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A Greater, Bigger, More Authentic World

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VOL 2622 • MAY 31, 2018

ISSUE 1069

PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP

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Michigan Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination Series

Q&A with Ferndale Mayor Dave Coulter

NEWS

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

This week's special Pride Issue installment for the BTL series, Michigan Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination, features Ferndale's own openly gay mayor, Dave Coulter. Coulter has been mayor of Ferndale since 2011.

Formerly a civil engineering draftsman and public school teacher, Coulter worked for 13 years in public affairs at the Michigan Consolidated Gas Company and served as executive director of the nonprofit Michigan AIDS Fund. He is currently the program officer for the Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation.

Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination is a bipartisan coalition of municipal leaders dedicated to securing inclusive non-discrimination protections for all, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals, at all levels of government. It is a program of Freedom for All Americans, the bipartisan campaign to win comprehensive LGBT non-discrimination protections nationwide. Since its inception, membership in Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination has grown to 307 mayors in 48 states and the District of Columbia, including 19 mayors in Michigan.

Why did you join Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination?

With the current politics in Washington, it's more important than ever that local communities and leaders join together to send strong, collective messages about fairness, equality and a whole host of issues. Together we can be stronger than the divisiveness before us.

How does your city promote fairness, diversity and inclusion, and why is that important?

Ferndale has been an important city in the fight for LGBT equality for decades now. As a result, we pride ourselves in leading on this issue and we incorporate policies, procedures and laws in Ferndale that reflect this commitment. Just last year we officially became a Welcoming City, another example of making sure people know they are safe and welcome in Ferndale.

“I actually discovered Ferndale by chance, but I quickly realized that this was a special community. There is a friendliness and small town feel to it, and I also quickly realized there was a significant LGBT community here that was not just “tolerated” but respected and appreciated by the larger community.”

As mayor, what role do you play in challenging discrimination, and making your city more inclusive?

Mayors can both lead by example and use their platform to raise awareness of issues around discrimination and inclusion.

How do you ensure that your city's objectives are consistently reflected in the actions of municipal employees?

One way we measure ourselves is by the Human Rights Campaign index, which we have used over the years to make sure our practices reflect our intentions. I'm proud that we have consistently raised our score, and we continue to work with them to make sure all areas of our community reflect our core values of inclusion.

What is your vision for your city 10 years from now, in terms of being a welcoming place to live, work and operate a business?

My hope is that in a decade the fact that someone is LGBT will be irrelevant to whether they feel safe and welcome and included in this community. I believe we're actually a lot further than most in that area, but there's more we can do to reduce those barriers and work towards full inclusion and equality.

What drew you to Ferndale? What is it like for you, personally, living in an inclusive city?

I actually discovered Ferndale by chance, but I quickly realized that this was a special community. There is a friendliness and



“Our motto in Ferndale is ‘Good Neighbors,’ and we interpret that to include the diversity of our residents and guests and the benefits of inclusive decision-making. My fellow Council members and I strive to act in ways reflective of Ferndale’s shared values.” - Ferndale Mayor Dave Coulter speaking at a rally in front of city hall in 2016 to commemorate the victims of the Pulse Nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida, that killed 49 people. Photos courtesy of Dave Coulter



small town feel to it, and I also quickly realized there was a significant LGBT community here that was not just “tolerated” but respected and appreciated by the larger community. I will always be grateful for discovering this town and the people here who made me feel immediately welcomed and included.

In October, Ferndale was one of the first municipalities in the U.S. to permanently install the Pride flag. How did that come to be, and why is that significant?

We had some water damage in City Hall from the flood a few years ago, and we were doing some internal repairs. As part of the restoration, we redid the wall behind the council table which had five flags. When we divided the flags to put our city logo in the middle of the wall we realized we needed a sixth flag, and I asked our council members their thoughts about a pride flag. We were all very excited about it, not only to recognize the significant role of the LGBT community

in Ferndale history but to ensure that in the future anyone who comes to our council meetings will immediately know this to be a safe and inclusive place. I couldn't find another city in the country that had done this, and we love breaking new ground in Ferndale!

In news stories you are frequently referred to as “Dave Coulter, Ferndale’s openly gay mayor.” What else should readers know about you?

Like all of us, there's much more that defines me than my sexuality. I'm passionate about politics and government, of course, but I also love sports (especially Michigan State), traveling and the front car of any roller coaster! Most important to me are my family and friends, and I am fortunate to have a wonderful network of people who love and encourage me. They are the ones that give me the strength to do the work I am privileged to do.

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Mara Keisling Keynotes Pride Brunch in Kalamazoo

Trans Activist Tells Members of the Community to 'Be Optimistic'

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Founding executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality Mara Keisling was in Kalamazoo on Saturday, May 26 to talk about her work in the advocacy organization, their legislative work in the presidential administration, and the political power of optimism.

As the keynote speaker during OutFront Kalamazoo's annual Pride brunch at 600 Kitchen & Bar, Keisling told attendees that "Things can sometimes look dark these days and they can look polarized and it can look like we're losing, but we have to always try to be optimistic, which can be really hard, but it's a choice to be optimistic, and it's a political statement and tool to be optimistic."

BTL briefly spoke with Keisling following brunch before she boarded a flight to her home state of Pennsylvania.

The NCTE is celebrating 15 years this year, and Keisling said she has been fortunate at her age to have a longer view of things.

"I've seen things get really really bad and get really really good again," she said, pointing to a 15-year-old out trans high school student who attended the Pride brunch.

"When I graduated from high school in olden times in 1977, there was not an out trans kid in school in the whole country. That wasn't even possible, and she's not the only trans kid at her school."

Keisling offered up another example of how things have changed.

"In 2001, I met with a state senator in Pennsylvania on a bill we were trying to get trans people into and he said he wouldn't support it. He was a liberal Democrat and he said, 'But Mara, look at the bright side, five years ago I wouldn't have even let you in my office.' That's not a thing anymore," she said.

As things continue to change, Keisling said there are a few ways members of the community can help create power in an

See Mara Keisling, page 15

City of Hazel Park Proclaims June Pride Month

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Around 40 members of the LGBTQ community and its allies gathered inside Hazel Park City Hall on Tuesday, May 22, to hear city council read into record a proclamation honoring Pride Month for 2018.

Mayor Pro Tem Amy Aubry read that Hazel Park, "supports the rights of every citizen to be free from discrimination," and that, "We as a society at large are embracing new definitions of sexuality and gender, and also acknowledges the need for education and awareness to end discrimination and prejudice ... The mayor and city council recognize and declare June 2018 as Pride Month in the city of Hazel Park, Michigan, and encourage our residents to reflect on the ongoing struggle for equality members of the LGBTQ community face and celebrate the contributions that enhance our city."

During the campaign season, Aubry and councilmember Alissa Sullivan spoke with residents to tell them they believed better representation was needed of the diverse community in Hazel Park at all levels. Aubry said this included the recruiting of more women, younger people and the LGBTQ community to various boards and commissions.

The city has an openly gay man, Mike McFall, on the Hazel Parks Art Council. He is also a member of the Downtown Development Authority.

McFall, who rallied the community via social media to come out and support the reading of the proclamation, said, "This means a lot. This tells me this city is a welcoming place," where he and his husband, Jake Cooper, moved to last summer. McFall pointed to April and Jayne Deboer-Rowse, the Hazel Park moms whose legal fight to jointly adopt their children led to marriage rights for all same-sex couples.

"The city has a large gay population. There is a lot of overflow from Ferndale and Royal Oak," he said. "People have viewed Hazel Park a certain way for a long time and that way has changed. The city is welcoming and open for business."

There is also a transgender woman, Char Davenport, on the city's planning commission.

"... The entire time I've lived here in Hazel Park has been nothing short of welcoming. I take my hat off to each and every one of you

for the work you do to make this city such a wonderful place to live in," she said, adding that, "A proclamation like this should not be taken lightly. It clearly delivers a message to members of the community who happen to be LGBT and QIA that they are not invisible, that they don't have to hide, that we see you, and that this is a huge thing – especially in the transgender community. And for our children, it tells them that you can succeed, you can be wonderful and a valuable part of

to the very hard work of the city management and staff, as well as myself and other currently elected officials, but also due to the hard work of city employees, citizens and elected officials before us. Hazel park has embraced its new residents and encouraged them to find their place, which many have by bringing new businesses, joining boards and commissions and volunteering with many of our local service organizations. The greatness in this is the melding of the old with the new. We don't



the community."

The proclamation is a first for Hazel Park, and Aubry, who is new to elected office and is only seven months into her position, was asked whether or not a non-discrimination ordinance can be expected on the books soon.

"There's a lot to learn and I came in with a lot of ideas but I recognize our staff is still limited so I have to pace myself," she said. "I would love to add a non-discrimination ordinance to the books. It's been discussed and I think we'll see that happen in some form eventually."

Sullivan echoed Aubry's sentiments.

"I think that for a very long time our city has been concerned with budgets and infrastructure, to the point of not being able to look around and see a need for other things that cities around us have and are embracing. We've been a city that has struggled, desperately, and, like Detroit, are experiencing a bit of a renaissance," Sullivan said. "We're at a point in our evolution that not only accepts change, but encourages it – and I'm so proud to be a part of this positive and progressive growth."

She continued, "Our community has some great opportunities headed our way, thanks

want to change Hazel Park, but we do want to continue to help it grow. We can do that best by recognizing and celebrating our future and all of the residents who make that possible."

During Tuesday night's special announcement, Hazel Park resident since 2000 and volunteer at Affirmations, Jeffrey Olivier, presented council with a rainbow flag, which will be on display at City Hall throughout the month of June.

"I have never felt unequal here in Hazel Park," he said. "I've actually felt loved and met many people who I've considered my second family here in Hazel Park. There are some young people that may be watching tonight and I want them to know that as an openly gay man in Hazel Park and also as an LGBTQ person, you are safe here. You don't have to be afraid to be who you are."

"It was incredible to see and hear," said Molly Tamsen, a Hazel Park resident for two and a half years. She lives in the city with her fiancée, Theresa, and their 4-year-old daughter.

Tamsen continued, "I've never seen a crowd like this at a council meeting. This is awesome. I feel accepted here and I view this as a sign of safety."

EQMI Says ELCRA Still Needs to be Amended

MI Civil Rights Commission's Interpretative Statement Is 'Important Incremental Step'

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Michigan has become the first state in the nation to expand access to anti-discrimination claims through the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.

In a vote of 5-0-1, the Commission voted on Monday, May 21, to approve a motion presented by Commissioner Alma Wheeler Smith to adopt as Interpretive Statement 2018-1 that "discrimination because of... sex" includes discrimination because of gender identity and discrimination because of sexual orientation.

The major victory for all Michiganders is fully within the Commission's authority, yet critics have raised two different claims: One, the Commission did not have authority to issue its decision, and two, the Commission's interpretation of discrimination on the basis of "sex" is wrong.

"I anticipate opponents will raise challenges on both grounds. One opponent, Attorney General Bill Schuette, has raised both criticisms, but especially the first criticism, insisting that the Commission had no authority to act. In the past few days, some legislators have said they will ask the attorney general to issue a formal opinion saying that the Commission has no authority to act," said Mark Totten, associate professor at Michigan State University's College of Law.

He is one of three legal experts who wrote to the Commission to rebut arguments used by the attorney general that blocked Commission action last September.

"This argument has no basis in law whatsoever. The legislature expressly gave the Commission the power to interpret ambiguous provisions of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, and that's exactly what the Commission did," said Totten. "To put this in context, this is not even a close call. The law is clear and bodies like the Commission regularly exercise such authority all the time. In legal-speak, it's Administrative Law 101. Even if the attorney general nonetheless issues a formal opinion concluding the Commission has no authority to act, the Commission would not be bound by it, as the Michigan Supreme Court has indicated an attorney general's

opinion does not bind an agency doing what the Commission did here."

Totten continued, "At some point someone will raise the second type of challenge – arguing that the Commission's interpretation of the law is wrong. When that happens, the courts will have the final say," he said. "The Commission should feel very confident, however, as many state and federal courts have reached exactly the same conclusion the Commission did interpreting similar provisions of law."

Although courts often defer and give respect to the agencies that have responsibility for administering laws like this, one big question remains: If the interpretation holds up, does that mean there doesn't need to be an amendment to the ELCRA? The ELCRA already includes sex discrimination, and discrimination against people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity is inherently because of sex.

According to Erin Knott, field manager at Equality Michigan, the answer is yes.

"Unlike 18 other states, Michigan does not currently have a state law that explicitly prohibits anti-LGBT discrimination in employment, housing or public accommodations. The interpretative statement is an important incremental step toward protecting LGBT Michiganders from discrimination, as it gives a path toward justice," she said. "However, it is not a substitute for legislative action to amend the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. Legislative action remains the top policy priority for EQMI and of the LGBT community. We cannot for one moment, take our eye off the top prize."

When asked what members of the community can do to help, Knott, said they are encouraged to join the EQMI Action Network, the advocacy arm of the organization, to mobilize at the grassroots level to help get elected pro-equality candidates who can help pass the ELCRA.

As of Tuesday, May 22, the Commission began taking complaints based sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination. To file a complaint, call 800-482-3604 or visit gaybe.am/GY.



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Midwestern T-Shirts Track History

Wearing Gay History Archive Showcases Thousands of Historical Shirts

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Midwestern Historian

There is a perception by some that LGBTQ history didn't happen in the Midwest. And while it is true that many of the most notable LGBTQ-related events seemed to favor larger, more coastal cities across the U.S., there is certainly a wealth of history that can be found locally. That negative view of his homeland is exactly what Eric Gonzaba refused to believe when he was looking for a way to understand the Midwest's historical impact on the nation. That's why in college he began what would become the internationally-known Wearing Gay History T-shirt archive project.

"I come from a small town in the Midwest and the idea for this project came from the idea that there are gay people from Indiana and elsewhere," Gonzaba said. "I was in Washington D.C. and I was at this party. I was talking about it to someone who was there, an older gentleman, and I said I'd like to focus on queer history in the heartland. And he goes, 'Well, queer history didn't happen there.' It kind of infuriated me. So, what this project has taught me is how dynamic the community is and how diverse it is."

Gonzaba's project began while he was an undergraduate at school.

"I didn't know where to start," Gonzaba said. "I actually found my way to the

Chris Gonzales Library and Archives in Indianapolis."

While at that LGBTQ history museum, he was hoping to find traditional documents to reference and perhaps start putting together a gay history exhibit of his own. That's when he stumbled upon a bunch of dusty unopened boxes.

"They hadn't been opened for a long time. I was going through them and it was just piles and piles of T-shirts from gay events in Indiana," Gonzaba said. "They were from bars, from bowling leagues, stuff and events, and I was fascinated by them."

Wearing History

Although T-shirts might seem like an unorthodox way to record history, the shirts have provided an unexpectedly efficient way of documenting the presence of LGBTQ-affirming people all across the world in recent history. And the answer is simple as to why: people love T-shirts.

Whether worn as an undershirt or simply as a standalone item, it's almost guaranteed that several T-shirts can be found in the average American closet. And the trend doesn't seem to be slowing down any time soon. In fact, bulk clothing retailer The Adair Group reported that in 2010 there were over 2 billion shirts sold globally – a trend that showed a more than 100 percent increase from 2005. However, although this clothing item made

its mainstream debut sometime in the early 1900s, it wasn't until the late '60s and '70s that custom T-shirt printing really began to take off. And, as the modern LGBTQ equality movement began to gain its footing, so did the rise of LGBTQ-themed T-shirts.

These shirts – depending on their designs – could either boldly proclaim support for LGBTQ rights or serve as clandestine messages to members of the same groups long before social media and today's more inclusive climate. And, in this way, they serve as reliable evidence of LGBTQ events – before it was even safe to publicly hold them.

A Project's Beginnings

After sorting through the contents of those dusty, history-filled boxes, it didn't take long for Gonzaba to start putting together his own exhibit at school. It showcased a selection of his 20 favorite shirts, and each displayed designs from a variety of Indiana pride events, groups and organization. Yet, as big of a step as that was toward the project's current scale, the Indiana University exhibit didn't last very long.

"At the end of it, I took down the shirts, I took down the museum, the messages I had written with them," he said. "And no one ever saw it again."

It wasn't until Gonzaba started his graduate program at George Mason University just outside of Washington D.C. that he considered



Wearing Gay History.com T-shirt archive project founder Eric Gonzaba.

These shirts – depending on their designs – could either boldly proclaim support for LGBTQ rights or serve as clandestine messages to members of the same groups long before social media and today's more inclusive climate. And, in this way, they serve as reliable evidence of LGBTQ events – before it was even safe to publicly hold them.



Hoosier Homos: New Orleans Invasion of the Hoosier Homos from Southern Decadence 1994. The shirt came from an annual six-day event held in New Orleans, Louisiana, by the gay and lesbian community during Labor Day Weekend. It finished with a parade through the French Quarter on the Sunday before Labor Day. From the Chris Gonzalez Library and Archives in Indianapolis, Indiana.



Michigan March 1989: This black T-shirt has a yellow road dividing lane with footprints on each side. It is now stored in the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Toronto, Ontario.



18th Michigan Womyn's Music Festival: This purple T-shirt commemorates the 18th Michigan Womyn's Music Festival in 1993. It is now housed in the Rainbow History Project Collection in Washington D.C.



