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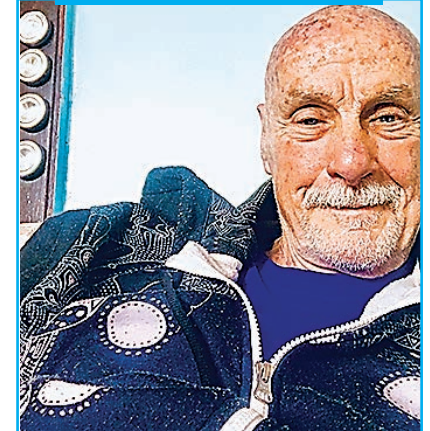
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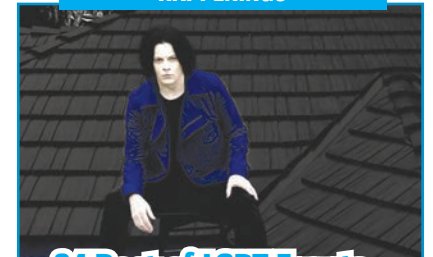


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20222 Farmington Rd., Livonia, Michigan 48152
Phone 734.293.7200

PUBLISHERS

Susan Horowitz & Jan Stevenson

MEMBER OF

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



EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief

Susan Horowitz, 734.293.7200 x 102
susanhorowitz@pridesource.com

Entertainment Editor

Chris Azzopardi, 734.293.7200 x 106
chrisazzopardi@pridesource.com

Feature News Editor

Kate Opalewski, 734.293.7200 x 108
kate@pridesource.com

Editorial Assistant

Eve Kucharski, 734.293.7200 x 105
eve@pridesource.com

News & Feature Writers

Emell Derra Adolphus, Michelle Brown, Todd A. Heywood, Ellen Knoppow, Jason Michael, Drew Howard, Jonathan Thurston

CREATIVE

Webmaster & MIS Director

Kevin Bryant, kevinbryant@pridesource.com

Columnists

Charles Alexander, Michelle E. Brown, Mikey Rox, D'Anne Witkowski, Gwendolyn Ann Smith

Cartoonists

Paul Berg, Dave Brousseau

Contributing Photographers

Andrew Potter, Alexander Godin, Andrew Cohen

ADVERTISING & SALES

Director of Sales

Jan Stevenson, 734.293.7200 x 101
jan@pridesource.com

Sales Representatives

Ann Cox, 734.293.7200 x 103
anncox@pridesource.com

Donelle Kremke, 734.293.7200 x 104
donelle@pridesource.com

National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media, 212.242.6863

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Affirmations Executive Director Susan Erspamer Resigns

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

As of a March 28 Affirmations board of directors meeting, it was confirmed that Executive Director Susan Erspamer resigned from her position without notice. Her official statement of resignation was read publicly at the meeting by Interim Board President Mike Flores.

"It is with mixed emotions I announce my resignation from Affirmations. After over two years of dedicated work I am pleased at Affirmations' many accomplishments and successes including a new vision, a new mission, a strategic plan, a rebranding and ending 2017 with a surplus," the statement said. "I wish nothing but the best for Affirmations now and in the future."

The announcement followed with an allotted public commentary period in which community members were able to pose questions about the board's next steps in addition to regular comments. The board provided no comment about public questions asked at the March 28 meeting, and promised that answers will be provided in a town hall meeting to be held sometime in April.

"We haven't selected a date yet, but we do know that it will be at the end of April," said Flores. "And the reason that we didn't want to answer questions at the board meeting was for two reasons. Number one, it was to give all the individuals who may have been there the opportunity to speak, but more importantly to give us the opportunity to hear the community, and to be able to reflect on what those questions are and to allow us to really be able to answer that in April."

When asked about the community center's next steps, Flores said that he will push to uphold Affirmations' precedent regarding the appointment of a new executive director.

"One of the things I'm trying to look at as the president is trying to determine how we've done this in the past, so we understand what the precedence is. I also want to look at what we can change as we move forward," he said. "I know that Susan was selected through a national search and we will probably try to engage in that type of search so that we can identify the best candidate for our community. But again, I think that we're still in the early stages of how we're actually going to select an executive director."

In Erspamer's stead, Affirmations' program director Lilianna Reyes will be taking over.

"As the first Transgender Latina to lead an LGBTQ+ organization in

Michigan, I'm honored to accept the Interim Executive Director role. I welcome this challenging transition with open arms," she wrote via email announcement. "I look forward to working with the community to make a stronger Affirmations. As we near International Transgender Day of Visibility, join me at Spring Bash on Saturday, April 14th, as we celebrate community!"

As the current interim board president, Flores' position is up for a vote in May at Affirmations' annual board of director's meeting. He said that Reyes has not been given a time limit for her interim position and that her position will not be voted upon this coming May. Flores said that this decision is a deliberate one to avoid

transitional "crisis" period when she came on the board two years ago.

"I think that's one thing Susan helped us do in 2016 when we had an exodus of employees and when we were dealing with a deficit. She was able to build a new core team and was able to stabilize our finances," Flores said.

For now, Flores said that the priority should be on maintaining the organization's positive financial momentum, developing a clear plan for finding a replacement and maintaining Affirmations' relationship to the community. And for community members who are interested in helping the center during its time of transition, Flores recommends several ways for community to get involved.

"We always welcome people to



When asked about the community center's next steps, Interim Board President Mike Flores said that he will push to uphold Affirmations' precedent regarding the appointment of a new executive director.

choosing someone who isn't "the right person for our community" because they lack the necessary skills.

"It is true, there has been a lot of turnover at the board level in the past, so moving forward, one of my objectives will be to identify board members that have two things: number one, that they are specialists or experts in particular areas that we need to strengthen Affirmations in, and secondly a long-term commitment to Affirmations as board members," Flores said. "I would love to see board members that would help us strengthen our policies, and controls which were identified as areas of improvement in our 2016 audit. We've addressed those in 2017, but I would like to continue working on how we can make Affirmations stronger in those particular areas."

And although Erspamer wasn't a member of the board of directors herself, she answered directly to it, and in Affirmations history the executive director's position has also faced similar turnover. However, Flores said that some of Erspamer's greatest strengths were her abilities as an administrator who brought Affirmations out of a

volunteer at our center. The second way people can support the center is through individual donations. The center is open because of donations that we receive from the community, so we're always looking to expand our donor base to either provide opportunities for people to continue to give more," he said. "Or by participating in some of our events like the Spring Bash that's coming up on April 14. Other ways that people can become involved is if they are interested in becoming members of our board is self-identifying themselves as potential board members."

For those who might be worried about the current state of the center, he said that he felt confident in its ability to come out stronger over time.

"I think that the biggest thing to kind of calm the community down is to help recognize that a lot has happened in the last couple of years and to remind ourselves where we were, where we are, and where we're going," Flores said. "If we reflect on that, I think the community will be proud about what has happened in the last few years and that they should be excited about what we're planning on doing in the future."



Lilianna Reyes: Familiar Face in New Role at Affirmations

BY MICHELLE E. BROWN

She's not a new face to the LGBTQ community locally or nationally, and certainly not to Affirmations where she has been working as the Program Services Director and as a volunteer. However, Lilianna Reyes is a new face in her current position as interim executive director at Affirmations.

For those who know Reyes, they probably aren't the least bit surprised to find her taking up the challenge. She was raised to believe one can do anything they want in life provided they work for it even when the road is hard. It's more than her determination that will be necessary for her success, but that will make her uniquely capable of sitting in this catbird seat of metro-Detroit's LGBTQ community. She truly stands boldly in the crosshairs of her intersectionality and continues to create change.

A proud trans-Latina woman, Reyes was born in Saginaw, which she credits with having a profound impact on her, and said it's responsible for shaping her into the woman she is today.

"The whole town was full of people who were working class people. Most of them were black and brown people – African-American and Mexican," Reyes said in an interview for "Collections." "It gave me exposure to, and an understanding of, strong women of color. So, my identity was shaped by very strong, very beautiful, very intelligent, often college-educated black women and women of color."

"I was shaped with the understanding of racial justice. We talked about Black History all year, not just in February, but we also talked about Mexican history," she said. "And so, when I graduated and went into the world, I felt really privileged to have this background."

She was born into a tight-knit, Catholic family. Her father was a Delphi worker and is now retired from GM. Shortly after her 18th birthday, her mother found all her girl clothes and makeup.

"My parents were pretty open, but having a gay child is a lot different from having gay friends," Reyes said. "I think that sometimes when we talk about parents' acceptance, it gets really polar and in reality, for many, especially for

See next page

► Lilanna Reyes

Continued from p. 4

people of color, that's just not how it works. Sometimes there's these steps that people have to take to find your way back to each other."

In her time at Affirmations, Reyes has worked with many LGBTQ youth who are estranged from, or those who, with their families, are in the process of finding their way back to each other. She said that this mirrored her own experience in her youth.

"I would never say that I was homeless, but I chose to leave the house. It was a really bad environment and I chose to leave but I was never kicked out," Reyes said. "My family always loved me. I knew if I got into any issue, I could have called my parents and they would have definitely supported me. For them (being transgender) was a piece of me that they couldn't support then, but they still wanted me to be OK."

It wasn't until college that she began to find her footing, and began speaking out about social justice issues and LGBTQ rights.

"When I initially went to college, I had no clue what I wanted to be. It ended up becoming a safe haven for me, a place where I could be authentically me and learn about who I was," she said. "I wasn't this anomaly. I got caught up in this evolving world and it allowed me to be able to understand the world and where I fit in."

She went on to earn a bachelor's degree in anthropology, sociology and history with minor in international and global studies and women's and gender studies. Eventually, it became clear that she wanted to help other people in her life.

"When I found out it was possible to live as a trans person, then I was like, that's who I am. There wasn't a whole lot of thought," Reyes said. "It was like, 'That's who I am.' I knew this was going to be hard. And I had to think like, 'What am I going to do for a job? I don't think anyone's going to hire me.' And then I'm like, 'Oh, social justice, that should work.'"

Reyes also earned a master's degree in public administration, focused on non-profit leadership and was certified as a substance abuse prevention specialist. She gained real-world experience when she worked with several nonprofits including Planned Parenthood, National Organization for Women and the NAACP.

When asked if she ever felt that she was tokenized in her work, she responded directly.

"To be completely honest with you, yes. Some did use me as a token," Reyes said. "The thing is, is that sometimes being used as a token allowed me to get in the door. Once I was in, then I pushed for my agenda to promote diversity and inclusion of the LGBTQ community. The good thing is all those organizations supported me. I also definitely think that a lot of the people that I worked with didn't really know what or how much they supported LGBTQ people."

Reyes said that the trick to building bridges

“When I found out it was possible to live as a trans person, then I was like, that's who I am. There wasn't a whole lot of thought”

- Interim Executive Director, Lilanna Reyes

with those colleagues who didn't understand the LGBTQ community was working inside-out, and building mutual respect between herself and them.

"If you can find common ground with people, then it can be really easy to build bridges. So, sometimes, you just got to like work with people even if you think that nothing's going to happen, but really amazing things can happen," Reyes said. "I've always been an analytical person where I've thought about pros and cons, but I've never been that analytical person that believes that because there are too many cons, you shouldn't do it."

And beyond her work as an employee for certain organizations, she has travelled across the Metro Detroit providing LGBTQ sensitivity training to police departments and other organizations. She said she feels like it is her duty to speak up and speak boldly about who she is and what she believes.

Reyes is also a founding mother and sitting board member of the Trans Sisters of Color Project – Detroit and her work has gotten national acclaim. She was featured in USA Today's "Faces of Pride Project" that featured members of the LGBTQ community and their allies from all 50 states.

Eventually, the work she was doing even reached back home, and started to patch up the relationships that were damaged when she came out.

"We had a lot of long talks, a lot of real hard talks that I never thought we would have. And one day my mother said, 'You know, you're just like me standing up for what you believe in, no matter what anyone says,'" Reyes said. "And she was like, 'I've never been more proud of you.' My mom ended up getting to a point where she became a social activist for LGBTQ people."

Her life experience mirrors that of many in the LGBTQ community who turn to Affirmations for support, programs and leadership and from all outside accounts, it seems that she is stepping into this interim position with the skills and history to make a difference.

The archived interview with Reyes Interim Executive Director of Affirmations is available on the Collections by Michelle Brown podcast on Blog Talk Radio, iTunes, Stitcher or SoundCloud. Michelle E. Brown is a public speaker, activist and author. Her weekly podcast "Collections by Michelle Brown" airs every Thursday at 7 p.m. Follow her on Facebook and Twitter @CollectionsbyMichelleBrown.

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Fabricio Alvarado on April 1, 2018, lost the second round of Costa Rica's presidential elections. (Photo by Iosepe; courtesy Wikimedia Commons)

Vocal Marriage Opponent Loses Costa Rica Presidential Election

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

Avocal opponent of marriage rights for same-sex couples on Sunday lost the second round of Costa Rica's presidential election.

Official results indicate Fabricio Alvarado lost to Carlos Alvarado by a 39-61 percent margin.

Fabricio Alvarado – a Pentecostal minister, singer and former journalist who is a member of the National Restoration Party – and Carlos Alvarado of the leftist Citizen's Action Party won the election's first round on Feb. 4. Fabricio Alvarado and Carlos Alvarado, who are not related, faced off on Sunday because neither of them received at least 40 percent of the vote in the election's first round.

Sunday's election took place less than three months after the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a landmark ruling that recognized same-sex marriage and transgender rights.

Outgoing Costa Rican Vice President Ana Helena Chacón subsequently announced her government would comply with the ruling. Fabricio Alvarado made his opposition to the decision a centerpiece of his campaign.

Carlos Alvarado publicly supports marriage rights for same-sex couples. He is also a member of outgoing President Luis Guillermo Solís' party.

"I am very happy," Margarita Salas, a Costa Rican LGBT rights advocate, told the Washington Blade on Sunday after Carlos Alvarado won the election. "Costa Rica today gave its strong and decisive support to human rights."

