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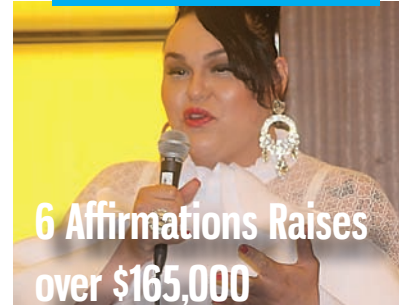
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Dem. AG Race: Dana Nessel Wins Nomination

Makes History as First Out Lesbian to Run for Attorney General

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Openly lesbian Michigan attorney general candidate Dana Nessel won the vote at the April 15 state endorsement convention at Detroit's Cobo Center. The 48-year-old candidate has had nearly 25 years of legal experience as both a defense and prosecuting attorney. She is also the president and co-founder of Fair Michigan.

Her opponent, Pat Miles gave a gracious concession speech and then Dana Nessel took the stage surrounded by her family and supporters, tears flowing.

"I want to thank all my supporters and everyone in the state of Michigan that believed in me and believed in our message," she said. "What I promise you is this: I will campaign my very hardest – not just on behalf of myself and my vision for attorney general but on behalf of all Democratic candidates. We're going to win all the way up and all the way down the ballot. Let's all work together to turn Michigan blue again. We can do it together!"

LGBTQA Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party Mark LaChey summed up how he felt about the victory succinctly when he said, "This is a momentous day for LGBTQ Michiganders!"

Her win won her praise from other Democratic candidates as well. State Rep. Jeremy Moss who is running for Michigan state Senate said he is confident in her ability to pull out a win in the upcoming November election.

"Dana is tenacious and is going to win in November. I've been to a lot of Democratic conventions before and haven't seen a turnout like today's crowd," Moss said. "A lot of credit goes to Dana and her team for engaging new voters in the process, which is exactly what Democrats will need to be successful in 2018. I was proud to support her at the convention and am excited that the rest of the party – and state — will have the opportunity to vote for an openly LGBT candidate in Michigan."

Nessel stated that if elected in November, she is excited to bring a new viewpoint to the position of Michigan attorney general. Moss was correct in his assessment of turnout, this endorsement convention hosted a record-breaking 6,700 delegates. Michigan State Rep. Jon Hoadley said he believes Nessel will win in November as well.

"Dana did amazing work organizing supporters to win the endorsement of the



Dana Nessel thanks her supporters as she accepts the nomination for the Democratic Attorney General candidate on Sunday at Cobo Hall. BTL Photo: Susan Horowitz

“ Dana is tenacious and is going to win in November. I've been to a lot of Democratic conventions before and haven't seen a turnout like today's crowd. A lot of credit goes to Dana and her team for engaging new voters in the process, which is exactly what Democrats will need to be successful in 2018. I was proud to support her at the convention and am excited that the rest of the party – and state – will have the opportunity to vote for an openly LGBT candidate in Michigan. **”**

– Jeremy Moss

Michigan Democratic Party, which indicates she has what it takes to organize voters to win in November," Hoadley said. "Our community has a chance to make history and elect a progressive fighter as the people's lawyer. Let's get fired up to vote!"

Sandi Smith is an Ann Arbor supporter who stood with Nessel during work on the marriage equality case *DeBoer v. Snyder* that made it to the U.S. Supreme Court. She said she was "pleased" with the result.

"She is a progressive Democrat with a track record of taking on tough fights. I have

seen first hand her tenacity and successes when others told her she would fail," Smith said. "Oh, and she will be the first out lesbian elected to a statewide office. That's something too!"

"I'm bringing diversity to the ticket in a way that has never existed before ... I think some people are excited about that," Nessel said in a previous interview with *Between The Lines*.

To read more about Nessel's goals for the position of attorney general, check out BTL's full Q&A with her at pridesource.com.

Robust LGBTQA Caucus Sets Records at MI Dem Convention

BY SUSAN HOROWITZ

DETROIT - A treacherous ice storm and a 9 a.m. Sunday morning start time did not deter over 150 people from attending the LGTQ&A Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party meeting April 15 at Cobo Hall. Mark LaChey, the caucus' chair, presided over an energetic meeting that featured a steady stream of candidates all seeking to garner the support of the caucus and its members. LaChey also led a delegation of 110 people at the Legacy Dinner the night before, making the LGBTQA Caucus the second largest group of attendees at the annual fundraiser, after the Labor Caucus.

LaChey opened the caucus meeting by announcing that dozens of candidates wanted to speak including many openly LGBTQ candidates.



LGTQ&A Caucus Chair Mark LaChey calls the meeting to order at the Michigan Democratic Party Convention on Sunday. BTL Photo: Susan Horowitz

"This year we have a record number of 20, by my current count, openly LGBT candidates running for office at all levels of government," said LaChey. "That includes three statewide candidates too – Dana Nessel for attorney general and two openly LGBT candidates for university trustee, Sue Carter at MSU and Wade Rakes at University of Michigan. And there are two openly LGBT State Senate candidates – Garnet Lewis on the western side of the state and Jeremy Moss in Southfield."

U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow made the LGBTQ&A Caucus her first stop of the

See next page

morning. She said our community is under attack at all levels and it is important to her and for all other Democrats to stand up now for fairness and equality. “This community is under attack and it doesn’t matter if it’s from the county level, or the state level or the federal level. I’m a proud sponsor of the Equality Act. It doesn’t matter if it’s Betsy DeVos or Health & Human Services or Jeff Sessions or who it is – their gut instincts are just plain wrong. I think they are immoral. And so this is a moment for all of us whether it is healthcare or marriage equality or equality for everyone in the justice system ... the important thing is for us to be focused and know who’s side we all are on as Democrats and whose side they are on - whether it’s this governor and what he has done, or the [Michigan] attorney general who has done every awful amicus brief you can imagine attacking marriage equality, to the affordable care act to women’s reproductive rights - it doesn’t matter. We know in the end there is a line here between what we believe in and what they believe in.”

All three of the leading candidates for governor addressed the caucus, including former Senate Minority Leader Gretchen Whitmer, former Detroit Health Department Director Abdul El-Sayed and retired Ann Arbor businessman Shri Thanedar. Each one pledged to champion the cause of amending the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include protections for LGBTQ people.

“I’m not the usual candidate for governor – I know that. People tell me all the time, ‘Abdul it’s not that we disagree with what you have to say. It’s just that you are a little bit young. You’re also a little bit brown and a little bit Moslem – how’s that gonna work out for you?’” he said jokingly. “My child identifies as trans. When are we going to have leadership that says that no longer will we allow it to be legal to discriminate against people like him. We will stand up and amend Elliott-Larsen so every Michigander belongs!” he said to loud applause and cheering.

“That fool in the White House hasn’t demoralized us – he’s energized us,” said Witmer. “So a lot of you know me from the my 14 years of fighting in the Michigan

Legislature. I’m proud of the work we tried to do, but we were in the minority the whole time I was there. And you know what - I’m done being the leader of the resistance. I want us to be the ones setting the agenda!” she said.

Dana Nessel brought her whole family – her wife and two sons – to the podium as she passionately addressed the caucus.

“The is what Michigan families look like,” she said. Best known for her role in representing the DeBoer–Rowse couple in one of the cases before the U.S. Supreme Court in 2015 that guaranteed marriage equality, Nessel said that as Attorney General she will fight hard every day to protect the rights of LGBTQ people in Michigan.

“LGBT issues are not just one of many for me. It is part of who I am and you can rely on me to always fight to protect LGBTQ people from discrimination, every day all day,” she said. “Not just when it is politically convenient.”

Elissa Slotkin is running for Congress in the 8th District against incumbent Republican Mike Bishop. She shared an emotional story about her mother who came out as a lesbian late in life, but who was unable to marry her life partner before her death in 2011.

“There is no contradiction between caring about the economy and caring about social issues,” said Slotkin. “And we as a party must do better to explain that to anyone who thinks that false choice exists. Because it is breaking us apart and we must fight against it.”

Statewide candidates for Supreme Court Megan Cavanagh and University of Michigan law professor Sam Bagenstos addressed the caucus as did Jocelyn Benson who is running for Secretary of State.

At one point there were so many candidates waiting to speak that a group of over 20 candidates for the Michigan State House came up together, led by our three openly gay state representatives: Jon Hoadley (D-Kalamazoo), Jeremy Moss (D-Southfield) and Tim Sneller (D-Flint). To flip the state house of representatives the Democrats need to pick up nine seats. Each introduced themselves and said they were energized, excited and enthused about the future Michigan House



Mark LaChey, Grace Wojcik, Jan Stevenson and Cynthia Thornton celebrate the announcement of Dana Nessel as the first openly lesbian candidate for Attorney General. BTL Photo: Susan Horowitz

of Representatives becoming controlled by the Democrats.

“We talk about a blue wave – can we actually do a wave?” asked Hoadley as he got the crowd on their feet in a stadium-style wave. “We have to get our energy going because we are going to win in 2018! We are doing the work to bring an opportunity-for-all agenda. And that means we have to focus all

the way down the ticket because we have seen time and again our issues getting siphoned off by the Republican majority.”

As the meeting ended LaChey was recognized with enthusiastic applause for his work in building the LGBTQ&A Caucus into its current strong position within the Michigan Democratic Party.



Jon Hoadley (D-Kalamazoo) addresses the LGBTQ&A Caucus with over 20 elected officials and candidates for the Michigan House of Representatives. BTL Photo: Susan Horowitz

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Affirmations Spring Bash Event Raises Over \$165K for Community Center

BY BTL STAFF

Affirmations' Annual Spring Bash themed "Celebrate Community" was "truly amazing" this year said Lilianna Reyes, the community center's interim executive director. With over 400 people in attendance, the April 14 event, emceed by Fox 2 Detroit News Charlie Langton, was held at the MGM Grand Detroit raised over \$165,000 for the community center in Ferndale.