March on Washington, 1993: This T-shirt was made by the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club and debuted on the March on Washington on April 25, 1993. It is now housed in the UTSA Libraries Special Collections in San Antonio, Texas.

rekindling some of his forgotten work.

“When I was at George Mason I didn’t know at the time that its history department is known for its digital history. It’s for trying to understand history in a different way using digital technology,” Gonzaba said.

That new approach to history got him thinking about creating a digitized version of his own unique history project, and was at the top of his list when he realized he needed to complete several large-scale assignments to advance his graduate degree. It turned out that the long-forgotten T-shirts were the right fit for Gonzaba.

“I was thinking that I’d fly back down to Indianapolis and photograph all the shirts in the collection. I wanted to make a very basic archive so that people could look back on these shirts if they wanted to, and it went well in the class,” he said. “They liked it.”

Eventually, the project grew to the proportions it has today.

“I went to Chicago and the Gerber/Hart Archives, their gay archives, and they had 300-or-so shirts. Then I went to Philadelphia to do their 300-or-so shirts and four or five years later there are now 20 collections from 20 archives around the world. There are now almost 5,000 shirts,” Gonzaba said. “It expanded, and it got recognized by a few big organizations and it won a few awards.”

Online Accessibility and Local Outreach

Today, the entire collection is documented on the project’s website, wearinggayhistory.com. There, interested people can not only view a photo of the T-shirts housed in the archives around the world, but learn more about where each T-shirt can be found across the globe and its unique history. The online

museum even includes a few accessories like hats.

Wearing Gay History also caught local attention too. Although the T-shirt project included many shirts from across the U.S., there were a few states like Michigan that were left out. Michigan-based LGBTQ historian and Michigan State University Professor Tim Retzlaff said that Gonzaba’s project was a perfect added element to his classroom instruction. He said he got inspired to contribute materials to the project when he noticed there weren’t any contributions from Michigan.

“I know Michigan has a number of repositories that have collected LGBTQ materials going back to the 1960s, so it kind of bugged me that Michigan didn’t associate with it,” he said. “It kind of dovetailed into this class I was teaching which is a version of advanced women’s studies that satisfies the LGBTQ studies minor. My focus, when I teach it, is that I’m doing queer history and in a variety of ways: From reading and writing, understanding narrative history and oral history, to understanding how historic preservation and recognizing historic sites might be a factor, to how archives are created and how museums might get material.”

Gonzaba, having lived in Michigan for several years himself, said he was very open to gaining project contributions from Retzlaff and from people across the globe who don’t live in traditional hot spots of LGBTQ history.

“There’s a different angle of gay history that we think of,” Gonzaba said. “We think that there’s a closet one day and then there’s not a closet one day. There’s a huge area, though, of where gay people have always been out and proud and that really inspired me.”

Maurice Stepp is an openly gay MSU undergrad who majors in kinesiology. However, in search of adding to a self-described “passion project,” he participated in Retzlaff’s class this past school year. Stepp said that the class’s partial focus on the T-shirt project was a great way to connect him to LGBTQ history he didn’t know about before.

“I personally took this class because I wanted to get to know my community and the people within it and I wanted to understand where we come from and where we’re possibly going,” Stepp said. “If you think about the LGBTQ community, you mostly think of major cities, coastal cities and not everyone is fully represented so these databases are able to collect things that are not only mainstream, but parts of different cultures and subcultures that are not as well-represented. I think that’s the main important thing to take away from the databases.”

Although Gonzaba does not house the T-shirts himself, to find out more about Wearing Gay History or how to donate to some of the various collections around the world, go to wearinggayhistory.com.

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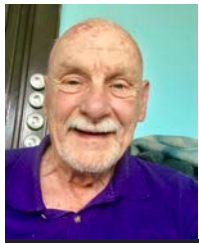
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For eligible study participants, all investigational medication (or placebo), study-related tests and study doctor’s visits will be provided at no cost to you for the duration of the study, up to 16 weeks. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

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Ys Beyond my Wildest Dreams

Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Long, long before The Village People made “Y.M.C.A.” the unofficial, persistent national anthem of Winter Olympian skater Brian Boitano, the Young Mens Christian Associations played an important role, second only to bars, as places to meet available others of like-minded, body-mind-and-spirit, triune persuasions (“You show me your triune, I’ll show you my try-unity. Let’s shower in unison. One with the others”).

In the ‘60s and ‘70s there were four YMCAs in the Detroit metropolitan area. There is only one now, located on busy, busy Broadway, in a brand-spanking-new, crowded downtown technicolored vista.

It was understood in the late ‘50s that the “C” in YMCA also stood for “Contacting” (among other gerunds of neo-pagan opportunity). And in the course of my wanderlust years, I’ve spent many pleasant (and, I’ll add, radiantly-scrubbed) weekends at Ys in Hamtramck, Toledo, Cleveland, Boston, Chicago, Santa Fe, Windsor, Toronto, Montreal and, the subject of this reminiscence, New York City.

I recall only two mishaps. At Chicago’s exuberant, centrally-located Lawton Y in the 1970s, I decided to take a nap after a gin martini brunch at the nearby, crazy patchwork Haig Bar (leaving my door ajar with every good intention of do-unto-others, 7th-floor hospitality).

When I awoke I was chagrined to find that someone, in an act of non-Christian, self-serving umbrage, had taken my new shoes and left me with their size 14, floppy clogs (I have no recollection of what I bartered for the exchange).

In the Detroit Y, when I was a young “looker” (and by that I mean I was always looking), I happened to be on the wrong floor at the wrong time. A passkey check was demanded, “Hey, Mary! This is for two floors below. Why are you here?”

“It’s Sunday,” said I with a reasonably-straight face. “I’m just checking to see if my friends are planning to go to church.”

As I couldn’t remember their room number, their names or, what’s worse, their religious affiliations – if any (and I was wearing nothing but a baptismal tea towel) – I was told to genuflect and leave immediately!

My name was placed on the sinners list – rather sizable I learned from an attendant friend – of “transient undesirables.” But I remember New York City’s Sloan House YMCA, on West 34th Street, with much pleasure.

Thirteen hours, 15 minutes, 35 seconds is a long time to spend on a confining, tepidly-ventilated train, and when traveling friend Gary and I arrived at Grand Central Station we were both in need of a soothing shower (but not together).

We took a hectic cab ride to the Sloan House, where another friend, Richard, who flew in the day before, had made our weekend reservations.

Our stay during that hot, humid memorable July was for a week, at the cost of \$50 (in the ‘40s, sci-fi author Ray Bradbury, of “Fahrenheit 451” fame, lived at Sloan House for \$5 a week). Richard greeted us in the crowded lobby, eagerly telling us as we registered that he had met this “hot number” who was going to introduce him – and Gary and me – to his buddy Marlon Brando. Party time! Sure, Mary.

I hadn’t been in my room more than 10 perspiring minutes when there was a knock at my door.

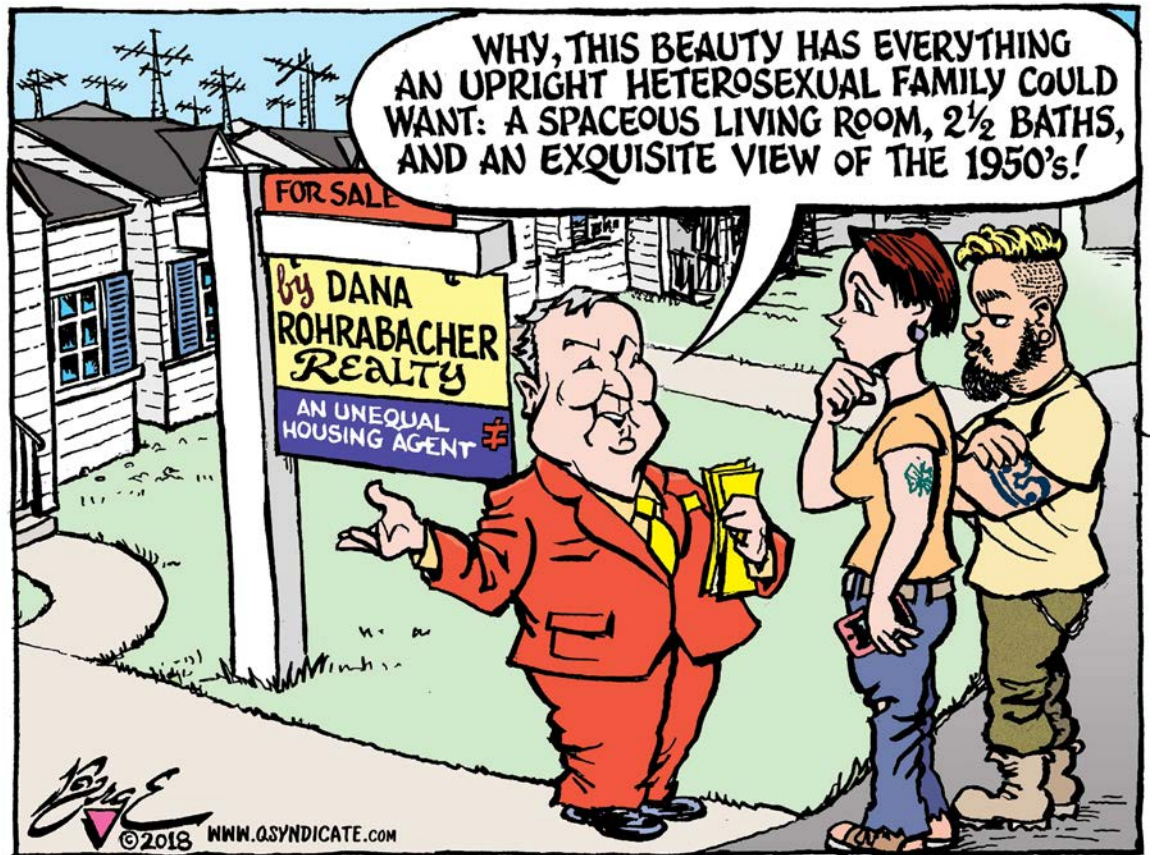
“Hey, Alexander! You’re wanted on the hall phone.”

The call was from someone named Jerry.

“I saw you check in,” he said quite directly. “If you’re available I’d like to, er, you know, buy you coffee.”

Jerry – who proved to be a mature guy of 25 in contrast to my tenuous 19 – was pleasant, good-looking, all-around nice. He was from

See next page



BY DANA RUDOLPH

Mombian

Two New Picture Books Tell Story of Rainbow Flag

Pride season is here, and so are two new picture books that tell the story of the rainbow flag and the individuals who both inspired and created it.

“Rob Sanders’ *Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag*,” published by Random House, begins with Milk dreaming of equality as a young man and carrying those dreams forward as he becomes an elected official. When he organizes a march “to protest inequality and unfair laws,” he seeks something that people may carry to give them a sense of hope and community. He reaches out to artist Gilbert Baker, who envisions a rainbow flag and enlists volunteers to create it.

Sanders deals as gently as possible with Milk’s death, noting that he and San Francisco mayor George Moscone were assassinated by a man who did not think, feel or love like Harvey. He then explains that people continued to create the flags as a symbol of hope, pride and equality. A brief afterword and timeline give further details for those who want them.

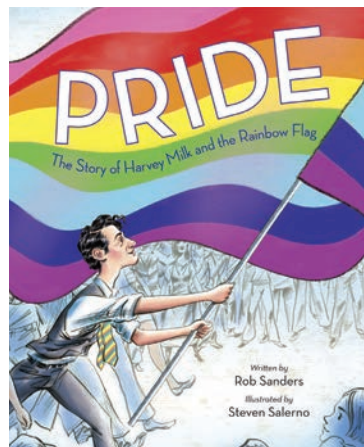
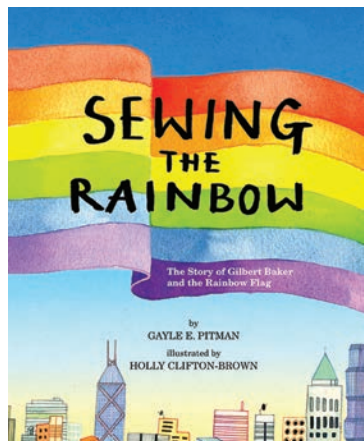
My one quibble is that Sanders merely tells us, “Harvey dreamed that everyone – even gay people – would have equality,” without saying what being gay means. Parents and teachers who don’t already have that language will need to find it elsewhere (and “including

gay people” might have been better than “even”).

The only other picture book about Milk, Kari Krakow’s 2001 “*The Harvey Milk Story*,” goes into more detail about Milk’s life and work, making it best for the older end of the picture book crowd. Sanders’ simpler version – more a snapshot than a full biography – and the inclusion of the colorful flag tale will appeal to slightly younger readers. So will the bright illustrations by Steven Salerno, showing the flag waving over crowds and being held by people of various gender identities, races and physical abilities. This inspiring, positive story is a great introduction to two LGBTQ heroes and to the spirit of the LGBTQ community.

Gayle Pitman’s “*Sewing the Rainbow*,” published by Magination Press, looks at the same era through the life of Gilbert Baker. Pitman has already written several children’s books on LGBTQ history and culture, including Stonewall Book Award-winning “*This Day In June*,” about a Pride parade; “*When You Look Out the Window*,” about LGBTQ-rights pioneers Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin and “*A Church for All*,” about an LGBTQ-inclusive church. Her latest work shows us not only a key moment in queer history, but also the journey of a boy to becoming his true self. A few

See next page



gaps in explanation, however, will require grown-ups to reference the reader's note at the end.

"Sewing the Rainbow" starts in Gilbert's dull Kansas hometown, where he "was full of color and sparkle and glitter." He would watch his grandmother sew in her clothing store, while he drew pictures of gowns and costumes. Then one day, "his father took away his art supplies and tore up his drawings." Pitman provides no reason for this, though, which may puzzle young readers.

Although Gilbert hoped to go someplace "filled with color" when he turned 18, he instead received a letter that "knocked every last bit of sparkle out of him." Pitman doesn't tell us what the letter said, however. On the next page, we simply read about his life in the army; adults will need to explain what a draft letter was.

Still, readers will feel almost as happy as Gilbert when he finally makes his way to San Francisco, learns to sew and creates costumes for famous singers, banners for (unspecified) marches and rallies, and "regalia for Mama José and her Imperial Court." Even the reader's note, however, doesn't tell us what the Imperial Court (an LGBTQ charitable organization known for its fancy balls) is.

A more serious omission comes when Gilbert's friend Harvey asks him for a new logo to replace a symbol that "continued to blemish" their city and "in Gilbert's community, was a constant reminder of evil." The text doesn't say what the symbol was, however; some readers may think it was a logo of the city (the reader's note explains that it was the pink triangle).

Additionally, nowhere in the story does

Pitman use the words "gay," "queer" or "LGBTQ," although she does in the reader's note. There is still much value in the broad message of acceptance and inclusion – but

part of me feels this is like writing about Martin Luther King, Jr. without specifying that he fought for black people and racial equality.

Still, many young readers, especially LGBTQ children, will likely identify with Gilbert's struggle to be himself. When Gilbert's flags first fly over San Francisco, we can't help cheering with the diverse crowd that celebrates them. And Pitman's final message, that when one sees a rainbow flag, "you'll know that it's okay to be your colorful, sparkly, glittery self," will inspire many, especially queer children with a more feminine gender expression. Illustrations by Holly Clifton-Brown are bright and whimsical, and the glittery rainbow cover adds to the book's attraction.

Sanders' tale is of heroes writ large, making public change with bold strokes. Pitman's story intertwines both personal and public transformations. Both approaches will add to children's understanding of these iconic figures and the time in which they lived – and our ongoing debt to them.

Let us hope they are followed by picture books – by these authors or others – about Mama José (José Sarria) and other people of color and of different genders who have also been fundamental to the LGBTQ rights movement.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBTQ parents. Please join her on June 4 by posting on social media for #LGBTQFamiliesDay.

air-conditioned, romantic July days. Sorry, I can't remember your last name or your try-whatever).

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.

Creep of the Week

Dana Rohrabacher

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

As I write this it is Memorial Day, a day when we as a country mourn our lost veterans and give thanks for service members past and present. Although, let's be honest, for many Americans it's



Dana Rohrabacher

a day to grill burgers, drink beer and maybe, just maybe, put on a T-shirt with an eagle on it or American flag swim trunks.

Mostly what I feel on this Memorial Day is sad. Sad that our veterans and our current service members have such a totally incompetent and unworthy commander in chief. America owes them all an apology.

I'm also sad about the 1,500 or so children that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has ripped from their parents and put into "foster homes or whatever" only to completely lose track of them. It's a nightmare. It's catastrophic. It's sickening. It's happening right here, right now.

I'm also sad because the NFL will punish players who kneel for the National Anthem in protest of police murdering unarmed black and brown men, women and children. If you're outraged by people kneeling during the anthem but you haven't managed to muster that same amount of outrage for the many homeless veterans in this country, I'm going to go out on a limb and say your issue isn't respect for troops so much as it is contempt for black and brown people.

But I'm not just sad, I'm pissed. And I hope you are, too. There's so much work to do to stem the tide into the cesspool of Trumpism. But one of the most important things you can do is to work to elect decent people to government. You must vote, but not only that, get involved with a campaign. Go volunteer to make phone calls, knock on doors, talk to voters. There are so many great people running across the country and they really need your help. You are busy – I get it, we all are – but do you want to look at your children/nephews/fur babies years from now and say, "When Trump was president I binge-watched all of the seasons of 'The Great British Baking Show' and 'BoJack Horseman' because I just couldn't even." No. No, you do not.

