether or not they keep with tradition doesn't really matter to them as long as they are together doing what they enjoy like traveling, camping, cooking, watching Netflix in "chill" mode, shopping, spending time with their grandchildren - Celine and Andre III - and selling real estate.

"It's all fun with LaShawn by my side," said Towanna, adding that they are both realtors with the Keller Williams West Bloomfield/Farmington Hills Market Center.

How does the Peterson-Jackson couple make that work?

"We enjoy what we do. We began to talk about our desire to start our own business early in our relationship," said Towanna. The couple knew they wanted a business where they could use their strengths and combine it with their passions – financial security, African American economic empowerment, civic and social responsibility, and women's empowerment.



Towanna and LaShawn, the Peterson-Jackson couple, were married on Feb. 14, 2016 at the Plaza Royale Wedding Chapel in Las Vegas. Photo courtesy of the couple.

While their way of getting things done is different, they said they work well as a team.

LaShawn is more methodical and organized. Towanna is more of a verbal communicator.

"Our compromise is we make a list of what needs to be done and LaShawn will call to tell me what is on the list," said Towanna.

This is important, she said, because, "For most people, buying a house will be the largest single economic transaction in their lifetime. I will make sure you find the house of your dreams and LaShawn will negotiate the best deal for you to obtain it."

Being partners in business is easy considering the challenges these women have faced as African American lesbians.

"It is hard," said LaShawn. "To some in the black community, being gay is the same as being a sexual deviant. I was compared to a child molester a week ago; to her I was no better than a child predator. I have had family members who feel they need to 'save my soul.' I have had unsolicited prayers. An offer of an exorcism. I've watched family and friends take to social media in tirades about how the homosexual agenda is being pushed on them. How it has destroyed America."

Despite that, LaShawn said her brothers, sisters and children are "very supportive" of their marriage. So much so that family members will call Towanna first because she likes to talk.

"I have a great group of friends that want the best for us also," said LaShawn.

Towanna agreed it is hard, especially with a Holy Bible-based family. Her father is a Christian pastor and her mother is one step away from Sainthood.

“My parents support my marriage to LaShawn because she is an amazing person. They don't see us as a lesbian couple they see us as a family.”

– Towanna Peterson-Jackson

Although they didn't put any pressure on her to change, they did quote Towanna a few bible verses in her early years.

"My parents support my marriage to LaShawn because she is an amazing person. They don't see us as a lesbian couple. They see us as a family," said Towanna. "I have some Day 1's that no matter what have always shown support to my sister, brother and daughter. I am the best and no one can tell them any different."

The Peterson-Jackson's live in Southfield with their Shih Tzu's Li-Li and Ki-Ki. They are proud mother's of three adult children – Chanel, a graduate from the University of Michigan; Andre, a graduate from Indiana State; and Indi, a graduate from Notre Dame.

When asked if they have any marital advice for LGBTQ couples, they both agree, "Always be honest. Accept your lover for what they are and not who you think they should be. Learn how to lose an argument. You must be able to forgive and on the flip side you must be worth forgiving."



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**Positive Thoughts**

Laurel Sprague.

# Connected Action

## GNP+ Works with Communities of People Living with HIV Around the World to Make Sure Their Voices Are Heard

BY ORIOL R. GUTIERREZ JR.

**L**aurel Sprague, PhD, is the executive director of GNP+ (The Global Network of People Living with HIV). The Amsterdam-based organization works to improve the quality of life for all people living with HIV through global advocacy, community strengthening and knowledge management. Sprague took the helm of GNP+ in May, but she's been committed to addressing human rights and social justice issues for more than 25 years.

She formerly worked as a global research fellow on HIV, gender and justice with the HIV Justice Network, an international group focused on ending inappropriate criminalization for nondisclosure, exposure and transmission of HIV. She was also on the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board as a nongovernmental organization delegate for

the United States.

Sprague, who was diagnosed with HIV in 1991, is no stranger to GNP+. She previously served as a regional coordinator for the North American affiliate of GNP+ and was also a board member.

### Tell us about GNP+'s three major areas of focus.

GNP+ is in the middle of creating a new strategic plan that will guide how we bring all the pieces of our work under an overarching focus. Nothing that we are doing now will be lost, but the way we will approach it will be different as we move forward.