Events like this help support Affirmations as it continues to provide numerous programs and services that community members rely on. Looking to the future, Affirmations representatives said they hope to expand their current work and grow into new and much-needed programs.

"We have five amazing awards and while we are so fortunate to have so many wonderful volunteers, we are so excited to celebrate with these amazing honorees," said Mike Flores, Affirmations' interim president during the event's VIP reception.

It was at this reception that Affirmations board members awarded individuals who have demonstrated longstanding dedication to the community center and given their time and talent. The honorees for 2018 included Kary Moss, who received the Community Hero Award; Anthony Sherman, who received the Jan Stevenson Award; Shazia Siddiqi, who received the Lorna Utley Award; Daniel Fulmer, who received the Charles Moyer Philanthropy Award and "our dear friend

and always faithful volunteer" Karen Dorgan, who received the Volunteer of the Year Award, which will now be named after her.

The Affirmations staff was recognized during the event also. They are Angela Sawyers, Finance Director; Becca Budde, Education Manager; Ryan Fowler, Office and Facilities Coordinator; Shelly McCallister, Counseling Program Supervisor; Ian Unger, Youth Program Coordinator; Heather Aymer, Community Resource Coordinator; Kyle Taylor, Development Coordinator and Katie Koch, Development Director.

"We had more sponsors this year than any year before. I was honored to be part of the program to introduce and recognize some amazing Affirmations' volunteers and supporters who received awards," Reyes said. "We are excited more than ever to work with community for community during the remaining 2018 year."

Affirmations will host their Fall Fling, its 2018 autumn fundraiser, in October. The event is held inside Affirmations' and will feature live entertainment, raffles, cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and desserts. For those who have not attended an Affirmations fundraiser, expect an opportunity to see the center in action, welcome the beauty of the new season and get to know the staff and volunteers.

For more information, visit goaffirmations.org.



Mike Flores: Self-Made Role Model

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Ever since high school, he's been involved in volunteerism or some form of activism. Beyond that, he's made the professional jump from the automotive to the aerospace industry and back again. It's very clear: Mike Flores is driven. Now, at 38, his drive has led him to the position of interim president at the Affirmations LGBTQ community center. When asked about what pushes him forward he was direct: he said it stems from his family.

"I'm a first-generation American. My dad is from El Salvador and my mom is from Nicaragua, and my father had a vision of what he considered the American dream for us," Flores said. "For him, for our family to achieve the American dream was to go to college and to enter corporate America. That's the path that I followed."

And that was a path that he excelled at. From an early age, Flores said that his family instilled in him a sense of awareness and gratitude for the opportunities he was being afforded as a U.S. citizen. This, he said, helped him work hard at school, do well in extracurricular activities and put down a strong foundation for a successful career in business.

Talk to Flores today and he exudes a sense of confidence both about his background and the person he has become, but it wasn't always that way. Growing up, everything was perfectly in place, except for one thing he couldn't change: his sexuality.

"I tried very hard to fit in the mold that my father was trying to develop for me. I finally realized that I was gay in high school, but at that time, I did not feel comfortable telling my parents because the only gay images I had were very stereotypical gay images," Flores said. "I was afraid that if I told my dad I was gay that he would think that I would be one of those stereotypes that I saw, and one of the stereotypes that he believed."

Part of that fear stemmed also from not wanting to disrupt the carefully outlined future that Flores' father had drawn out for him.

"In the Latin culture we're very patriarchal. The father sets the tone for the family and my father set the tone and the expectations for our family," Flores said. "I never remember having a debate with my father about any issue. He was the authority figure and we knew that he was doing what was best for the family."

So, Flores didn't disturb the path that was serving him well. When he was accepted into the University of Detroit Mercy, he also began to gain an understanding of what it meant to be himself, and what it meant to be in marginalized groups – for him being both Latino and gay – and it was at school that his streak of activism began to develop. He decided that in addition to his career, he was going to make a concerted effort to "pay it forward."

"I personally have benefitted from education. I think education is one of the easiest ways for people to enter the middle class because my family has benefitted from education," Flores said. "One of the things I work on today is, 'How can I make sure education is accessible – when I was younger it was to Latino people – so when I was at university we volunteered in southeastern Detroit doing mentorship programs with La Comunidad, and the LGBT gay community that we started, and that had educational elements attached to it.'"

Eventually, however, Flores' family caught on to the fact that something was different about him, and in his junior year at school he was forced to answer a direct question from his father, "Are you gay?"

"I told him. I cried while I was telling him. It was very emotional because I really felt that I was about to lose my dad and my family and the support that he had provided to get me



Lilianna Reyes, the community center's interim executive director, welcomes guests to the Spring Big Bash where over 400 people were in attendance Saturday night. BTL Photo: Eve Kucharski

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Army Chief of Staff Undermines DOD Report Against Transgender Service

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

The top uniformed official in the U.S. Army on Thursday undermined recommendations from Defense Secretary James Mattis against transgender military service — which led to President Trump’s ban on transgender people in the armed forces — by asserting their presence has had no negative impact on unit cohesion.

But Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley also undercut efforts the other way in support of transgender military service by saying it’s “not a civil rights issue” and by asserting the U.S. military has the prerogative to set necessary standards for troops.

Milley, along with Army Secretary Mark Esper, made the remarks during congressional testimony on the the posture of the Army under questioning from Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), who has introduced legislation against Trump’s transgender military ban.

Gillibrand, who cited concerns about unit cohesion in the aftermath of the anti-trans recommendations, asked the Army officials if transgender service — first allowed in the Obama years under former Defense Secretary Ashton Carter before Trump tried to ban it — had resulted in any problems. Both officials replied it had not.

Esper, who had previously said the issue of transgender service “hasn’t come up” in talks with soldiers, reported no new problems with unit cohesion.

“Nothing has percolated up to my level,” Esper said. “When I made that comment, I was questioned about if I met with soldiers and talked about these issues, what do they raise? And as I said then ... young kids tend to raise the issue in front of them at the day. It could be that they’re performing all-night duty or didn’t get their paycheck, and this was just not an issue that came up at that moment in time.”

Milley echoed the sentiment, saying in response to Gillibrand’s question about whether transgender troops have caused a problem with unit cohesion, “No. Not at all.”

“We have a finite number,” Milley said. “We know who they are, and it is monitored very closely because we’re concerned about that and want to make sure that they are in fact treated with dignity and respect and have had precisely zero reports of issues of cohesion, discipline, morale and all sorts of things.”

The evaluation that transgender service hasn’t negatively affected unit cohesion stands in contrast to the report produced by Mattis to justify Trump’s transgender ban, which was made public last month by the White House.

“[U]ndermining the clear sex-differentiated lines with respect to physical fitness; berthing,



Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley undermined the DOD report against transgender service. (Photo public domain)

bathroom and shower facilities; and uniform and grooming standards, which have all served the branches well to date, risks unnecessarily adding to the challenges faced by leaders at all levels, potentially fraying unit cohesion, and threatening good order and discipline,” the report says.

Aaron Belkin, director of the San Francisco-based Palm Center, said in a statement Milley’s testimony speaks volumes about transgender service and undermines Mattis’ conclusions.

“It is telling for the Army chief of staff to acknowledge there have been ‘zero’ problems with cohesion, discipline or morale just weeks after a DOD report, ostensibly based on months of research, insisted that transgender troops pose a risk to cohesion, discipline and morale,” Belkin said.

Although courts have enjoined the Trump administration from enforcing its ban on transgender military service, Gillibrand said the transgender military ban that Trump is seeking and the Mattis recommendations could still be harmful.

“Transgender service members have now seen the department’s recommendation and are on notice that if the policy is implemented, they will get kicked out for seeking care or treatment for their gender dysphoria,” Gillibrand said. “I’m worried that this uncertainty will have a negative impact on these individuals, but also on their units and that fear of these recommendations will stop these soldiers from seeking care.”

Asked by Gillibrand what the Army is doing

to ensure readiness “in the light of the pall that’s been cast on the future of transgender soldiers,” Esper insisted they’re being treated fairly.

“We continue to treat every soldier, transgender or not, with dignity and respect, ensure that they’re well-trained and well-equipped for whatever future fights,” Esper said. “With regard to accessions, our accession folks understand that we are operating under the Carter policy, if you will. We’ve had some persons already join, transgender persons join, and we will continue to assess them and train them and treat them well in accordance with that policy.”

But Gillibrand expressed skepticism, saying the recommendations against transgender service “is different from treating everybody with dignity and respect.”

In the wake of a letter from Democrats seeking information on the process that led Mattis to come to his recommendations against transgender service, Gillibrand asked the officials about the degree to which they had input, citing objections to the recommendations from the American Medical Association about its conclusions.

When Gillibrand asked who represented the Army on the panel of experts Mattis convened, Milley said it was Vice Chief of the Army Gen. James McConville. When Gillibrand asked if any medical experts were included on the panel, Milley said he was unsure, but knew McConville “consulted with lots of internal folks, medical professionals, absolutely yes.”

Gillibrand asked Milley to submit to the Senate Armed Services Committee the names of the experts who were consulted, and Milley agreed.

Milley also offered additional information about the nature of the panel of experts Mattis convened to reach his conclusions against transgender service. The Army chief of staff offered to provide Gillibrand the exact names at a later time.

“Each of the service vices, I believe, was on it,” Milley said. “There were several DOD folks. I’m pretty sure the panel was led by the DOD P&R, if I remember right, the under secretary for personnel and readiness.”