Because that's how people like Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) continue to hold office. Rohrabacher, a name that has come up

There's so much work to do to stem the tide into the cesspool of Trumpism. But one of the most important things you can do is to work to elect decent people to government.

repeatedly in to the Russia investigation that is definitely not a hoax, recently declared that it should be totally fine for people to refuse to sell houses to gays.

"Every homeowner should be able to make a decision not to sell their home to someone (if) they don't agree with their lifestyle," Rohrabacher told a group of Realtors according to the OC Register.

In case you want to give him the benefit of the doubt, don't. Because later when asked for clarification he doubled down.

"We've drawn a line on racism, but I don't think we should extend that line," Rohrabacher told the OCR. "A homeowner should not be required to be in business with someone they think is doing something that is immoral."

First of all, I have some strong doubts that Rohrabacher is even cool with the line being drawn at racism.

Secondly, for anyone who was wondering where the fight over bakers making cakes for gay weddings was heading, this is it. This is why cakes matter. It was never about cakes. It's about real people's lives.

Thankfully, this display of anti-gay animosity led the National Association of Realtors to stop supporting Rohrabacher with campaign contributions.

"We certainly hope that Congress will ... support the elimination of housing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity," the NAR declared in a statement.

I'm also happy to report that Rohrabacher has many challengers in this next election. According to the OCR, Rohrabacher "is facing 15 challengers, including eight Democrats" and, "For the first time in 15 terms, Rohrabacher, a perennial shoo-in, might finally have cause to worry about his incumbency."

As he should. Because he is trash.

If you're in Orange County, definitely find someone running against Rohrabacher and put helping them on your dance card.

If you live elsewhere in the country, no doubt you have your own Rohrabacher to battle. Put on your volunteer armor and get to work.

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 10

Sandusky, Ohio, staying for a three-day holiday weekend.

"If you like, I can show you around. We can hit a few of the tourist spots. Take in the bars. It's up to you. How about it? Please!"

As Brando wasn't a viable option, I said sure (thanks, Jerry – whatever nursing home you're now in – for three memorable, if non-



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Pride at Work President Cynthia Thornton Receives 'Rebel With A Cause' Award

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

On Saturday, May 19, the President of Pride at Work Michigan, Cynthia Thornton, received the University of Michigan-Dearborn's Rebel With A Cause Award for her "exemplary demonstration of leadership and inspiration to young workers everywhere, especially here in Michigan." The award was part of the two-day 2018 Young Workers' Conference held at the school's Dearborn campus. Pride at Work is the local branch of a national nonprofit organization that represents LGBTQ union members and their allies and is officially recognized by the AFL-CIO.

"I found out give or take a month ago at a planning meeting that I was going to be receiving the award, but once I heard the name I was absolutely in love with it," Thornton said. "Because, while I had never considered myself to be a rebel with a cause, that's exactly what I am."

Conference organizers described the event's aim as being "open to all workers, union or non-union, and leaders from a variety of organizations to learn together about new ideas, strategies and skills to meet the needs and challenges



Cynthia Thornton

Cynthia Thornton said her latest Pride at Work initiative will be aimed at helping to foster LGBTQ-affirming work environments and finding jobs for those people who are not unskilled, but who have had issues finding work in the past because of their identities.

facing workers in our ever-changing workplaces." And the event has a focus on being inclusive to all "genders and all cultural or ethnic backgrounds."

Thornton said that while it was an honor to receive the award, it only serves as a mile marker in her goals for furthering Pride at Work's current goals.

"There's two key things and I realized that last year, while my first inclination was to focus on the LGBTQ part, I realized that the allies were actually hurting quite a bit," Thornton said, recalling an instance where allies were sometimes unsure how to support LGBTQ family members in non-inclusive work environments. "The practical thing I'm working on will be spending most of my time talking to elected officials and finding out where they are on LGBTQ issues and bringing them into that fight. Keeping that in mind how great a need there is in bringing in LGBTQ people into skilled trades."

Thornton said that part of her latest Pride at Work initiative will be aimed at helping to foster LGBTQ-affirming work environments and finding jobs for those people who are not unskilled, but who have had issues finding work in the past because of their identities. She will be working with the AFL-CIO to aid with this.

"That is something that I'm cracking the door on," Thornton said.

When asked why it is important to maintain an LGBTQ workers' union, Thornton responded in reference to her activism.

"There's the reality that nothing's going to change without going through a political platform," Thornton said. "So I'm inclined to build personal relationships and build understanding and acceptance."

Thornton said that anyone who is interested in joining Pride at Work or supports the cause, can follow the local branch's social media accounts to get started, or give them a direct call.

"We are on Facebook, as Pride at Work Michigan, and we actually encourage people to either become members or send donations," Thornton said. "Because all of the trainings and things that we do are free but we do have to pay to get into pride festivals, etc. So, if you believe in this work and you believe it is worthwhile but maybe you don't want to put yourself on the line, make a donation. Interact with us on Facebook, tell us about the issue that you are experiencing which is particularly relevant right now."

Pride at Work Michigan can be reached either by calling 313-757-5413 or by going online to gaybe.am/7B.



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Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau raises the rainbow flag over the Canadian Parliament on June 1, 2016. Canada is the latest country to join the Global Equality Fund, a U.S. public-private partnership that promotes LGBTI rights abroad. (Photo courtesy of Pam Lambo/Canadian Embassy in the U.S.)

Canada Joins Global LGBTI Rights Initiative

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

Canada is the latest country to join a U.S. initiative that seeks to promote LGBTI rights around the world.

The State Department and the Canadian government in a May 17 press release that announced Canada joined the Global Equality Fund said both countries “recognize that protecting and respecting human rights is the responsibility of all governments, and that the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons are not different or separate from the human rights of anyone else.” The press release also notes Canada’s contribution to the fund will specifically provide “emergency assistance to LGBTI persons under threat of violence.”

“Through the Global Equality Fund, like-minded governments, foundations and corporations provide support to civil society organizations working to promote the inclusion of and respect for all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or sex characteristics,” it reads.

The fund — which is a public-private partnership — have given tens of millions of dollars to LGBTI advocacy groups since its 2011 launch.

Argentina, Australia, Chile, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Uruguay are the other countries that contribute to the fund. The Arcus Foundation, the Human Rights Campaign and the Royal Bank of Canada are among the non-governmental organizations and foundations that are among the other contributors.

The announcement that Canada has joined the fund coincided with the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia that commemorates the World Health Organization’s decision to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder. The U.S. continues to promote LGBTI rights abroad, even though the Trump administration’s record on these issues domestically and its overall foreign policy has come under intense criticism.

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

Pope to Gay Sex Abuse Victim: ‘God Loves You’

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

A gay man from Chile who was sexually abused by a priest said Pope Francis told him earlier this month that God “loves you.”

Juan Carlos Cruz and two other victims of Rev. Fernando Karadima — José Murillo and James Hamilton — met with Francis at the Vatican.

Cruz, Murillo and Hamilton in a 2013 civil lawsuit accused Cardinal Ricardo Ezzati, the archbishop of the Chilean capital of Santiago and his predecessor, Cardinal Francisco Javier Errázuriz, and the Archdiocese of Santiago of covering up the abuse that took place the span of three decades.

Errázuriz and Ezzati conspired to block Cruz from being named to a sex abuse commission that Francis created. Cruz in a previous interview with the Washington Blade said Errázuriz also dismissed his allegations against Karadima, noting he is “gay and he liked it.”

“In the conversation with the pope, he said Juan Carlos, don’t worry about that,” Cruz told the Blade on Monday during a telephone interview. “God loves you. The pope loves you.”

“He said God loves me for who I am, made me like this,” added Cruz in a follow-up text message.

Cruz told the Blade that he was “super touched” by Francis’ comments to him.

“But I also don’t want to lose sight as to why I was there: To call attention to all the survivors around the world,” added Cruz. “It’s not just about me.”

Pope was ‘man of compassion and cared deeply’

Cruz is one of the hundreds of people who Karadima sexually abused in his parish in a wealthy Santiago neighborhood.

Francis in January during his trip to Chile sparked widespread outrage when he publicly defended Rev. Juan Barros, a Karadima protégé who is the bishop of the city of Osorno, and dismissed allegations that he witnessed the sex abuse and covered it up. Francis faced additional criticism over his assertion that he did not know about the allegations against Barros.

Francis in a letter he sent to all of Chile’s 31 active Catholic bishops said he made “serious errors” in the way he responded to the Karadima case.

All of the bishops offered to resign last week after they met with Francis at the Vatican. It remains unclear as to whether Francis has accepted the resignations, but Cruz said he is

“pleased” by the apparent overture.

“I’m just hoping these things move and they happen,” he told the Blade.

Cruz also reiterated his praise of Francis after their meeting.

“The (man) I met at the Vatican was a man of compassion and cared deeply,” he said. “But I hope that I am not the exception and become the norm.”

LGBTI advocates welcome Francis’ comments

The Vatican’s tone towards homosexuality and other LGBTI-specific issues has moderated under Francis’ papacy, but advocates maintain

for Catholic teaching about sexual orientation that is very different than what has been traditionally stated. If God creates us with our sexual orientation or gender identity as part of who we are, the doctrine that LGBTI people are not part of God’s plan for humanity cannot stand. We can no longer be considered ‘objectively disordered,’ and the entire theology of human identity and relationships will need to be reconsidered.”

Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, a Maryland-based group that ministers to



Juan Carlos Cruz is a gay man from Chile who met with Pope Francis earlier this month at the Vatican. Rev. Fernando Karadima, a former priest at a parish in the Chilean capital of Santiago, sexually abused Cruz and hundreds of other boys and young men over more than three decades. (Photo courtesy of Juan Carlos Cruz)

church teachings on them have not changed.

The Vatican website notes Catholic teaching says “tradition has always declared that ‘homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered,’” but gay men and lesbians “must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity.” Francis has also faced criticism over his comments against marriage rights for same-sex couples and transgender children.

Advocates this week nevertheless welcomed Francis’ comments to Cruz.

“The pope saying that God created an individual as gay goes far beyond a statement of welcome,” said Marianne Duddy-Burke, executive director of DignityUSA, a group of LGBTI Catholics. “It sets a new foundation

LGBTI Catholics, in a statement said the comments represent “a remarkable shift in official Catholic discourse on LGBT issues.”

“Instead of the more passive ‘Who am I to judge?’ the pope is expressing a much stronger affirmation of gay and lesbian people than he, or any previous pope or Vatican official, has ever done,” said DeBernardo. “Even if the words reported are exactly as the pope said them, they still do not indicate a change in official teaching, but they do represent a major change in pastoral attitude and practice.”

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

► Mara Keisling

Continued from p. 6

institutional vacuum or in a place where institutions are disintegrating.

“One of the advantages to systems and institutions breaking down and rules being rewritten is that we now have sufficient visibility and sufficient power to be part of the conversations about what’s next, and that might seem like a lot for people to bite off, but it is important for everyone to participate in what happens next. What is the system going to look like next? And that means being engaged and demanding things of your elected officials, and it means voting,” she said.

Here in Michigan specifically, Keisling said members of the LGBT community are going to have to step up and file complaints with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission following their decision on Monday, May 24 to approve a statement legally interpreting the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act’s ban on “discrimination because of ... sex” to include discrimination against sexual orientation or gender identity.

“And understand that might make them visible in ways they are uncomfortable with, but if we don’t use these tools we’ve all created, they will be taken from us,” she said. “If we do use them, we’ll be able to leverage that for more good and getting more things done. The more folks who bring legitimate cases forward, the more evidence there is for the need to pass the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act.”

And gathering evidence and data collection will help not just with passing the ELCRA, but it can help with ending things like racism, misogyny, poverty, job and health care discrimination, and violence toward trans people - which NCTE has been dedicated to doing since it was established in 2003.

“... We very much call out violence when it happens, and that’s of little consequence to the victims - we fully understand that - but we have to keep showing that it’s a real problem, a significant problem, and a fixable problem,” said Keisling. “So quantifying it is very important. Insisting that the federal government do data collection better than

they’ve been doing. They will try to weasel out of things if you can’t document that there’s a quantitative problem. And generally the federal government is the one who has to do the quantifying so forcing the government or advocating for the government to do good data collection is incredibly important.”

This will protect the LGBT community, she said, from the Trump administration, which is “attacking trans people in every way that they can.”

In just 16 months, the Trump administration has withdrawn federal guidance protecting transgender schoolchildren, employees, and homeless people. It has attempted to outlaw transgender military service, and has argued that the Affordable Care Act does not prohibit doctors and hospitals from turning away transgender patients, or insurance companies from refusing to cover gender-related treatment. This month, trans people were targeted again in the Bureau of Prisons with the rolling back of Obama-era policy allowing transgender prisoners to be placed in accordance with their gender identity. New guidelines say that prisons “will use biological sex as the initial determination” and that an inmate’s own gender identity will only be recognized for housing “in rare cases.”

“We think they will come after gay people with the same ferociousness soon,” said Keisling, who encourages members of the community to pay attention to the Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission case, which may be decided upon in June and will greatly affect the LGBT community and other social justice movements.

“Freedom of religion is extremely important in the United States, but religious freedom should be used as a shield, not a sword, and they are using it as a sword,” she said.

Recently named one of the Top 100 Most Influential People in Gender Policy by Apolitical, Keisling offers up advice for anyone who wants to step up and make a difference in their community.

“You have to stay strong and you have to stay alert and you have to be optimistic. If you do not believe things can be better, you’re not going to help make them better. So, you really have to believe that,” she said. “If you don’t believe that, get out of the way.”

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- IMAGO relationship therapy

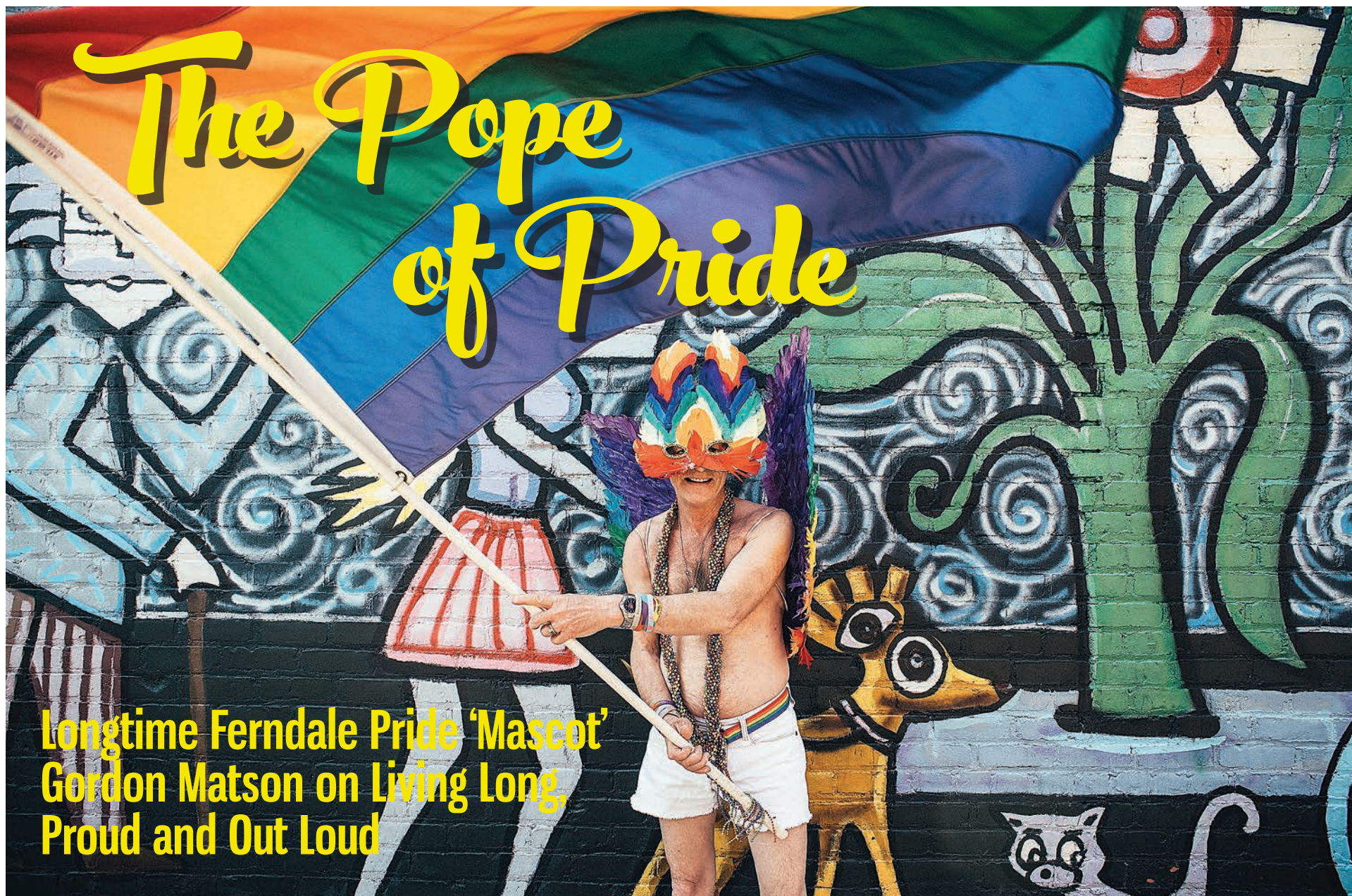


Joe Kort, Ph.D.