Other LGBT rights advocates throughout Latin America also celebrated Carlos Alvarado's victory.

"Costa Rica won," wrote Andrea Ayala, executive director of Espacio de Mujeres Lesbianas por la Diversidad, an LGBT advocacy group in El Salvador, on her Facebook page.

BTL Journalist Receives Lansing for Cesar E. Chavez Committee's Humanitarian Award

BY THERESA ROSADO

Over a simple meal of habichuelas and rice, the Lansing area Latino community came together over the Easter weekend to celebrate the life and legacy of Caesar E. Chavez. About 200 people attended the dinner to honor the civil rights legend as well as celebrate the renaming of Grand River Avenue in the Old Town neighborhood of Lansing after the icon. Old Town is also home to Lansing's two LGBTQ bars.

Also on the agenda, Between The Lines reporter and activist Todd Heywood was honored with The Lansing for Cesar E. Chavez Committee 8th Annual Humanitarian Award.

"Todd was chosen unanimously out of 5 individuals because of what he stood for. Cesar Chavez was not about white or black or just Hispanic. He did what was best to work for both sides," said Al Salas, president of the group. The committee chose to honor Heywood because of his history of research and his national recognition related to hate groups and hate violence.

"He himself was assaulted and beaten up. He decided one of the things he was going to do in life is to work against hate crimes," said Salas. "What better way than to honor someone from Lansing to honor what we believe? That's Cesar Chavez."

Heywood's questions generated a community response in Lansing after two incidents in 2017. The first: the murder of a local gay man, Kevin Wirth, outside of his home. Heywood questioned police practices in alerting the LBGQTQA community of bias crimes. Lansing police initially failed to identify Wirth as gay man, a decision that could have been detrimental for the safety of citizens while Wirth's murderer was at large.

Emily Dievendorf, President of Lansing Association for Human Rights, cited Heywood's relentless questioning as a reason for his success.

"Todd's work has always been unsettling," she said. "It has been productive in how uncomfortable his questions make you. And that is how real change happens. Real change requires seeing the whole truth."

In July, the second incident arose: an undocumented immigrant from Mexico was brutally assaulted while walking home, a sign stapled to his body, "Go back to Mexico, wetback."

It took a week for police to alert the public. Heywood alerted leaders in the Hispanic community after the victim approached him. A swift press conference was organized by



Todd Heywood speaking before the crowd at the Cesar Chavez dinner, Heywood called for human commonalities to rise above hate groups and fear. BTL photo: Theresa Rosado

civil rights leaders to alert Lansing's large population of immigrants. Allena Tapia of Lansing, an activist of Michigan United, joined in on the response.

"Todd's diligent research brought to light the 2017 hate crime that ended up mobilizing the community and led to several new safety initiatives," she said. "I find his work on monitoring hate groups brave and valuable, not just for my neighbors of color here in the city, but for all of us. He plays an important role in our goal of an inclusive, equitable community."

Speaking before the crowd at the Cesar Chavez dinner, Heywood called for human commonalities to rise above hate groups and fear.

"That hatred is rooted in a deep, gut-wrenching fear. If we want to end the hatred, we are going to have to step up and hear the pain and the fear underlying the hatred. We are going to have to listen, bear witness and then help those espousing this vile hatred to see our common humanities, our common fears and, most important, our common dreams," Heywood said. "We must reach out and help others to understand that as a city, a state, a country, a world, we are stronger and better together working cooperatively to lift all people up."

Heywood's approach shaped best practices in policies that led a Lansing health center in receiving coveted national recognition in LBGQTQA services. Ingham County Commissioner Kara Hope praised Heywood's volunteer work with the center.

"Todd's work as a journalist has raised

“That hatred is rooted in a deep, gut-wrenching fear. If we want to end the hatred, we are going to have to step up and hear the pain and the fear underlying the hatred.”

– Todd Heywood

awareness of the hardships and, in many cases, the injustices faced by folks with HIV as well as the LGBTQ community. He is someone who uses his platform to advocate for care and fairness for people who are often marginalized," she said. "I know that his work with the Ingham County Health Department and our community health centers is one reason Ingham County has been recognized as a leader in providing healthcare to our LGBTQ residents."

Sam Ingot who serves on the Ingham Community Health Center Board echoed Hope's sentiments.

"Todd is an open government and transparency purist. No violation is too small," Ingot said. "All realms of the public, city to Federal level – we need that now more than ever. Lansing is very lucky to have him."

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Joint Chiefs not Briefed before Trump went Public with Trans Military Ban

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

The joint military service chiefs were not briefed on the recommendations by Defense Secretary James Mattis against the transgender military ban or the Trump memo seeking to implement them before the White House went public with them last Friday, according to two sources familiar with the process.

One source said the top uniformed officials at the Pentagon had to download the documents online just like the rest of the public late on March 23 to obtain them for the first time.

Maj. Carla Gleason, a Pentagon spokesperson, wouldn't deny the joint chiefs weren't briefed on the recommendation before it went public, but said their representatives were on the panel of experts that advised Mattis on transgender service before he made his recommendation.

"Recommendations and conversations between the secretary and the president are private, however, each service was represented on the panel of experts," Gleason said.

Gleason said the group of experts on which Mattis relied before making his recommendation on February 22 to the White



Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr. wasn't briefed on the trans military ban before the White House made it public last week. (Photo public domain)

House was "a panel of service and joint staff senior leaders."

A defense official said the service chiefs may not have had the documents in hand

before they went public Friday, but that wasn't unusual because it was a part of a process in which Mattis was tasked with producing a recommendation and there was no actual

policy before the White House issued its memo March 23.

There's a history of Trump not consulting the joint chiefs on his plan to ban transgender people "in any capacity" from the armed forces, which he announced via Twitter in July. A BuzzFeed report last month on an email exchange immediately after Trump tweeted out his announcement revealed Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford called the move "unexpected" and intended to tell Congress he was "not consulted."

The White House didn't immediately respond to a request for comment late Friday on why the administration elected not to brief the service chiefs before making the transgender policy public.

Even after the White House made the transgender policy public last week, the Pentagon has insisted it will continue to assess and retain transgender troops in accordance with multiple court orders against Trump's earlier policy that found banning transgender service members is unconstitutional.

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

Widow of Pulse Nightclub Gunman Acquitted

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

A jury on Friday acquitted Noor Salman on charges that she helped her husband carry out the 2016 massacre at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Fla.

Federal prosecutors charged Salman with obstruction of justice and providing material support to a foreign terrorism organization in connection with the June 12, 2016, shooting that left 49 people dead and 53 others injured. Salman's trial began earlier this month at a federal courthouse in downtown Orlando that is roughly two miles from the Pulse nightclub.

The Orlando Sentinel reported Salman was crying after the jury reached its verdict. The newspaper also noted Barbara Poma, owner of the Pulse nightclub, and several of the victims' relatives did not speak when they left the courtroom after Salman was acquitted.

"I respect the criminal justice process, and we all have to trust that the jury made its decision free of bias and emotion," wrote Poma on her Facebook page. "Those of us directly affected by this tragedy must find peace in our hearts and remember that he (the gunman) was the one who pulled the trigger that night. He was the perpetrator, and he

should not have one more minute of power over our lives."

The massacre was the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history until a gunman on Oct. 1, 2017, killed 58 people and injured nearly 500 others during a country music festival in Las Vegas.

Brandon Wolf, a survivor of the Pulse nightclub massacre who is vice president of the Dru Project, a gun control advocacy group, is among the hundreds of thousands of people who participated in the "March for Our Lives" that took place in D.C. on March 24.

"I have not been watching the trial," he wrote on his Facebook page after the jury acquitted Salman. "I am not personally invested in the outcome, but I know this: True justice, in my eyes, comes from creating a world our 49 angels would be proud of. A world where we are celebrating life, not running from bullets."

"I love you all," added Wolf. "Stay strong. We do it for them."

Poma in her Facebook post said the verdict "cannot and will not divide us."

"The survivors, families, and first responders as well as the community of Orlando and everyone around the world must now focus on the work ahead of us," she wrote. "We



A federal jury in Orlando, Fla., on March 30, 2018, acquitted Noor Salman on charges that she helped her husband carry out the Pulse nightclub massacre.

will always carry the pain of what happened at Pulse, and we will never forget those who were taken. We will wrap our arms around all affected today and in the days to come."

"It will be difficult, but we will focus now on healing, and we will continue to work to help communities emerge from violence and

hate," added Poma. "It is as important today as it was 21 months ago."

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

Poll Gives Trump Poor Numbers on LGBT Rights

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

A recent Economist-YouGov poll on President Trump and a range of other issues gives him a poor numbers on his handling of LGBT rights just days after the administration reaffirmed its ban on transgender military service.

A total of 29 percent of U.S. adults said they approve of the way Trump is handling gay rights, with 12 percent saying they strongly approve and 17 percent saying they somewhat approve. Meanwhile, a total of 44 percent said they disapprove of his handling of this issue, with 9 percent saying they somewhat disapprove and 35 percent saying they strongly disapprove. Twenty-seven percent had no opinion.

The poll was conducted between March 25 and March 27 among 1,500 U.S. adults and has a margin of error of 3.4 percent. The poll also asked respondents about a variety of issues, including views of foreign countries, trade and social media websites.

On whether respondents approved of Trump's performance as president generally, a total of 39 percent said they approve, with 19 percent saying they strongly approve and 20 percent saying they somewhat approve. But 49 percent said they disapprove, with 9 percent saying they somewhat disapprove and 40 percent saying they strongly disapprove. Twelve percent weren't sure.

Respondents were specifically asked about their views on transgender people in the U.S. military and Trump's attempt to ban them from the armed forces — a move he reaffirmed with a memo last week. Despite the memo, the Pentagon is continuing to assess and retain transgender service members in accordance with court orders against his earlier policy.

A plurality of 49 percent said they support openly transgender service, with 31 percent saying they favor it strongly and 18 percent saying they favor it somewhat. Meanwhile, 11 percent said they oppose it somewhat, 23 percent said they strongly oppose it and 17 percent didn't know.

On whether transgender service has increased military readiness, 10 percent said it has made readiness better, 45 percent said it hasn't made much difference, 26 percent said it made it worse and 20 percent said they don't know.

Asked whether they support Trump's ban, a total of 34 percent said they support it and 48 percent said they were against it. Twenty-four said they strongly approve, 10 percent said they somewhat approve, 13 percent said



A recent poll of U.S. adults give President Trump poor numbers on LGBT rights. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)

they somewhat disapprove, 35 percent said they strongly disapprove and 18 percent said they weren't sure.

Kathy Frankovic, a survey research professional for CBS News, said in a blog post the numbers demonstrate Trump's ban isn't what the public wants.

"There is relatively little difference between the general opinion about transgender troops and opinion about the president's specific decision to ban them," Frankovic writes. "The overall assessment of the president's action is negative — except among Republicans."

The poll also asked respondents if gay rights is the most important issue to them given a choice of that topic among a total of 15. Only two percent said it's the most important, placing it in ranked importance ahead of only the war in Afghanistan, which zero percent say is the most important issue, and foreign policy, which one percent say is the most important issue. The economy and Social Security were tied at 16 percent as the most important issue.

Another question was asked about the importance of gay rights. Twenty-three percent said the issue is very important, 25 percent said somewhat important, 24 percent said not very important and 28 percent said unimportant.

The poll also asked whether respondents personally know someone who's gay or transgender and results were markedly different between the two.

Seventy-one percent said they personally know someone who's gay, but 21 percent said they didn't and 8 percent weren't sure. In contrast, 23 percent said they know someone who's transgender, but 68 percent said they don't and nine percent weren't sure.

As noted by Frankovic, the table results reveal knowing someone who's transgender increases support for allowing them to serve two-to-one.

The results found Democrats are twice as likely as Republicans to know someone who is transgender. However, veterans and those 65 and older are least likely to know a transgender person. Only 11 percent of veterans said they know a transgender people and 13 percent of those 65 and older said they do.

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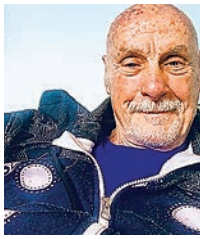
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Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

This week's issue of *Between The Lines* marks the kickoff of our celebration of 25 years of our dedicated, meaningful, challenging, rainbow-community outreach publication.

Whew! Who would have thought it possible? (Did you?)

I proudly – and, of course, as always somewhat modestly – note that I have been with BTL since day one when co-publishers Susan Horowitz and Jan Stevenson took previous publisher Mark Weinstein's radical faerie advocacy publication in a radical new direction for all concerned.

I remember our first meeting to discuss the direction the paper would take under Jan Stevenson and Susan Horowitz's leadership. Mark and his supporters advocated a strong, militant, in-your-face approach. Something along the lines of earlier Gay Liberation newspapers of the late '70s and '80s (Tim Toy and John Kavanaugh were proud, innovative promoters).

Horowitz, who, once prominently involved in the Stonewall Riot scene in New York 1969, felt BTL should be a source of news about the vital progress our community is making, its positive events and its personalities. Importantly, news of its varied, nationwide and worldwide interests as well.

Radical militancy would not be the paper's primary focus – Susan also brought to BTL her extensive journalist/publication/printing background honed in the New York LGBTQ scene.

I began writing my *Parting Glances* columns in 1993, and again modestly say I have written over 500 columns – approximately 305,000 words total so far – and never missed a deadline, a comma, an asterisk or an after-hours conjunction.

Whether or not at my advanced age that means I'm AC – anal compulsive – is open to psychotherapeutic – albeit nonsexual – group discussion with grammatically correct therapist Joe Kort.

My *Parting Glances* columns usually run about 600 words. They originally began at about 150 words and were devoted to brief overviews of the outstanding past LGBTQ events of the then soon-to-be-ending 20th Century. How time flies!