But the last word in the exchange wasn’t favorable to transgender service. Asked by Gillibrand if the two had spoken to transgender soldiers, they said they’ve had those exchanges, but not after the recommendations were issued. That’s when Milley pushed back by asserting the military’s right to institute standards.

“My view is that we have an Army that is standards-based,” Milley said. “It has always been standards-based. It will remain standards-based for medical, physical, psychological, conduct, etc. And those soldiers or those applicants, people who want to assess into the Army that meet those standards, and they’re rigorous standards, if you meet those standards, then you’re on the team. If you don’t meet the standards for whatever reason, then you’re not on the team. It’s that simple.”

Those standards, Milley said, may mean certain individuals are unable to serve in the armed forces regardless of what civil rights advocates think.

“This is not an issue, in my view, this is not a civil rights issue,” Milley said. “This is an issue of standards and maintaining deployability and the combat effectiveness and lethality of the United States Army, and I think I speak for the other service chiefs as well.”

Belkin told the Blade he agrees with Milley that issue isn’t about civil rights, but transgender service is in the best interest of military readiness.

“And the research as well as lessons from two years of inclusive policy and 18 foreign militaries that allow transgender service is that treating everybody according to the same standards is what’s best for readiness,” Belkin said. “The problem with the Trump ban is that it is based on scientific distortions, cherry-picked data and double standards that apply only to transgender troops, and no one else.”

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



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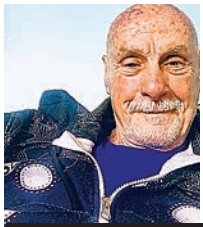
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Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Dreams Wet and Otherwise

The mind-boggling possibility of recording dreams may soon be a reality predicts “How It’s Made,” a British monthly science magazine.

The nanotechnology/brain scanning techniques are now such that translating neural impulses from brain neurons and retinal images to recording and screen instrumentation is almost a done deal (Nightmares anyone? Wet dreams for replay?).

I reread my dream journal recently, after having neglected it for years. It was fascinating, embarrassing shock theater. And, to be expected of an eccentric artist like myself, wacky. No wonder Freudian shrinks find their couch company such fun.

Question: Are the dreams of gay and lesbian persons significantly different from those of straights because of variations in respective brain hemispheres? How about trans persons? Recording dreams would likely provide answers.

I once kept a dream journal. I recorded over 50 dreams for six

months, which is pretty good considering that dreams are like exotic butterflies – occasionally darksome moths – unless netted quickly they flutter back into your mental twilight zone. Vanishing forever in seconds.

(Everyone dreams. Cats, dogs, parrots, pretty-boy Pence. Dodo the Donald. Dreams occur every 90 minutes as evidenced by rapid eye movements or REMs. Up-and-down fluttering behind the eyelids.)

The secret to keeping a dream journal is to remind yourself at bedtime that you will remember your dreams when awakening, and have pen and paper nearby to jot down vivid and fresh details – X-rated and otherwise (if you have sleepover company, use dictation).

You may not get back to sleep, but you’ve got something to show for time spent in your brain’s unique answer to Disneyland.

I reread my dream journal recently, after having neglected it for years. It was fascinating, embarrassing shock theater. And, to be expected of an eccentric artist like myself, wacky. No wonder Freudian shrinks find their couch company such fun.

Here’s a sample. Dated July 19, 2015. Feel free to free associate (your couch or mine). “I’m riding in a cab with two other passengers wearing blond wigs, none of whom speak English. We are in a foreign country at night. I get off at the stop light. The cab driver rolls down the window, “You left your beaded bag, Monsignor!” I wake up (no tip, I’m sure).

Modesty precludes further dream journal entries – one including an erotic encounter with two movie stars, an acrobat, three outfielders and a drag queen piano tuner.

Although dreams can be crazy, they keep us from going temporarily insane. If you go without sleep for more than 48 hours – say at a weekend circuit party – you can expect to experience hallucinations or psychosis without taking drugs.

The world’s Guinness Record for going without zzzzs is 264 hours and 11 minutes, held by a straight but really bent DJ, who never

See next page



Transmissions



Here’s Your Sign

BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

Being transgender in the late 2010s means you talk about restrooms. Indeed, it’s a topic you end up having to revisit over and over again, with what has been years now of attacks on public accommodations laws for transgender people.

While we are setting renewed issues with transgender rights within the current administration – and I don’t want to diminish what a enormous threat that is, with attacks from all around this president’s cabinet – I do feel that transgender issues have become more accepted than not in the court of public opinion.

My feelings are further buoyed by the recent victory against Alaska’s Proposition 1, which would have prevented people from using a restroom that did not correspond with their sex assigned on their birth certificate. This was rejected; making for one of the few times transgender rights has won at the ballot box.

It’s a huge victory, and while it was members of the trans and larger LGBTQ community spearheading it, it is a win that would not have happened without a lot of supportive allies. Before I go further, I want to make one thing clear: I have nothing but appreciation for people who stand up for trans rights as an ally. So many of us

fight day in and day out, year after year for our very survival, and it is heartening seeing people step up to lend a hand.

On the other hand – and you knew there would be one – sometimes allies don’t quite see how their actions, well-meaning as they may be, can make trans people uncomfortable. This is when I go back to talking about restrooms.

Over the last few years, I’ve seen more and more examples of gender-neutral signage on restrooms. Much of it is okay, simply proclaiming that a facility is gender neutral, or even “all gender.” Some go a step further, and this is where things get dicey.

I’ve been shown pictures of restrooms that are labeled “whatever,” often with a “half man half woman” image. I’ve even seen ones that include an alien figure amongst the others, or one that used a mermaid and centaur pairing.

These are all very cute, all serving to show that the owner of said establishment is trans supportive – and are have problems.

You see, I’m not a “whatever.” I’m not a mythological creature nor do I come from beyond the stars – and by equating my very real need to use restroom facilities with the real of fantasy or science fiction, you end up treating me as something strange and bizarre.

See next page

My feelings are further buoyed by the recent victory against Alaska's Proposition 1, which would have prevented people from using a restroom that did not correspond with their sex assigned on their birth certificate. This was rejected; making for one of the few times transgender rights has won at the ballot box.

When I was a child, many others and I were brought up to "not see race," as if this would solve the issues of racism. It was a similarly well-meaning concept to a "whatever" restroom, with similar issues.

Not having to "see race" is a very privileged standpoint, and means you get to be willfully blind to the very real issues of systemic racism that can pervade a society. It sounds good, but doesn't solve anything. Indeed, it may in many ways make things worse.

Saying "whatever" to issues surrounding transgender people and the use of public accommodations, let alone putting up cute images of extraterrestrials and fairy creatures may seem like a great way to flag one's support of transgender issues, but it tells me, a transgender person, that my needs are singled out and made strange, and that my use of such facilities is, nevertheless, strange.

I don't want to be strange. I just want to go to the restroom in peace.

Now, again, I know that when such a sign was put up, the owner didn't think it would be such an issue. I'm sure that voicing such concerns makes me seem humorless and shrill. I get it. At the same time, shouldn't part of being an ally be concerned with listening to those who you are seeking to ally with, and making sure that your efforts don't, ahem, alienate anyone in the process?

This may feel like such a small issue, and maybe it is — but with restrooms being such

a big battleground that transgender people are facing, I think we'd all appreciate our allies standing up and showing up and doing the right thing for us all.

To me, it's time that the centaurs and mermaids go back to the land of the fae, the aliens get beamed up, and whatever goes away, forever. While we're at it, let's retire that half man / half woman info graphic that, quite frankly, only seems to apply to a particular Halloween get-up and not to any trans or non-binary identity.

For me, I want a restroom that says, quite simply, restroom. If you need an image, why not a graphic of a toilet, and avoid any convoluted examples of men, women and so on?

Further, if you want to really show your allyship, why not place a sign next to that, stating that you support transgender people, and that they can use the bathroom that fits their gender identity. Spell out your choices and reasons, and truly stand up for us.

We're going to need our allies, because the defeat of Proposition 1 in Alaska isn't the end of troubles for trans rights. There's still a long road ahead, and we're going to need all the help we can get — but I ask you to listen, learn and we can all do a better job for every trans person out there.

Gwen Smith's restroom is tiki themed. You'll find her at gwenstsmith.com.

choice but to be flung. It was my dream. Get with it. He did. It was mind-blowing, though we haven't spoken since).

It's a fact. More lesbians dream of U-Hauls than do gay men. More gay men dream of basket weaving. Neither dream of elephants in their respective bedroom. Log Cabin Republicans, the exception.

And, as Freud might have said, "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar. A cucumber, just a cucumber."

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.

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 10

fully recovered from nonstop lack of REMs.

Of all the sweet dreams I've had, none compares to a lucid dream. It's a real mind trip, and, for the 60 seconds or so that it lasts, it's life (and sometimes love) in the fifth Dimension. No question about it: the mind has a mind of its own.

Lucid Dreams, like dreaming in color, are said by psychologists to be indices of reasonably high intelligence (smile).

You can fly, touch your "solid" surroundings and ask questions of dream people (like being awake, you may not get intelligent answers). You can have a sexual fling (I encountered one dream partner who, when refusing to fling, was told he had no

Creep of the Week

Matt Walsh

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

It should be obvious by now that the Creep of the Week every week is Donald Trump. He is a cancerous tumor on the U.S. and as a nation we desperately need a Trumpectomy.

But, let's not forget about all of the others who were creepy long before Trump became



Matt Walsh

the false idol of the so-called religious right. While the right-wing adoration of Trump might seem hypocritical, it's really a match made in heaven. Because the right-wing agenda has

always been about power and oppression, never about morality. If having Trump as president allows the right-wingers to wrest the right to marry from lesbians and gays or drive transgender men and women out of public life then Trump can screw and pay off all the porn stars in the world. Mission accomplished.