JoeKort.com
AND ASSOCIATES

(248) 399-7317

Royal Oak | joekort.com



BTL photos: Andrew Potter

Longtime Ferndale Pride 'Mascot' Gordon Matson on Living Long, Proud and Out Loud

BY EMELL DERRA ADOLPHUS

Whenever someone references “standing on the shoulders” of those who came before them in the fight for equality, they are talking about people like Gordon Matson. Today, it’s simply part of local tradition to witness him, ever-changing rainbow costume and all, out and proud as Ferndale’s pride mascot. However, before he could become the rainbow headdress-wearing, acceptance-spreading, veritable pope of pride, like most in his position, the Ferndale native spent a large portion of his formative years in the closet.

“Because you didn’t talk about those things back then,” he explained. “Ferndale was a lot different back then.”

The “back then” Matson referenced was the ‘60s and early ‘70s.

In part not knowing how to go about coming out, or how his parents would react, Matson put off coming out until after he finished high school in 1977. He still remembers the talk he had with his mother at the Ferndale Elks

Lodge, where he continues to be a regular member.

“We hugged each other, cried and she said, ‘Don’t you worry about a thing because your father and I will back you 100 percent, whatever you decide to do. Back then that was, like, unheard of,’” said Gordon, who was 18 years old at the time.

Now, on the cusp of 60 and soon to be married to his fiancé, Timothy, Matson can appreciate how that early acceptance from his parents helped him develop the confidence to live his life boldly and openly, and inspiring many others in the process. And part of the reason Matson’s reach is so great each year, is that Ferndale Pride has been steadily growing in size since its inception years ago and this year’s is no exception.

This year’s Ferndale Pride is on Saturday, June 2, and it marks the largest pride the city has hosted since 2011, with more than 160 vendors. The whole festival will stretch almost entirely from Woodward Avenue to Livernois.

“And everything is sold out,” said Matson. “Every inch of 9 Mile is sold out,” due in large

part to the volunteers and personalities that make this street fair special.

And Matson, as most mascots should, has no shortage of personality. When he met with BTL, though he wasn’t in his LGBTQ-themed papal wear, the recently Home Depot-retired Matson was wearing a shirt that says “Homo Deport.” He giggled over the play on words and laughed like a school boy with a secret. The rest of his outfit complemented his bold shirt, with shorts that day that were accented with a rainbow belt and wrists that were festooned with rubber bracelets, displaying sayings like, “Just be you” and, “Erase hate.” Each of these were from past pride campaigns.

Matson’s love of all things rainbow is symbolically tied to his self-expression, he said. “I wear it because I can, and it’s my expression of who I am,” he said. “That’s just me.”

When asked about how he got his role, he said that he was officially christened with it seven years ago, but not because he sought it out.

“It was just something that happened and I

kind of fell into it,” he said.

And as he fell, he happened to make a big splash – even from day one.

During his first pride, Matson marked the occasion in a rainbow toga and carried a pride flag attached to a 10-foot pole. Since then, he’s added a rainbow mask, hair and a Tiki skirt to his rotating looks. Matson also said that when he first started creating his mascot costumes he said he began to feel a sense of acceptance that he had never felt before, despite his regularly bold, out lifestyle.

“It was a release that you can be who you were without being pressured by peers. You’d be yourself and you didn’t have to worry about what anybody else said. It was freedom of expression,” said Matson. “(That was what) started the out pride movement, the outreach to the people outside that were here and normalizing LGBTQ people.”

And as open and free as Ferndale Pride is today, Matson said that he still remembers Ferndale’s political environment of the

See Pope of Pride, page 34

Ferndale Pride is Back and Bigger than Ever

Magic, Mysticism and More Abound at Ferndale's Candle Wick Shoppe

BY DREW HOWARD

With a larger festival footprint, 40 percent more booths, as well as new initiatives to support the asexual and intersex communities, Ferndale Pride 2018 is looking to be an even bigger celebration than years past.

Ferndale Pride's main event, the street fair, runs on Saturday, June 2, from 1 to 10 p.m. and is set to feature more than 150 vendors offering a variety of food, beverages and goods. Attendees are encouraged to check out downtown businesses throughout the weekend for special Pride promotions and deals.

The festival's larger footprint, which now covers West Nine Mile Road between Woodward and Livernois as well as portions of Planavon and Allen streets, allows for even more activities. Julia Music, chair of Ferndale Pride, says there will be an expanded children's area sponsored by Blue Care Network of Michigan, complete with a rock climbing wall and supplies for children to construct their own masks.

Ferndale Pride organizers are also creating more space for the asexual and intersex communities, Music told BTL.

"For the last several years we have been

saying 'LGBTQIA,' but we never had people from the 'A' & 'I' group representing," Music said. "We now have booths representing both intersex and asexual people."

"These communities are often overlooked in Pride festivals, so we've worked hard to make connections and to make sure they feel welcome," Music added.

The festival will honor both communities by waving their respective flags, Music said, in addition to hosting a balloon launch in honor of the asexual community.

Live entertainment will be available on two separate stages this year: The Motor City Main Stage and the Genisys Credit Union DJ Dance Stage. Notable billings across the two stages include a live wedding ceremony, a performance from singer-songwriter Chastity Brown, a fire-twirling show, as well as the "Drag Me to Pride" drag show.

This year's naming sponsor of Ferndale Pride is the Candle Wick Shoppe, a small business in Ferndale celebrating nearly 10 years of tarot card readings, Reiki healings, spiritual cleansings and much more.

Music said the small business owners have gone above just throwing money at the

See Ferndale Pride Bigger, page 27



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**GRAND RAPIDS
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JUNE 9

Motor City Pride

Hart Plaza, Detroit
motorcitypride.org

JUNE 10

Dykes on Bikes Motor City Pride Ride

Lineup starts at 10 a.m.
dykesonbikesdetroit.org

Motor City Pride Parade

11 a.m.
www.motorcitypride.org
This year's parade is themed "Stronger Together" as the state of Michigan comes together as a community.

Motor City Pride Festival

12-7 p.m.
Hart Plaza, Detroit
www.motorcitypride.org
Cover: \$5

SUMMER PRIDE CALENDAR

MAY 31-JUNE 11

"Company"

8 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays & Mondays;
5 p.m. on June 3 & 10
The Ringwald Theatre
22742 Woodward Ave., Ferndale
Tickets: \$25 on Fridays & Saturdays; \$20 on Sundays; \$10 on Mondays
theringwald.com

JUNE 1

2nd Annual Ypsi Pride

6-10 p.m.
S. Washington St.
facebook.com/YpsiPride/

Catfight for the Crown

8-11 p.m.
Hosted by the Ruth Ellis Center
The Fillmore Detroit
2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit
Project Beautiful - Inside & Out, Catfight is an elaborate, "tongue in cheek" drag show "beauty" pageant that features amateur drag performers as contestants fighting for the title of Miss Kitty.
ruthelliscenter.org

JUNE 1-3

Ferndale Pride Birthday Weekend

4-10 p.m.
Axle Brewing Co.
567 Livernois Street, Ferndale
Expect new beers, a throwback food menu, outdoor beer drinking, raffles, giveaways and more.

JUNE 2

6th Annual 5K Rainbow Run

10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Presented by the Ferndale Chamber of Commerce
All participants will receive a pair of Michigan made rainbow socks featuring the rainbow, trans, or asexual pride colors. Portion of the proceeds to benefit Ferndale Pride.
ferndaleareachamber.com

Ferndale Pride

Begins at 1 p.m..
facebook.com/ferndalepride

JUNE 3-4

A Drag Race Elaganza

Slipstream Theatre
460 Hilton Road, Ferndale
313-986-9156 or insidetheslipstream@gmail.com
To kick off Pride month, Slipstream offers a two-day only extravaganza of the community's favorite Drag Race stars. Celebrate Pride with the queens that own it.
slipstreamti.com

JUNE 8

Kalamazoo Pride

6 p.m.
Arcadia Creek Festival Site, Kalamazoo
facebook.com/KalamazooPride/

JUNE 9

Motor City Pride Festival

Hart Plaza, Detroit
motorcitypride.org

Drippin' In Denim

9 p.m. - 2 a.m.
Studio 51
1995 Woodbridge, Detroit
\$10 before 10 p.m.; Geminis 1/2 off all night
Attire: Sexy denim, 21+
A Motor City Pride celebration of M. Diddy's birthday and Star Statuz Ent. 10-year reunion

11th Annual Pride Ball: "Magical Mischief"

7:30 p.m.
The Majestic Theater
4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit
Contact Keith at 313-446-9800 or khughes@miunified.org
statussexy.com/pride-ball
Free entry; Hosted by Unified - HIV Health & Beyond to bring greater visibility and strengthen the relationships with Ball Scene members to help guide them to obtain optimal health.

CONTINUED PAGE 20

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PRIDE

LOVE WHO YOU ARE

Friday, June 8th

6pm-12:30am

Saturday, June 9th

2pm-12:30am

Arcadia Creek Festival Place
Downtown Kalamazoo

.....
Kalamazoo Pride is a fundraising event for OutFront Kalamazoo. Visit our website for program information, news, events and resources. www.outfrontkzoo.org



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FROM *AMERICA'S GOT TALENT* TO ROCK YOUR HEART OUT:

BRODY RAY

CHICAGO'S ALL-GIRL COVER BAND PLAYING ALL YOUR FAVES:

CATFIGHT

SEASON 4 WINNER

OF *RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE*:

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www.dpmcc.net

Sunday Worship time is now 9:30 A.M.



For many LGBTQ southeast Michiganders, Ferndale pride is a must-see when celebrating throughout the month of June. This year, the Affirmations LGBTQ community center is hosting its own miniature Ferndale pride in-house to provide Affirmations programming that goes hand-in-hand with the set Ferndale lineup. Events will go on from Thursday, May 31 through Saturday, June 2. Events will include everything from a youth drop-in to a men's discussion group.

More information about each scheduled activity can be found online by going to goaffirmations.org, or by calling 248-398-7105. Affirmations is located at 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. A full list and times can be found here:

Affirmations Hosts Ferndale Pride Week

Affirmations Groups

Thursday, May 31
NA Regardless of ...
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Friday, June 1
AA Brownbaggers
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Youth Drop-in (Ages
13-20)
4 to 9 p.m.

Recess Cafe
4 to 8 p.m.

Saturday, June 2
Coming Out Over Coffee
10:30 a.m. to noon

SMART Recovery
10 to 11 a.m.

Recess Cafe
11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

HIV/STI Testing (Matrix)
1 to 3 p.m.
AA Brownbaggers
1:30 to 3 p.m.

Men's Discussion Group
6 to 8 p.m.

Pride Events

Thursday, May 31
Water is Life, Water for
Flint
9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Finding Our Strength
Research Exhibition by
Transcend the Binary
5 to 8 p.m.

Pride Weekend Kick
Off at Axle Brewing
Company
6 to 10 p.m.

Friday, June 1
Moon 1 Luv Featuring
Erica Carter
6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 2
Interfaith Fellowship
Service
10 a.m. to Noon

AFF Groups Meet &
Greet
11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Talk Saves Lives: Suicide
Prevention
1 to 2:30 p.m.

Hepatitis A Vaccinations
with OCHD
1 to 5 p.m.

HIV/STI Testing with
Unified
4 to 6 p.m.

A Mystery Most Queer
(Ages 13 to 20 Only) A
Youth Prom Experience
6 to 8 p.m.

CONTINUED FROM 18

Kalamazoo Pride

2 p.m.
Arcadia Creek Festival Site,
Kalamazoo
facebook.com/KalamazooPride/

12th Annual Motor City "Bears in Speedos" Car Wash

11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Level One Bank
22635 Woodward Ave., Ferndale
The Bears will be washing cars,
truck, bikes, scooters and even a
roller blade or two. A portion of the
proceeds to benefit the Ruth Ellis
Center and Affirmations.
facebook.com/motorcitybears/

Grosse Pointe Pride

9:30 a.m.
Grosse Pointe South High School
11 Grosse Pointe Blvd., Grosse Pointe
Farms
We GP's family friendly LGBTQ Pride
March. There will be face painting,
choirs, food trucks and a big banner
to sign. We GP is sharing proceeds
with the Ruth Ellis Center.
facebook.com/gppride

JUNE 10

Motor City Pride Festival and Parade

Hart Plaza, Detroit
motorcitypride.org

JUNE 15

Pride Night

6-9:30 p.m.
Homer Stryker Field
251 Mills Street, Kalamazoo
A tailgate party that includes all-
inclusive food and drink, and three
beers. Use the code "kzoopride,"
to purchase tickets. Proceeds will
benefit OutFront Kalamazoo. The
first 100 people through the gates
will receive rainbow swag from Bell's
Brewery, and Sparkleberry will be on
tap. Stick around for fireworks after
the game.
facebook.com/KalamazooPride/

JUNE 15-JULY 8

"St. Sebastian"

Slipstream Theatre
460 Hilton Road, Ferndale
313-986-9156 or
insidetheslipstream@gmail.com
Fridays & Saturdays, 7 p.m.; Sundays,
8 p.m.
Tickets: \$12
slipstreamti.com

JUNE 16

Sing Out Detroit Presents: Encore

7 p.m.
Ferndale High School
881 Pinecrest Drive, Ferndale
Celebrate 10 years of music in the
making
facebook.com/groups/singoutdetroit/
about

30th Annual Grand Rapids Pride Festival

12 p.m. - 10 p.m.
Calder Plaza (La Grand Vitesse)
300 Ottawa Ave NW, Grand Rapids
facebook.com/grpridefest/
Festival Headliner Betty Who
facebook.com/gppride

Michigan Pride

Old Town Lansing
1232 Turner St, Lansing
facebook.com/MichiganPride

Lake Effect Pride

7-10 p.m.
Four Winds Casinos
11111 Wilson Road, New Buffalo
facebook.
comevents/178847742737490

CONTINUED PAGE 22

Fire Performer to Heat Up Ferndale Pride



BY JASON A. MICHAEL

A plethora of performers will keep people entertained during Ferndale Pride on June 2, but no one will be hotter than Alexa Rae.

“I do fire breathing and fire eating,” said Rae, who will manipulate fire at 9:30 p.m. on the Genisys Credit Union DJ Dance Stage. “I also do fire contact staff, which is like with a staff that’s lit on both ends. So I roll the staff over my body. And then fire fans. They have five wicks, and they look like a fan you could fan yourself with them, but they’re metal, and they have wicks on the end. Then you spin them or make shapes with them.”

How does one get into such a trade? In Rae’s case, she stumbled into it.

“One of my ex-partners, she was very much into the fire-spinning thing,” Rae recalled. “I went to support her and I ended up falling more in love with it than

she was. I did competitive cheerleading for four years in high school. So when I found circus and fire—I do more than just the fire stuff—I was able to tap into that, the competitive aspect and the routines and performing in general.”

Rae learned the art of fire performing in part from the Detroit Fire Collective.

“I studied there a little bit,” she said. “That’s when I first began to play with fire on a weekly basis. They meet on Mondays. But also, I kind of immediately fell in love with it and I found other friends who did it and we’d go to each other’s houses.”

But Rae’s enthusiasm was at times risky and came with a price.

“Obviously, you don’t just go into fire hooping,” said Rae. “You need to learn how to hoola hoop. I kind of did everything backwards. I saw fire and I was like, ‘This is it. I want to play with it.’ Then I learned how to do the other things because it was fascinating.”

Now Rae is such a professional fire performer that she’s even insured.

“If you want to get better gigs you have to get insured,” Rae said. “It’s specialty insurance. It’s \$300 to 400 a year. A lot of corporate gigs will require you have insurance.”

Behind the Flames

If Rae’s professional life sounds fascinating, there’s more to her than just fire.

“I call myself an experience creator,” she said. “My business is called Alexa Rae Creates.”

Rae has worked as a festival coordinator and organizer for such festivals as Kinetic Fire and the Great Lakes Flow Festival. She’s also worked at the Electric Forest and the Theater Bizarre.

“Theater Bizarre is very special to me,” said Rae. “You get to tap into a dark side that everyone has but you don’t always get to see it. So with Theater Bizarre I get to get in there and be a deep, dark character which is fun.”

As if all that weren’t enough, Rae’s muggle job, as she calls it, is bartending.

“I’m a TIPS certified bartender,” she said. “I am proud to work at Danny’s Irish Pub and Pop’s for Italian.”

When she’s not doing any of the above, Rae spends a lot of time messing around with Mary Jane. That’s not a euphemism for marijuana, but rather the name of her pit bull/sharpei mix.

“She is going to be 10 years old on June 1,” said Rae. “She sounds like a pig. She snorts like a pig when she talks. She snores louder than any human you can imagine. I have to put her under the covers to sleep with her. Otherwise I couldn’t sleep with her.”

Mary Jane aside, Rae has a love for people—especially creative ones.

“I just love to watch people’s brains work,” she said. “Seeing someone get so creative and learning and taking their training and having dedication is super sexy. I love seeing how every person has a sort of different type of creativity. But seeing people tap into it is super sexy.”

In all that she does, Rae said she strives to take a positive approach.