Our global advocacy work has been shaped by consultations done with different communities of people living with HIV across the world. We came up with a pretty big global advocacy agenda, and from that, the first area we focused on was treatment access and access to prevention, care and

support with HIV. We're trying to make sure that all people are able to access prevention. We also want treatment for HIV to be offered in ways that are nonstigmatizing and nondiscriminatory so that we can all access the kind of care and support related to the medical treatment that we need.

Second, the human rights part of our work is about the comprehensive quality of life for people living with HIV and the comprehensive ability to live life with dignity. This work deals with fighting stigma, discrimination and criminal laws that target people living with HIV and people who are LGBT, as well as laws that target sex workers and people who use drugs and treat women unfairly.

Finally, the knowledge management piece of our work has involved looking at human rights violations, training people with HIV to document human rights violations and

sharing what's happening at the national level so that we can bring that information forward. We have gathered an incredible amount of information that we haven't always had the time and capacity to use completely. Moving forward, we want to develop the infrastructure so that we can take all this information and share it and use it in even more powerful ways.

Those three areas of the agenda come together in a framework called Positive Health, Dignity and Prevention (PHDP). It looks at the comprehensiveness of life for people living with HIV and the way in which our treatment, employment, housing, access to sexual reproductive health and rights and so many other things are all interconnected. They create this sort of organic whole that is the picture of our lives and the context within which we have to operate.

### What changes are in store for GNP+?

Last November, our board, which was made up of representatives from each region of people living with HIV, made the decision to restructure the board in order to have a better representation of all the key populations of people living with HIV. There will be much more space for the broadest diversity possible among board members and a constant focus of attention on groups that are marginalized. The next big change is the restructuring of the GNP+ Secretariat. Over the last few years, we have become very project-based, and there is a real commitment to shaping the organization so that we are principles-based. We're committed to setting a vision for how people living with HIV should be able to live in the world and orienting our work around that.

### Describe your relationship with local and global groups.

As a global network, GNP+ sometimes serves in a convening role but also offers support toward autonomous networks of people living with HIV.

We primarily work to make tools and resources available. We can link people to training and support that they need and help with the basic processes they need to create a structure, to work with a board, to reach out to funders and things like that. We try to help build capacities so that networks can be stronger on their own.

There's a lot of work around collecting information, sharing it, reporting it and monitoring it, specifically around stigma, human rights violations and criminalization and keeping track of legal and regulatory barriers to HIV testing.

Working at the global level with organizations like UNAIDS, Global Fund, Unitaid and PEPFAR, we do our best to make sure that the needs of people living with HIV worldwide are reflected in their guidelines, best practices and decision making. We then reflect that information and what we learn in global settings back to regional and national levels. We're trying to maintain the clearest

picture of what's happening in different regions and countries so that we're able to accurately reflect what's happening out in the world.

**What are some of your top concerns?**

There's a big challenge in reestablishing the primacy of human rights as a central tenet in addressing HIV and issues around health and health equity broadly. The more biomedical approaches we have to HIV, the more it seems that there's a sense that human rights and decency can fall by the wayside.

Another major priority is access to treatment. I think it's great to report the successes around HIV, but many of us know what it looks like to die of AIDS-related illness. It looks exactly the same now as it did in 1981, and half of the people worldwide who have HIV don't have treatment, which means they're facing exactly what we were all facing in the '80s and early '90s.

We need to figure out what to do to get people the treatment they need. Part of it has to do with reducing stigma and discrimination in health care facilities, but also within our communities. We need to look at the ways that we stigmatize ourselves and one another. We need to commit to creating spaces where there is room for everyone and we can work together.

Another big part of the problem of getting people access to treatment is the price of drugs. We know that GNP+ needs to have a much louder voice, and in many ways, we all need to have a much louder voice to say that it's not acceptable that profits are made on the backs of human lives in the way that they are right now.

**How are you absorbing this change?**

I'm honored that the board selected me to lead GNP+. It feels like a heavy responsibility, but the weight is lightened by the number of people who have offered support – especially people living with HIV. We're joining forces and doing it together. We are creating a united movement, and it means the world to me.