So conservatives can spare me the moral outrage act over anything related to sexuality.

And yet on April 23 conservatives want parents to keep their kids out of school in order to protest sex education for fear that the kids might learn that gay people exist and that gender can be expressed in various ways.

"Parents across the country will be keeping their children home from school to protest the insane, pornographic, morally debased propaganda that passes for 'sex ed' these days," wrote Matt Walsh for The Daily Wire. "It's about time that parents took a stand against this madness."

Walsh, a conservative writer and self-described "extremist," presents a novel approach to sex-ed that will work perfectly once robots take over the world.

"Sex should be a subject covered in science class, and it should go no further than simply explaining how human reproduction works," he writes. "All of the rest of this — the lessons on 'gender identity,' the free condoms, the discussion of masturbation and oral sex — is ideological."

Never mind the fact that knowing how human reproduction works is not the same thing as having an understanding of human sexuality nor does it acknowledge the complex and often fraught relationships between people that result in and are a result

Never mind the fact that knowing how human reproduction works is not the same thing as having an understanding of human sexuality nor does it acknowledge the complex and often fraught relationships between people that result in and are a result of that sexuality.

Especially for teenagers who are literally being yanked through the stratosphere by their hormones and do not yet have the maturity to deal with these feelings, let alone the self-control to not act on them. So age-appropriate discussions about condoms and masturbation are literally fucking useful, not ideological.

"The schools want our kids to be the sort of people who indulge their sexual urges freely and openly, without regard to oppressive notions of morality and human dignity," Walsh writes, apparently under the impression that public schools are veritable orgies from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. "The deviants who develop these courses believe that hedonism is the path to fulfillment."

This is a pretty standard conservative take on sex ed: that sex should be divorced from pleasure and should only be used to make babies. Of course, we also don't want teenagers having babies, which is kinda why sex ed is important. Because teenagers are having sex. Whether they know how to protect themselves or not.

Sex is not a product of Satan, as Walsh implies. It's a healthy, normal part of human life that way too many people have hang-ups about because of the kind of senseless shame promoted by folks like Walsh.

"My only problem with the [April 23] sit-out is that it's too short," Walsh writes. "It should be permanent. But this is a good first step."

This idea that public education is a finishing school for sexual deviance is damaging not only to children, but also to their parents and their communities as conservatives with the backing of Betsy DeVos work to tear down this pillar of American life and democracy. So yes, parents should be aware that mythical sex-ed horror tales are being used to promote the destruction of their kids' schools. And they should absolutely take a stand against this madness.

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

Mike Pompeo on Thursday during his confirmation hearing to become the next secretary of state faced questions about his previous anti-LGBT statements.

Pompeo reaffirmed his opposition to marriage rights for same-sex couples when U.S. Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) asked about a 2015 speech in which he cited a prayer from an anti-gay preacher that described homosexuality as a “perversion” and an “alternative lifestyle.” Pompeo also did not directly answer Booker’s question about whether he thinks “being gay is a perversion.”

“My respect for every individual, regardless of their sexual orientation, is the same,” Pompeo told Booker and other members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

President Trump last month nominated Pompeo — who is the current CIA director — to succeed then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson after he fired him. Pompeo represented Kansas’ 4th Congressional District from 2011-2017.

Pompeo opposed the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” He also co-sponsored a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives that would have allowed states to refuse to recognize the marriages of gays and lesbians.

Pompeo also has long-standing ties with



the Family Research Council, which the Southern Poverty Law Center has classified as a hate group.

The Human Rights Campaign and Lambda Legal are among the dozens of LGBT and civil rights organizations that have come out against Pompeo’s nomination because of his previous statements against homosexuality, marriage rights for same-sex couples, Muslims and other issues.

“We had a terrible fellow in Kansas named Fred Phelps,” Pompeo told Booker in response to a question about his previous statements against Muslims. “I called him out.”

Pompeo told Booker that he treated married gay couples at the CIA “with the exact same set of rights.” Pompeo also said to U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen that he has “honored and valued every CIA officer, regardless” of their sexual orientation, race, religion, etc.

“I treat each and everyone of our officers

with respect,” Pompeo told Shaheen. “I promise I will do that as secretary of state.”

Pompeo: State Department workforce ‘must be diverse’

The hearing took place against the backdrop of increasing concern over whether Trump will fire Deputy U.S. Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and/or special counsel Robert Mueller who are investigating whether his campaign had any ties to Russia’s interference with the 2016 election. Trump in the coming days is also expected to potentially authorize a military strike against Syria after President Bashar al-Assad’s regime used chemical weapons to attack a one-time rebel stronghold outside of the country’s capital of Damascus.

Trump in the coming weeks is also expected to meet with North Korean President Kim Jong-un, who is under pressure to end his country’s nuclear weapons program.

“If we do not lead for democracy, for prosperity, for human rights around the world, than who will,” said Pompeo during the hearing.

Pompeo also told senators he would work to bolster morale at the State Department and seek to fill positions that went unfilled during Tillerson’s tenure.

“I believe deeply the State Department’s workforce must be diverse,” he said.

Van Hollen among lawmakers who oppose nomination

U.S. Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), who chairs the committee, on Thursday said he “avidly” supports Pompeo’s nomination. U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) in a statement announced his opposition to Pompeo, citing his positions on a host of issues that include the deal with Iran over its nuclear program and torture.

“He has shown himself to be anti-equality and anti-Muslim, and quick to limit access to reproductive health care and deny the pressing issue of climate change,” notes Van Hollen in his statement. “For all of these reasons, I cannot support his nomination as secretary of state.”

U.S. Reps. David Cicilline (D-R.I.), Mark Takano (D-Calif.) and Dina Titus (D-Nev.) and U.S. Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.) are among the members of the U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday who signed a letter to Corker and Menendez that urges the committee to vote against Pompeo’s nomination.

“We believe that Mr. Pompeo’s track record of opposing equal rights for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community, and his support for the use of torture, which is a tactic often used against LGBTI and other vulnerable communities, should disqualify him from consideration for the position of secretary of state,” reads the letter.

Senate Dems Object to Removal of LGBT Health Data from Gov’t Websites

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

A group of 17 Senate Democrats led by Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) have expressed “serious concerns” with the Trump administration about the removal of LGBT health data from government websites and are calling for the restoration of the information.

In a letter to the White House dated April 12, the lawmakers decried the recently reported removal of information on LGBT health data from the Department of Health & Human Services website for the Office of Women’s Health as well as and the removal of LGBT population-based data reports from the Federal Committee of Statistical Methodology website for the Office of Management & Budget.

“We are troubled by these recent actions, which, coupled with other actions your administration has taken to restrict information for LGBT people, reveal a pattern of censorship that fosters discrimination and undermines access to evidence-based health care resources that aid millions across the country,” the senators write. “These actions could seriously compromise the health of LGBT individuals, who have less access to health care than the general population and

suffer disproportionately from a wide range of health conditions and disparities due to societal stigma and discrimination.”

According to Politico, HHS said the pages and links, some of which were first posted in 2012, were taken down as part of a routine update. However, the Sunlight Foundation, a government accountability non-profit, determined existing health topic pages do not appear to have been updated with new material and the now-missing lesbian and bisexual health content wasn’t integrated elsewhere.

The removal of LGBT information from U.S. government websites has been a consistent theme over the course of the Trump administration. As the Washington Blade has previously reported, LGBT information on U.S. government websites found during the Obama years was removed the White House and Small Business Administration websites.

The senators pose seven questions to the White House on the removal of LGBT health data from the HHS and OMB websites.

1. Why did HHS elect to remove or change the LGBT resources on the OWH website? Why did these changes occur without providing any notice or explanation to site users or the public?



2. What plans do you have to communicate these changes to site users and the public?

3. Were these actions taken in consultation with HHS stakeholders and partners? If so, with whom, and what feedback did they provide?

4. It was reported by HHS that the OWH pages were removed as part of a routine update. However, existing health topic pages do not appear to be updated, and the missing content has not been integrated into other areas of the site, as reported by an HHS spokesperson. What efforts are being made to update the materials, and on what date will this information in its entirety be available again on the OWH website?

5. Why were policy papers and reports on sexual orientation and gender identity data collection efforts removed or rendered

inaccessible from the FCSM website? What federal departments were involved in making this decision?

6. Why was the FCSM website relocated from the OMB website to the National Center for Education Statistics within the Department of Education website?

7. Will the information on sexual orientation and gender identity data collection from the former FCSM site be made available on the new website within the National Center for Education Statistics? If so, when?

In addition to seeking answers to these questions, the senators urge the White House to restore the LGBT health data to the websites.

“You have repeatedly broken your campaign promises to support and protect the LGBT community, and this latest assault on a vulnerable population could further compromise the health of more than ten million LGBT people,” the senators conclude. “We are concerned that you are putting politics ahead of science and access to evidence-based health care that is critical for millions, and so we call on you to reverse course to ensure that our federal programs serve the needs of all people.”

The Blade has placed a request in with the White House seeking comment on the letter.

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Trans Couple Tying the Knot Hopes to Increase Visibility

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Rebecca and Miranda Veal met a little more than a year ago at a PFLAG-Genesee County meeting and it was electric. The two quickly hit it off. So much so that in a month the couple plans to get married. Rebecca said that their first meeting happened when Miranda reached out to her.

"She was in the process of doing a documentary on the transgender community at the time and I was president of Transgender Connect," said Rebecca. "I had some information I thought she could use and we just started going places to get footage."

There was a comfortable chemistry between the two from the start.

"I was doing what I normally do in helping the trans community," Rebecca said. "I thought her documentary would be a good idea so I'd take her to places she could get background footage. The more I was with her the more I wanted to be with her."

Rebecca had been married before, but never presented as her authentic self. In fact, when she presented as male she was married to a cis woman for 42 years.