“I hope to lead with love in all areas of my life,” Rae said. “And then sprinkle it with a little sass.”

Check out Alexa Rae online at facebook.com/AlexaXORae or facebook.com/AlexaRaeCreates/. Visit ferndalepride.com for event information.

DJ CoolkidSue Makes Ferndale Pride Debut

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

DJ CoolkidSue calls herself a “rebel,” a “blast” and a “party animal.” All of which make her a perfect fit to perform at this year’s Ferndale Pride at 4:15 p.m. on June 2 on the Genisys Credit Union DJ Dance Stage.

“I’m down for anything that promotes the LGBT culture as a whole, even if you’re not in the LGBT culture, you just support it,” she said. “It’s just having a moment where everyone can come together and be positive and showcase differences, but everyone’s just together. That’s why I’m really excited to be able to showcase my talent to everyone who’s coming as well as celebrating everyone’s individuality who’s coming. So that’s what Pride means to me and why I’m really excited to be a part of it this year.”

Her talent is DJing—something she taught herself to do at a young age. She grew up on Detroit’s east side as SueNeko Carmichaels, but her nickname stuck.

“It’s just always been CoolkidSue... once I became a DJ I didn’t feel the need to change it,” she said. “I wouldn’t say I’m the coolest, but I try to be involved in the world enough to be cool.”

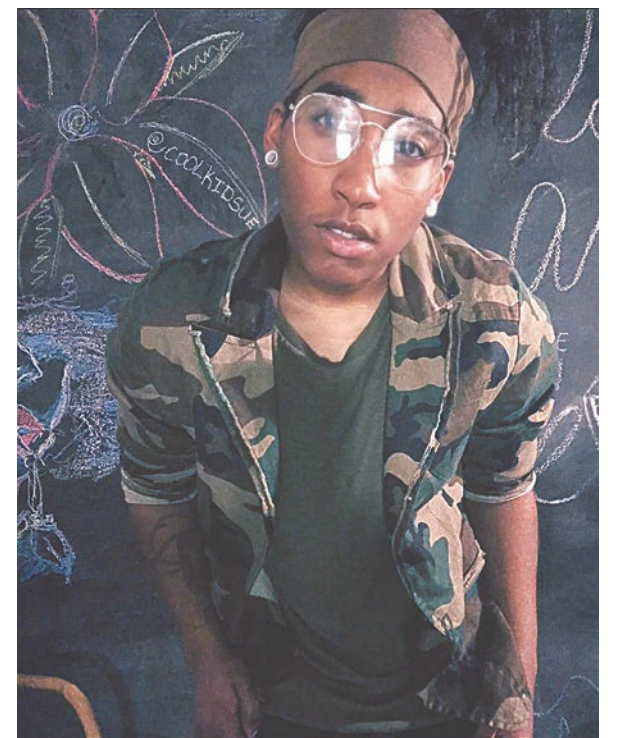
CoolkidSue graduated from Walled Lake Western High School and briefly went to Wayne State University to study graphic design. But she couldn’t stop thinking about music.

“Always, at every party, I had the best music,” she said. “My phone always ended up on the auxiliary cord or my playlist was played. Then last June I was like, ‘I think this is what I want to do.’ So I saved money to buy a deck. And from that day I was like, ‘Wow! This is fun.’ That’s how I got into DJing. I didn’t grow up around DJs. But I just got into it and so far it’s working for me.”

Her music is a mix of trap and pop. It’s similar to DJ Jazzy Jeff, one of her favorite DJs.

“He’s really good at playing multiple genres at one

Continued on pg. 32



CONTINUED FROM 20

JUNE 18-24

Up North Pride

facebook.com/upnorthpride/

JUNE 23

8th Annual Flint Pride

2-8 p.m.

Riverbank Park, Downtown Flint

facebook.com/FLINTGAYPRIDE

JUNE 23

Holland Pride

12-5 p.m.

Centennial Park

250 Central Ave., Holland

7-11 p.m.

Park Theatre

248 S. River Ave., Holland

facebook.com/outonthelakeshore

JUNE 27

National HIV Testing Day

Visit pridesource.com/directory.html, pridesource.com/calendar.html to find testing events in your area.

JUNE 30

Great Lakes Bay Pride

12-4 p.m.

Wenonah Park, 800 N. Water Street
Bay City

facebook.com/greatlakesbaypride

JULY 12

Kick-Off Movie

6:30 p.m.

Battle Creek Pride

First Congregational Church Cinema Room

145 Capital Ave. NE, Battle Creek

battlecreekpride.org

JULY 13

Blessing of the Bikes

5:30 p.m.

Battle Creek Pride

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

16 E. Van Buren Street, Battle Creek

battlecreekpride.org

3rd Annual Battle Creek Pride Parade

7 p.m.

Downtown, Battle Creek

Followed by a post-parade variety show at Wave Park.

battlecreekpride.org

'Casa Valentina' at JET

West Bloomfield's Jewish Ensemble Theatre will be putting on a production of Harvey Fierstein's Tony Award-Winning 'Casa Valentina'. The play opens on May 24 and runs through June 17. It follows the lives of women named Miranda, Bessie, Valentina, Charlotte, Gloria, Terry and Amy who meet regularly at their favorite vacation spot in the Catskills.

The group of seven aren't cisgender women however, their given names are Jonathon, Albert, George, Isadore, Michael, Theodore and one simply referred to as The Judge.

However, the show isn't about a group of transgender women, it focuses on the fact that the resort the visit caters to straight men who secretly love to dress as women. Trouble brews when their comfort zones are pushed to limit when a newcomer attempts to change



the longstanding rules of the resort. Among the cast are actors Joe Bailey, Vince Kelley, Charles VanHoose and many more. Some of the cast are also Ringwald Theatre regulars. Show tickets start at \$16 and a full schedule can be found online at jettheatre.org, or by calling 248-788-2900. The show will be held at the Aaron Deroy Theatre at the Jewish Community Center which is located at 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield.

JULY 14

Battle Creek's Pride Festival

11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

McCarnly Park

10 N. Washington Ave., Downtown Battle Creek

battlecreekpride.org

Battle Creek's Exclusive "Pride Bash"

8 p.m. - 2 a.m.

Partners Bar (Battle Creek's only LGBTQ bar)

910 North Ave., Battle Creek

battlecreekpride.org

JULY 15

Pride Brunch Buffet

1 p.m.

Battle Creek Pride

Clara's on the River

44 McCarnly Street North, Battle Creek

Battle Creek

claras.com or battlecreekpride.org

JULY 16

Candlelight Vigil

9 p.m.

Battle Creek Pride

Sojourner Truth Monument

2-14 E Michigan Ave., Battle Creek

Battle Creek

battlecreekpride.org

JULY 20-AUGUST 5

'Lost in 3 Pines'

Slipstream Theatre

460 Hilton Road, Ferndale

313-986-9156 or insidetheslipstream@gmail.com

Fridays & Saturdays, 7 p.m.; Sundays, 8 p.m.

Tickets: \$12

slipstreamti.com

JULY 24

Candlelight Vigil

6 p.m.

Hotter Than July

Palmer Park, Detroit

facebook.com/DetroitHTJ

JULY 25

Opening Party

5 p.m.

Hotter Than July

Woodward Bar & Grill, Detroit

facebook.com/DetroitHTJ/

JULY 26

Fine Art Reception

6 p.m.

Hotter Than July

facebook.com/DetroitHTJ/

JULY 27

Gathering on LGBTQ Issues

9 a.m.

Hotter Than July

facebook.com/DetroitHTJ/

JULY 28

Palmer Park Picnic

11 a.m.

Palmer Park, Detroit

facebook.com/DetroitHTJ

AUGUST 3-5

Ann Arbor Pride (formerly known as OUTFest)

All proceeds go to helping support the efforts of the Jim Toy Community Center. annarborpride.com

AUGUST 11

Transgender Pride in the Park

12-6 p.m.

Donald Red Geary Park

Earle Blvd. at Pinecrest, Ferndale

Celebrating the 52nd anniversary of the Compton's Cafeteria Riot.

transgendermichigan.org



Hotter Than July returns. Learn about all the events at facebook.com/DetroitHTJ



JUNE 9 & 10, 2018 · HART PLAZA, DETROIT

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PRIDE

FESTIVAL & PARADE



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JUNE 9-10, 2018
DETROIT

FESTIVAL AND PARADE

SAT. 1-9PM • SUN. NOON-7PM

PARADE NOON, SUN. JUNE 10

www.motorcitypride.org

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Pride Stage



Sat. June 9, 2018

- 12:30 PM DJ Lena
- 1:00 PM Furillostar
- 2:00 PM Vigil and Out-Loud Music Chorus
- 3:00 PM Little Animal
- 4:00 PM Sabin Drag Revue
- 5:00 PM Posh Hammer
- 6:00 PM SIAS
- 7:00 PM Tiffany
- 8:00 PM Haute To Death

Sun. June 10, 2018

- 12:00 PM DJ Marquis
- 1:00 PM Sing-Out Detroit
- 2:00 PM Citizen Jane
- 3:00 PM Killer Flamingos
- 4:00 PM Martha Reeves & the Vandellas
- 5:00 PM Taina Asili
- 6:00 PM DJ John 'Jammin' Collins



MARTHA REEVES

Festival Stage

Sat. June 9, 2018

- 1:30 PM The Real Truck N
- 2:30 PM Perry Holmes
- 3:30 PM Acoustic Ash
- 4:30 PM Brad Bowen
- 5:30 PM NWOYE
- 6:30 PM Ladysee
- 7:30 PM LVRS

Sun. June 10, 2018

- 1:30 PM Matt Wixson's Flying Circus
- 2:30 PM Paisley Fields
- 3:30 PM I'm With Molly
- 4:30 PM Dirk Kroll Band
- 5:30 PM The Band Mint

Underground

Sat. June 9, 2018

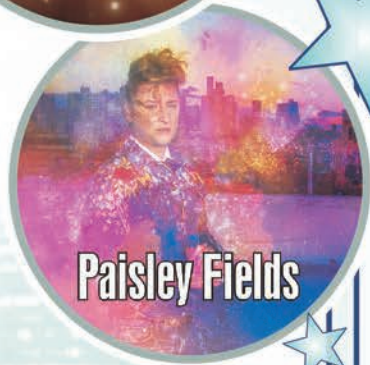
- 1:00 PM DJ COOLKIDSUE
- 2:00 PM Nader
- 3:00 PM DJ Knowledge
- 4:00 PM The Perry Wayne
- 5:00 PM DJ Tom T
- 6:00 PM DJ DigiMark
- 7:00 PM DJ Jace
- 8:00 PM DVJ Mark

Sun. June 10, 2018

- 1:00 PM DVJ Mark
- 2:00 PM DJ Holographic
- 3:00 PM DJ Tylr
- 4:00 PM DJ Lena
- 5:00 PM TBA
- 6:00 PM Marquis

Schedules are

Stage



Pyramid Stage

Sat. June 9, 2018

- 1:30 PM King Scooby
- 2:00 PM 666 Chainz
- 2:30 PM Kool Breed
- 3:00 PM Chenelle Evens
- 3:30 PM Jharid
- 4:30 PM Ku-Laid
- 5:30 PM Philly Fal 313
- 6:00 PM KO DA D.O.N
- 6:30 PM Kitty Delicious | Queer Burlesque

Sun. June 10, 2018

- 1:30 PM Mike Nelson
- 2:30 PM Eric Donte
- 3:30 PM James Taylor Jr.
- 4:30 PM Crystal Harding's Drag



MOTOR CITY PRIDE PARADE

Presented by FIAT
Sunday, June 10th
Starts at Noon

Starts at the corner of Fort & Griswold



Thank you to our sponsors:



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SATURDAY

Welcome Gates Open at 1:00pm

1:00pm - 8:00pm Festival Events

Five Stages of Entertainment Featuring over 150 Artists
(Please visit the Stage Schedules that are printed in this Guide)

Over 130 Sponsors, Vendors, Non-Profits & Food Booths
Thousands of LGBTQ+ people coming together for Equality

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---------------------------|
| 2:00pm
Vigil for victims of LGBTQ violence | 1:00pm-5:00pm
Family Area, with youth activities & games | 8:00pm
Entrances Close
<small>(No Admittance or Re-Admittance after 8:00pm)</small> | 9:00pm
Festival Closes |
|---|---|---|---------------------------|

\$5.00 cover for everyone over 12 years of age

SUNDAY

Welcome Gates Open at Noon

Noon - 7:00pm Festival Events

Five Stages of Entertainment Featuring over 150 Artists
(Please visit the Stage Schedules that are printed in this Guide)

Over 120 Sponsors, Vendors, Non-Profits & Food Booths
Thousands of LGBTQ+ people coming together for Equality

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------|
| Noon
Parade Sponsored by Fiat | 1:00pm-5:00pm
Family Area, with youth activities & games | 6:00pm
Entrances Close
<small>(No Admittance or Re-Admittance after 8:00pm)</small> | 7:00pm
Festival Closes |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------|

\$5.00 cover for everyone over 12 years of age

subject to change. Check the website www.motorcitypride.org for any last minute updates.



PARADE MAP SUNDAY AT NOON!




FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Saturday, June 9th
1:00PM - 5:00PM

&

Sunday, June 10th
1:00PM - 5:00PM

Join other families as they participate in face painting, arts & crafts and much more!

Let's show the world together!

► Ferndale Pride Bigger

Continued from p. 17

event. “They are beyond just great financial givers, as they’ve also stepped up to the plate to make things easier,” Music said. “Jackie Smith, who is one of the owners, has done a tremendous amount of volunteering for Pride. And her husband does IT work for the event. He’s contributed hundreds of hours of work.”

“For a really small business to get involved at this level is unbelievable ... they’re great people,” Music added.

Located at 175 W. 9 Mile Road in Ferndale, The Candle Wick Shoppe invites patrons to embrace all-things supernatural and fantastical. While the storefront is recognized for its wide offerings of spiritual counseling and cleansing services, it might just be best known for its selection of handcrafted “intention” candles.

“An intention candle is mixed with different herbs and oils, and each candle has its own intention blessed into it,” Patrick Vincent, store manager, told BTL. “We have a spiritual cleansing candle to cleanse the home, attraction candles to bring people to you, as well as Adam & Eve, Adam & Steve and Alice & Eve candles for couples to stay together.”

Intention candles are handcrafted at Coventry Creations, located in Ferndale and run by sister-duo Jacky Smith and Patty Shaw. Together, Smith and Shaw create candles designed to strengthen emotional balance, quiet the mind, ensure victory and success and manifest desires – among other things.

“What we create is the vibration that your intention will match, empowering you to unlock the magic that you already hold inside,” Shaw said on the Coventry Creations website. “You are the ultimate magic maker in your own life. Coventry products give you that nudge to get you out of your personal short circuiting and begin healing.”

The Candle Wick Shoppe is also the home of the Reiki Healing Center, a method by which “universal light and love” brings healing and balance to the body, emotions, mind and spirit.

“Reiki is kind of a like a massage, but without being touched,” Vincent said. “It’s all through energies and the practitioner’s own energy. People come in for aches and pains to balance their inner selves.”

Individuals “born with the gift of relaying messages of spirits” help facilitate the storefront Reiki treatments, Vincent told BTL, as well as the tarot and psychic readings. He added that the store is in the process of increasing such services to compete with their popular intentional candles.

While The Candle Wick Shoppe has been involved in Ferndale Pride in years past, Vincent said the upcoming 2018 celebration

marks the first time the shop has officially sponsored the event. He added that store leadership has always made a point of supporting the LGBTQ community throughout the years, most notably through their diversity in employees.

“This is my first year as a manager here,” Vincent said. “As a gay man working here, I really enjoy knowing that the owners of the company support me and what I do.”

“I have a very diverse staff as well,” he added. “We’re a total melting pot – I want it to be a safe space for people working here and being who they are.”



The Candlewick Shoppe is just one of many local establishments lending its services to Ferndale Pride, Music said, as places like Affirmations, Dino’s Lounge, Otus Supply, Rosie O’Grady’s and Level One Bank will host additional Pride-related events throughout the weekend.

Events

Notable events scheduled in support of Ferndale Pride include, but are not limited to:

- 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday, May 31 – Water is Life, Water for Flint collection. Bring water donations to Affirmations.

- 4 to 6 p.m. Saturday, June 2 – Free confidential/anonymous HIV testing with Unified at Affirmations.

- 6 to 8 p.m. Saturday, June 2 – A Mystery Most Queer: A Youth Prom Experience for ages 13 to 20 at Affirmations.

- 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, June 9 – 12th annual Bears in Speedos Car Wash in the parking lot at Level One Bank, 22635 Woodward Ave. Get your car washed by Detroit’s Motor City Bears dressed only in Speedos. All profits benefit Affirmations and the Ruth Ellis Center.

- 1 p.m. & 3 p.m. Sunday, June 3 – Rosie O’Grady’s Drag Brunch, 279 W. Nine Mile Road.