Before joining BTL I was writing an occasional story for an earlier LGBTQ newspaper, *Ten Percent*, and had done an interview with Stevenson, then first executive director of the Affirmations LGBTQ Center.

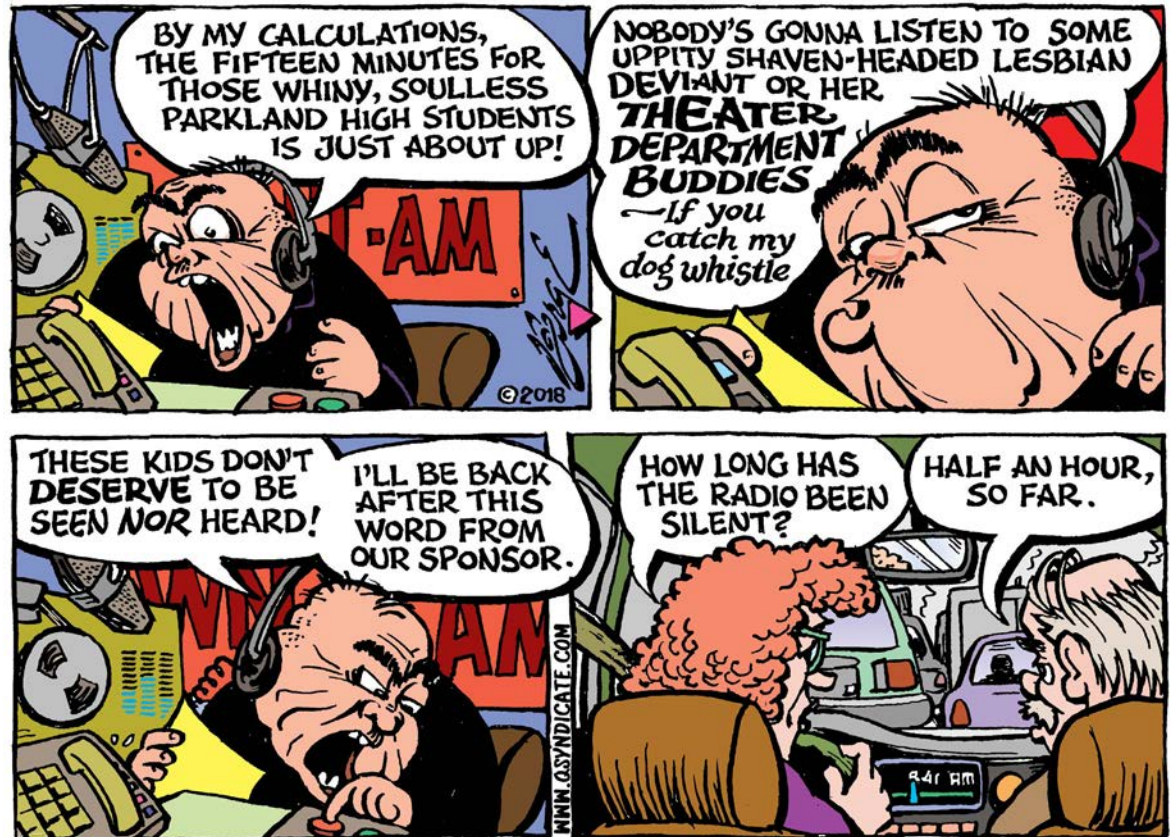
Stevenson asked me later if I would be interested in writing for BTL. I said yes. Why not? And during my tenure as a writer of history, Detroit background, coming-out personalities, humor, drag queens and the notorious Sister Scatterpin – now running a gift shop on the Isle of Capri – I've met many creative, dedicated colleagues:

Dr. Tim Retzliff, Cheryl Zupan, Jason A. Michael, Michelle Brown, Todd Heywood, D'Anne Witkowski, Kate Opalewski, Eric Rader, Ann Cox, Eve Kucharski, Chris Azzopardi, Kevin Bryant

And here's a real plus for BTL readers. Within a matter of weeks all 1000+ issues of BTL will be accessible online for fast reading reference, local history and, so importantly, remembrance of past trials, tribulations, triumphs – before Trump, and pretty-boy Pence.

And! I modestly invite my PG readers during our BTL 25th Anniversary year to read *Parting Glances: The Best of Charles Alexander*. (Been there. Done that.)

Charles Alexander is prolific both as a BTL columnist (700-plus columns) and as a well-known LGBT community artist (1000 Face Book images). He is a Spirit of Detroit Award recipient and an Affirmations LGBT CENTER Jan Stevenson awardee. Connect with him at Charles@pridesource.com.



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

Viewpoint

Striking Gold

To be transgender in 2018 is to deal with challenging, difficult times. We face attacks from all sides, and the specter of death itself lays heavy upon our community. As a result, I find I often have to spend a lot of time ringing the alarm bells, and warning of dire times.

Yes it is just as important to take a moment to step back, and realize that in spite of the adversity, we are gaining ground.

I think back to when I started out in the transgender community, such as it was at the time. We met in back rooms of hotels or in shadowy clubs – if at all. We were wholly outside the mainstream, and the notion of being “out” as trans was utterly foreign. Our role models were few and far between, as scarce as rights to protect us, or organizations willing to support us.

Today, we're seeing a bumper crop of amazing transgender people in public roles, from politicians like

Danica Roem, authors like Sarah McBride, Jenny Boylan and Janet Mock, and actors like Laverne Cox.

Movies and television were churning out a constant stream of bad “cross-dressing comedies” where a person – usually male – was appearing as a female in order to deceive someone and/or get something. All of this seemed to be borne out of the popularity of the 1960 movie “Some Like It Hot,” where the main characters – on the run from witnessing the St. Valentine's Day Massacre – join an all-female, traveling musical act. The same tropes powered films like “Tootsie,” “Mrs. Doubtfire,” “Juwanna Mann,” “White Chicks” and so many more forgettable films. This was when they weren't making films featuring cross-dressing murderers like the Buffalo Bill character in “Silence of the Lambs.”

In those days, we in the trans community were liable

See next page

Over the last few years, we've seen a new type of film take hold, one that features an actual trans characters rather than the capers of the stereotypical "man in a dress" comedies. We've seen characters like Rayon, portrayed by Jared Leto in "Dallas Buyer's Club," or Eddie Redmayne's take on Lili Elbe in "The Danish Girl." I think this came out of the success of Hilary Swank's groundbreaking portrayal of Brandon Teena in "Boys Don't Cry," coupled with an overall increase in trans awareness over the last couple years.

► Viewpoint

Continued from p. 10

to cheer on a movie like "The Crying Game," which featured a trans character played by an actor, Jaye Davidson, who was androgynous in appearance and gay-identified. The film itself was, for many, a breakthrough – even if it still relied on deception tropes, and had a male lead character so repulsed by Davidson's character's transgender nature that he vomited on screen.

Over the last few years, we've seen a new type of film take hold, one that features an actual trans characters rather than the capers of the stereotypical "man in a dress" comedies. We've seen characters like Rayon, portrayed by Jared Leto in "Dallas Buyer's Club," or Eddie Redmayne's take on Lili Elbe in "The Danish Girl." I think this came out of the success of Hilary Swank's groundbreaking portrayal of Brandon Teena in "Boys Don't Cry," coupled with an overall increase in trans awareness over the last couple years.

Of course, all of these still have an issue: the transgender characters are played by people who are not themselves trans, and who are all identified with their character's birth gender.

We're seeing a new category opening up, the next step beyond these stories and a sign of how far we've come since Robin Williams donned a pair of falsies and a gray-haired wig.

In the 2017 film "A Fantastic Woman," Daniela Vega, a 28-year-old trans woman from Chile, played Marina who is a transgender waiter and singer. Also out in 2017 was "Strong Island," a true-crime documentary directed by black trans man Yance Ford, and telling the story of his brother's murder and the subsequent denial of justice by an all-white jury.

Both of these follow other recent works, most notably "Tangerine" in 2016, which featured a black trans woman, Mya Taylor, playing a black trans woman in the lead role.

When one talks about the transgender comedies above, it is worth noting that

"Some Like It Hot" was nominated for several Oscars, and both "Tootsie" and "Mrs. Doubtfire" took home Academy Awards. Likewise, "Some Like It Hot" has been listed more than a couple times as the best comedy of all time. These accolades are likely what fueled so many other films to try to mine this trope for moviegoer dollars.

The same may be said for films like "The Danish Girl," "Dallas Buyer's club" and others thanks to the success of "Boys Don't Cry." Swank's portrayal garnered her Oscar gold, and helped make her the star she is today. It is easy to assume that these other films were banking on similar success, and indeed, "The Danish Girl" gained a nomination for Redmayne, while "Dallas Buyers Club" won for best supporting actor for Leto's performance.

This is why I point at films like "A Fantastic Woman" as the next step, because it too struck gold at the Oscars, as it won as best Foreign Language Film. Vega was also part of the show, introducing one of the musical numbers, the first time an out trans woman was done so at the Academy Awards. It's well worth noting that "Strong Island's" director was nominated for an Academy Award as well.

In these times where we see so much push back against trans rights, with an administration so hostile to transgender people, amongst so many others, we can and should take hope when we see wins like this. What's more, this isn't – shouldn't – be the apex, no more than the less-than-stellar "The Crying Game" was back in 1992.

Now is the time for a trans-led, trans-starring film focused on trans issues to make it big and cement the next wave of trans films, where we tell our stories, and we can truly be the next big thing in cinema.

We're in an era where, in spite of all the adversity we're facing, we're showing just what we're made of – and we shine like gold.

Gwen Smith teared up to see Daniela Vega at the Oscars. You'll find her at gwensmith.com.

Creep of the Week

Laura Ingraham

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI



Rabbi David Seidenberg wrote in an April 2 blog post, "Back in 1984, when we were both enrolled at Dartmouth College, she secretly recorded a confidential support group for gay students, and published a transcript in The Dartmouth Review – complete with the names of the students at the meeting, students who were in the closet, back in the day when being outed could mean getting rejected for jobs and attacked by drunken frat boys."

Many years later she expressed regret over this.

That's something she has a knack for, apparently. Doing or saying totally reprehensible things that no decent human would do and then offering a weak apology.

Case in point her recent Twitter tantrum in which she made fun of Parkland shooting survivor David Hogg because he didn't get accepted by colleges he applied to.

As you know, Hogg is a high school student. A 17-year-old. A child. Ingraham is, purportedly, a full grown adult. One without a filter or any compassion.

Now, when I say that Hogg is a child, I am not saying he's too immature to have opinions and feelings, which is what right-wing pundits like Ingraham believe. He has shown himself to be smart, mature and very articulate on these issues. He's also said some things that remind us that he's a 17-year-old who is angry, and rightfully so, after his classmates were slaughtered at his high school. It's pretty telling that the right wing gives "Mulligans" to Trump for literally every sin and crime he has committed, but are so keen on attacking the Parkland kids for, like, using the F-word sometimes.

This isn't the first time Ingraham has bared her fangs at a child. And she called the existence of transgender kids, "This new gender-bending phenomenon, which clearly is facilitated and encouraged by a popular culture that seems to have concluded

that, you know, traditional gender roles are yesterday's news."

Traditional gender roles, which have been used to keep women subservient and men violent and are the basis for sexism and homophobia and transphobia, are something the right-wing loves to champion. Which makes sense considering how morally corrupt their agenda is.

Ingraham has a gay brother, which you would think might bring her around on the issue of LGBTQ rights, but it doesn't. She's spoken out against marriage equality, saying she feared it would essentially make Catholics look like bad people for discriminating against gays.

That's something she has a knack for, apparently. Doing or saying totally reprehensible things that no decent human would do and then offering a weak apology. Case in point her recent Twitter tantrum in which she made fun of Parkland shooting survivor David Hogg because he didn't get accepted by colleges he applied to.

I could go on and on about the many racist and stupid things Ingraham has said, but you can Google that shit if you want.

Instead, I would like to say that at some point in the future people will look back at the time when Americans attacked and vilified children after they'd survived a mass shooting for daring to demand that the people in charge actually do something about gun violence. And they will wonder how a country who valued guns over kids managed to survive.

That is, of course assuming we have a future, because a country that puts gun rights before the right of its own citizens to live cannot survive. Not like this. If we continue on like this we'll be a country full of angry white men with guns in MAGA and "Who Farted?" hats. Which probably doesn't sound like a bad thing to Ingraham. After all, instead of having advertisers flee her show, her ratings would go through the roof. And she wouldn't have to apologize to anybody.

Barring that apocalyptic outcome, maybe Ingraham could just try being a better person.

Who's to Blame for Trans Military Ban: Mattis or Pence?

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

When President Trump reaffirmed his ban on transgender military service last Friday, the memo was backed up by a report from Defense Secretary James Mattis in which he asserted that a nine-month review of the issue revealed “substantial risks” in allowing transgender people in the U.S. military. But was it really his doing, or that of Vice President Mike Pence, who has a virulent anti-LGBT record?

Upon the release of the memo, many were surprised Mattis – who’s seen as one of the more mature voices in the Trump administration – was found to have signed his name to a document against transgender military service. After all, media reports from the time the memo was delivered in February indicated Mattis would advise Trump to allow transgender people to keep serving.

That wasn’t the case in the memo. Apparently by relying on junk science on transgender people, the memo came to the conclusion the Obama administration was in error by lifting the ban on their service and they shouldn’t be in the military.

“The Department of Defense concludes that there are substantial risks associated with allowing the accession and retention of individuals with a history or diagnosis of gender dysphoria and require, or have already undertaken, a course of treatment to change their gender,” Mattis writes. “Furthermore, the department also finds that exempting such persons from well-established mental health, physical health, and sex-based standards, which apply to all service members, including transgender service members without gender dysphoria, could undermine readiness, disrupt unit cohesion and impose an unreasonable burden on the military that is not conducive to military effectiveness and lethality.”