"That was before I started my transition," said Rebecca. "I have three kids and eight grandchildren. I lost my first wife in 2010 to cancer," Rebecca said. "I found Miranda and she filled the void for me. When you lose a wife of 42 years you have quite a void. And now with Miranda, our spirits are really attuned to each other."

Miranda agreed, attributing that spiritual connection to their deep bond.

"She is like the other half of me," Miranda said.

A Wedding to Remember

However, deep spiritual connection or not, planning the wedding requires a bit of compromise one's other half. The two are gearing up to tying the knot on April 23 at a meeting of Transgender Connect, the social club Rebecca founded.

"I would have been fine with a justice of the peace but Miranda wanted to have a full-blown wedding," Rebecca said. "So it was planned with that thought in mind, wanting to give Miranda what



Rebecca and Miranda Veal

she wanted. My thing is Miranda gets what Miranda wants because I'm a firm believer in 'happy wife happy life.'"

And Miranda was thankful Rebecca didn't put up a fight because of the social commentary their marriage makes.

"A wedding ceremony gives us visibility," she said. "I always wanted a big wedding. I love all the flowers and the dresses and the community."

And in classic fashion, both women will wear white.

"Both of us are wearing white because this is our first time being married as trans women," said Rebecca. "The white was essential. Most trans women dream about wearing that white dress growing up. Trans women are little girls growing up and we have the same feelings as little [cis] girls."

The two had their final fittings just last week.

"I have a princess dress that laces up the back," said Miranda. "It's sleeveless and I have gloves to go with it and a gorgeous veil. Rebecca has a chapel length gown with a chapel-length veil. And we got these big, beautiful bouquets that we made up that have draping flowers. We had a good couple of nights putting together all the vases and the

bouquets for everybody."

In all this preparation, though, the family has been incredibly helpful for the Veal's. Rebecca's daughter has been instrumental in organizing the wedding.

"Thank God for my daughter," Rebecca said. "She is making our cake, she is helping with floral arrangements and she's the one who did the final fitting on our dresses."

Rebecca's daughter is one of two of her children who will be attending.

"My oldest son lives in South Carolina and we don't know if he's going to make it or not," Rebecca said. "My youngest son is going to walk me down the aisle and my daughter is one of my bridesmaids."

There will be a potluck dinner following the ceremony. Then, on July 21, the couple will host a Hawaiian luau complete with a roasted pig as their official reception.

"The main reason we went with such a big event is we wanted to provide some visibility within the community," said Rebecca. "We may be trans women but we're just the same as anyone else in the world. We can love, we can get married. We're not always in the dark and hiding from people."

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Mike Flores is a businessman and currently the Interim President at Ferndale's Affirmations LGBTQ community center. He credits his career's success with the support his family gave him growing up.

► Flores

Continued from p. 6

through college," Flores said. "But, what was remarkable about that conversation was that my father said, 'I'm more upset that you weren't comfortable enough to tell me.'" Of course, I started sobbing after that as well (laughs). What he was telling me was that he loved me more for who I am and who I'm going to become, versus the fact that I was gay."

It certainly wasn't an easy process for his family to come to terms with the fact that Flores was part of the LGBTQ community, but there was something that made it easier. Flores didn't fit into the negatively-associated stereotypes that his father had about homosexuality. In fact, he was completely different than his father thought was possible.

"That's what most parents fear: that their kids are not going to be OK. And that was my dad's biggest fear. He thought I was going to be living a very stereotypical image of what he thought being gay meant," Flores said.

"This is my father, Latin American, barely speaks English at the time, and he still has that negative image of the '80s of what it meant to be gay during the AIDS epidemic and all that. I know that that was going through his mind."

But when Flores did win his father over, he began to flourish not only personally, but in his career. He attributes part of his confidence in himself not only to his family but to the wise words of a mentor early on in his career.

"I had a Latino mentor and I came out to him and he gave me the best advice ever: 'If you do a great job and you produce, no one's going to care.' He said, 'Focus on what you do best, and everything else is going to fall into place.' And, let me tell you, when he gave me that advice, it has helped me in focusing on what I can deliver, making sure that I can provide 110 percent to everything that I do – if not more – and it has worked out well for me."

To learn more about Mike Flores and his role at Affirmations as interim president go to goaffirmations.org.

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Artists Celebrate Queer and Trans Love Through Poetry, Photography

BY DREW HOWARD

Through their poetry, photography and writing, the self-identified “alien femme” duo Alex Jenny and Effee Nelly showcase a fully-realized depiction of queer and transgender love in a decidedly unique way.

The couple’s blog, appropriately titled “Alex & Effee,” is an outlet for the pair to express their creativity via elegant photo shoots and deeply personal prose, all the while representing everyday life as queer and trans people of color in a way that moves past the prevailing narrative of tragedy, pain and suffering. With 1,500 followers and thousands of likes on Instagram to-date, the duo’s passion project is seemingly only getting started.

“We wanted to create the representation we so desperately craved, one with trans love, happiness and glamour,” Jenny said. “We’re really trying our best to be open and vulnerable about our relationship in different ways and allow people to see what’s possible.”

Alex and Effee’s photography captures queer and trans love – or as we should really start calling it, love, without the qualifier - in a fashion that’s purely romantic. “Being in front of the camera was the most natural, yet still completely unexpected next step for me,” Nelly said, describing the initial stages of their photographic efforts. “As I was growing into my womanhood, I was very much yearning to create, to immortalize strength and beauty.”

“It pushed us in profound ways,” Jenny added. “Being able to go through this vulnerable process, and challenging ourselves, showed us we can be glamorous and confident and sexy and beautiful.”

Photos uploaded to both the blog and Instagram page are often coupled with poetry to tell a complete story. The pair’s art is intentionally vulnerable, Jenny said, and provides an avenue for them to connect not only with their online fans but also with each other.

“Our poetry is like the writing that we used to do in private and show each other in order to help each other be closer to another,” Jenny said. “I think that’s the major tying theme – really trying to present our process of trying to make sense of our experiences.”

For Nelly, writing poetry is an outlet to express the “hopeless romantic” side of herself that eschews cookie-cutter Hollywood love. “Love is absolutely where my art, especially my poetry, takes root ... but love as in ugly-beautiful, messy, vulnerable, raw-real, sweet, sticky, earth-shattering, fire-bending, gravity-defying, watery, wavy, wavy love.”

Both Jenny and Nelly were first introduced to one another at a house party during their junior years at the University of Michigan. Jenny describes their initial encounter as “passionate, fiery and explosive.”



(From top to bottom) Alex Jenny and Effee Nelly. The self-described “alien femme” couple hopes to bring positive awareness about queer and transgender love through their photography. Photo: Darline Rodriguez

“I thought this would be a shooting star type of moment – we’ll combust and then live our own separate lives,” Jenny said. “I was telling my friends, ‘I think I love her,’ do I need to be institutionalized? I don’t understand – just met her, and I feel like I see my future.”

The pair married later in 2014 following their graduation from UM. Today, the couple live together in Chicago working day jobs in LGBTQ therapy and higher education consulting research, respectively.

Though they’ve been together for close to six years, the official Alex & Effee project didn’t begin until last year, and was originally an idea the two concocted as an excuse to balance their day jobs and artistic endeavors.

“We really felt like we weren’t investing in our art or poetry anymore in a serious ways,” Jenny told BTL.

What began as more of a personal project has grown into a public exercise of trans visibility and expression, allowing the couple to connect with members of LGBTQ community and other artists. One of the most profound responses they received to the blog came from a father inspired to capture his child’s transness on camera.

“I absolutely love when people feel more courageous to give into love once they read our pieces,” Nelly said. “One of our photographer friends tells me she had a father contact her to shoot his child’s high school senior picture because he wants to make sure his child’s transness is not only respected but celebrated – my heart is full.”

Jenny’s counseling job has afforded her many opportunities to speak about LGBTQ issues directly with community members.

“We wanted to create the representation we so desperately craved, one with trans love, happiness and glamour. We’re really trying our best to be open and vulnerable about our relationship in different ways and allow people to see what’s possible.”

– Alex Jenny

Originally from Grand Rapids, Alex returned to her hometown just this past week to give the keynote speech for Grand Valley State University’s Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Jenny’s speech, which centered around the healing process in relation to trauma and depression, was followed by a Q&A session with students. While she wasn’t able to spend as much time as she would’ve hoped on each question, she said the session was a sobering reminder of just how far she’s progressed in the past several years.

“I spent time thanking everyone for being in that moment, because I was able to be in my hometown as someone my younger self would’ve never imagined,” Jenny said. “I came back to a place where a lot of trauma happened ... I really wanted to emphasize that in my talk.”

Looking to the future, she hopes the blog can help her learn what kind of LGBTQ elder she wants to be.

“In a few more years I’ll be an elder, because we don’t have many people to look up to because a whole generation were all wiped out from the AIDS epidemic,” Jenny said. “I’m pushing to hold myself accountable to what these kids need.”

As for Nelly, she says she dreams up a new goal for her art “every day.”

“I have many dreams,” Nelly said. “I want to travel more to meet and collaborate with creatives we love in person. I want to explore directing full editorials where our work is equal parts writing and visuals. I want to invite my friends and families more into my creative process, and even create more with them!”

“And sooo much more,” she added.

The full collection of Alex and Effee’s poetry, writing and photography can be found on their blog at alexandeffee.com or on their Instagram, “alexandeffee.”

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Caption: Courtesy of High Road Touring.

Indigo Girls' Emily Saliers Talks Empathy, Creativity and New Projects

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Few artists are willing to take on topics as complex as the prison industrial complex, painkiller addiction and faith – let alone one album – but the Indigo Girls certainly don't shy away from getting to the root of serious social issues. And, on their latest release "One Lost Day," they tackle each of these topics. After releasing 16 studio albums and performing for over 30 years together, the folk rock duo that is Amy Ray and Emily Saliers is set to perform at Detroit's MotorCity Casino Hotel on April 22.