For a complete listing of events, or for details on becoming a sponsor or volunteer, visit ferndalepride.com

MICHIGAN PRIDE

June 16, 2018

Saturday Festival

\$10 Featuring:



Emma Sapphire



StarFarm

f Michigan Pride



FRIDAY
WHITE PARTY
7PM - CLOSE

\$10 Wristband for entry to all three bars:

Spiral Dancing

Esquire Lowkey Awesome

Sir Pizza Dancing, Food & Full Bar

SATURDAY

PARADE
12-12:30PM
Adado Riverfront Park > Capitol

RALLY
12:30PM
State Capitol Lawn

FESTIVAL
12-10PM
Old Town Lansing

Grosse Pointe to Host 2nd Annual Grosse Pointe Pride March

BY BTL STAFF

All are welcome at the second annual Grosse Pointe Pride March to be held on Saturday, June 9, starting at 9:30 a.m. It will be in conjunction with National Pride month and hundreds of cities across the nation hosting their own marches and events. The objective is to raise awareness and show support for the LGTBQ community within Grosse Pointe as well as those who are considering the area for shopping, dining, recreation and living.

Attendees are invited to start gathering for the family friendly march at its start in the Grosse Pointe South High School "J" parking lot along Fisher Road. The march will proceed along Kercheval Avenue to Maire Elementary School. Before the march begins, Pride merchandise will be available for purchase and family friendly activities will be offered, including face painting. The event will conclude with a brief rally in the



Last year Grosse Pointe held its first annual Pride march and will return on Saturday, June 9 starting at 9:30. Photo courtesy of Daymon J. Hart.

Maire Elementary School parking lot at 11 a.m., which will feature food trucks and a performance by a community choir.

Last year's inaugural Grosse Pointe Pride March was "an overwhelming success," according to organizers, with more than 1,000 community members and families attending to march, gather and show support for their friends and neighbors.

"We were so thrilled with the turnout last year and the positive impact it had on our community, it was not even a question of whether we would make this an annual Grosse

Pointe tradition," said Andrea Joy, We GP LGTBQA Task Force leader. "Once again, we have a diverse and far-reaching committee of volunteers, including students from the local schools, who have been working to organize the event and we are looking forward to seeing another great show of support from the Grosse Pointe community. It will be a very positive, fun and family-friendly day for everyone."

This proceeds from this year's event will benefit the Ruth Ellis Center in Highland Park, whose mission is to provide short- and long-term residential safe space and support services for runaway, homeless and at-risk lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. Mark Erwin-McCormick, director of development and advancement for the Ruth Ellis Center will speak at the rally after the march.

"We are still living in a world where almost half of all LGBT youth do not feel safe in their communities and where LGBT youth are twice as likely to be physically assaulted in school," said Joy. "An organization such as the Ruth Ellis Center is such an important refuge for our at-risk youth and its guiding principles and mission are perfectly in line with Welcoming Everyone Grosse Pointe. We are so pleased to be able to support them with this event."

Also new this year is the community choir performance, which will be a highlight of the rally at the conclusion of the march. Community members who are interested in being a part of the choir, or help with the march in any way, should contact We GP through the its website: we-gp.org or its Facebook page listed as Grosse Pointe Pride March by We GP.

We GP is organizing several other events in support of Grosse Pointe Pride, including a Pride yoga class at Full Lotus Yoga in Grosse Pointe Woods on Friday, June 1, at 6 p.m. and a Paint & Sip party at Posterity Gallery in Grosse Pointe on the same day as the march at 4 p.m. All proceeds from this event will benefit We GP and the Ruth Ellis Center.

Grosse Pointe Pride March is proud to announce that there are 34 local sponsors of the event, including the following Gold Level

sponsors: O'Flaherty's Irish Bar, Park Grill Mediterranean, Posterity Framing & Printing, Soif de and steinerprinting.com.

Ypsi Pride Block Party Doubles Local Entertainment 2nd Year in a Row

Ypsi Pride is set to host their second annual block party in Downtown Ypsilanti on Friday, June 1. Ypsi Pride, a program of First Fridays Ypsilanti, brings two stages of lively, family-friendly local entertainment, a children's area, outdoor beer gardens, food trucks, vendors and organizations to the North and South Washington Street blocks in Ypsilanti.

Pride flags will be coloring the streets, setting the backdrop for an evening of fun and entertainment for all. Ypsi Pride aspires to unite the people of Ypsilanti through a celebration of LGBTQ culture by reaffirming their visibility and inclusivity across this community.

Kayj Michelle, co-chair of the Ypsi Pride planning committee, said that she's "stoked for the program expansion down South Washington Street, and the new partnerships" that have helped pride expand to the two-block festival that it has now become.

The two stages, hosted by local drag queens Tedi Rhinestone and Maxi Chanel, are scheduled

with local musicians, drag and burlesque artists and dancers. The Market Stage on South Washington at the Ypsilanti Farmers Marketplace boasts the talents of local drag artists and musicians, alongside a beer garden by Cultivate Coffee & TapHouse and Bell's Brewery. The Pearl Stage on North Washington is booked with entertainment including local folk music artist Kate Peterson, Kitty Delicious Queer Burlesque, drag artists and festival headliner and local funk band: The Register Project.

While festival attendees enjoy both blocks of entertainment, available also will be activities, vendors and food. Children's activities will take place on both blocks, with a children's activity area sponsored by Elements Preschool on South Washington. Vendors and local organizations will be lined up along blocks, and a variety of food trucks and vendors will have food for sale. The Ypsi Pride block party will be directly followed by a 21+ after party at Bona Sera Restaurant.

For more information, please see the Ypsi Pride social media @YpsiPride, or contact co-chair Elize Jakobson via email at elize@firstfridaysypi.com. Events will be happening on both N. and S. Washington St., on Friday, June 1.

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Her partner, Karen
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‘Dip’ and Drag in Days Gone By

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

An auspicious year for female impersonators and those in Detroit’s transgender community was 1927. In that year Mae West’s play “The Drag,” written under her pen name Jane Mast, opened with trial runs in New Jersey and Connecticut. The play never made Broadway, on or Off.

West, who herself would be many a drag queen’s model and inspiration with phrases like, “Come up and see me sometime, big boy!” and “Is that a pistol in your pocket, or are you glad to see me?” She was well-loved by the hoped-for Broadway hit Ray Bourbon – who, following a gender reassignment surgery, changed her name to Rae.

Forty some years later, Bourbon would highlight Detroit’s then famous drag bar, The Diplomat, located at 8540 Second Blvd., a few blocks north of the Fisher Theater (an opulent movie palace turned into a legitimate theater show place). Bourbon would eventually exit “the Dip” and die in prison.

Detroit’s early days of cross-dressing took place at a slightly sleazy Third Avenue venue named, perhaps in a touch of high class, the Sweet Heart Bar. Those who did cross-dress felt safe dropping in for drinks now and then, content to know their secret lives were just that: secret and safe, because the Sweet Heart paid the liquor commission inspectors to look the other way.

During World War II years, the bar, with its jukebox – six plays for a quarter – attracted a few gay soldiers and sailors on leave, often replete in their own stylish military uniforms.

Wearing clothes that didn’t conform to regular gender stereotypes, by city law, was permitted only at Halloween. The law also stated that known homosexuals were not permitted to gather where liquor was served (one supposes ‘known’ homosexuals could be identified by whether they drank cocktails from a straw instead of in a manly fashion from 25-cent bottles of beer).

At Halloween, Farmer & Bates streets, where three gay bars were located: the Rio Grande – later 1011 – LaRosa’s and the Silver Dollar, were cordoned off to traffic, and it seemed every courageous cross-dresser and drag queen held center stage. Especially so as straight tourists gathered by the dozens to gawk, applaud, whistle or be embarrassed (but closeted) at the seemingly endless display.

I was 19 when I attended my first Halloween parade in downtown Detroit – three blocks away from old City Hall and one block away from the 1st Precinct Police Station. I was startled and chagrined to see the man I had been dating for six months, Dick Bodie, walk by in full drag: Lipstick, mascara and a wig.

That ended that. I just wasn’t into women, cisgender or briefly made-up for Halloween (Dick soon after moved to New York with a girlfriend to become a follower of Ayn Rand and her right-wing objectivism).

Ironically, I celebrated my 21st birthday with my second go-around at gay romance by attending a performance of the up-and-coming drag group from the west coast: the Jewel Box Review. It was at the Flame Show Bar, a black-and-tan bistro on Detroit’s Brush Street (Black and tan was a euphemism for those establishments catering to black/white mixed clientele. Storme DeLarverie, famed black male impersonator, was emcee. Throughout her life she did indeed have many stormy encounters with the law and police. She died at 74 in 2014.)

In 1968, following Detroit’s rioting the year before, the Tigers won the World Series and pitcher Denny McClain was the city’s hero. At the same time, tension was in the air. That year’s Halloween on Farmer & Bates got out of hand. There was catcalling, fist-waving, barrier-battering and rock-throwing at the drags, queens and gays.

It was then that Detroit’s gay scene shifted north. The Woodward bar increased in popularity (I started going there in 1959 when I was 23). And drag as full-fledged, top-notch entertainment made Bookie’s Diplomat bar an “in” place to be on weekends in the ‘60s and early ‘70s (it was there that I saw Ethel Merman and Liberace drinking).

At first the Diplomat abided by its “cross-dressing” restriction: “no cross-dressing in public places, or where liquor is sold until

Halloween” (on a side note, lesbians from Canada who were dressed too much like men were not allowed entry here by U.S. Border Customs).

Bookie, who knew a thing or two about managing a good gay bar and drag queen entertainment, had previously managed the Silver Dollar on Farmer & Bates for his brother-in-law.

Bookie – Sam Stewart – treated his customers well. Occasionally bailed them out of jail, and if you were sitting too close to a vice officer – Miss Tillie in gay street lingo – Bookie would have one of his bartenders send you a free drink. Signal: Careful Mary, you’re sitting next to a vice cop.

Among the first drag queens to perform at Bookie’s were an uneventful looking twosome. Billy & Maurice. Uneventful, because of the Michigan Liquor Commission ruling on cross-dressing, their drag was limited only to facial makeup, black shirts and pants.

Billy & Maurice didn’t lip-synch to recorded music. They sang songs to the piano music of Arnie Rose, who had been a once popular background pianist at the 1011, next-door to the Downton Silver Dollar. Songs sung were in risque English and presumably questionable French.

It didn’t take long after their departure of the rather plain – but sincere Billy & Maurice duo – for the drag queen line up at the Diplomat to increase. Big time. As things eased up with the Liquor Commission – perhaps an under-the-counter agreement with Mr. Stewart helped – full drag for legitimate stage entertainers was acceptable. Expected. A draw for gays and gay

Celebrate Drag June 1

In celebration of drag history, the Ruth Ellis Center will host the first ever Catfight for the Crown on June 1 at the Fillmore Theatre, 2115 Woodward Ave.

Eight amateur contestants will fight for the title of Miss Kitty in categories of evening wear, swimsuit, talent, and interview segments. The Catfight for the Crown is an elaborate, “tongue-in-cheek” drag show “beauty” pageant that brings forward a unique, over-the-top, entertaining and interactive way of raising critical funding to support the Ruth Ellis Center.

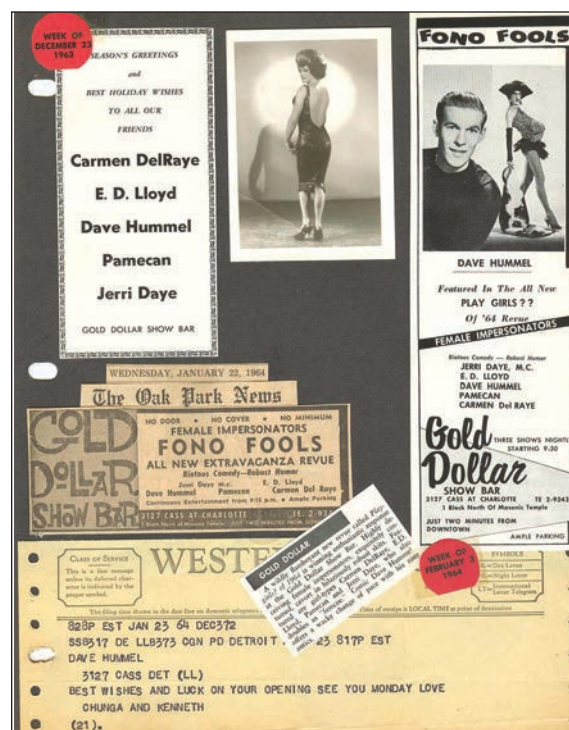
Visit ruthelliscenter.org for more information. To purchase tickets, visit universe.com/catfightforthecrown.

friendly patrons.

Weekends often included appearances by half a dozen drag queens. “Tonight’s the night for a fabulous time!” was the opening line drag emcee Lola-Lola welcomed the usually full house of spectators. One by one she’d call the entertainers on stage to get the night’s festivities underway.

“Let have a round of applause for ... former first-base, Tigerette-turned-pinch hitter, Miss Bobby Johns ... Chunga (and her live,

Continued on pg. 32



“ Mainstream newspapers, including the Detroit Free Press and the Detroit News, the Lansing State Journal, the Traverse City Record-Eagle, the Flint Journal and the Grand Rapids Press, have documented queer lives for decades, in both negative and positive fashion ... the raw evidence of local LGBTQ history is increasingly available in various archives, although a visit to use (some) materials on site is required. ”

This quote is an excerpt of a 2016 Pridesource Magazine article that BTL contributor Tim Retzlaff completed. To find out more ways to research about LGBTQ history, drag and otherwise, go online to pridesource.com for this full story.

Pictured left: Scrapbooks kept by David Hummel preserve memorabilia of Detroit’s female impersonators of the 1960s.



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• **Farmington Hills**
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www.antiochelca.org

Hope Lutheran Church
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www.hope-lutheran-church.com

• **Ferndale**
Zion Lutheran Church
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www.zionlutheranmi.org

• **Grand Rapids**
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
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www.bethlehemchurchgr.org

• **Kalamazoo**
Lutheran Church of the Savior
3616 East G Avenue
www.lcoskzoo.com

• **Kentwood**
Ascension Lutheran Church
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www.twochurches.org

• **Livonia**
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www.timothy-lutheranchurch.com

• **Mount Pleasant**
Immanuel Lutheran Church
320 South Bradley St.
www.immanuelmp.com

• **Muskegon**
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
1132 Southern Ave.
www.oslcmuskegon.org

• **Okemos**
Faith Lutheran Church
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www.faithlutheranokemos.org

• **Port Huron**
St. Martin Lutheran Church
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• **Rochester Hills**
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• **Saline**
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www.holy-faith-church.org

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► Drag

Continued from p. 32

non-feather boa for special, legs-akimbo charming) ... Vickie Marlene (and her total gold body makeup) ... Fat Jack (and her yellow polka-dot bikini) ... and Lola-Lola, little ole me, who lives for love! And, if you'll permit me: just a humping or two of the these gold lame, Christine Jorgensen designer stage curtains."

The real drag queen star of the Bookie's venue wasn't Lola Lola, Chunga with her live boa or Vickie Marlene, who passed out because her gold-embossed body caused her to collapse and fall into the audience while dancing. It was the one-and-old Fat Jack, "a quarter ton of fat and fun." Real name Jack Genore, he lip-synched to the then popular hit, "Yellow Polka-Doted Bikini" (the famed bikini was later raffled for an LGBT fundraiser.)

An occasional glamorous full-time cross-dresser seen at the Dip' was the stunningly beautiful Gail Sherman, then in her ravishing, brunette 30s (stories circulated for years that a straight guy, then a grad student at Wayne State University, committed suicide behind the Dip because of being rejected by Sherman, in their secret romancing).

With big names now and then in the Diplomat audience (Merman performed a signature song; Liberace, surprisingly butch) the booking of Mae West's Broadway Drag Queen, Rae Bourbon, now in his 60s, was cause for excitement ("who's Rae Bourbon?" Some wondered. Jaded queens all, no doubt.)

Unfortunately, Rae's starlit stairway was soon to collapse on her. She - now a fully trans person - was "paid" after each performance, because of back taxes owed to the IRS. She also used too much borrowed material from her once-risque mid-'50s LP, "Around the

World in 80 Ways!" Nothing new for jaded drag queen titillation.

Rae's career ended on a sad note. She had two dogs. Poodles Mae and Maybee. She felt the vet caring for them had somehow abused them or charged the fabulous Rae too much for their care and keep. Rae hired thugs to rough up the vet. They accidentally killed him. Rae was sent to prison where she died in 1971.



The author, Charles Alexander, in the mid-'60s.

The Diplomat closed in 1972, due to a fire from miswired electrical outlets. Bookie went on to own and host other LGBTQ gay bar ventures. He died in 1984. Next time you play Drag Queen Bingo, keep Bookie in mind. He made Detroit's gay life a truly rainbow experience. I know. I was there. Unfortunately, or fortunately, Never in drag.

found "aggravating my friends. I'm a jokester. So I'm always out there causing some trouble with my friends. I like skateboarding on the Riverwalk. I like dancing whenever I get a chance. And I really like entertaining my friends. They come over a lot and we make cocktails and I have small events in my home."

And just like CoolkidSue entertains her friends, she will entertain Pride-goers also.

"It will definitely be a good vibe that's chill and poppin,' but lit," she said. "As a DJ, my goal is to create memories, that 'Ahh' moment. Like, 'this is my song,' or, 'OMG, what song is this?' Or, 'OMG, let me kiss this person next to me.' That's who I am as a DJ. I just really enjoy good music and happy people around me."

Connect with DJ CoolkidSue on Facebook at [facebook.com/djcoolkidsue/](https://www.facebook.com/djcoolkidsue/).

Ferndale Pride Week at Affirmations

Pride Events

List of Affirmations' special events for Pride.