As a result, Trump was able to simply defer to a military expert (this time, for real, as opposed to when he made highly dubious claims on consulting military experts when he announced his ban in July) to maintain the policy. Further, Mattis’ voice gives ammunition to the U.S. government as it defends the policy in court. Now, the Justice Department can clearly argue the ban is a military decision, and the courts traditionally give deference to the military leaders on military matters.

Ashley Broadway-Mack, president of the American Military Partner Association, said Mattis may have been influenced by Pence or President Trump, but signing his name to the document makes the defense chief culpable.

“At the end of the day, Mattis agreed to allow his name to be attached to the

final recommendation including outrageous and false claims used to try to justify this administration’s unconscionable transgender military ban,” Broadway-Mack said. “That fact is deeply troubling, and dare I say, a breach of trust for the transgender service members and their families he is charged with leading.”

The conclusions that Mattis reached in his memo are different from views he stated before. During his confirmation hearing last year, Mattis said he intended to reverse Obama-era changes allowing LGBT people in the U.S. military under questioning from Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) and Mazie

including transgender service members – are treated with the dignity, respect, and support they need and deserve,” Broadway-Mack said.

For his part, Mattis is keeping tight-lipped about the ban. According to The Hill newspaper, Mattis said new policies “stand on their own” when speaking to reporters Monday prior to meeting with the Indonesia Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi.

“I think the statements stand on their own right now, and I don’t need to waste our guests’ time reiterating what’s already down,” Mattis is quoted as saying.

Keep in mind the transgender military

Matt Thorn, executive director of the LGBT military group OutServe-SLDN, said the real villain behind the policy is Trump, although Mattis shares some blame.

“I wouldn’t characterize it as escaping culpability from this,” Thorn said. “He is making a recommendation that is counterpoint to major, long studies and feedback that was provided to the Defense Department in 2016, but at the end of the day, this is the president and the president directing this decision.”

Amid expectations a new policy on transgender military service would emerge last week, rumors circulated Pence secretly harbored a desire to ban transgender people from military service and held an “ad hoc” meeting at the White House with anti-LGBT leaders – including Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council and Elaine Donnelly, who long opposed transgender military service – to keep the ban in place.

At the time, the rumors were unverified and not reported by the Washington Blade, but they’ve since found their way to other media outlets. In fact, ThinkProgress reported Pence essentially swapped out the finding of Mattis in February with recommendations from the “ad hoc” group.

Given the report is dated Feb. 22, the time Mattis turned over his recommendation to the White House, and purports to represent the findings of the working group established by the Pentagon, such a substitution would rise to the level of fraud. The document was submitted to courts adjudicating the constitutionality of the ban, which could result in consequences, including criminal liability or being found in contempt of court, if the report was found to be fraudulent.

Even if the report wasn’t a substitute, Mattis was undeniably under pressure to produce a report against transgender service given his boss Trump had already tweeted he’d ban transgender people from the military “in any capacity” and the White House memorandum to the Pentagon in August sought to ban transgender military service.

Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, wasn’t sure if Mattis was culpable for the ban on transgender service given the rumors Pence secretly drafted the policy.

“It’s not clear how much Secretary Mattis has actually bought into this reckless ban, or whether he simply got rolled by the president and vice president and elected not to fall on his sword,” Keisling said. “There has been some reporting to suggest the latter scenario. What we do know is that the DOD recommendations



LGBT advocates had varying takes on whether Defense Secretary Jim Mattis is culpable for the new trans military ban. (Photo courtesy Department of Defense)

Hirono (D-Hawaii).

“I believe that military service is a touchstone for patriots of whatever stripe,” Mattis said at the time. “It’s simply the way that they demonstrate their commitment. And I believe that right now the policies that are in effect – unless a service chief brings something to me where there’s a problem that’s been proven – then I’m not going in with the idea that I’m going to review these and right away start rolling something back.”

Broadway-Mack said Mattis should remember the words he said under oath before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

“In the end, however, we are confident that justice will prevail in our lawsuit and hopeful that Secretary Mattis will return to the promises he made during his confirmation hearing of ensuring all service members –

ban isn’t in effect thanks to court order against Trump’s earlier policy and that’s highly unlikely to change given that courts determined banning transgender people is a form of sex discrimination and a violation of due process under the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

A Defense Department spokesperson told the Blade prior to the time the memo was public the military will “still comply with federal court rulings and continue to assess and retain transgender service members.” In oral arguments for litigation against the ban on Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Marsha Pechman in Washington State said the Trump administration can’t implement any policy barring transgender individuals from serving in the military as a result of her earlier injunction and those of other courts.

See Who's to Blame?, page 15

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AIDS Watch Brings 500 Activists to Halls of Congress



Quinn Tivey and Naomi Wilding, grandchildren of legendary actress Liz Taylor, were on Capitol Hill this week. (Photo by Sean Black; courtesy of the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation)

BY LOU CHIBBARO JR.

Nearly 550 people living with HIV and their allies visited the offices of more than 200 members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives on Tuesday as part of the 25th anniversary gathering of AIDS Watch, the largest constituent-based annual HIV advocacy event in the nation.

Among those participating in the Capitol Hill visits were three grandchildren of actress Elizabeth Taylor on behalf of the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation, which serves as the lead sponsor of AIDS Watch. Also participating in the event this year was celebrity fashion designer Zac Posen, who serves as an Ambassador of the Taylor Foundation.

“The overall objective of AIDS Watch each year is to bring HIV advocates from the grass roots directly to Congress to tell their story and to advocate for the appropriate policies we need to continue to change the trajectory of this disease in America,” said Jesse Milan, president and CEO of AIDS United, the national advocacy group that serves as lead organizer of AIDS Watch.

Milan said AIDS United organizes the event in collaboration with The Treatment Access Expansion Project, which helps provide low-income people with HIV access to treatment and support services; and the U.S. People Living With AIDS Caucus.

He said the activists participating in the congressional visits and who attended a conference one day earlier on HIV issues held at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel came from 36 states and the District of Columbia.

AIDS Watch participants gathered on the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol on Tuesday morning for a rally before going to congressional offices to advocate for a wide range of AIDS-related issues.

According to Milan, among the issues the activists raised with the congressional offices they visited was the need for increased federal funding for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention following by a decision by the Trump administration to cut the CDC’s budget next year. The CDC plays a significant role in AIDS research and monitoring the course of the epidemic.

Other issues raised, Milan said, were the need for appropriate funding for the Ryan White AIDS program; support for a federal program in support of housing for low income people with HIV; and federal support for PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis medication that the U.S. FDA says has proven effective in preventing HIV-negative people from

becoming infected.

He said activists participating in the congressional visits from southern states were expected to raise the issue of the need to stem the tide of the South continuing to be hit hardest with AIDS in the U.S. Despite the effectiveness of HIV medication in keeping most people with HIV healthy and disease free, many in the South do not know they are HIV positive until they become ill with a life-threatening infection that could have been prevented with early HIV treatment, experts have said.

Although Congress is in recess this week with most lawmakers away on visits to their home states, Milan said AIDS Watch arranged for participants to meet with high-level legislative aides to their respective senators and House members.

“We just completed one visit a few minutes ago with the office of a senator whose legislative aide told us he was thrilled that we were there because he has friends who have HIV,” Milan told the Blade in a phone interview on Tuesday afternoon. It was the office of Sen. Thad Cochran (R-Miss.).

During Monday’s AIDS Watch conference, Elizabeth Taylor grandchildren Quinn Tivey, and Laela and Naomi Wilding presented the fourth annual Elizabeth Taylor Legislative Leadership Awards to two current and one former state legislator.

The three are gay former New York State Sen. Thomas K. Duane, for his longstanding commitment to treatment and care of people living with HIV in New York; gay Pennsylvania State Rep. Brian Sims for his efforts to end employment discrimination against the LGBT community and to advance marriage equality; and Florida State Rep. Carlos Guillermo Smith for his role in recent negotiations that led to the supermarket chain Publix to ensure its employee health plans cover PrEP.

AIDS Watch organizers presented that event’s annual Positive Leadership Award for people who are HIV positive to three people they said showed exemplary leadership advancing support for diverse groups with HIV. The three are Cecilia Chung, Senior Director of Strategic Projects at the Transgender Law Center; Ronald Johnson, former Vice President for Policy & Advocacy at AIDS United; and Venita Ray, Public Policy Manager at Legacy Community Health.

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► Who's to Blame?

Continued from p. 12

and report are a weak attempt to reverse-engineer justifications for the same ban that President Trump recklessly tweeted last July. It doesn't stand up to the least bit of scrutiny. The history of this issue makes clear this ban is being driven by the Trump-Pence White House and its bigoted agenda and nothing more."

A Defense Department spokesperson referred to the recommendation made public by the White House as the Mattis report when asked by the Blade about its veracity, deferring additional questions to the White House.

A Pence official said the report the vice president swapped a recommendation is "patently false" and insisted he hasn't been involved in a major way. The official said he defers to the Defense Department on the best way to handle transgender service in the military.

White House Deputy Press Secretary Raj Shah said via email to the Blade the Pentagon produced its recommendation on its own when asked if the president, vice president or anyone at the White House sought to influence the outcome.

"The Department of Defense's panel of experts was comprised of senior uniformed and civilian leaders who considered the issue based on data and their professional military judgment, without regard to any external factors," Shah said.

In response to a question from the Blade on whether the ban is a non-starter because of court rulings against banning transgender service, Shah referred to a comment from the Justice Department.

"After comprehensive study and analysis, the Secretary of Defense concluded that new policies should be adopted regarding individuals with gender dysphoria that are consistent with military effectiveness and lethality, budgetary constraints, and applicable law," the statement says. "The Department of Justice will continue to defend DOD's lawful authority to create and implement personnel policies they have determined are necessary to best defend our nation. Consistent with this new policy, we are asking the courts to lift all related preliminary injunctions in order to ensure the safety and security of the American people and the best fighting force in the world."

(Shah responded to the Blade's questions via email after the White House declined to call on the news outlet during the first two daily briefings after the administration went public with the ban. No reporter from any other outlet called on during the briefings asked the White House spokesperson at the podium about the transgender policy.)

The new transgender policy was met with stern condemnation

not only from LGBT groups, but other organizations. The American Psychological Association issued a statement on Monday reiterating its opposition to banning transgender service, which it first issued in 2012.

"The APA stands firmly against discrimination against anyone, and this ban is a discriminatory action," said APA CEO and Medical Director Saul Levin. "This ban not only harms those who have chosen to serve our country, but it also casts a pall over all transgender Americans. This discrimination has a negative impact on the mental health of those targeted."

The San Francisco-based Palm Center made public a statement from 26 retired generals and flag officers in opposition to the new policy as well as former U.S. Surgeons General Joycelyn Elders and David Satcher, who said the Pentagon "mischaracterized the robust body of peer-reviewed research on the effectiveness of transgender medical care."

Aaron Belkin, director of the Palm Center, said Trump and Mattis are both "100 percent responsible for taking aim at their own troops" when asked if the defense chief was culpable.

"The Trump ban is based on scientific distortions that were immediately debunked by the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and retired surgeons general," Belkin said. "We don't yet know for sure the extent of Mike Pence's involvement, which circumstantial evidence suggests may have been high. But that's not the point. The point is that the ban is based on scientific distortions, which is why it will fail."

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Scissor Sisters Frontman on Going Solo, Aging and the Day David Bowie Died

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

“Oh, did I print that?”

Jake Shears is in a state of surprised perplexity, wondering if a version of his new (and very moving) memoir, “Boys Keep Swinging,” landed in the hands of journalists, such as myself, with what he calls the “weird epilogue.”

After all, Shears (born Jason Sellards) thought he stripped that throwaway entry – quite literally, as “I had them rip that page out from the ones that hadn’t been sent out already when I found out about that” – but those not-to-be-published pages still made the rounds.

In addition to reflecting on the process of reaching into tucked away corners of his life for the two-years-in-the-making memoir, the flash-forward epilogue explains his lengthy break from the Scissor Sisters, which Shears formed with Scott “Babydaddy” Hoffman in 2001, just days after Sept. 11. He writes, “I didn’t have much to say anymore through that particular filter.”

Calling from New York, where he’s starring as Charlie Price in Broadway’s “Kinky Boots,” it’s clear in conversation that even if you didn’t know Shears studied fiction writing at the New School in New York City and went

on to adapt Armistead Maupin’s “Tales of the City” into a stage musical, you’d catch on to his writerly conscience quickly. He cycles through his thoughts carefully, acknowledging his tendency to get lost in thought – “here I’m not talking in complete sentences” – or prefacing his explanation of the Trump era’s judgy, joy-shaming rhetoric with, “I’m not gonna be eloquent saying this, I don’t think.”

A love letter to the band of misfits he met living in Seattle and New York responsible for his queer coming of age, a journey that transformed his youth as a suppressed, bullied Christian outcast into a flagrantly gay, go-go

dancing, glam-rock superstar, the wonderful “Boys Keep Swinging” is an unflinching account of sexuality in bloom, imbued with Shears’ colorful record of his most influential and formidable years.

Musically, he’s found his creative mojo again, releasing last year’s ’70s-inspired groove “Creep City,” a prelude to his upcoming summer solo debut. “I feel like through the kind of lens of Scissor Sisters, I wasn’t particularly inspired at the moment to make more music that goes through that filter,” he tells me, elaborating on the nixed epilogue. “I really wanted that filter to just be

me, and I'm definitely in a place where I am very comfortable and happy to call the shots."

My mom is a fan of yours, and we've been to a Scissor Sisters show together. She wants to read your book, and I want her to, but I'm worried she'll ask me a lot of questions about the gay community's deep, dark secrets – like, what are International Male catalogues? – after she does.

It was weird to have my own mom read it! She read it in a day, and I was really beside myself when I finally gave it to her, but I had her primed for it for a couple of years while I was writing it, so she was ready for it. She's actually been super supportive and loved it.

Considering she wasn't accepting of you after you came out to her, that's a pretty evolved woman.

Yeah, my mom's amazing. I couldn't have a better mom.