Between The Lines caught up with Saliers in-between tour stops to talk about how songs change in importance over time, the struggle of the creative process and new projects currently in the works.

"One Lost Day" is your newest release, but it's a few years old now. Have you found that some of the songs on that record have changed their meaning?

You're exactly right that over time, songs do change what they mean to you or you can experience them differently emotionally even though you wrote them a long, long time ago. For instance, the song on "One Lost Day" on "Come A Long Way" that's a song about a spiritual journey of mine and it's still very fresh to me ... that happens for a lot of the older songs, but for the songs for the newest album they still feel new.

Are you ever surprised that a song you may have written a long time ago becomes topical again with age?

I know what you mean. I feel like a lot of times, the subject that we write about are things like systemic oppression, systemic racism, a long human history of conflict and war or refugees. These are really, really deep problems that the human race faces, and so even if the song was written 10, even 20 years ago, it's going to still be relevant today because we're still working on those issues. We may timestamp a song by listing something specific like, for instance, Amy mentions Karla Faye Tucker in "Faye Tucker" so you could look at the time that Karla Faye Tucker was executed and look at the time there, but you have the same issues showing up in "Rise of the Black Messiah." Where Black inmates who were what most everybody believes to be wrongly accused of something they didn't do and then put

See next page

PERFORMING

APRIL 22 Sound Board

The Indigo Girls will be at the Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel in Detroit on Sunday, April 22 at 7:30 p.m. For more details about the upcoming performance go to indigogirls.com or ticketmaster.com. Tickets start at \$24.

in solitary confinement for decades. Just supreme injustice.

Do you think that because you're part of the LGBTQ community you're more able to empathize with social justice issues? Does that inform your creative process?

Yeah, there's no doubt about it. I definitely know what it feels like to feel ostracized, to have society say, "You're not valid. You can't get married." People who are fundamentalists or conservative Christians taking their faith to put harsh judgment and oppression on queer people. I would never compare my struggle as a queer person and trying to work toward acceptance and gay rights and things like that point by point to the Black civil rights struggle in America. They're different struggles but they do have in common the perception of being oppressed.

Have you ever had a fan come up to you and say you've changed their mind about issues? For instance helped someone deal with homophobia?

(Laughs) You know, not specifically that. But I have to say that the music has opened their minds, opened their spirits and those kind of things. And, definitely, I have heard that from listeners that maybe they thought that Indigo Girls was just for lesbians or women

or whatever. We'll have men fans come up and explain what the music has meant to them after their sister or their wife or whomever introduced them to the music. So, we definitely get feedback about how they have appreciated what the music has brought to them in a way that maybe they didn't think about or experience before.

Are you working on any new projects right now? What are some of the issues you'd like to focus on more?

Yeah, there are plans! We're releasing a full symphony album that we recorded with the University of Colorado Symphony Orchestra last April. We've been touring orchestras across North America for several years now at least, so we're releasing that. We're really, really proud of it. Those are songs that we've already had, they're not new songs that are on that new album. But then, we're going to London at the beginning of the new year and we're going to make another Indigo Girls record with brand-new music. We're going back with the same team that did "Come On Now Social." That's one of my favorite albums in our discography and we love our British cohorts.

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'The King & I' at Fox Theatre May 8

A national tour of Rodgers & Hammerstein's classic musical "The King and I" brings it to Detroit's Fox Theatre from May 8 through 13. The musical is directed by Tony Award-winner Bartlett Sher and has earned such praise as "beautiful" and "first-rate, sumptuous" by publications like The New York Times and New York Magazine. Tickets start at \$35 and can be purchased at ticketmaster.com. More information about the performance can be found online at 313presents.com or by calling 313-471-3200.

Credit: Courtesy of YouTube.

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Happenings

OUTINGS

Thursday, April 19

Lisa Lampanelli 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. 313-309-4700. motorcitycasino.com. soundboarddetroit.com.

Saturday, April 21

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

Draw or be Drawn 7 p.m. A free, unstructured, life drawing event for all ages and skill levels. Bring your art supplies. Costumes encouraged. Blue Owl Coffee Co., 1149 S Washington Ave, Lansing. 5177123420 nick@blueowlcoffee.net. draworbedrawn@elanna.noel.

Sunday, April 22

Tom of Finland Event in Memory of Jeff Montgomery 6:30 p.m. Mocad, 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit. act.myngp.com.

Indigo Girls 7:30 p.m. Indigo Girls are a Grammy Award-winning folk rock music American duo consisting of Amy Ray and Emily Saliers. Motor City Casino, 2901

Grand River Ave., Detroit. 866-782-9622. soundboarddetroit.com.

Tuesday, April 24

Queer Queens of Qomey 7:30 p.m. Carol Leifer has done it all. She is an internationally acclaimed comic, comedy writer and producer. Toledo Funnybone, 6140 Levis Commons Blvd, Perrysburg., 419-931-3474 Pophaha1@gmail.com. Toledo.funnybone.com. QueerQueensofQomey.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 7:00 p.m. One event on May 23 at 7:00 p.m. Geri Kulick Community Center, 1201 Livernois, Ferndale. 248-544-6767. ferndalemi.gov. ferndalepride.com.

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". Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, 1000 E. Beltline Ave., NE, Grand Rapids. 888-957-1580. meijergardens.org.

Sunday, April 29

Joyful Resistance 3 p.m. Under the direction of Mighty Medicine's DeShaun Snead: Salus Singers: Lansing's Queer Quoir. The Robin Theatre, 1105 S. Washington Ave., Lansing. 989-878-1810. info@saluscenter.org. therobintheatre.com.

Tuesday, May 1

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups 7 p.m. St. Mary's In The Hills Episcopal Church, 2512 Joslyn Court, Lake Orion. 248-391-0663. stmarysinthehills.org. standwithtrans.org.

com.ferndalepride.com.

MUSIC & MORE

Cold Blood April 19-21, 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 Street, Ann Arbor. 734-647-3327. smt.d.umich.edu.

Michigan Modernism Art & Antiques Show April 20-22, 6 p.m. Step out in your best mod dress, skinny ties, and short boots and join Michigan's Modernism Art & Antiques design community at the Annual Modernism Preview Night. Be the first to see and shop from Southfield Pavilion, 26000 Evergreen Road, Southfield. bobbocklus@hotmail.com. maineantiquedigest.com.

SF Jazz Collective: The Music of Miles Davis April 20, 8 p.m. The SFJAZZ

Collective is an all-star award winning jazz ensemble comprising eight of the finest performers/composers at work in jazz today. After exploring the work of John Coltrane, Horace Silver, Stevie Wonder, and Michael Jackson, Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111 dso.org.

Quiana Lynell at The Cube April 20, 10 p.m. Looking for a place to hang after the Music of Miles Davis concert? Join us for the "The Hang"—a post-concert late night jam session in The Cube featuring live music, plus drink and food specials. Max M. & Marjorie S., Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. dso.org/cube.

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. 248-258-0440. 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



Editor's Pick

Glass and Sculpture Exhibit at Art Leaders Gallery

West Bloomfield's Art Leaders Gallery has been taking note of Michigan's glass and sculpture artists for almost 40 years now. Through April 30, they are exhibiting a diverse selection of hand-made glasswork, bronze sculptures and a variety of sculpture accessories. Featuring the works of artists like Andrew Madvin, Stephen Schlanser and many others, the free exhibit is showcasing Michigan's largest collection of glass pieces. More information can be found by emailing info@artleaders.com or by visiting artleaders.com.



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. rjspd9.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 Rd., Detroit. 313-927-1200. waltfourpianos.com. fourpianos.com.

Draw or be Drawn April 21, 7 p.m. Draw or be Drawn is a free, unstructured, life drawing event for all ages and skill levels. Bring your art supplies. Costumes encouraged. Blue Owl Coffee Co., 1149 S. Washington Ave., Lansing. 517-712-3420. nick@blueowlcoffee.net. blueowlcoffee.net. draworbedrawn@elanna.noel.

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.

Kygo at Masonic Temple May 3, 6:30 p.m. Norwegian born, Kygo, is slated to perform at Detroit's Masonic Temple. Today, Kygo has been nominated for over 30 music industry awards and has won 10. See our website for more information. Detroit Masonic Temple, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., #1100, Detroit. 800-854-2196. templedetroit.com.

Fort Street Chorale presents Mozart Requiem Sunday May 6, 3 p.m. The Fort Street Chorale and Chamber Orchestra present Mozart's beloved Requiem Sunday, May 6 at 3 p.m. in Detroit's historic Fort Street Presbyterian Church, under the baton of renowned conductor Dr. Arianne Abela. Fort Street Presbyterian Church, 631 W. Fort St., Detroit. 313-961-4533. secretary@fortstreet.org.

Live Band Karaoke at Dino's for Ferndale Pride May 11, 9:30 p.m. Another awesome Ferndale Pride event happening at Dino's in Ferndale for Live Band Karaoke! Put on your musical shoes and come perform! Dino's Restaurant, 22740 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. 248-591-3466. julia@ferndalepride.com. dinoslounge.com.

13th Annual Friends for Animals of Metro Detroit Mutt Strut! May 12, 8 a.m. The 5K run and 2.2 mile walk is Metro Detroit's only springtime pet-friendly run and walk! The Mutt Strut welcomes

families and individuals of all skill levels for the run and walk along Dearborn's Gateway Dearborn's Gateway Trail, 22051 Cherry Hill St., Dearborn. events@metrodetroitanimals.org. famdmuttstrut.org.