Thursday, May 31st

- 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. - *Water is Life, Water for Flint*
- 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. - *Finding Our Strength Research Exhibition by Transcend the Binary*
- 6:00 - 10:00 p.m. - *Pride Weekend Kick Off at Axle Brewing Company*

Friday, June 1st

- 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. - *Moon 1 Luv featuring Erica Carter*

Saturday, June 2nd

- 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - *Interfaith Fellowship Service*
- 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. - *AFF Groups Meet & Greet*
- 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. - *Talk Saves Lives: Suicide Prevention*
- 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. - *Hepatitis A Vaccinations with OCHD*
- 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. - *HIV/STI Testing with Unified*
- 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. - *A Mystery Most Queer (Ages 13-20 Only) A Youth Prom Experience*

Affirmations' Programs

List of Affirmations' regularly occurring programs.

Thursday, May 31st

- 11:30am - 1:00 p.m. - *NA Regardless of...*

Friday, June 1st

- 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. - *AA Brownbaggers*
- 4:00 - 9:00 p.m. - *Youth Drop-In (age 13-20)*
- 4:00 - 8:00 p.m. - *Recess Cafe*

Saturday, June 2nd

- 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - *Coming Out Over Coffee*
- 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. - *SMART Recovery*
- 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. - *Recess Cafe*
- 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. - *HIV/STI Testing (Matrix)*
- 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. - *AA Brownbaggers*
- 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. - *Men's Discussion Group*

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► CoolkidSue

Continued from p. 21

time and that's kind of like how I am," said CoolkidSue, who learned by watching and studying other DJs on YouTube. "If I can take a really good pop song and mix it with like Future or Drake then I accomplished something."

Something else CoolkidSue would like to accomplish is event organizing.

"I have a passion for it. I like to create spaces. So if I can get a really nice loft and just open space and I'm free to decorate it the way that I want, just full of art, that would be my dream place."

Beyond that, when not playing music for the masses, CoolkidSue said she can probably be

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► Pope of Pride

Continued from p. 16

'70s, and that most of the current LGBTQ community in the city was nonexistent. At that time, living as an out gay man was like having a target on one's back.

Matson noted that while his coming out experience was considerably lucky, he wasn't free from his own share of prejudice even in his family. Though with most members of his family, "It was always, 'Gordon is Gordon,'" he said that one sister had an especially hard time coming to terms with his sexual orientation.

"It took a long time for her to come around. And that probably didn't happen until maybe 20 years ago after my mom died in '99," he said.

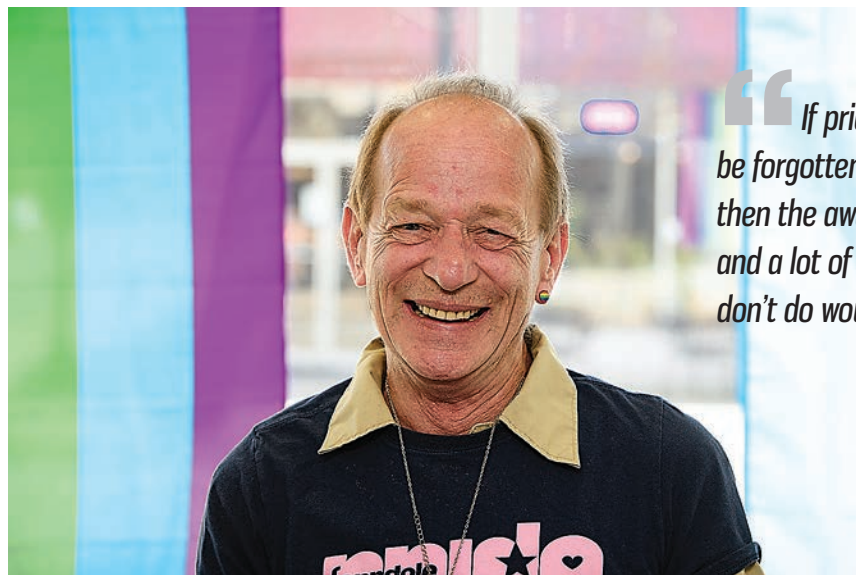
Matson's father died two years before.

"A lot of families I've seen go this way when parents go," he said, moving his hands in opposite directions. "Ours came together."

Now, that initially-reluctant sister will be a part of Matson's wedding.

Matson said that not only has his own struggle with visibility and acceptance helped people who attend Ferndale pride, but members of his family who are members of the LGBTQ community. Currently, he said he's helping a nephew through a transition.

"Wait," he paused to get it right, "she's coming out as a gay, transgender man."



“If pride wasn't there, we would be forgotten. If you stop doing pride, then the awareness level would drop and a lot of things that we do and don't do would be forgotten.”

- Gordon Matson

For that very reason, Matson said that he believes it is important to keep pride festivals around like Ferndale's no matter how digital, and seemingly physically detached the LGBTQ community gets. And that there will always be a role for someone who spreads a message of love and acceptance in history.

"If pride wasn't there, we would be forgotten. If you stop doing pride, then the awareness level would drop and a lot of things that we do and don't do would be forgotten," he said. "I like to impress upon people that it's not a pride just for the LGBTQ community. It's a pride for everybody. It's family-oriented.

And now that there are a lot of gay couples who have children, I like to let the straight allies know that this is who we are, and we are not any different than you throwing a party."

Matson then pointed to a memory of taking his straight brother-in-law to a pride event in California. He said that that moment helped turn his brother into an even bigger ally, because of his willingness to experience pride.

"They came and he saw RuPaul. He said, 'I really don't see a difference between you and them,'" Matson said. "That meant a lot coming from him."

He went on to elaborate about the high toll

of the LGBTQ-renouncing, hostile environment he faced outside of his home in his youth.

"A lot of people still don't know the price. A lot of this generation feel that they have it so hard," he said. "You don't know what hard is."

Yet, as easy as it is now comparatively, Matson emphasized that the fight isn't over and that, "There's always going to be work to do."

"Now more so I feel that, because there's more to the LGBTQ community than what was (visible) before. Before, it was gays and lesbians. Now, we have this community that is (raising) awareness through other people to the world, that there are other people besides gays and lesbians," he said. "If that goes away then the awareness goes away. People aren't going to learn to love thy neighbor if their neighbor is transgender and they don't know what's going on."

He added, "They may still think you're a freak, but now, they have a name for it."



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A Greater, Bigger, More Authentic World

Duo's Chad King Forthcoming Album (Their 'Arrival Moment') and Being Gay in Music Today

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

While you were crying, out musician Chad King and his friend Ian Axel were figuring out their next move. Could *A Great Big World*, as they're collectively known, strike twice with another colossal Christina Aguilera-assisted tearjerker?

Peaking at No. 4 on the Billboard Hot 100 and winning them a Grammy for Best Pop Duo/Group Performance, even they knew another "Say Something," which featured Aguilera's harmonious flutters, was likely inimitable. Still, the crushing ballad gave considerable clout to the two albums that followed it: their 2014 debut "Is There Anybody Out There?" and its 2015 followup, "When the Morning Comes."

With a third on the way, and its lead bop, "Younger," out now, we caught up with King to discuss writing about dressing in his mom's clothes as a kid, finding their true selves, and how "Paris Is Burning" inspired a musical moment.

On "Younger," you revel in the nostalgia of playing with Barbies and giving fashion shows. What were these fashions like? Did you strut?

Yeah, I remember going through my mom's closet with my younger brother and putting on her heels, putting on her dresses, and stuffing the dress with padding to make it look like we had boobs. Then, as a whole family, we'd sit down on the living room couch and me and my brother would come out and just work it. And they'd all cheer for us. I never thought I would be singing about that, but I'm glad it made its way into the music.

How did the song come about?

"Younger" was actually the first song we wrote for this album, and it morphed into this tune where it's like, let's tap into our childhood: what we remember, why we were so happy then, and what was so exciting and freeing and liberating



Photo: Epic Records

about being that kid. Playing house with my neighbor down the street, I just remember playing with her Barbies and feeling like no one was going to come and hurt me. I was so safe to be and act however I wanted to act, and there was just something so freeing about that moment.

After two albums, why self-title this one?

"Is There Anybody Out There?"

was sort of a collection of songs that me and Ian had written over the first five years of us being friends. And one of those songs was "Say Something," and "Say Something" had the life that it had and all of a sudden we found ourselves in this pop world. We also found ourselves feeling a bit of pressure to stay in that world, and that's when the second album came out. Then the second record did what it did, or didn't do.

And then it came time for the third album. We were like, let's go back to writing for ourselves again. We took six months to write this album, and we are so proud of these songs. *Most* proud of these songs. We all feel this is the most true to who we are, and that our sound or music has ever been, so it made sense that it would be a self-titled record to us. It was like, "OK, *this* is *A Great Big World*." It feels like an arrival moment.

“I think this is a really beautiful time to be out and an artist and be free with your expression.”

Even though "Say Something" was a mega-pop hit, the first album it appeared on was rooted in a musical-theater sound. Have you worked your fondness for theater into the fold for this album?

Yeah, absolutely. "Younger" is a really good example. It's so theatrical, narratively. I feel like we write really well to a narrative or in that context of storytelling. We have a song called "When I Am King" that is also super theatrical and super Queen-like that I'm really excited about. This record has theatricality all over it.

And how did the iconic queer film "Paris Is Burning" become the inspiration for "Hooray for You"?

I showed everyone the clip of Dorian Corey at the very end of "Paris Is Burning" having that sort of moment in front of the mirror where she's applying her makeup and saying, "You don't have to bend the whole word. I think it's better to just enjoy it." And at the end she goes, "If you shoot an arrow and it goes real high, hooray for you." And we did something really special with that moment:

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► Great Big World

Continued from p. 36

We took a sample of that moment and made it into a track of its own that I'm really excited for people to hear. It's exciting to have this on a record. Like, this will live forever. Also to push "Paris Is Burning," because that movie is iconic and brilliant, and I only just found out about it last year. I really didn't get into it until last year, so I'm so thankful that we were able to make that a part of this record.

I imagine after "Say Something" the pressure to top yourselves or reach that same level again was immense.

In the moment, we would never say there's pressure. I'd be like, "No, we're just writing!" I'd probably say that. "Yeah, we love writing!" But looking back and reflecting on how we wrote with all sorts of pop writers and got into the room with all kinds of pop producers, it's very clear we were going through the motions of creating something under this pressure. Even if it was subconscious, there was this pressure, for sure. That song feels like an anomaly. It feels like a monster. It feels like something that happens once in a lifetime. So, to follow that up is – yeah, there's a ton of pressure.

Did you have people around you asking you to recapture that magic?

Yeah, we had a couple moments where people were like, "We want you to write 'Say Something' for us." So we had to go through the motions of writing another song like "Say Something." There's actually one song that we have – oh, I don't know if it's official. I can't tell you. But we have a song that looks like it's gonna be making another artist's record and their original briefing to us was, "We love the emotion behind 'Say Something.' Can you give us a song like this?" So, me and Ian tapped into that, and it looks like we'll be getting the song on his record. But I think "Say Something" came from such an emotionally charged place that it's hard to recreate if you're not experiencing that in the moment.

You wrote a great essay for Out Magazine about being a gay man with multiple sclerosis. As a gay man with MS, do you hear from other gay people with MS who can relate?

At the time, I remember people coming to me and saying like, "I had this trauma around my MS," and sort of validating my theory: this mind-body connection, and that there is nothing separate about it, and the fact that I came out and two weeks later I was diagnosed with MS is not a coincidence. I have no doubt

that that is *not* a coincidence.

I don't feel like I am MS. I feel like, yeah, I was diagnosed with that, but to me, my body was reacting to its environment in certain ways and I just need to be aware and conscious, and be really careful of what I put in my body and how I treat my body in general. When I started paying attention to the effect of my environment inside and out, that's when I started seeing real change. But it just didn't feel random to me. It felt like, "What the hell is going on with my body and why would it be going through this right now?" And so my sexuality was tied in completely to that and that was so monumental of a discovery for me.

The landscape for out gay musicians has changed even since 2014, when you released your debut. If anything, there are more artists who are out from the get-go. Is this an even better time to be an out gay musician than it was when you released your debut just four years ago?

Actually, I'm a little jealous of anyone just now entering this music scene because it's like being gay today versus being gay 20 years ago. It's just not the same thing. It's just not. And it's so awesome that kids have nothing to fear when they're singing about who they love – and it could be a guy and

a guy, or a girl and a girl, and it works and everyone accepts it and it's beautiful. I think the landscape is going to change even more so in the next year. I went and saw Tyler, the Creator, and this was the first time I ever really listened to his music or listened to the lyrics and I was like, "Whoa, he's singing about a cute boy and he has all these hardcore rap fans. It was so cool to see."

I think this is a really beautiful time to be out and an artist and be free with your expression. The fear I had with "Hold Each Other" or with any of our songs talking about a love interest, where I felt like it couldn't be from the male perspective about another male, that feels like it's gone now.

So I take it you'll be writing with male pronouns on this upcoming release?

Yeah, I do on this record coming out. I do it more. And it was freeing and easier, and it was beautiful. So, I'm really excited for people to get even more gay music from us. (Laughs)

As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBTQ wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).



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Happenings

Shania Twain at Little Caesar's Arena

Canadian-born singer Shania Twain has sold millions of records over her career and won a variety of awards like a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and a CCMA Generation Award. Twain's unique blend of rock, pop and country has solidified her space in pop culture and earned her millions of fans during her more than 20-year career. On Friday, June 15, at 7:30 p.m. the singer will visit Little Caesars Arena for her Now Tour. More information can be found online at 313presents.com or shaniatwain.com.

OUTINGS

Wednesday, May 30

Affirmations Youth Workforce Development Program 4:30 p.m. Improve communication skills, write an effective resume, nail that interview, understand budgets and financial responsibilities. Ages 13-24. The first 2018 Workforce class is now open and taking applications. An event every week that begins at 4:30pm on Wednesday and Friday, repeating until July 11. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 <http://www.goaffirmations.org>

Get Your People: The Role of White People in Ending Racism 6:30 p.m. 'Get Your People: The Role of White People in Ending Racism' is an interactive discussion and moderated panel on the role of white people in ending racism in metro Detroit and beyond. Birmingham Unitarian Church, 38651 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. 248-647-2380 [bucmi.org](http://www.bucmi.org).

Friday, June 1

Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber Night at Comerica Park! 7 p.m. It's the Tiger vs Blue Jays at Comerica Park! Go to our website to buy tickets. Comerica Park, 2100 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-962-4000 info@detroitlgbtchamber.com www.mlb.com/detroitlgbtchamber.com <https://detroitlgbtchamber.com>

Sunday, June 3

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups 6:30 p.m. For parents of transgender kids, this group meets the 1st Sunday of each month from 6:30-8 p.m. Hilltop Counseling, 115 W. Maumee Street, Adrian. 313-909-5408 www.standwithtrans.org <http://www.hilltopcounseling.org>

Tuesday, June 5

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups 7 p.m. For parents of transgender kids, this group meets the 1st Tuesday of each month at 7:00-8:30 pm. St. Mary's In The Hills Episcopal Church, 2512 Joslyn Court, Lake Orion. 248-391-0663 www.stmarysinthehills.org

Ann Arbor Summer Festival 2018 Mainstage Lineup! 7:30 p.m. Passionate, provocative, and charming, the iconic singer/songwriter, activist, poet, and auteur Ani DiFranco returns to the territory that brought her to the world's attention backed by a full band. Power Center, 121 Fletcher Street, Ann Arbor. (734) 647-3327 info@a2sf.org http://smt.d.umich.edu/about/facilities/central_campus/power/index.htm <http://a2sf.org/events/ani-difranco/>

Thursday, June 7

Safetalk Training 5 p.m. Hosted by American Indian Health and Family Services and American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, safeTALK is a half-day alertness training that prepares anyone 15 or older, regardless of prior experience or training, to become a suicide-alert helper. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105

Friday, June 8

Marianne Williamson's National "Love America" Tour 7 p.m. Historic Detroit Unity Temple is honored to have been selected as the first Michigan appearance for internationally acclaimed author and lecturer, Marianne Williamson on her Love America book and speaking tour. Detroit Unity Temple, 17505 Second Ave., Detroit. 313-945-4848 pgriffin@sbcglobal.net www.detroitunity.com <http://www.detroitunity.com>

America The Beautiful: Songs from

the Great American Songbook, and More! 7:30 p.m. An evening of male choral music paying tribute the vast array of music that is contained in the Great American Songbook. You'll enjoy a variety of American popular music from the last 100 years. An event every day that begins at 7:30pm, repeating until June 9. First Presbyterian Church of Lansing, 510 West Ottawa Street, Lansing. [lansingfirstpres.com](http://www.lansingfirstpres.com)

Sunday, June 10

Grillin' for Food Gatherers 3 p.m. Grillin' is a community picnic for the whole family featuring eclectic live music, gourmet grilled sausages & side dishes from 30+ local food purveyors, regional beer, and plenty of kids activities! Proceeds support Food Gatherers' Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds, 5055 Ann Arbor-Saline Road, Ann Arbor. 734-761-2796 www.foodgatherers.org

Monday, June 11

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups 6:30 p.m. Macomb Teen/Youth Support Group Event. Dakota High School, 21051 21 Mile Road, Macomb. 586-723-2700 <http://www.chippewavalleyhighschools.org/schools/high-schools/dhs/>

Thursday, June 14

Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce Merge & Mixer 6:30 p.m. Michigan Employee Resource Groups for Equality (MERGE) Monthly Networking Event. All are welcomed to network. Host by: Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce. Check website for monthly location, RSVP is Required. An event every month that begins at 6:30pm on day second of the month, repeating until December 13. Soho, 205 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-542-7646 info@detroitlgbtchamber.com

www.ferndalesoho.com <http://www.detroitlgbtchamber.com>

Saturday, June 16

Sing Out Detroit Presents: Encore 7 p.m. Come Out and Support Sing Out Detroit Chorus as we celebrate 10 years of making music together. We will be performing some of our favorite songs and will be joined by chorus alumni. Ferndale High School, 881 Pinecrest Drive, Ferndale. 248-943-2411 <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sing-out-detroit-presents-encore-tickets-44325980200>

The Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce presents the 2nd Annual Pride Cruise 7 p.m. Come out for a night of fun and food at a pretty affordable price. Network with Chamber members and Corporate Partners. Connect with the LGBT community on the beautiful Detroit River with Diamond Jack Tours.