Reading it, I don't think I expected to find parts of myself in your life story. But some of my earliest memories have been jolted and brought back to life because of you sharing your own. I forgot B. Dalton Bookseller even existed until you mentioned it.

I had no expectations as to what people were going to think or respond to, or whether people would identify with it. It's funny: (Musician) Sam Sparro, a really great friend of mine in Los Angeles and one of the first people I gave (the book) to when I got the uncorrected proofs, that's what he said. He was just like, "I feel like this is my own story in so many ways." The day I turned this book in was devastating to me. I was really very unhappy. Basically, it had to be ripped out of my hands. (Laughs)

Why was letting the book go so difficult for you?

It'd been such a part of my life for a couple of years. I don't know if I would call it a crutch, but it was definitely this obsession once I had started editing it. I was editing it until the last hour. When I turned in the final – the very last edits – I was so unhappy! I feel a lot better about it now. (Laughs)

When your friend, novelist Rakesh Satyal, suggested you write the book, did you immediately know where to start?

For a while, the book had started where the New York section starts. That was the beginning of the book, and I was going for quite a while. I really wasn't planning on writing that whole first third (about my youth), and then I hit this point when I was writing well into what is now the second section where I was like, I'm not gonna be able to go any further without actually starting from the beginning. So, I went back. That whole first third I ended up going back and writing.

As gay people in their 30s, it's sometimes easy to forget the emotional turmoil and personal

struggle we went through to be comfortable with ourselves. Did reflecting on your own sexual adversity give you a greater appreciation for who you've become – this unabashedly gay role model?

I don't really think of myself like that, but the thing I did underestimate, though, is, I'm a pretty resilient person. Going back and writing some of the more painful stuff, I feel like I kind of underestimated its effect on me, just in general in my everyday life. I would finish a week and feel terrible and realize I had been sort of reliving some hard stuff, and I didn't really consider that when I was getting into it and didn't really know that was happening at the time. It's strange. I feel like there are 30 different books that I could've written.

Did you tap into any other queer memoirists for advice or insight?

The Carrie Brownstein book ("Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl") came along exactly when I needed it. It really resonated with me, and it was very influential. Over the summer I met up with (gay author of "The Hours") Michael Cunningham, and I've had a couple of great talks with him about this thing and have gotten a lot of support from him.

It's hard to give the book to somebody when it's not finished. It's just strange. You've gotta pick the right people to give it to before it's done. I had lunch with Elton (John) a couple of weeks ago, and I was excited for him to read it because he plays a prominent part in the last third of the book. He read it in a day and wrote me this email, and he was so happy and loved it. That was really sweet.

In addition to Elton, you write a lot about your childhood idol, David Bowie, in the book. You didn't actually meet Bowie, right?

No, he just came to a show and I found out about it after I got off stage. I was heartbroken. It was the scariest. Just a really freaky moment for me.

When you found out about his passing how did that affect you?

It was so strange because I'd been pounding "Black Star" all weekend and just absolutely loving it, and then I had told my friend Laura it was great and she needed to listen to it. And so, it was Sunday night and I was hanging out with this guy, this friend of a friend, and we were just having a drink and he didn't know any Bowie stuff, so I was like, "I'll play you some good Bowie tunes." And I was playing Bowie and I got an instant message from my friend Laura that just said, "David Bowie," with a frowny face. I was so confused. I wrote back and then she gave me the news. It was just a really strange moment because I was playing his music when I found out he died. It was a very weird night. This person that I didn't really know ended up just being

See Jake Shears, page 18

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► Jake Shears

Continued from p. 17

with me all night. I was wrecked. I woke up the next morning and was going through a lot of stuff at that time in my life, and I was actually overjoyed in the following weeks to see the outpouring of love for him. All the parties and all the memories and just everyone's enthusiasm and love for him was so wonderful, and my darkest time was just that night, and I've been celebrating him ever since.

Considering Bowie's influence on you as an artist, did his death have you contemplating your own legacy as an artist?

Oh, I don't know. I don't even really think about it. (Laughs) I do feel like I'm into probably chapter three. The next 10 years are gonna be another thing for me. The album is coming out this summer, and it's an album that I'm so beyond proud of and that I love so much and that I'm so excited to put out. You're gonna dig it. I've never been prouder of something so much, as a whole.

Your photos, including the single cover for "Creep City," have crossed over from twink to daddy, at least according to the gay men who comment on your Instagram photos.

I know! (The daddy name) just started a few years ago and I'm like, "Well, I guess we're here now." I turn 40 in October and have a great life and feel as sexy now as ever, if not sexier. I don't mind going into my 40s. I'm really excited about the next 10 years, and then the next 10 years after that. It was weirder finishing up my 20s and going into my 30s, but now I'm very happy about my age and aging.

Regarding the Scissor Sisters, can you give me an example of something you had to compromise on that you no longer have to as a solo artist?

This whole record is about a time and a place in my life, and it's definitely me writing about a very specific place that I was at when I wrote it. There's no way I could've made this record without everybody being like, "Why do we all have to perform songs about you?" (Laughs)

Will it reflect the political turmoil that a lot of Trump-era art has?

In an inverted way. I personally think the world needs more joy at the moment. There needs to be joyful music, and I think sometimes we forget that in hard times. Sometimes we can forget to have fun, and I think right now there are a lot of hands on the hips and frowning upon having fun, and I just don't subscribe to that.

Being in "Kinky Boots" has been the perfect show for me because it really sums up my philosophy with the music that I make. It's been a really nice fit in that way, and the magic of being in that show is getting to see all the people come from all over the world that have never seen anything like that. As a New Yorker, we take a lot of stuff for granted. Urban sophisticates take a lot for granted, and here's a show about being yourself, and in a very loud and proud way. Seeing the various people come to the show who have never seen anything like it before is a really beautiful thing. I do think that it opens and changes people's minds.

I make music for everybody, and I really don't care who you are or what you believe. If somebody who has a different belief system than I do finds something in my music to like, I think that's a really great thing. I just really can't stand the rhetoric happening from everybody – or from a lot of people – at the moment.

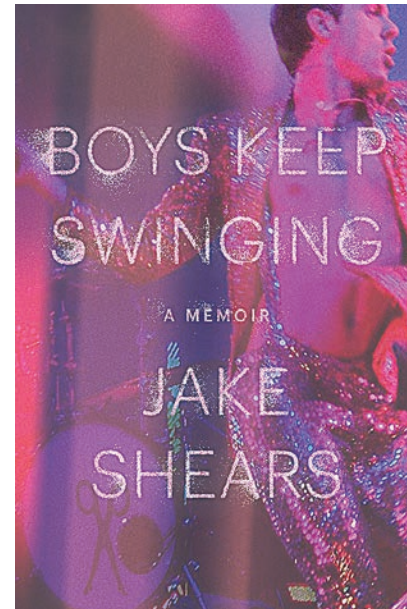
What rhetoric are you referring to?

I just think there's so much judgment coming from all sides with social media. It's just one big pile of judgment

on everybody and everything. I just think everybody's got room to grow, and I think that should be encouraged.

You go through a lot of personal growth in the book. Had you known what you know now about life, what would you tell your younger self?

I would try to bolster my own confidence that my own instincts at the time were correct. There's nothing I would go back and tell myself to do differently because I don't really have any regrets or anything – OK, I mean, of course we all have regrets. But I just took my own path, and I would tell myself, at 18, 19 years old, "You're headed in the right direction. Don't second guess." It's so crazy how much more self-doubt I have now as a 40-year-old man sometimes than I did then. Just writing this book and looking at me being 21 years old, I'm like, "Oh my god, I probably should've had a little more fear than I did!"



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Moms Who Love LGBTQ Kids Create 'Mama Bears' Documentary

BY DREW HOWARD

Thousands of conservative, Christian mothers of LGBTQ children meet up every day in the virtual world within secret support groups. Together, they help one another grapple with faith, answer questions, and learn how to best support their children.

These mothers are now the focus of the in-progress documentary "Mama Bears." Helmed by award-winning filmmaker Daresha Kyi, the project will take a closer look at how this group of women – aka "Mama Bears" – found community and a new lens for faith when they chose to embrace their LGBTQ children.

Kyi is now in the early fundraising stage for "Mama Bears." Interested donors can find a trailer for the documentary and other information on the "Mama Bears" IndieGogo page (<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/mama-bears-documentary>), where more than \$4,500 has already been raised for the project.

"One of the things I want to talk about is the journey of acceptance. I want to catch a mom who's just found out, who doesn't know what way to turn to talk about those early fears," Kyi told BTL. "Typically the women scour the Bible looking for actual scripture condemning homosexuality, and when they come up empty-handed, there's a crisis of faith."

Oklahoma Mama Bear Sara Cunningham found herself in that exact situation after learning her 21-year-old son is gay. As a woman of faith who'd been a member of her church for 20 years, Cunningham was lost and desperate for someone to turn to.

"No one talked about it in church," Cunningham said. "They tried to minister, but they didn't know what to do with us. I felt like the only woman in the world reconciling my faith, and feeling like I had to choose between my son and my faith."

Cunningham was later turned on to a private Facebook group for moms of LGBTQ+ kids called "Serendipitydodah for Moms." Created in 2014 by Liz Dyer, the page has since grown to 2,500 members and spawned three subgroups focusing on mothers of transgender children, opportunities for activism, and an LGBTQ-affirming faith community.

"Serendipitydodah for Moms" was one of the original inspirations for the "Mama Bears" documentary. Cunningham says the group



is for mothers at all stages of the journey, whether that's a mom who's still asking questions or reached full acceptance.

"What shocked me was we all had the same story of feeling alienated and separated from our families, churches and society," Cunningham said. "There are moms losing their husbands because they affirm their child, and stories of youth pastors outing their lesbian youth students on Sunday mornings – it's just horrible, these horror stories."

Cunningham started taking her activism to the streets, literally, when she walked in an Oklahoma Pride Week parade holding a banner reading "Free Mom Hugs." The act proved to be a hit with parade-goers, prompting Cunningham to turn Free Mom Hugs into its entirely own separate non-profit group.

With additional funding, Kyi hopes to document the 2nd annual Free Mom Hugs. From May 4-19, Cunningham and a group of mothers will bring the Free Mom Hugs banner to 10 cities along the way to their final destination at the Wyoming grave site of Matthew Shepard, a 22-year-old gay student who was beaten and left for dead in 1998.

Cunningham's first Free Moms Hugs tour, which concluded at the Stonewall Inn in New York, is featured in the Mama Bears trailer on IndieGogo. Kyi says Cunningham is an example of a mom who turned her grief into activism.

"They call themselves the Mama Bears because in the animal kingdom, the mom is the fiercest defender," Cunningham said. "They identify with that image – once they get on board they're ferocious. You will see them marching in Pride Parades. You see Sara, who went from laying in bed for five months

crying to starting her 2nd Free Mom Hugs tour and traveling to 10 cities, this time her son going with her."

Kyi will also use donations to document Susan Cottrell, an international speaker, author and Mama Bear of two LGBTQ+ children. Cottrell is also the founder of FreedHearts, a non-profit organization that promotes inclusivity through speaking events, video courses and secret Facebook support groups for moms and dads of LGBTQ+ children.

Like many of the parents she speaks to, Cottrell was forced to reexamine religion within the church when her two daughters came out of the closet. She said the church's stance on homosexuality was one of the reasons why she started FreedHearts.

"I told a couple women in my church about my daughter and I was simply told it's a sin and you can't accept it," Cottrell said. "How can't you accept your daughter? I had to get out ahead of this thing and defend this community."

Cottrell's work in the community has afforded her speaking opportunities on Good Morning America, ABC's 20/20, and Nightline, among other places. She's also authored three books approved by the Human Rights Campaign, including her most recent titled "Mom, I'm Gay - Loving Your LGBTQ Child and Strengthening Your Faith."

Cottrell's activism has come at a price, though, as she's lost touch with family members and longtime friends due to her outspoken beliefs. She still considers herself a Christ follower, one who's less tied to church and more so to her personal relationship with God.

"I still consider myself a Christ follower by all means," Cottrell told BTL. "If you look at Jesus he doesn't say any of this stuff. If they listened to him they'd have a whole different spirit. I still follow Jesus, but I don't follow churches and pastors."

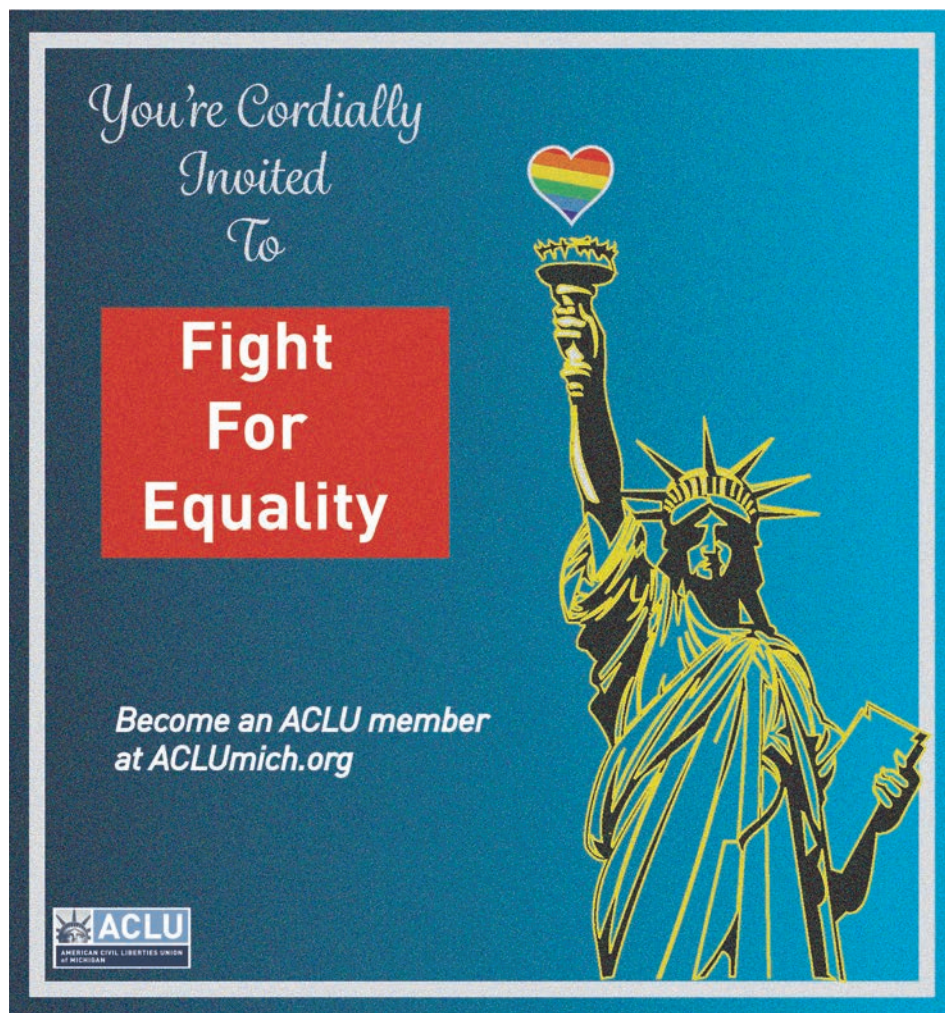
"We advocate because of our faith, not in spite of it," she added.