**What advice can you give to people living with HIV who want to get involved?**

I will always be the biggest proponent of getting involved in networks of people living with HIV because that's made all the difference for me. The best networks to join are your local networks. I can't think of anything that makes us stronger in terms of both our own self-love and our love for the people in our communities than our networks. I hope people will also connect with GNP+ through our website or Facebook because we have lots of interesting webinars and information to share. If you can connect with us, then you'll know what's happening – you'll be part of it.

*Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr. is the editor-in-chief of POZ magazine. Find him on Twitter @oriolgutierrez. This column is a project of Plus, Positively Aware, POZ, The Body and Q Syndicate, the LGBT wire service. Visit their websites – <http://hivplusmag.com>, <http://positivelyaware.com>, <http://poz.com> and <http://thebody.com> – for the latest updates on HIV/AIDS*

“ I think it's great to report the successes around HIV, but many of us know what it looks like to die of AIDS-related illness. ”



GNP+ board members (from left): Jaime Luna, Chinmay Modi, Christian Hui, Erika Castellanos, Javier Hourcade Belloccq, L'Orangelis Thomas Negron, Chris Mallouris



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# The Frivolist 6 Reasons Why Gay People Are a Higher Form of Evolution

BY MIKEY ROX

Science has yet to definitively declare a “gay gene” – probably because all those evil-gelicals would abort their gaybies left and right and all hell would break loose (hallelujah?) – but just because the argument for biological evidence that determines sexual orientation hasn’t been substantiated doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist. Barring the discovery of an actual genetic modification that predisposes people to being gay, studies have shown that homosexuality is a heritable trait. Nonetheless, the research as it stands now is still just a bunch of lab-coat mumbo jumbo caught up in a tornado of politics.

Personally, I believe I’m a higher form of evolution. Not just me, though, but all gay people. I look at our community as a whole and, well, we do just about everything better than those who are not inherently equipped to think above the status quo.

I’m not a kook, either. Rather, I’m skeptical of most oddball concepts – like psychics, paranormal activity, crop circles, and whoever convinced Bill Cosby it’s a good idea to launch a speaking tour about sexual assault. But I do earnestly believe that you and I are genetically superior to our heterosexual counterparts. Here’s why.

## 1. We encourage, adapt to, and continue the pursuit of progression

Since the earliest recorded history – about 97th-century BCE when Mesolithic rock in Sicily is said to depict male homosexual intercourse – gays have infiltrated and influenced

all aspects of life, from art to government. We’re drawn to positions of power because we affect change more swiftly and more democratically than those seeking to rule, often iron-fistedly, simply to make up for their lack of anatomical endowment (which isn’t just conjecture, by the way; a study by the Kinsey Institute reported that gay guys typically have bigger dicks than straight guys) and we don’t have to look any further than our own current administration to see this time-honored tradition in practice. It stands to reason then that we have less to prove than straight men seeking power, who much of the time want to stifle progression, while we advocate on behalf of forging ahead, quite happy with what’s been bestowed between our legs. In the meantime, we may have already answered the age-old question: Does size matter? All the world’s conflicts started by cranky old straight men decidedly point to yes.

## 2. We have an “eye” for just about everything

You can’t teach imagination or creativity; you’re either born with it or you aren’t. Certainly there’s a case to be made for the cultivation of our own capacities – which requires encouragement from those who raise us during our most vital developmental stages – but once we’re in tune with our own intelligence, we’re unstoppable. We corner the market on creative expression, from home design and culinary arts to science and movie making, and our insight is unrivaled because we won’t allow it to be muted, even when some around us demanded it growing up. The downside to this, of course, includes our rampant daddy issues (for some of us, least) – but let’s be honest, we make the most of that, too.

Before I wrote this column, I asked my friends why they thought gay people were a higher form of evolution. Mostly because I needed validation that my own ego wasn’t out of control. It is, mind you – everybody who knows me will tell you that – but in this case, I at least have comrades on my side. My buddy Jason provided his thoughts on this particular matter – why we seem to get “it” and ourselves more than straight people understand themselves and their place in this world.

“For thousands of years, we have been systematically oppressed and persecuted by every major religion and every government,” he said. “Attempts have been made to eradicate our kind for millennia, quite unsuccessfully. I believe we are feared most because we are, and always have been, the most powerful beings on this planet. We give you your culture, your beauty, your fashion, your art. We know no bounds, and exist in every corner of the earth, from your governments to your

churches to your families, and all of your institutions. We cover every race, every gender and every class.”