2nd Annual Pride Cruise 7 p.m. The Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce presents the 2nd Annual Pride Cruise. Come out for a night of fun and food at a pretty affordable price. Network with Chamber members and Corporate Partners. Connect Diamond Jack Tours, Stroh's River Place 201 Joseph Campau Ave., Detroit. 3131-843-9376 info@detroitlgbtchamber.com <http://www.detroitlgbtchamber.com>

MUSIC & MORE

Cinetopia Film Festival at Ann Arbor's Michigan Theater May 31 - June 10, 7 p.m. Created for the people of southeastern Michigan, the Cinetopia Film Festival features the best feature-length dramas, comedies, and documentaries

Continued on pg. 42

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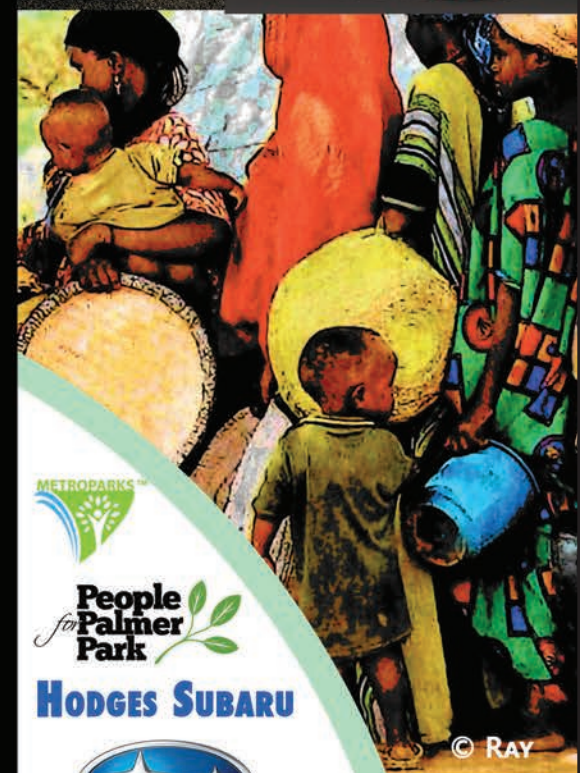
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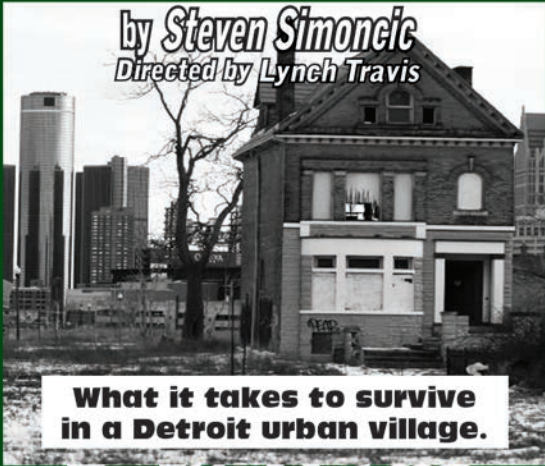
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OC 8PM June 8.

Editor's Pick

Meet Detroit's CIO: Lesbians Who Tech + Allies Detroit

Lesbians Who Tech + Allies is a group that joins LGBTQ professional women together to network and connect. On Saturday, June 16, the group will meet with the Chief Information Officer for the City of Detroit Beth Niblock. The event is free and goes from 2 to 5 p.m. More information can be found online at eventbrite.com.



BETH NIBLOCK
CIO OF DETROIT

lesbians who tech
Lesbians Who Tech (+ Allies) Detroit || Chat w/Detroit's CIO
JUNE 16TH, 2 - 5PM

► Happenings

Continued from p. 40

from the world's best film festivals (e.g. Sundance, Cannes, Venice, Toronto, Berlin, SXSW, Tribeca, etc.). Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397 <http://www.cinetopiafestival.org>

Barb Barton CD Release Concert June 1, 7:30 p.m. Come celebrate the release of Barb's seventh album and her newest book, *Manoomin – The Story of Wild Rice in Michigan* (MSU Press). To make it an even better night, Barb will also be celebrating MSU Community Music School, 4930 Hagadorn Rd, East Lansing. 517-484-1712 <http://www.goldenrod.com/product/barb-barton-cd-release-concert-tickets-friday-june-1-2018/> <http://www.barbbarton.com/calender-of-events.html>

Wizbang! Circus June 1-3, 9:30 p.m. The show will feature everything from world champion jugglers, exciting acrobats, professional misbehavers and the best in slight of hand magicians, spine-tingling sideshow, kinky cabaret! Tangent Gallery, 715 East Milwaukee Avenue, Detroit. 2484451277 <http://www.wizbangtheatre.com>

Om @ The Max June 3, 10:30 a.m. Practice yoga to live music by French composers. Certified yoga instructor and DSO Librarian Ethan Allen leads a group yoga session open to all skill levels—accompanied with music performed live by a DSO percussion ensemble. The Cube, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. <https://www.dso.org/ShowEventsView.aspx?id=5084&prod=5083> <https://www.dso.org/ShowEventsView.aspx?id=5084&prod=5083>

Ann Arbor Summer Festival 2018 Mainstage Lineup! June 5, 7:30 p.m. Passionate, provocative, and charming, the iconic singer/songwriter, activist, poet, and auteur Ani DiFranco returns to the territory that brought her to the world's attention backed by a full band. Power Center, 121 Fletcher Street, Ann Arbor. (734) 647-3327 info@a2sf.org <http://a2sf.org> http://smt.d.umich.edu/about/facilities/central_campus/power/index.htm <http://a2sf.org/events/ani-difranco/>

Marianne Williamson's National "Love America" Tour June 8, 7 p.m. Historic

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America The Beautiful: Songs from the Great American Songbook, and More! June 8, 7:30 p.m. An evening of male choral music paying tribute to the vast array of music that is contained in the Great American Songbook. You'll enjoy a variety of American popular music from the last 100 years, with an event every day that begins at 7:30pm, repeating until June 9 First Presbyterian Church of Lansing, 510 West Ottawa Street, Lansing. <http://www.lansingfirstpres.com>

Brandi Carlile – In Concert June 9, 7:30 p.m. Brandi M. Carlile is a Grammy-nominated American folk rock and Americana singer-songwriter. For our upcoming 2018 spring and summer tour, each online ticket order will include a digital copy of our new album, *By The Way*. The Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397 <http://www.michtheater.org/show/brandi-carlile>

Ann Arbor Summer Festival 2018 Mainstage Lineup Continues! June 9, 8 p.m. It's all part of the saucy, vintage nouveau world of Postmodern Jukebox, a tongue-in-cheek musical project for all ages spearheaded by Scott Bradlee, a revered pianist and genius of song arrangement known for growing his Power Center, 121 Fletcher Street, Ann Arbor. (734) 647-3327 info@a2sf.org <http://a2sf.org> http://smt.d.umich.edu/about/facilities/central_campus/power/index.htm <http://a2sf.org/events/scott-bradlee-postmodern-jukebox/>

Chicago Samba June 9, 10 p.m. Chicago Samba, led by Mo Marchini, brings its authentic sound and dance mixed with the flavor of Carnival to The Cube for a taste of tropical Brazil not to be missed! The Cube, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. <https://www.dso.org/ShowEventsView.aspx?id=5084&prod=5083> <http://www.dso.org/ShowEventsView.aspx?id=5376&prod=5375>

Ann Arbor Summer Festival 2018 Mainstage Lineup Continues! June 10, 1 p.m. ACROBUFFO'S AIR PLAY: Fabrics dance, balloons have a mind of their own, confetti turns into the night sky, and a gorgeous canopy becomes a river of silk hovering over the audience in this modern circus One event on June 10 at 4:00pm Power Center, 121 Fletcher Street, Ann Arbor. (734) 647-3327 info@a2sf.org http://smt.d.umich.edu/about/facilities/central_campus/power/index.htm <http://a2sf.org/events/acrobuffos-air-play-1>

Grillin' for Food Gatherers June 10, 3 p.m. Grillin' is a community picnic for the whole family featuring eclectic live music, gourmet grilled sausages & side dishes from 30+ local food purveyors, regional beer, and plenty of kids activities! Proceeds support Food Gatherers' Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds, 5055 Ann Arbor-Saline Road, Ann Arbor. 734-761-2796 www.foodgatherers.org <http://www.foodgatherers.org/grillin>

Sing Out Detroit Presents: Encore June 16, 7 p.m. Come Out and Support Sing Out Detroit Chorus as we celebrate 10 years of making music together. We will be performing some of our favorite songs and will be joined by chorus alumni. Join us Ferndale High School, 881 Pinecrest Drive, Ferndale. 248-943-2411 <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sing-out-detroit-presents-encore-tickets-44325980200>

eVenti Verticali's Wanted June 19, 7:30 p.m. Aerial theater combines with video projections on a giant outdoor screen and concocts a mind-bending visual comedy extravaganza for all ages. Suspended in a world of animation, two Italian brothers hang from ropes and harnesses One event on June 19 at 9:30pm One event on June 20 at 7:30pm One event on June 20 at 9:30pm Top of the Park, 915 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor. 734-994-5999 info@a2sf.org <https://a2sf.org/category/top-of-the-park/>

Sam Smith June 22, 8 p.m. Sam Smith's sophomore album, *The Thrill Of It All*, was released worldwide on November 3 via Capitol Records. In support, Smith announced the North American dates for "The Thrill Of It All Tour." Little Caesar's Arena, 2645 Woodward Avenue, Detroit. 3133495777

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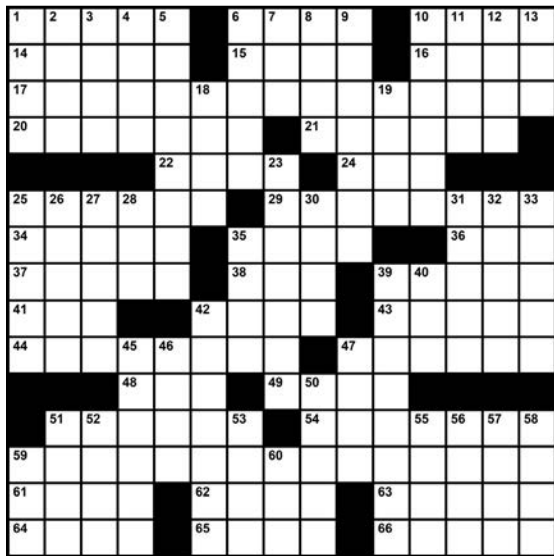


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Let's Get to the Bottom of This

Q Puzzle

Across

- 1 Liquor source in Gomer's Mayberry
 6 Hoofbeat of a stallion
 10 Gay cable network
 14 She hoped Gibson was gay in "What Women Want"
 15 Org. against pirates
- 16 Digital rectal, for example
 17 How 37-Across jokingly described the meaning of the song "Bloom"
 20 They have a top job
 21 Water channel
 22 Log Cabin pundits do this to candidates
 24 Giant outfielder Mel
 25 Like a gown at a drag

- queen wedding
 29 McKellen movie "Gods and ____"
 34 Greek architectural style
 35 Penetrating reed
 36 Bloomers worn around the neck
 37 With 39-Across, "Bloom" singer
 38 Spot for a computer
 39 See 37-Across
 41 Shakespeare's dusk
 42 Some Christmas trees
 43 Cock teaser
 44 Detecting Butch cologne
 47 Meat treats
 48 Shooter in Bruce Weber's field
 49 "Movin' ____" (theme from a Sherman Hemsley sitcom)
 51 "Man of La ____"
 54 Made possible
 59 Actual theme of the song
 61 Dull discomfort
 62 It keeps a fruit from being exposed
 63 Hell of a comedy writer
- 64 "The ____ the limit!"
 65 Part of YSL
 66 A pink triangle has three

Down

- 1 Direction from Susan Feniger
 2 Friend of Dorothy
 3 Britney Spears' "____ Curious"
 4 Focus of an almost nude statue
 5 Pianist with a candelabra
 6 Outer pie part
 7 Aflame
 8 Meatheads
 9 Umpire Dave
 10 Jennifer Love's last name
 11 Veep, e.g.
 12 Pink in a steakhouse
 13 Letters on an ambulance
 18 Like phone sex, in a way
 19 Drives from the closet
 23 Ban on commercial intercourse
 25 Gets a mouthful
 26 Composer Ned
 27 Phrase after Sheehan's hole
 28 Home improvement
- letters
 30 WNBA sport to Eliza Doolittle?
 31 "Jailhouse Rock" star
 32 Jerk a knee
 33 Goes to the bottom
 35 "Brothers & Sisters" producer Ken
 39 Web site concerned with HIV
 40 SEP, e.g.
 42 Angler-supplied cookout
 45 Some Mapplethorpe equipment
 46 Off your rocker
 47 Made a "Clang, clang, clang" sound
 50 Jocks' antitheses
 51 Emulate Harper Lee's bird
 52 Like smoking areas at a gay club
 53 Tel ____
 55 Sons of, in Hebrew
 56 Swedish soprano Jenny
 57 Suffix with Smurf
 58 Easter egg solutions
 59 Article written by Lorca
 60 Suffix with hero


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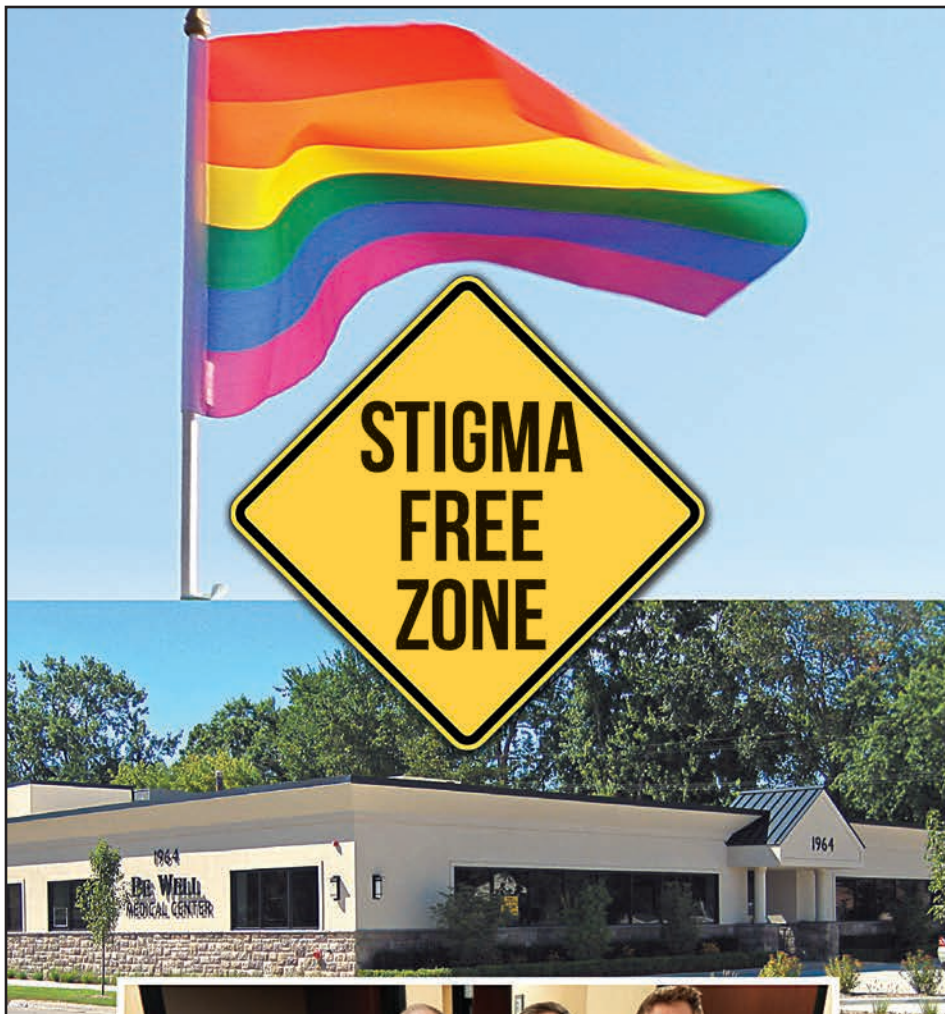
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The Sydney Morning Herald

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