ART 'N' AROUND

Michigan Modernism Art & Antiques Show April 20-21, 6 p.m. Step out in your best mod dress, skinny ties, and short boots and join Michigan's Modernism Art & Antiques design community at the Annual Modernism Preview Night. Southfield Pavilion, 26000 Evergreen Road, Southfield. bobbocklus@hotmail.com. maineantiquedigest.com.

Draw or be Drawn April 21, 7 p.m. Draw or be Drawn is a free, unstructured, life drawing event for all ages and skill levels. Bring your art supplies. Costumes encouraged. Blue Owl Coffee Co., 1149 S. Washington Ave., Lansing. 517-712-3420. nick@blueowlcoffee.net. blueowlcoffee.net. draworbedrawn@elanna.noel.

Tom of Finland Event in Memory of Jeff Montgomery April 22, 6:30 p.m. Come for the Cocktails, Stay for the Exhibit... then watch the funds rise in memory of Jeff Montgomery, our co-founder and one of the most influential LGBT activists in Michigan history. Raise a glass in Moad, 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit.

Cat Mania! A celebration of cats variety show! April 27, 8 p.m. Static presents Cat Mania! An art and variety show featuring a night of music, art, burlesque and vendors capturing the feline frenzy for a local cat rescue called the Hater Kitty Rescue Army! 18 and Tanager Gallery, 715 E. Milwaukee Avenue, Detroit. 248-445-1277. haterkitty.com.

Epiphany Studios Spring Show and Sale May 4-6, 4 p.m. Epiphany Studios, 770 Orchard Lake Road, Pontiac. 248-745-3786. epiphanyglass.com.

THEATER

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 8:00 p.m. One event on April 21 at 8:00 p.m. Power Center, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. 734-647-3327. smt.d.umich.edu. ums.org.

A2CT Presents Arcadia April 19, 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

See Calendar, page 24

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Editor's Pick

Caroline Rose at El Club

Labeled by Stereogum as an "Artist to Watch," and lauded by Consequence of Sound as "refreshing," Caroline Rose brings her own specific brand of sarcasm and melancholy to her latest album "LONER." Rose will be finishing off her three-date stopover in Michigan on April 19 with a performance at El Club alongside the Go Rounds. Tickets start at \$10 and more information can be found online at ticketfly.com. El Club is located at 4114 Vernor Hwy., Detroit.



Calendar

Continued from p. 23

difficult questions. Director Melissa Freilich calls the play "funny, smart, and heartfelt. One event on April 20 at 8:00 p.m. One event on April 21 at 8:00 p.m. One event on April 22 at 2:00 p.m. Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-2538. smt.umich.edu. a2ct.org.

Metamorphoses April 19, 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 Street, Ypsilanti. ubiquitous theater@gmail.com. dreamlandtheater.com. bit.ly/kissingthewitch.

On Your Feet! at the Fisher Theatre May 1-13, 8 p.m. From their humble beginnings in Cuba, Emilio and Gloria Estefan came to America and broke through all barriers to become a crossover sensation at the very top of the pop music world. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000. broadwayindetroit.com.

National Theatre Live in HD: Shakespeare's Julius Caesar May 6, 7 p.m. High-Definition Broadcasts from National Theatre, London. Presented in partnership with the Michigan Theater. Nicholas Hytner's production thrusts the audience into the street party that greets Caesar's return, the congress that witnesses his murder, the rally Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. ums.org.



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Federal Grants Available to Crime Victims, Public, Nonprofit Groups

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) announced on April 12 that local organizations across the state will be able to apply for \$3.75 million in federal grants to provide services for supervised visitation and safe exchange programs.

The MDHHS Division of Victim Services has posted its second of five Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding. The division is accepting proposals from organizations that would expand and enhance their existing supervised visitation and safe exchange service for crime victims. MDHHS will award three- to five-year U.S. Department of Justice grants of \$50,000 to \$750,000.

Supervised visitation and safe exchange programs provide parents who may present a risk to their children or to another parent the opportunity to have parent-child contact monitored by an appropriate third party. Visitation centers have begun to emerge as a service for some families engaged in child custody disputes and for families with histories

of domestic violence and other allegations of parental misconduct.

Questions about the RFP for supervised visitation and safe exchange programs can be emailed to MDHHS-CVSC-VOCA-GRANTS@michigan.gov and must be submitted by Friday, April 20 by 5 p.m. The deadline for proposals is Thursday, May 10 by 3 p.m.

The remaining three RFPs will be available in April and May and will focus on sexual assault services, tribal victim services and children's advocacy center development. Applicant agencies must be public or non-profit organizations – including faith-based entities and American Indian tribes – that provide direct services to crime victims. The purpose of the funding is to expand and enhance services to victims of crime, such as responding to the immediate needs of crime victims, reducing psychological consequences of victimization and helping restore victims' sense of dignity and self-esteem.

For more information about Michigan's Division of Victim Services, visit Michigan.gov/crimevictims.

Hepatitis A Helpline Provides 24/7 Counsel to Fight Outbreak

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit have teamed up for a provider helpline to assist healthcare providers with questions about hepatitis A. The helpline is staffed by infectious disease specialists and is available 24/7.

"With more than 800 cases of hepatitis A reported in Michigan during this outbreak, it is far from over," said Dr. Eden Wells, MDHHS chief medical executive. "During the first three months of 2018, there have been more

cases reported than we would expect to see for an entire year. Local health departments, hospitals, urgent cares and primary care clinics need access to the latest information to help them with their patients and stop the spread of this disease."

The Hepatitis A Provider Helpline is not intended for the general public. Patients are advised to consult with their physician or local health department with their questions.

The helpline provides a valuable service for disease prevention and mitigating new cases for healthcare providers and can answer questions regarding:

- Hepatitis A treatment
- Identifying high-risk groups
- Hepatitis A vaccination
- Hepatitis A blood testing

"The Hepatitis A provider helpline is a valuable resource for health care professionals across the state," said Norman Markowitz, M.D., a Henry Ford infectious diseases physician. "Our team can provide the latest best practices for preventing and limiting the spread of hepatitis A in our communities."

There are two ways for providers to get in touch with the Hepatitis A Provider Helpline. For urgent questions, providers should call 313-575-0332 to be connected with an infectious disease specialist at Henry Ford for immediate answers 24/7. Non-urgent questions can be submitted online at Henryford.com/HepAConsult.



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Please visit www.corktownhealth.org for the full position descriptions and information about applying. All positions will be open until filled.



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Lansing Lugnuts Host Pride Night Baseball Game

BY BTL STAFF

For sports fans all across the U.S., spring just isn't the same without the start of baseball season. The Lansing Lugnuts baseball team recognizes this and wants to make a stand for an inclusive season for all its fans, so on Friday, May 18, fans are invited for Pride Night.

The game against the Bowling Green Hot Rods will go as planned, but the LanSINGout Gay Men's Chorus will lead the national anthem as well as the seventh inning stretch. Lansing Lugnuts Manager of Fan Engagement Mikaela Higgins said that the game will be unique for another reason as well.

"LGBTQ groups and organizations will be at the game providing information on how to join and get involved with their organizations," Higgins said.

In addition, this first-ever event is encouraging other local LGBTQ organizations to reach out if they would be interested in doing community outreach at the event.

"This is the Lugnuts very first Pride Night and we are so proud to be hosting," Higgins said. "The Lugnuts want to provide a fun, friendly and inclusive atmosphere to all fans."

Tickets start at \$8 and more information can be found by following this link: gaybe.am/Aw. Interested LGBTQ organizations should reach out to mhiggins@



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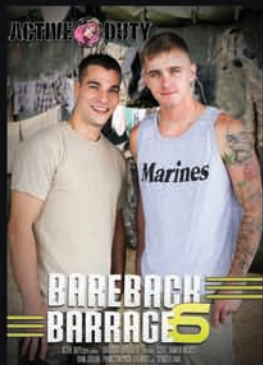
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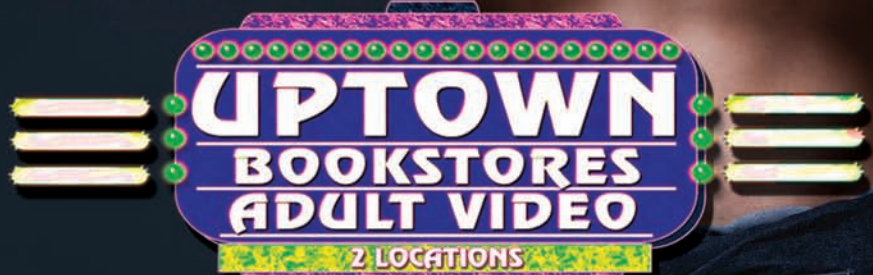


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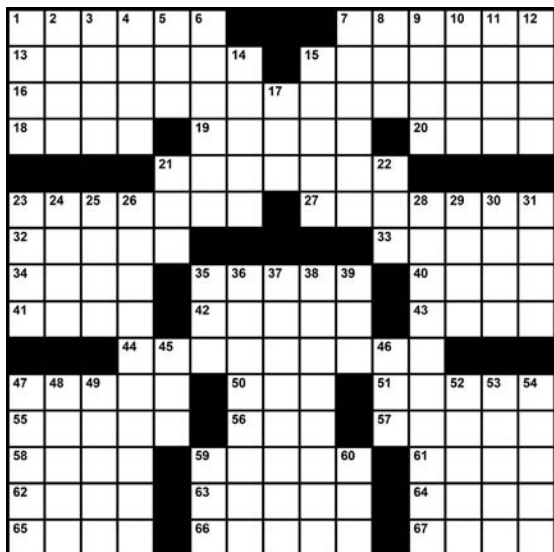
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quip
 27 More of the end of the quip
 32 Really queer
 33 Phallic fish
 34 Overwhelm with sweetness
 35 Boobs
 40 "Atlas Shrugged" author Ayn
 41 Smith of "Dawson's Creek"
 42 Peruvian friends of Maya Angelou?
 43 "Would ___ to you?"
 44 Layers over Scarlet's petticoats?
 47 Some of them are gray
 50 What a man may be made of, in Oz
 51 Theater whisper
 55 End of the end of the quip
 56 Offspring of a queen
 57 Betsy, who was spoofed in the SNL quip
 58 Words before were
 59 Dr. Weaver portrayer Laura
 61 Pinball wizard foul
 62 "Evita" lyricist Tim
 63 Bernstein manuscript, e.g.