In laymen’s terms, we’re here and we’re queer – and we will inherit this earth.

## 3. Bullying and oppression has informed our sense of humor and self-worth

I use humor as a defense mechanism. Many of us do. But that’s because we were forced to find the happiness in an otherwise depressing situation. We’re made fun of, taunted, bullied, and put down everywhere we go – even today. But it’s because of that that we’re able to evaluate and identify our self-worth when nobody else will, and the sense of humor that evolves from that oppression is what makes us likeable, self-aware beings who can and will read another to filth just for kicks.

## 4. People are naturally drawn to us – for one reason or another

Straight women follow us around like tongues-out Frenchies, and straight men envy all the things we possess that they desperately want, like the devotion of those straight women. Whether they’ll admit it or not, heterosexuals envy us – and we should all sleep better accepting that as pseudo-scientific fact.

## 5. We are emotionally more advanced because of circumstance

My beautiful lesbian friend Leslie laid this one out bare: “The strength one must possess to ‘come out’ as different from the norm is pretty much as powerful as one can be,” she said. “As humans we want to belong and be accepted by our tribe. It takes incredible strength and resilience to risk being literally abandoned by your tribe and surviving. It defies evolution as we know it, thus making us a whole new breed of fucking fabulous.”

## 6. We are, in fact, essential to humanity

Dr. James O’Keefe delivered a TED Talk at TEDxTallaght in Dublin last year, and he related a story that was covered by NewNowNext about how his own son came out 13 years ago. Initially, Dr. O’Keefe feared for his son’s safety and happiness, but then his own analytic abilities led him to surmise that his boy was going to be just fine – because gay people are goddamned remarkable.

“Viewed in the light of evolution, homosexuality seems to be a real self-defeating non-productive strategy,” O’Keefe told the audience at his TED talk. “Gays have 80 percent fewer kids than heterosexuals. This is a trait that ought to go extinct in a few generations, yet down through recorded history in every culture and many animal species as well, homosexuality has been a small but distinct subgroup. If this were a genetic error, natural selection should have long ago culled this from the gene pool.”

Dr. O’Keefe went on to discuss how everyone probably has gay genes in their DNA, but they only would have been activated as a means of survival, like stressful external circumstances while in the womb. You can watch his talk about how homos are motherfucking gods among men on YouTube; the talk is titled “Homosexuality: it’s about survival – not sex,” because that’s the truest truth there is.

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## Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center to Hire New Education Director

The Lansing Art Gallery's Education Center has been around for 30 years, which offers on-site instruction with qualified, teaching artists in a dedicated educational space, holding up to fifteen students per session.

The center, according to their website, is actively providing "public awareness, education and enjoyment of the visual arts by promoting the work of Michigan artists" through these exhibits, and more.

Former Education Coordinator of the Lansing Art Gallery, Sydney Richards, has left, due to a work opportunity elsewhere, according to a City Pulse report. This has forced the team at the gallery to search for someone new to fill the part-time position.

Executive Director of the gallery, Barb Whitney told City Pulse that the center has sought out "driven, excited and motivated" individuals.

"Who can just really engage with the community and blow up our educational programming. That is why there is a change in the title and some of the responsibilities, there is a potential of the Education Director to really assist with some of the fundamentals around the programming," Whitney said in the report. "The right person can come in and make this full time pretty quickly."






The priority deadline for the job of Education Director was Aug. 1. The center is working with a hiring committee on the process and they already have a pool of "really highly qualified" candidates.

They will take a week to review all of the applications, then a week or two to call up candidates for interviews. According to the report, the center plans to have the position filled by Sept. 15.

For more information visit <http://lansingartgallery.org>.

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## Explore Detroit: City of Design Tour

Detroit is the only American city to be named a UNESCO City of Design and this tour will help people see and understand why. Detroit Experience Factory will take people inside some of Detroit's most innovative and creative projects from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. on Aug. 19 where they'll have the opportunity to meet some of the people using design to make a positive impact on Detroit and the world. Meet on time at 123 Monroe Street in Detroit. Tickets are \$30. For more information, call 313-962-4590, email [hello@detroitexperiencefactory.org](mailto:hello@detroitexperiencefactory.org) or visit <http://detroitexperiencefactory.org/>.