Kyi was unable to give BTL a release date for the documentary, but she hopes to finish it "within a year and a half." Kyi will continue providing developments on the film through social media as well as the "updates" tab on the Mama Bears IndieGogo page.

Anyone interested in joining the Serendipitydodah Facebook support group is encouraged to visit the public page <https://www.facebook.com/Serendipitydodah1> or email Liz Dyer at lizdyer55@gmail.com.

For more information about FreedHearts, please visit freedhearts.org. Parents can gain access to the FreedHearts private Facebook support page by inputting their information on the website.

To view the official Mama Bears trailer, click <https://vimeo.com/227316524>.





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Ferndale's Soho Bar Hosts Merge & Member Mixer

BY BTL STAFF

Ferndale's one and only LGBT bar is switching up its usually relaxed atmosphere for a slightly more professional one on Thursday, April 12. From 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce is hosting a Merge & Member Mixer to allow LGBT professionals and Allies to get to know each other better.

"Business is all about connections. DRLGBTCC is committed to building an inclusive community in SE Michigan," said the DRLGBTCC website. "Cultivating spaces where transparent meaningful connections between professionals and businesses are necessary for building an inclusive community. Participation with DRLGBTCC is not only an investment in your business but also an investment in the future growth of Detroit."

The event will also feature products from ShannonLoren Marketing Support Services.

Soho is located at 205 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale and can be reached online at ferndalesoho.com or by phone at 248-542-7646. To pre-register for this free event, go online to detroitlgbtchamber.com.

Lesbians Who Tech + Allies Hosts Board Gaymes and Trivia

BY BTL STAFF

Board games and trivia can be great fun, but only in a group. For those looking for an inclusive space to meet new people or maybe meet up with old friends, join Lesbians Who Tech + Allies on Monday, April 23 at B Nektar Meadery.

All ages are welcome to this event, and no ID is required. The event is also wheelchair accessible and compliant with ADA requirements for restrooms.

Founded in San Francisco six years ago, Lesbians Who Tech + Allies is a community of queer women in the tech industry who number more than 40,000. The community prides itself on the inclusion of all LGBTQ people and gender nonconforming people and hosts events in nearly 40 cities around the U.S., including 5 international cities. In order



to maintain this community, the group hosts monthly meetings in its various chapters.

This year, the group will be hosting its first-ever leadership summit for mid-level and executive non-binary, LGBTQ women and allies.

The free event will be held from 5:30 to 10 p.m. B Nektar Meadery is located at 1511 Jarvis, Ferndale. More information about the organization and its events can be found online at lesbianswhotech.org and on eventbrite.com.

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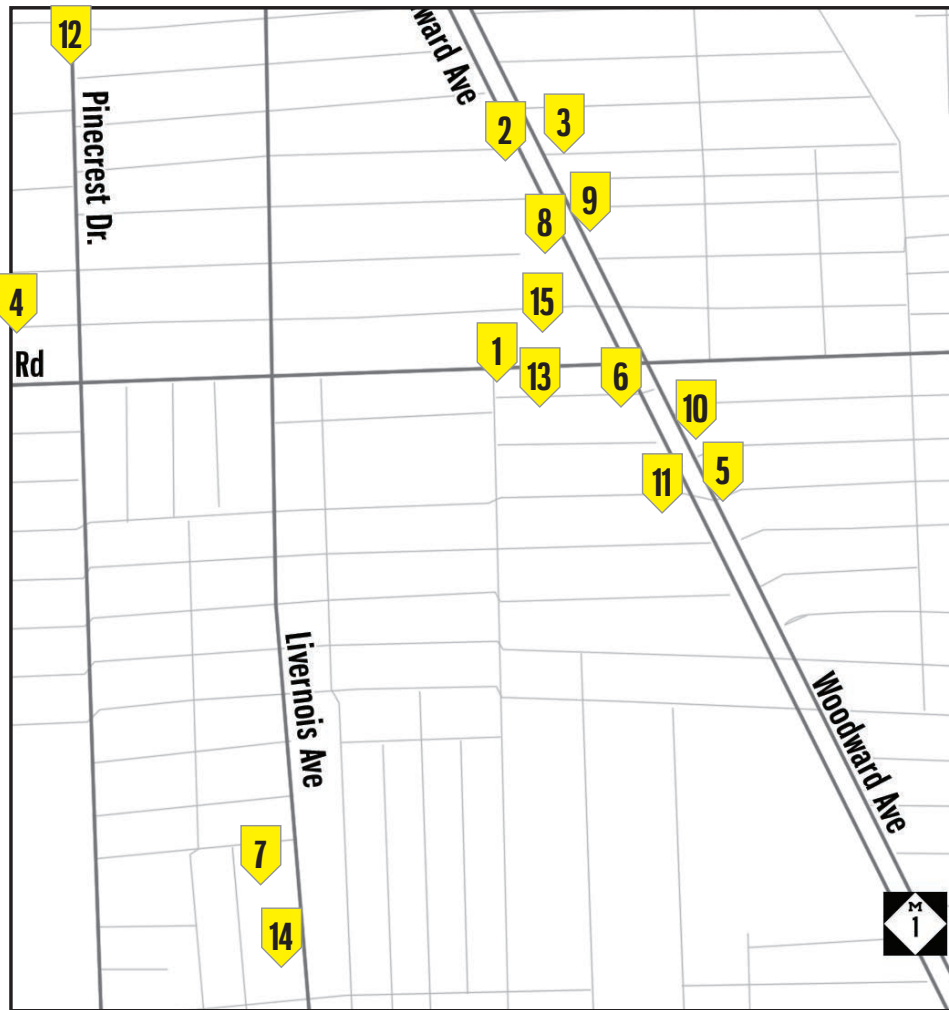
The Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce mission is to promote and empower our Metropolitan Detroit LGBT, allied business members, non-profit members, corporate partners and their employees through leadership, advocacy, and education.

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Happenings

Photo by David James Swanson.

Jack White to Perform at Little Caesar's Arena

In addition to receiving 12 Grammy Awards, Jack White has been ranked by Rolling Stone to be in "The 100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time" and has achieved number one status on the Billboard charts for each of his solo albums. Now, touring with his most recent album *Boarding House Reach*, the Detroit native will stop by Little Caesar's Arena on April 19. Tickets start at \$21. More information can be found online at olympiaentertainment.com.

OUTINGS

Thursday, April 5

Pop-Up Event: Dance! Introduction to Partner Movement 7 p.m. Learn the rumba or 4 count hustle at Affirmations with our friend Jeffrey T. Rakowski from Evoke Ballroom. All couples and ages are welcome in this free workshop series. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, **Ferndale**. 248-398-7105.

OU 15th Annual Drag Show 7 p.m. The 15th Annual Drag Show is a major aspect of Pride Month. The drag show is the Gay-Straight Alliance's largest event, with hundreds of spectators each year. Consisting of both professional and student-auditioned performers, this Oakland Center, 312 Meadow Brook Road, Room 118, Rochester. 248-370-3230 gsc@oakland.edu gsc@oakland.edu.

Friday, April 6

Foolmoon 2018 10 a.m. FoolMoon is the nighttime kick-off event to our foolish weekend! In the heart of downtown Ann Arbor, everyone and anyone is invited to gather in the streets to shake off those cold gray winters. The Ann Arbor, Ashley St. and Washington St. wonderfoolproductions.org/foolmoon/.

The Novi Home and Garden Show 2018 2 p.m. The Novi Home & Garden Show is the one-stop destination to find home improvement products and services for every type of project imaginable, decorating and landscaping exhibits as well as experienced businesses available for consulting. One event on April 7 at 10 a.m. One event on April 8 at 10 a.m. Suburban Collection Showplace, 4, Novi. 5867526381 gmonette@allseasonscommunications.com gmonette@allseasonscommunications.com.

novihomeshow.com

As One: An Opera About The Transgender Experience 8 p.m. EPEX Contemporary Performance and Kerrytown Concert House present Kathleen Kelly's new staging of the renowned chamber opera "As One" – music and concept by Laura Kaminsky and libretto by Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed. An event every day that begins at 8:00 p.m., repeating until April 7 Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N. 4th Ave., Ann Arbor.

The Gay Agenda's Camptastic! 8 p.m. Let's get campy! Join Brant Branson and Trant Transon on a magical journey to the past to rediscover the roots of their friendship. Mr. B's, 215 S. Main St., **Royal Oak**. 248-399-0017 mrbspub.com.

Saturday, April 7

Queer Prom 2018 7 p.m. Second Annual Queer Prom Ages 14-18 Early Bird Registration opens March 7th at 8 a.m. Early Bird tickets are \$15 Ticket prices increase to \$20 on April 1. Tickets will be available at the door. Streeters Ground Zero, 1669 S. Garfield Ave., Traverse City. 231-932-1300 groundzeroonline.com.

Spring TG Prom 9 p.m. Join us for our annual TG Prom. DJ Doug, 9 p.m. Who will be our next Prom Queen and King? The Dunes Resort, 333 Blue Star Hwy, Douglas. 269-857-1401 dunesresort.com.

Sunday, April 8

Festifools 2018 4 p.m. Festifools is one of Ann Arbor's cultural treasures. It is a HUGE-mongous public art spectacular, created by members of the community and U of M students. Magnificent, colorful, bizarre, human-powered papier-mâché puppets join thousands of Yearly Ann Arbor, Main Street. wonderfoolproductions.org/festifools/

Monday, April 9

Selecting and Using Children's Literature to Discuss LGBTQIA Identities in Classroom 6 p.m. All are welcome to attend this seminar in 350 Pawley Hall to learn methods for starting conversations with children about gender and LGBTQIA identities through the selection and discussion of children's literature. Dr. Kristin McIlhagga, Oakland Center, 312 Meadow Brook Road, Room 118, Rochester. 248-370-3230 gsc@oakland.edu gsc@oakland.edu.

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups 6:30 p.m. Macomb Teen/Youth Support Group Event Time: 6:30pm-8pm All youth are welcome to attend this FREE group. Come and meet other trans* youth and teens and support each other through your journeys. Dakota High School, 21051 21 Mile Road, Macomb. 586-723-2700 chippewavalleyschools.org/schools/high-schools/dhs/.

Thursday, April 12

Lesser Known Gender and Sexuality Identities 11:30 a.m. This event will focus on bringing awareness and understanding to some of the lesser-known gender and sexual identities. Oakland University, 2200 N. Squirrel Road, **Rochester**. 248-370-4336 gsc@oakland.edu

Friday, April 13

Friday the 13th @ Zeke's Rock & Roll Ferndale Pride Fundraiser 11 a.m. Come join us on Friday, April 13th at Zeke's Rock & Roll BBQ featuring Amelia Airharts. 20 of sales all day and \$10 cover starting at 9 p.m. Proceeds both benefit Ferndale Pride.

Average White Band Comes to the MGM Grand 8 p.m. Average White Band are a Scottish funk and R&B band that had a series of soul and disco hits

between 1974 and 1980. They are best known for their million-selling instrumental track "Pick Up the MGM Grand Detroit, 1777 3rd Ave., **Detroit**. 877-888-2121 mgmresorts.com.

Saturday, April 14

Affirmations Proudly Presents 'Celebrating Community' Spring Bash! 5 p.m. Affirmations is proud to present Spring Bash 2018 – Celebrating Community, at the beautiful MGM Grand Detroit on Saturday, April 14th. We expect over 400 guests to attend the gala. The evening includes open bar, MGM Grand Detroit, 1777 3rd Avenue, Detroit. 877-888-2121 mgmresorts.com.

Spring Bash 2018 – Celebrating Community 6 p.m. MGM Grand Detroit for a celebration of Metro Detroit's LGBTQ+ community and its allies. MGM Grand Detroit, 1777 3rd Ave., Detroit. 877-888-2121/ mgmresorts.com.

Sunday, April 15

The 29th Annual Bow Wow Brunch 10:30 a.m. Detroit's animal lovers will don their cocktail chic for homeless pets on April 15, when the Michigan Humane Society will host its Purrrfect Bow Wow Brunch, presented by Strategic Staffing Solutions, at the MGM Grand MGM Grand Detroit, 1777 3rd Ave., Detroit. 877-888-2121 events@michiganhumane.org mgmresorts.com.