64 Tubbies' prefix
 65 Harlan Greene's "What the ___ Remember"
 66 The brainy bunch
 67 Fruit-flavored ice cream maker

Down

1 Nickname for Streisand
 2 Iowa State city
 3 Madeline of "Young Frankenstein"
 4 Shooters from the land of the cut
 5 Chaney of silent films
 6 McArdle once of "Annie" fame
 7 Egyptian lake namesake
 8 The NCAA Trojans
 9 Served perfectly, to Mauresmo
 10 _Peter Pan_ pooch
 11 Acceptance on the street, in slang
 12 "___ On Down the Road"
 14 Places for commercial intercourse
 15 Kind of blitz
 17 Lang. of Queen Esther
 21 Bridal bio word
 22 Sch. for Rev. Spahr
 23 Make fun of

24 Noel but not Coward
 25 "Take ___ leave it!"
 26 Playfully insulted with wry humor?
 28 Alanis, who played a doctor on "Weeds"
 29 Russian river
 30 "___ Get a Witness" (Marvin Gaye)
 31 David ___ Pierce
 35 Pose for Diana Davies
 36 Example
 37 Kate, who portrayed Betsy in the SNL skit
 38 O'Keeffe and Bonheur
 39 Ga., once
 45 Milk, so to speak
 46 Abe Lincoln's boy
 47 Sarah Paulson's Emmy for playing Marcia Clark, e.g.
 48 LGBT rights activist O'Donnell
 49 Kane in "All My Children"
 52 Covered with vines
 53 Say hello to her on Broadway
 54 Rob of "Melrose Place"
 59 Suffix with homoerotic or sex
 60 Where you work in the navy

Educating Betsy

Q Puzzle

Across

1 Scott of "American Beauty"
 7 Subtle difference
 13 Wonder Woman's people
 15 Drag queen's application for lids

16 End of an SNL quip: "I may not be very good on camera, but ___"
 18 IRS data
 19 Actor Robert and family
 20 South Beach's Miami-___ County
 21 Lesbians in training, e.g.
 23 More of the end of the

50 What a man may be made of, in Oz
 51 Theater whisper
 55 End of the end of the quip
 56 Offspring of a queen
 57 Betsy, who was spoofed in the SNL quip
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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

WSU Hosts Rainbow Graduation, Awards and Homecoming

BY BTL STAFF

For many LGBTQ students, being part of that community can at times seem like a hindrance to one's professional life due to stigma or prejudice. However, for the LGBTQ students at Wayne State University, it's a part of their identity that they can celebrate and even include as part of their graduation attire. This is because WSU is offering three events: Rainbow graduation, Awards and Homecoming that can help students feel proud of their academic accomplishments while celebrating what makes them unique. All three of these events will be held on May 4 from 4 to 6 p.m.

"Rainbow Graduation is a special event that is open to all graduating WSU undergraduate, graduate and professional school students," said the WSU website. "All graduates will be awarded a certificate and a rainbow graduation

cord that can also be worn at the main University Commencement events."

And although Rainbow graduation is not a replacement to the regularly scheduled commencement at WSU, it's a positive and inclusive addition.

"Rainbow Awards celebrate students, faculty and staff who have been honored with scholarships and awards related to gender, sexuality and the GLBTQ community. Recognized award winners do not need to be graduating students," said the website. "Rainbow Homecoming is an opportunity for GLBTQIA alumni of WSU to return to campus. Alums can help celebrate our current students and 2018 graduates, can learn more about campus climate and developments, and can network with old and new friends."

More information about the event can be found by contacting Tom Molina-Duarte at 313-577-2357 or by emailing gf9811@wayne.edu.

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Benton Harbor OutCenter Seeks Volunteers for Teen Pride Prom

BY BTL STAFF

Putting on a prom night is no easy feat. Ensuring that there's a great theme, enough food, good music and well-made decorations can take weeks. That's why Benton Harbor needs volunteers to help host its upcoming 5th Annual LGBT Teen Prom. The center is hosting its second teen pride planning session on Saturday, April 28 from 2 to 5 p.m.

There, teenagers can work in a safe space and concentrate on creating a prom night that is inclusive and open to all, instead of worrying about being accepted by their peers. Also, for those teens who are unable to make the trip to Benton Harbor, OutCenter is willing to aid with transportation.

For more information about transportation and the 5th Annual Prom Prep, reach out to info@outcenter.org. OutCenter is located at 132 Water St., Benton Harbor. outcenter.org. 269-925-8330.

Concise Writing Theme at 2018 Rochester Writers' Spring Conference

BY BTL STAFF

"The Concise Writer" is the theme for Rochester Writers' annual spring event held on Saturday, April 21, at Oakland University. Short stories, poems and memoirs, as well as powerful first paragraphs, winning contests and effective marketing will be featured at this event for writers of all levels and ages.

Lev Raphael, presenter and Keynote Speaker, will be focusing on writing short stories and the value of writing across multiple genres with his "Writing Without Borders" presentation. The author of 25 books, Raphael currently teaches creative writing at Michigan State University. His most recent book, "Writer's Block is Bunk," is for writers at all stages in their careers.

"Knowing how to create a concise and effective message is important," said Michael Dwyer, organizer and founder of the event. "Many forms of writing require the attention to brevity, and all writers can

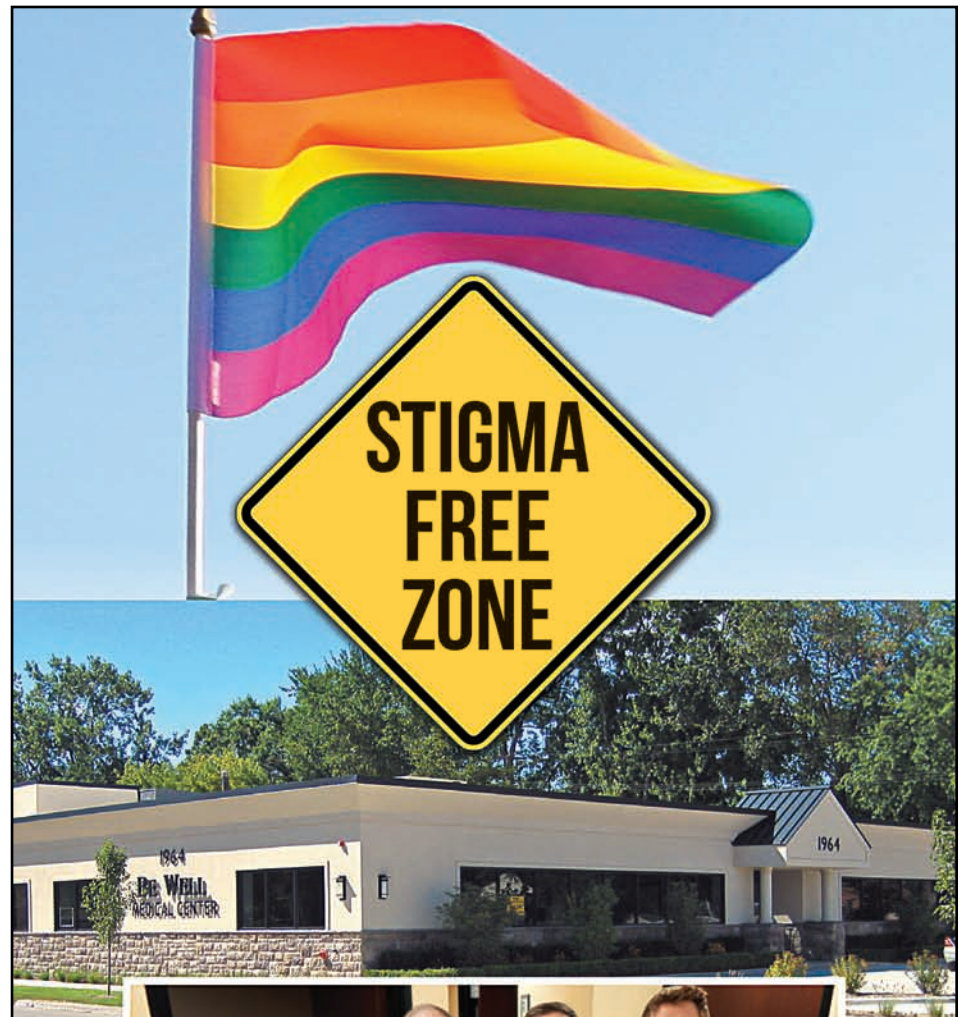
benefit from learning to choose the best words to tell a story."

Breakout sessions will offer writers workshops and lectures on focused topics such as acing agent appointments, crafting submission emails, and marketing a message to grow an author platform. In addition, Cyle Young and Bethany Morehead from the Hartline Literary Agency will be setting appointments with authors seeking representation.

The conference begins at 9 a.m. in the Oakland Center at Oakland University.

Registration includes refreshments, lunch and all nine presentations. Attendees may select the presentations most interesting to them.

Registration is going on now. The advance rate is \$125, with an at the door rate of \$150. A full list of speaker biographies and their presentations are posted at RochesterWriters.com.



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