# Happenings

## OUTINGS

### Thursday, Aug. 10

**All Day Fundraiser for Affirmations** 11 a.m. A percentage of the day's net sales will be donated to the center, including dine-in and carry-out orders. Affirmations, 240 W. Nine Mile Rd., **Ferndale**. [ktaylor@goaffirmations.org](mailto:ktaylor@goaffirmations.org) [www.facebook.com/zekesrockandrollbbq/](http://www.facebook.com/zekesrockandrollbbq/)

**Justice for Our Neighbors** 1 p.m. Free legal consultations for LGBTQ immigrants Grand Rapids Pride Center, 343 Atlas Ave. SE, **Grand Rapids**. [www.grpride.org](http://www.grpride.org)

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

**Red Umbrella Support Group** 7:30 p.m. For individuals involved in the erotic labor industry. Sex Workers Outreach Project Michigan, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. [www.goaffirmations.org](http://www.goaffirmations.org)

### Friday, Aug. 11

**Department of Victim Services Open Office Hours** 2 p.m. Contact Serena Johnson, lead advocate, for more information or to schedule an appointment. Walk-ins welcome. Equality Michigan, 343 Atlas Ave. SE, **Grand Rapids**. 313-537-7000 Ext 115.

[sjohnson@equalitymi.org](mailto:sjohnson@equalitymi.org) [www.grpride.org](http://www.grpride.org)

**First Friday** 7 p.m. A monthly social gathering and potluck. To host a gathering, contact Penny at [marydrpenny@yahoo.com](mailto:marydrpenny@yahoo.com) or 517-484-4512. Lesbian Connection, 15075 Wood Road, **Lansing**. 517-410-1606. [www.LConline.org](http://www.LConline.org)

### Saturday, Aug. 12

**Men's Discussion Group** 6 p.m. Topic: Autobiography - Lady Gaga Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105. [www.goaffirmations.org](http://www.goaffirmations.org)

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

**Own Your Gender** 7 p.m. For transgender, non-binary and gender and gender questioning people Grand Rapids Pride Center, 343 Atlas Ave. SE, **Grand Rapids**. [www.grpride.org](http://www.grpride.org)

### Sunday, Aug. 13

**Stand with Trans 2nd Annual Family Fun Day Picnic** 1 p.m. There are grills, picnic tables, and shelter (reserved). Bring frisbees, lawn games, and a side dish to share. We will provide the hot dogs, buns, condiments, water, and paper goods. Memorial Park also has a skate park and play structures. Email by Aug. 7 to RSVP for this alcohol-free event. Stand with Trans, 31100 Woodward Ave., **Royal Oak**.

[roz@standwithtrans.org](mailto:roz@standwithtrans.org) [www.facebook.com/events/1396552450379785/](http://www.facebook.com/events/1396552450379785/)

**Rainbow Book Club** 4:30 p.m. Rainbow Book Club, 319 Braun Ct., **Ann Arbor**. 734-995-9867. [www.jimtoycenter.org/](http://www.jimtoycenter.org/)

**Transtastic Night to Remember** 5 p.m. A benefit for the Ruth Ellis Center and the Motor City Sisters. \$20 admission covers catered dinner and dessert, screening of the movie "Tangerine" with popcorn, two surprise raffles, a silent auction, live music and keynote speakers. Motor City Sisters, 940 W. McNichols Ave., **Highland Park**. [www.facebook.com/events/1369042246548414/](http://www.facebook.com/events/1369042246548414/)

### Monday, Aug. 14

**Trans Youth and Family Support Groups** 6:30 p.m. Penny Hader, LMSW will facilitate the parent support group and Stephanie Lange, LMSW, will facilitate the youth support group. Contact Lange for more information. Stand with Trans, 21051 21 Mile Road, **Macomb**. 586-723-2872. [slange@cvs.k12.mi.us](mailto:slange@cvs.k12.mi.us) [www.standwithtrans.org](http://www.standwithtrans.org)

**Whole Lives, Healthy Lives Adult Support Group** 7 p.m. This one-of-a-kind program in Berrien County helps attendees support each other in healthy ways through active listening and caring feedback. OutCenter, 132 Water St., **Benton Harbor**. 269-925-8330. [www.Outcenter.org](http://www.Outcenter.org)