Thursday, April 19

Lisa Lampanelli at Motor City Casino Sound Board 8 p.m. Lisa Lampanelli is one of the most high-profile insult comics. Though actually born in Connecticut, she is identified as a New Yorker, where she built up her career on the stand-up comic circuit. Motor City Casino Sound Board, 2901 Grand River Ave., **Detroit**. 313-309-

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Editor's Pick

A2CT Offers Long Scene Improv Class

For many, improvisation is something that is incredibly appealing, but might seem inaccessible. However, the Ann Arbor Civic Theatre is helping to change that by offering a workshop to not only work on improvisational techniques, but maintaining them for long periods of time. The workshop is aimed at those aged 16 and up and will be held Saturday, April 7 from 1 to 4 p.m. at the A2Ct Studio located at 322 W. Ann St., Ann Arbor. Registration is available both online at a2ct.org or by calling ahead at 734-971-2228. Tickets for members of the theater cost \$20 and \$25 for non-members.



4700. motorcitycasino.com/soundboard.aspx soundboarddetroit.com.

Saturday, April 21

Brunch at Dino's Benefiting Ferndale Pride 9:30 a.m. Come join us at Dino's for Brunch, 10 of sales during brunch benefit Ferndale Pride! Dino's Restaurant, 22740 Woodward Avenue, Ferndale. 248-591-3466 julia@ferndalepride.com julia@ferndalepride.com. dinoslounge.com.

Sunday, April 22

Indigo Girls at Motor City Casino Sound Board 7:30 p.m. Indigo Girls are a Grammy Award-winning folk rock music American duo consisting of Amy Ray and Emily Saliers. They started performing with the name Indigo Girls as students at Emory University, performing weekly at Motor City Casino, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 866-782-9622 soundboarddetroit.com.

Tuesday, April 24

Queer Queens of Comedy 7:30 p.m. Carol Leifer has done it all. She is an internationally acclaimed comic, comedy writer and producer. Writing for this year's Oscars. Poppy Champlin is producing this three-city tour that goes from Columbus to Toledo and Toledo Funnybone, 6140 Lewis Commons Blvd., Perrysburg. 419-931-3474 Pophaha1@gmail.com Pophaha1@gmail.com. Toledo.funnybone.com. QueerQueensofComedy.com.

Wednesday, April 25

Ferndale Pride Volunteer Meetings Update 7 p.m. All Ferndale Pride Volunteer Meetings have been moved to the Geri Kulick Center, 1201 Livernois, Ferndale, MI 48220 Any questions, contact the event chair, Julia Music at julia@ferndalepride.com One event on May 9 at 7 p.m. One event on May 23 at 7 p.m. Geri Kulick Community Center, 1201 Livernois, Ferndale. 248-544-6767 ferndalemi.gov.

Friday, April 27

2nd Annual Spring Luncheon Equality Michigan 11:30 a.m. Kalamazoo born and raised Eric Fanning- the first openly gay, former U.S. Secretary of the Army- will be Equality Michigan's featured speaker at our 2nd annual spring luncheon "The Business Case for Equality" on Friday Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, 1000 E. Beltline Ave., NE, Grand Rapids. 888-957-1580. meijergardens.org.

MUSIC & MORE

Foolmoon 2018 April 6, 10 a.m. FoolMoon is the nighttime kick-off event to our foolish weekend! In the heart of downtown Ann Arbor, everyone and anyone is invited to gather in the streets to shake off those

cold gray winters. wonderfoolproductions.org/foolmoon/.

Strauss & Wagner at Orchestra Hall April 6, 10:30 a.m. Originally composed as a gift to his wife after the birth of their son Siegfried, Wagner's Siegfried Idyll would eventually serve as musical inspiration to parts of his Ring cycle. ConcertTalk 4/6 at 7 p.m. One event on April 6 at 8 p.m. One event on April 7 at 8 p.m. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. 313-576-5111. dso.org.

The Novi Home and Garden Show

2018 April 6, 2 p.m. The Novi Home & Garden Show is the one-stop destination to find home improvement products and services for every type of project imaginable, decorating and landscaping exhibits as well as experienced businesses available for consulting One event on April 7 at 10 a.m. One event on April 8 at 10 a.m. Suburban Collection Showplace, 4, Novi. 586-752-6381. gmonette@allseasonscommunications.com. novihomeshow.com.

Storm Large & Le Bonheur April 6, 8:30 p.m. Tickets start at \$20. Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5162. dso.org.

Music April 7, 8:30 p.m. Hailed by Performance Today's Fred Child as "one of the groups that has really helped to shape the future of classical music," Music is a group of six New York City instrumentalists flourishing in the Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-516. dso.org.

Artemis Quartet April 8, 4 p.m. Named after the Greek goddess of hunt and wilderness, the Artemis Quartet was founded in 1989 but took a full 10 years before it performed its first concerts for a live audience. This dedication to Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor. 734-764-8572. rackham.umich.edu.

Festifoools 2018 April 8, 4 p.m. FestiFools is one of Ann Arbor's cultural treasures. It is a HUGE-mongous public art spectacular, created by members of the community and U of M students. Magnificent, colorful, bizarre, human-powered papier-mâché puppets join thousands of Yearly Ann Arbor, Main Street. wonderfoolproductions.org/festifoools/.

Foster Care and Adoption Orientation

April 10, 6 p.m. Orchards Children's Services is seeking adults to create smiles in a child's life. Orchards is looking for adults from all counties to provide temporary care in their home for children ages 0 to 17 for Orchards Children's Services, 24901 Northwestern Hwy., Suite 601, Southfield. 248-258-0440. orchards.org.

Friday the 13th @ Zeke's Rock & Roll Ferndale Pride Fundraiser April 13, 11 a.m. Come join us on Friday, April 13th at Zeke's Rock & Roll BBQ featuring Amelia Airharts. 20 percent off sales all day and \$10 cover starting at 9 p.m. Proceeds both benefit Ferndale Pride.

A Tribute to The Jazz Legend Abdullah Ibrahim April 13, 8 p.m. Iconic South African jazz legend Abdullah Ibrahim and his band Ekaya — with Freddie Hendrix in the trumpet chair — present a concert program in tribute to The Jazz Epistles, South Africa's first black jazz Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. ums.org.

Average White Band Comes to the MGM Grand April 13, 8 p.m. Average White Band are a Scottish funk and R&B band that had a series of soul and disco hits between 1974 and 1980. They are best known for their million-selling instrumental track "Pick Up the MGM Grand Detroit, 1777 3rd Ave., Detroit. (877) 888-2121. mgmresorts.com.

Sorrow – A Reimagining of Gorecki's Third Symphony April 14, 8 p.m. Henryk Gorecki's iconic third symphony, often called "Symphony of Sorrowful Songs," made a huge impact on listeners in the early 1990s and was a musical touchstone for virtuoso saxophonist and Ann Arbor native Colin Stetson. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. ums.org.

The 29th Annual Bow Wow Brunch April 15, 10:30 a.m. Detroit's animal lovers will don their cocktail chic for homeless pets on April 15, when the Michigan Humane Society will host its Purrfect Bow Wow Brunch, presented by Strategic Staffing Solutions, at the MGM Grand MGM Grand Detroit, 1777 3rd Ave., Detroit. 877-888-2121. events@michiganhumane.org. mgmresorts.com.

Apollo's Fire: Monteverdi's L'Orfeo April 15, 4 p.m. As one of the earliest examples of the form, and certainly the earliest that still has a place in the present repertoire 400 years later, L'Orfeo sets to music the famous myth of Orpheus and Ann Arbor Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. ums.org.

Cold Blood April 19, 7:30 p.m. After the resounding success of Kiss & Cry (2014-15 season), the magnificent creative team of Charleroi Danses in Belgium brings Cold Blood, a poetic journey that is filmed before your very eyes. The performance explores One event on April 20 at 8 p.m. One event on April 21 at 8 p.m. Power Center, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. 734-647-3327 smt.d.umich.edu. ums.org.

Lisa Lampanelli at Motor City Casino Sound Board April 19, 8 p.m. Lisa Lampanelli is one of the most high-profile insult comics. Though actually born in

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The Theatre Company

See Calendar, page 27

Hands Across the Water Gets Leadership Status from the Human Rights Campaign

BY BTL STAFF

On Friday, April 13, Hands Across The Water, a licensed child welfare agency will be hosting an open house event at their Ann Arbor office, celebrating their achievements in serving LGBTQ families and earning the All Children, All Families Leadership Status from the Human Rights Campaign for the seventh year in a row.

This event will provide community members, agency families and supporters with the opportunity to learn about the work of Hands Across The Water and celebrate their achievements in promoting LGBTQ rights. Friends, supporters and all interested community members are invited to attend this celebration which will include light refreshments, kid-friendly activities, giveaways, an office tour and a short presentation about the organization. A representative from the HRC will also be present to give Hands Across The Water with a Seal of Recognition at 5 pm and again at 6 pm.

Agency director, Katie Page Sander said that she is excited about the upcoming event and to show community members Hands Across the Water's new location.

"Many of our former families and supporters have not yet seen our space that we moved into five years ago and we want to include them in our celebration," she said. "We are incredibly proud to be recognized by HRC for the 7th year in a row as a leader in serving the LGBTQ community. More than ever before. It is imperative that we loudly and proudly express our strongly held values through our work in the child welfare community, which is inclusive of all children and families. We hope that our work in this area inspires more agencies in the field to pursue this honor."

Hands Across The Water is a fully licensed child placing agency. Founded in 1999, HATW originally provided international adoption services. Today, HATW supports families in domestic infant adoption, state adoption, pregnancy counseling, foster care, in-home parent education and behavioral health services. Hands Across The Water is dedicated to building and supporting families, committed to the belief that every child deserves a home and loving family.

The "All Children, All Families Celebration" will run from 4 to 7 p.m. at Hands Across The Water's Ann Arbor Office, located at 781 Avis Drive Suite 200.

Heidelberg Project Brings Arts Education to Detroit Schools

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT —The Heidelberg Project and four Detroit public schools are piloting a first-of-its-kind program that will use art to empower and inspire students to be change agents in their community.

The Heidelberg Arts Leadership Academy (HALA) serves Detroit students in grades 4-12 to explore art as a tool for social change, self-expression and community healing. HALA, launched in 2018, will serve over 100 students at Martin Luther King High School, Southeastern High School, Marcus Garvey Academy and Cesar Chavez Academy East.

"Using art as a catalyst to change lives is the very foundation of what we do at the Heidelberg Project," said its President and CEO Jenenne Whitfield. "The Heidelberg Arts Leadership Academy is one way that we are investing in kids and in Detroit's future. This program fills a critical need in Detroit schools that have seen a significant reduction or complete elimination of arts education funding."

Founded in 1986 by artist Tyree Guyton, The Heidelberg Project is a Detroit-based community organization that uses art as a catalyst to breathe new life into the community, transforming what others saw as trash into public, outdoor art installations. The nonprofit also offers free art programs to thousands of children in the neighborhood and at Detroit and suburban schools. In August 2016, Guyton

The HALA program is the sole source of arts education for students at Southeastern High School and Marcus Garvey Academy. It serves a critical enrichment program for students at Martin Luther King High School and Cesar Chavez Academy East.

announced Heidelberg 3.0, a new vision to transform his childhood neighborhood from an arts installation driven by one man into a self-sustaining arts and culture village.

The HALA program is the sole source of arts education for students at Southeastern High School and Marcus Garvey Academy. It serves a critical enrichment program for students at Martin Luther King High School and Cesar Chavez Academy East.

"The importance of arts education is paramount to the development of the whole child," said Southeastern High School Assistant Principal Alan Washington. "The Heidelberg Project is an iconic Detroit community arts organization and the partnership with Southeastern high school will allow our students to appreciate the history, significance and richness of the arts in the city."

The HALA program was cofounded and designed by three women that specialize in classroom education and programming, curriculum design, arts advocacy and community partnerships. HALA includes three, nine-week sessions of in-school or after school classes that connect students to a network of resources that include artists, organizers, entrepreneurs, and tech innovators to cultivate student potential and help build leadership skills. The classes include:

Art Through Hip-Hop where students use album covers to explore art as a tool for social change and artistic expression.

Art Speaks: Mural Project in which students collaborate with a local muralist to create a school-based mural that highlights an issue in the student's local neighborhood or school community. Students also visit visited 11 Detroit area murals and met with Heidelberg Project founder Tyree Guyton as part of the course.

Writes of Passage where students report and write about social change within their community to create a zine of editorial poems, short stories, drawings and photography.

"We feel like this program is our calling," said HALA cofounder Keisa Davis. "The Heidelberg Project was our inspiration and our backgrounds created the perfect combination of experience to bring this program to life."

To learn more about HALA, please visit, heidelberg.org/hala.

LGBT Detroit Hosts Event to Stand Against Sexual Assault

BY BTL STAFF

Same-sex sexual assault can happen on a date, between friends, partners or strangers. Survivors take on the shame, guilt and internal conflict trying to understand why someone could have used these tactics of power to control their bodies. And homophobia increases the likelihood of sexual assault, as it is used as a form of hate crime; a form of punishment and humiliation. And, often especially for lesbians and bisexual women, victims contemplate if the violence was due to anti-LGBTQ sentiment of their gender. To draw attention to these issues and more, LGBT Detroit is hosting a Talk Tuesday, on April 10th, for the LGBTQ community to gather and identify the factors that affect victims.

"Even if someone understands the tactics used to perpetrate violence in our community, even if they are well versed on

the prevalence of gender based violence, understanding LGBTQ survivors of sexual violence needs a multifaceted perspective. Our stories deserve to be at the center of the sexual assault narrative, so that survivors can understand their experiences through a queer theoretical approach," said an LGBT Detroit press release. "This discussion also needs to address public discrimination, street harassment, gaslighting and microaggressions."

But beyond simply meeting to understanding the reasons why perpetrators commit sexual assault, LGBT Detroit is dedicated to delving into why people sometimes avoid reporting these criminal acts against them. At the Talk Tuesday, this issue will be brought up as well.

"Due to the prejudice and lack of power in LGBTQ spaces, survivors often do not seek out support or report these crimes," the press release said. "Gender

variance and nonconformity puts our transgender family at much higher risks. They face sexual violence at rates of 40 to 65 percent, based on racial background. When advocating for our community and survivors of sexual violence, our analysis of their experience must intersect with the historical trauma faced by minorities, LGBTQ community and women."