### Tuesday, Aug. 15

**Young Adult Group** 7 p.m. For young people ages 18-24 Grand Rapids Pride

## Editor's Pick

### Transtastic Night to Remember

A benefit for the Ruth Ellis Center and the Motor City Sisters with special guests FtM Detroit, Suck It! Suicide and keynote speakers Char Davenport and Jeynce Poindexter. A \$20 admission covers catered dinner, dessert, screening of the movie "Tangerine" with popcorn, two raffles, a silent auction and live music. Wrigleys Pharmacy in Highland Park provided donations for the event at 5 p.m. on Aug. 13 at 928/950 W. McNichols Ave. in Detroit. For more information, visit <http://gaybe.am/aE>.



Center, 343 Atlas Ave. SE, **Grand Rapids**. [www.grpride.org](http://www.grpride.org)

**Ann Arbor TNG** 8 p.m. For the kink and fetish community Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Court, **Ann Arbor**. 734-995-9867. [www.jimtoycenter.org/](http://www.jimtoycenter.org/)

### Wednesday, Aug. 16

**The Pastor is In** 3:30 p.m. Pastor Dani Veenstra, local United Church of Christ faith leader and ally to the LGBTQ community hosts this free service every Wednesday. OutCenter, 132 Water St., **Benton Harbor**. 269-925-8330. [thepastorisin@outcenter.org](mailto:thepastorisin@outcenter.org) [www.outcenter.org](http://www.outcenter.org)

**Out Loud Chorus Board Meeting** 7 p.m. Out Loud Chorus, 319 Braun Court, **Ann Arbor**. 734-995-9867. [www.jimtoycenter.org/](http://www.jimtoycenter.org/)

### Thursday, Aug. 17

**Polyamory Network** 7 p.m. Open and inclusive community of people living polyamorously, people interested in

polyamory and people of, friendly to and curious about polyamory. Welcomes diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity. Polyamory Network, 319 Braun Ct., **Ann Arbor**. 734-995-9867. [www.jimtoycenter.org](http://www.jimtoycenter.org)

### Friday, Aug. 18

**Woman 2 Woman** 5:30 p.m. For lesbian, transgender and bi-attractional individuals. RSVP to Sharron Fincher via email. Woman 2 Woman, 20025 Greenfield Road, **Detroit**. [sharronfincher@lgbtdetroit.org](mailto:sharronfincher@lgbtdetroit.org) [www.lgbtdetroit.org](http://www.lgbtdetroit.org)

### Saturday, Aug. 19

**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](http://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](http://www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups)

**Open LGBT AA Meeting** 11 a.m. Grace Episcopal Church, 341 Washington St., **Traverse City**. [www.tcpolestar.org/](http://www.tcpolestar.org/)

**New Volunteer Orientation and Training** 12 p.m. Guided tour. Learn more about how to support the LGBTQ community at the community center. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 2483987105. [haymer@goaffirmations.org](mailto:haymer@goaffirmations.org) [www.Goaffirmations.org](http://www.Goaffirmations.org)

**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](http://www.goaffirmations.org/programs-services/support-discussion-groups)

**Bisexual Peer Group** 5 p.m. Meetings are a freeform discussion of current bi/pan/omni news, events, and other LGBT





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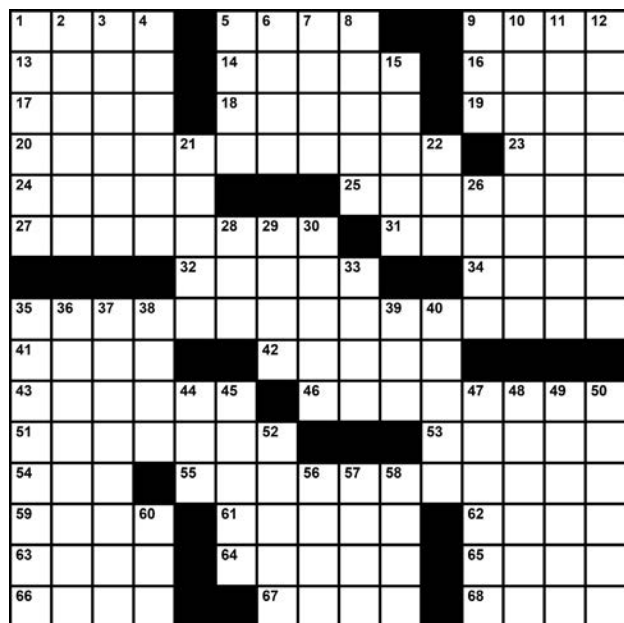