The discussion will also answer questions concerning why "LGBTQ, black and brown voices missing from the narrative of the sexual assault movement" and "How do we as a community address toxic masculinity?"

The meeting will run from 6 to 8 p.m. LGBT Detroit is located at 20025 Greenfield, Detroit. More information about LGBT Detroit and its various programs can be found at lgbtdetroit.org.

Editor's Pick

Joe Hertler & The Rainbow Seekers Headline at Blind Pig

When Joe Hertler started recording music in his Central Michigan University dorm room in 2009, he probably couldn't have predicted that nine years later he'd be on a national tour with his fourth album. The Lansing-based band has a mixed sound that ranges from funk and soul-inspired tunes to Americana. He'll be at Ann Arbor's Blind Pig on Friday, April 6 at 9 p.m. More information can be found online at blindpigmusic.com. Tickets are \$15.



Sean Cook Wedding Photography

► Calendar

Continued from p. 25

Connecticut, she is identified as a New Yorker, where she built up her career on the stand-up comic circuit. She is Motor City Casino Sound Board, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313-309-4700. motorcitycasino.com/soundboard.aspx.

Foster Care and Adoption Orientation April 21, 9 a.m. Orchards Children's Services is seeking adults to create smiles in a child's life. Orchards is looking for adults from all counties to provide temporary care in their home for children ages 0 to 17 for Orchards Children's Services, 24901 Northwestern Hwy., Suite 601, Southfield. 248-258-044. orchards.org.

Brunch at Dino's Benefiting Ferndale Pride April 21, 9:30 a.m. Come join us at Dino's for Brunch, 10 of sales during brunch benefit Ferndale Pride! Dino's Restaurant, 22740 Woodward Avenue, Ferndale. 248-591-3466. julia@ferndalepride.com. dinoslounge.com.

RJ Spangler and John "Tbone" Paxton Return to Ann Arbor For an Afternoon Delight April 21, 2 p.m. RJ Spangler, Detroit drummer/bandleader, and Tbone Paxton, trombone/vocals, expect to cover a lot of musical ground on a Saturday afternoon. Adding saxophonists Dan Bennett and Goode Wyche III, they will be performing swing and on Zal Gaz Grotto Club, 2070 W. Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor. 734-663-1202 rjspd9@gmail.com. zalgaz.org.

Walt Matzke's Four Pianos April 21, 7 p.m. This Piano Philharmonic is a stunning, magical performance featuring four exceptional pianists playing, masterfully and in tandem, a variety of familiar music from classical to Broadway, pop to Hollywood film themes on four

grand pianos. Marygrove College Theater, 8425 W McNichols Road, Detroit. 313-927-1200. walt@fourpianos.com.

Verdi Requiem @ Hill Auditorium April 21, 8 p.m. Verdi Requiem presented by the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra. Arie Lipsky, Music Director & Conductor, featuring Indra Thomas, Susan Platts, Sean Panikkar, Gary Relyea and the UMS Choral Union. pre-concert lecture: 7 p.m.

Murray Perahia, Piano April 22, 4 p.m. "His sound can be pure gold, and he voices chords with a clarity that you have to hear to believe." Murray Perahia's place in the Ann Arbor Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. ums.org.

Indigo Girls at Motor City Casino Sound Board April 22, 7:30 p.m. Indigo Girls are a Grammy Award-winning folk rock music American duo consisting of Amy Ray and Emily Saliers They started performing with the name Indigo Girls as students at Emory University, performing weekly at Motor City Casino, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 866-782-9622. soundboarddetroit.com.

2nd Annual Spring Luncheon Equality Michigan April 27, 11:30 a.m. Kalamazoo born and raised Eric Fanning- the first openly gay, former U.S. Secretary of the Army- will be Equality Michigan's featured speaker at our 2nd annual spring luncheon "The Business Case for Equality" on Friday Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, 1000 East Beltline Ave. NE, Grand Rapids. 888-957-1580. meijergardens.org.

THEATER

Kayak April 6-29, 8 p.m. Alone in a kayak on a vast stretch of water, Annie Iversen recounts the strange chain of events that got her there. Matrix Theatre Company, 2730 Bagley St., Detroit. 313-967-0599 info@matrixtheatre.org. matrixtheatre.org.

School of Rock at the Fisher Theatre April 10-22, 7:30 p.m. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000. broadwayindetroit.com.

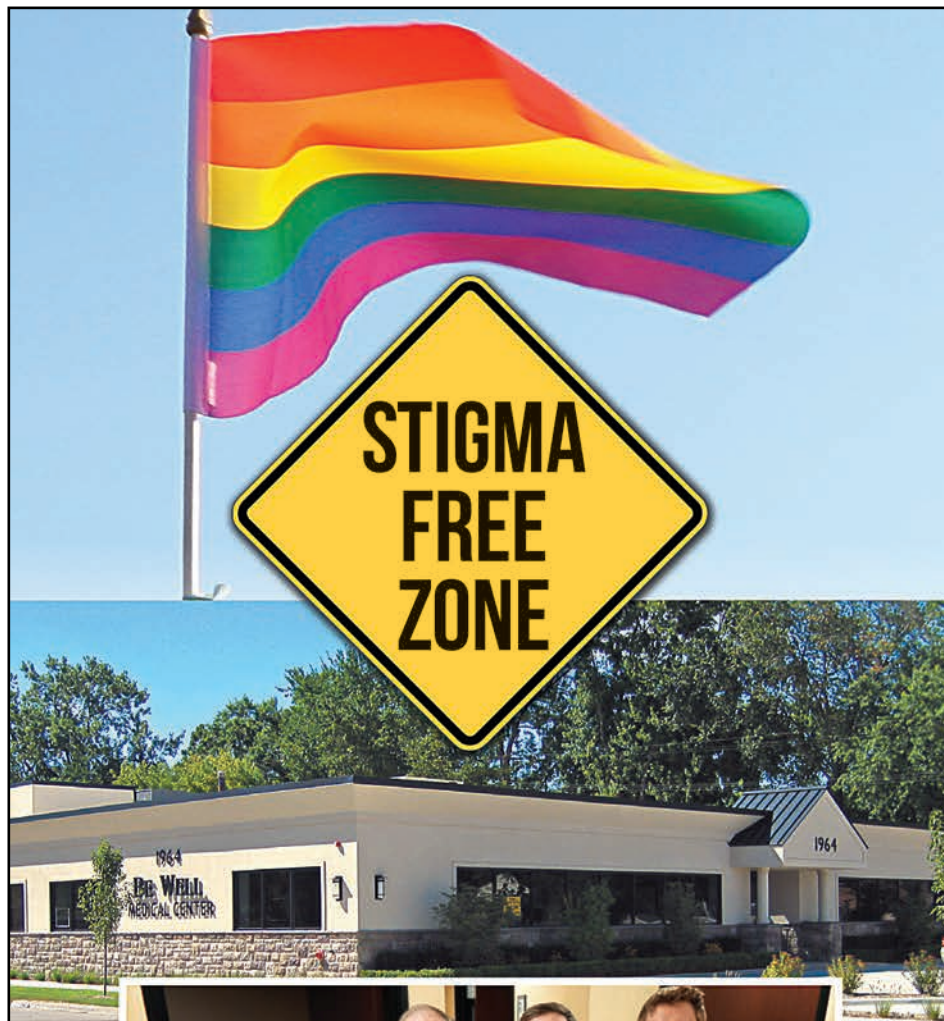
Metamorphoses April 13-15 & 19-22, 8 p.m. Based on the classic myths of Ovid, Metamorphoses is a rarely seen theatrical marvel that unfolds in and around a giant pool of water. Contact for ticket pricing Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette, Royal Oak. 248-541-802. stagecrafters.org.

Cold Blood April 19-22, 7:30 p.m. After the resounding success of Kiss & Cry (2014-15 season), the magnificent creative team of Charleroi Danses in Belgium brings Cold Blood, a poetic journey that is filmed before your very eyes. Power Center, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. 734-647-3327. smt.d.umich.edu.

A2CT Presents Arcadia April 19, 22 7:30 p.m. Ann Arbor Civic Theatre presents Arcadia by Tom Stoppard. In an English country house in 1809, Thomasina asks her tutor Septimus some uncomfortably difficult questions. Director Melissa Freilich calls the play "funny, smart, and heartfelt. Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-2538. smt.d.umich.edu/.

Metamorphoses April, April 13-22, 8 p.m. Based on the classic myths of Ovid, Metamorphoses is a rarely seen theatrical marvel that unfolds in and around a giant pool of water. Contact for ticket pricing Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette, Royal Oak. 248-541-8027. stagecrafters.org.

Kissing the Witch April 19-21, 8 p.m. Ubiquitous Theater presents a play by Emma Donoghue. A collection of familiar fairytales re-envisioned through the feminist lens. The women unite, the patriarchy unravels and witches might kiss. Dreamland Theater, 26 N. Washington St., Ypsilanti. ubiquitoustheater@gmail.com. dreamlandtheater.com.



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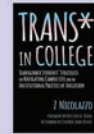


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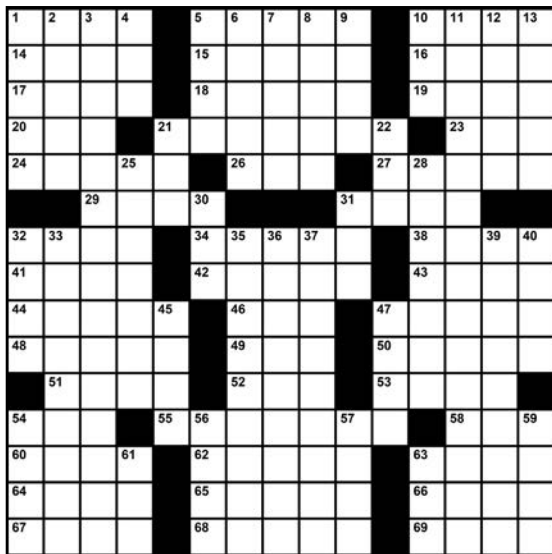
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34 Bonehead
38 "The Bells ____ Mary's"
41 Where boxers are visible
42 Like Nijinsky's ballet moves
43 www.stopaids.org, e.g.
44 Emulated Sara Gilbert
46 Ambulance letters
47 Sailor's rear
48 Wallace's running mate in

- 62 Scrabble companion of Q
63 Look at a hottie in a gay bar
64 Twin to Jacob
65 Where Patty Sheehan putts it
66 Land of Emma Donoghue
67 Diggs of "Private Practice"
68 Full of lip
69 ____ many words

- 21 Word after pro
22 What 50 million Frenchmen never drink
25 Get hard
28 Prominent cock
30 Pressure meas.
31 Muscle Mary's pride
32 Like phone sex
33 Lisa Ben's magazine
35 Elizabeth Taylor movie on the Nile
36 See 7-Down
37 Calls incorrectly
39 Pranksters who have been exposed?
40 Triple X, for Caesar
45 Prepares Easter eggs
47 Boot attachment for Jack Twist
54 Threesome that doesn't work out?
56 Drags
57 Start of a child's rhyme
59 Bicolor bite
61 Wicks once of the WNBA
63 Island necklace

Down

- 1 Like Gomer's Mayberry
2 Type of queen
3 Poet Edna
4 Signal that goes either way
5 Bottom
6 "____ little silhouette of a man..."
7 With 36-Down, Dame Edna portrayer
8 Prod
9 Ball balancers
10 Poseidon's province
11 He was Edna in "Hairspray"
12 B. D. Wong, for one
13 Earp, who shot off at the O.K. Corral

Q Puzzle

Edna

Across


- 1 Diana of "Lady Sings the Blues"
5 Where they sing "Hello Dalai"?
10 Peggy of WOW Cafe
14 Engaged in
15 The way we word
16 Not hard to get in bed
17 Jane Spahr and Mychal Judge


- 18 Male partner of St. Bacchus
19 "La Traviata" solo
20 Paul Newman role in "Exodus"
21 1979 Bette Midler film
23 Industrial-size container
24 Shaft of a knight
26 "Atlas Shrugged" author Rand
27 "____ we a pair?"


- 1968
49 Quit, with "out"
50 Colette's fathers
51 Like Scar in "The Lion King"
52 F-word start, for Socrates?
53 Bear up there
54 Penn. neighbor
55 Top player for the Eagles, e.g.
58 WBA decision
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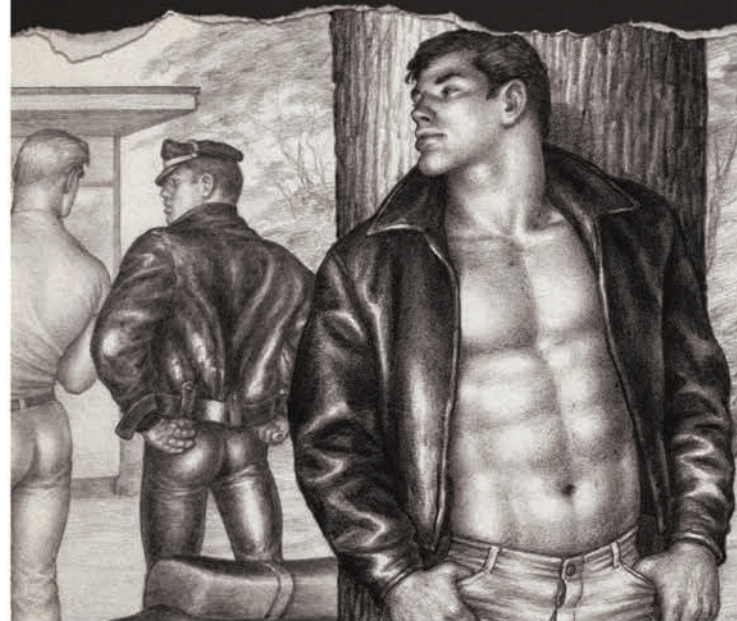
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