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# Q Puzzle



- 41 Place for pansies  
42 Simple kind of question  
43 Like a careless man's condom  
46 Top athletes  
51 Fruitcake  
53 Position, in religion  
54 Collection suffix  
55 End of the quote  
59 Crack the whip at, e.g.  
61 Poet Dickinson  
62 Mapplethorpe model, often  
63 City near Tulsa  
64 Prepare to get plucked  
65 "The Unicorn" author Murdoch  
66 Fairy particles  
67 Feel (for)  
68 Match parts, to Navratilova
- 12 Eastern U.S. region  
15 Drawn-out assault  
21 Frequent online claim  
22 Mo. to elect pro-gay pols  
26 Oooooookla., once  
28 Spill one's seed  
29 Singer Anita  
30 Short messages  
33 HIV exam, e.g.  
35 Prepared to become a breeder  
36 Mork's sign-off  
37 Seismic sea waves  
38 "For \_\_\_ jolly good ..."  
39 Gene's makeup  
40 Loud, to Copland  
44 JFK posting  
45 Tool for cutting carrots  
47 Mauresmo's game  
48 Bear  
49 Go over again  
50 Burnout cause  
52 Lily Tomlin, for one  
56 Talk show cohost  
57 Glenn Burke, formerly  
58 Daly of \_Judging Amy\_  
60 Summer hours in N.Y.C.

## Down

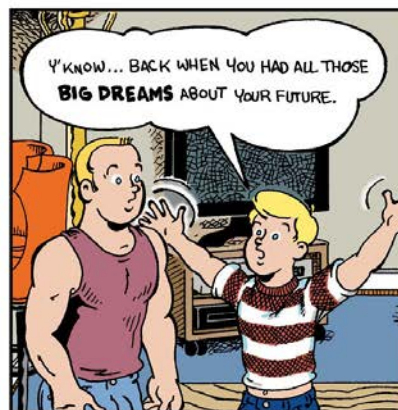
- 1 Heads, to Caesar  
2 Prop for "I have a headache tonight ..."  
3 Serious encroachment  
4 Temperament  
5 "How queer!"  
6 "Summer and Smoke" heroine  
7 Car from Sweden  
8 Name on a drag queen's compact  
9 Shock's partner  
10 "Giant" actor  
11 Margaret Cho show

Find solution to this puzzle at [www.pridesource.com](http://www.pridesource.com)

# A-maize-ing Marlon

## Across

- 1 Superman portrayal Dean  
5 "\_\_\_ On Down the Road"  
9 Lickety-split  
13 Poet Seward  
14 Like the menagerie of Tennessee  
16 "What \_\_\_ thinking?"  
17 Say "So Long, Farewell!"  
18 Place for a G-string
- 19 If not  
20 Start of a quote about Marlon growing maize?  
23 Foaming at the mouth  
24 It tops a queen  
25 Diva's problem  
27 Hans Christian of fairy tales  
31 Just the same  
32 Beckett no-show  
34 Jockey's handful  
35 Movie of this puzzle's quote



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## SAGE Metro Detroit Seeks Friendly Caller Coordinator

SAGE Metro Detroit is searching for a part-time program coordinator to help organize their Friendly Caller Program who will be responsible for:

- Implementation of the Friendly Caller Program, which includes the marketing of the program and recruitment of volunteers for the program, the training and orientation of volunteer callers. The Friendly Caller Program is a program where volunteers will call LGBT older adults on a regular basis, as a way to reduce social isolation and connect LGBT older adults to needed services and supports.
  - Will conduct initial survey of both callers and LGBT older adults and will be responsible for matching up callers with LGBT older adults.
  - Responsible for follow up surveys and evaluations with Friendly Caller participants.
  - Responsible for Evaluation Report on the Project, based on survey and evaluation information collected throughout the Project year.
  - Responsible for reports to the HOPE Fund, which is the funder of the Friendly Caller Program, including the final report.
  - Follow up with volunteer callers and LGBT older adults should problems or issues arise with phone calling.
  - Responsible for follow up with Emergency Contacts, 9-1-1, when older adults are not responding or answering calls.
  - The Coordinator reports to and works closely with the Program Director for SAGE Metro Detroit, who will be the Coordinator's supervisor.
  - Looking for candidates who are self-starters, possess good organization, communication and interpersonal skills, as well as phone skills.
  - This is a part-time contractual position, working on the average, 8-10 hours a week, which will last over a 12 month period, beginning in September 2017. Hours are flexible and may involve some week nights and a possible weekend (for orientation and training of volunteer callers).
  - Continued work beyond this contract period will depend on continued funding for the Friendly Caller Program, as well as the contractual employee's job performance evaluation.
  - Coordinator is expected to provide own computer equipment and may work from home for a majority of the job responsibilities.
  - Position pays \$10,000 over a twelve month period (\$833 monthly compensation).
- Deadline for applications is Aug. 25.

Interested persons should submit a resume and cover letter to Jay Kaplan at [Kaplan@aclumich.org](mailto:Kaplan@aclumich.org) or [info@sagemetrodetroit.org](mailto:info@sagemetrodetroit.org). Interviews for the position will take place after Labor Day. For more information, visit [www.sagemetrodetroit.org](http://www.sagemetrodetroit.org).

## Help CHAG to Continue Offering HIV Prevention and Care

HIV is having a major impact here in the local community, according to the Community Health Awareness Group. Southeastern Michigan and particularly Detroit have the highest incidence of HIV in the state of Michigan. While prevention and treatment interventions are effective, many people fail to learn their status, employ available prevention strategies, or maintain medical care.

It is CHAG's mission to improve the quality of life of Detroit's African American community by addressing current health issues and developing effective ways of promoting and implementing positive health strategies, but they need the community's support to continue doing so.

That's why CHAG is hosting their 30th Anniversary Charity Cruise from 7-10 p.m. on Aug. 19. Tickets for \$100 per person are on sale now for the "Moonlight Masquerade" aboard the Ovation Yacht, 24400 Jefferson Ave. in St. Clair Shores. There will be an open premium bar, a gourmet

strolling supper, music and dancing, a cookie bar, the Detroit Photo Bar and more. Tickets can be purchased at <https://chagcruise.eventbrite.com>. Suggested attire is dressy cruise wear. Masquerade masks are optional.

Proceeds will benefit CHAG, a non-profit organization committed to reducing the transmission of HIV, works to disseminate relevant information in communities at risk and offers a range of healthcare and support services for high risk, HIV infected individuals, and substance abusers because health disparities in the African American community persist, HIV remains a pressing health issue and those at risk for HIV and other health issues need information and access to testing and treatment.

Learn more at [www.chagdetroit.org](http://www.chagdetroit.org). CHAG is located at 1300 W. Fort St. in Detroit. Contact their office between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. at 313-963-3434.

## Matrix Theatre Company Announces Fundraising Campaign

For more than 26 years, Matrix Theatre Company has created "Theatre that Matters." They produce high quality, professional theatre that aims to begin and further issue-based conversations and build upon the sense of community that will strengthen society's resolve toward social justice.

In July, Matrix had the honor of participating in the O'Brien Construction Company Charity Giveaway. They competed with other worthy non-profit organizations located in southeastern Michigan for a chance to win \$5,500 by getting the most online votes. Out of 32 organizations, Matrix Theatre Company came out in fourth place with 2,109 votes. O'Brien Construction Company decided to award \$550 each to the second through fifth place finishers.

While that helps, Matrix needs more support to continue live theatre in Detroit. As a result, they launched their "If You Can't Win It, Raise It" campaign. They've set an aggressive goal of \$11,000.

Matrix is hosting this crowdfunding campaign on Generosity, and those who donate at specific levels are eligible to claim perks. A contribution to Matrix affords a chance to earn social media shout outs, T-shirts, tickets and



more.

To donate, visit their campaign website <http://gaybe.am/D6>. Matrix has also selected its 2017-2018 Mainstage Season, which they will announce soon. Stay tuned for more information. Visit [www.matrixtheatre.org](http://www.matrixtheatre.org) for details.



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