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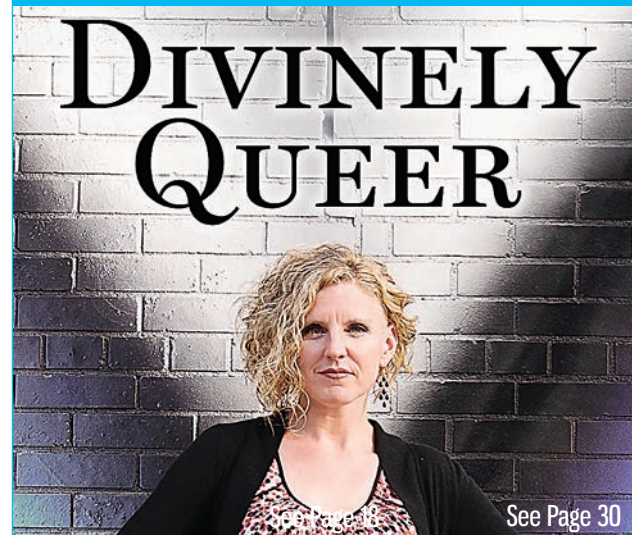
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Senate Confirms Kavanaugh to Supreme Court

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

The U.S. Senate voted on Saturday to confirm Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S. Supreme Court, bringing to an end a tumultuous confirmation process for President Trump's judicial nominee.

With Vice President Mike Pence presiding over the chamber in case his constitutional duty to break tie votes was required, the Senate voted 50-48 to confirm Kavanaugh.

The Senate confirmed Kavanaugh despite multiple allegations the nominee committed sexual assault. Christine Blasey Ford testified before the Senate a teenaged Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her in 1982 when she was 15 years old. Kavanaugh also faced accusations of perjury based on his testimony, including his assertion the meaning of "Devil's Triangle" and "boofed" in his high school yearbook entry weren't sexually related terms.

Other critics said his response to the accusations in his testimony before the Senate, including an assertion it was a result of "revenge of the Clintons," demonstrated a lack of judicial temperament and made him unfit for the Supreme Court.

The vote was largely along party lines, although Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) broke with Democrats to vote in favor of nomination. Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) came out against Kavanaugh's confirmation, but voted "present" on the confirmation vote in the spirit of comity because Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.) absent because he was attending his daughter's wedding.

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), a supporter of LGBT rights who was a champion of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, was thought to be a potential "no" vote on Kavanaugh, but declared her support for the nominee Friday.

The margin was the narrowest ever in history for the confirmation of a justice to the Supreme Court, beating the 52-48 vote in 1991 to confirm U.S. Associate Justice Clarence Thomas.

Raj Shah, a White House spokesperson, said in a statement the Trump administration would waste no time in seating Kavanaugh and arrange his swearing-in the day of his confirmation vote.

"The White House applauds the Senate for confirming President Trump's nominee Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court," Shah said. "Later today, the President will sign his commission of appointment and he will be officially sworn in."

According to the Associated Press, U.S. Chief Justice John Roberts and former U.S. Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy would swear in Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

Progressive and LGBT groups, who opposed Kavanaugh since he was nominated out of fears he'd rollback LGBT rights and overturn *Roe v. Wade*, were indignant over the Senate



Brett Kavanaugh refused to say he supports the Obergefell decision. (Blade photo by Michael Key).

approving his nomination.

Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said in a statement the confirmation was "a slap in the face to women and all sexual assault survivors."

"It is also a blow to the legitimacy of the Supreme Court," Minter said. "Kavanaugh's belligerence and hyperpartisan attacks at last week's hearing do not reflect the temperament or impartiality required for a lifetime appointment to our nation's highest court."

Kavanaugh now takes the seat on the Supreme Court formerly occupied by Kennedy, who was known as a moderate, dwining justice and wrote four major milestone decisions in favor of gay rights, including the 2015 ruling for marriage equality nationwide.

During his time as a judge on the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, Kavanaugh wasn't asked to deliver any rulings on LGBT rights. However, his inclusion on Trump's list of potential Supreme Court nominees, chosen by the Federalist Society and the Heritage Foundation, cast doubt he would interpret the law favorably for LGBT rights.

Stan Sloan, CEO of the Family Equality Council, articulated in a statement the concerns felt by LGBT rights supporters over Kavanaugh's confirmation.

"Today, we recognize the deep disappointment and fear many Americans are feeling, and acknowledge the specific fears of the LGBTQ community as the Justice joining the Supreme Court has a record that indicates he would undercut our rights, uphold discrimination against our community, and allow President Trump's anti-LGBTQ agenda to withstand judicial scrutiny," Sloan said.

Many LGBT right supporters have raised

concerns Kavanaugh will be the deciding vote reversing Kennedy's landmark decisions on LGBT rights, including the decision for marriage equality nationwide. Kavanaugh's responses on LGBT rights during his confirmation hearing left LGBT legal experts wholly unsatisfied.

The chances of reversing Obergefell three years after the court issued the decision may be slim, but marriage equality is but one issue Kavanaugh could face as a justice. Other LGBT-related cases that may come to Supreme Court with Kavanaugh on the bench including litigation challenging President Trump's transgender military ban, whether federal civil laws against sex discrimination applies to LGBT people and whether "religious freedom" affords a right for individuals and businesses to discriminate against LGBT people.

Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, said in a statement the confirmation was a "moral failure" on the part of the Senate.

"Justice Kavanaugh is a direct threat to the well-being of 2 million transgender people, and his confirmation is an insult to the millions of people who have survived sexual assault," Keisling said. "Every time the Supreme Court strips more rights away, survivors will receive a painful reminder that decisions about their lives are being made by people who have been credibly accused of sexual assault."

With Kavanaugh seated, many progressives are hoping outrage over the confirmation will contribute to the energy driving an expected "blue" wave at the polls in the upcoming congressional mid-term elections. However, new signs have indicated the Kavanaugh confirmation process has also generated a

backlash among Republican voters, who are now telling pollsters they're also energized.

Chad Griffin, president of the Human Rights Campaign, said in a statement the "harmful consequences of the Senate's decision to support Brett Kavanaugh will last decades" and urged voters to make their objections heard at the polls.

"In the wake of this news, there is only one course of action," Griffin said. "The millions of Americans who have fought a valiant struggle against this Trump-Pence nominee must make their voices heard in November and beyond by electing lawmakers who will stand up for our rights rather than sell us out."

Kavanaugh may not be out of the woods even though he was confirmed to the Supreme Court. Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, has indicated a Democratic majority in the House would further investigate sexual assault and perjury allegations against Kavanaugh, which could result in impeachment proceedings.

Sarah Kate Ellis, CEO of GLAAD, said in a statement voters should head to the polls to November to contain and reverse the Kavanaugh confirmation and the Trump administration.

"Brett Kavanaugh has been granted the opportunity to ensconce President Trump and Vice President Pence's hate-fueled anti-LGBTQ agenda on the nation's top court for decades to come, threatening the hard-won rights of women, LGBTQ people, immigrants, and all vulnerable people," Ellis said. "We must turn our attention to the ballot box in November to protect and preserve our most deeply held American values, and resist the tyranny of the Trump Administration."

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

FIND ONLINE

Supreme Court 2018-2019 Session Busy with LGBTQ Cases

Cases before the U.S. Supreme Court seem almost like an afterthought after last week's political slugfest over the confirmation process for President Trump's second nominee, Judge Brett Kavanaugh. But there are several cases before the high court that are of great importance to the LGBTQ community as the high court began its 2018-2019 session this week. In fact, this session could be one of the busiest in history for LGBTQ-related concerns.

Read the entire story online at PrideSource.com



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EQMI 2018 Fall Reception Recap

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

On Friday, Oct. 5, Equality Michigan hosted its annual Fall Reception with hundreds in attendance. The event featured not only notable speakers like the night's keynote, Olympic bronze medalist Adam Rippon, but brand-new awards in recognition of standout members of the Detroit LGBTQ community. The event kicked off with a video message from Sen. Debbie Stabenow, who emphasized that much of the progress for the LGBTQ community "is possible because" of organizations like EQMI and its supportive allies.

Executive director of Equality Michigan Stephanie White followed Stabenow's words by underscoring the value of teamwork with Michigan politicians.

"We're lucky to have great allies in Congress. Sen. Stabenow and Sen. Peters are wonderful, but we're really lucky to have a lot of wonderful elected officials up and down through all levels of government, many of whom are here tonight," White said. "... Equality Michigan is a political organization and politics is based on relationships. At its best politics is based on relationships. It's not playing out that well at the national scene right now and that makes it all the more important for us, here in this room, in the state of Michigan, to build the relationships that break down the barriers between us and work together for the common vision of our state."

In attendance at the Fall Reception were many Democratic candidates up for election on Nov. 6 like gubernatorial candidate Gretchen Whitmer, attorney general candidate Dana Nessel and state Senate candidate Jeremy Moss.

Among other speakers, the winner of EQMI's brand-new Bridge Builder Award was CMS Energy Corporation and Consumers Energy Company President and CEO Patti Poppe. In her address to the audience she made clear the need to "have a diverse and inclusive set of laws, rules and ways to operate with one another, because if people can bring themselves to work they can do the best work."

She was presented the award by Jim Fitterling, the chief executive officer of Dow Chemical Company, who is one of only a handful of openly gay CEOs of Fortune 500 companies.

Other awards of the night included the Change Maker Award, awarded to Melvin L. Larsen who is the co-author of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act; the Catalyst Award, awarded to Alma Wheeler Smith for helping to interpret the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act in favor of sexual orientation and gender identity; Adrian Goodstal received the McAllister Award for partnering with EQMI to create the first dedicated shelter to trans adults in Grand Rapids; and Brandi Smith received Youth Award for her work with Detroit's Ruth Ellis Center.

Smith said she as honored to receive the award and emphasized in her speech the need of the LGBTQ community to work together cohesively to create even more success in the future.

"I also feel like as organizations, a lot of the time, we don't like to come together and stand together," Smith said. "I feel like it's time for us to stand up and fight. Fight until we can't fight anymore, and fight until we have equality. Not only in the trans community, but in the LGBT community as a whole."

When Rippon took the stage, his speech centered on the importance of not only



Executive director of Equality Michigan Stephanie White listens to gubernatorial candidate Gretchen Whitmer. BTL photo: Eve Kucharski.

LGBTQ activists standing firm in the face of oppression, but for everyone in the LGBTQ community to recognize their value despite hardship. He recounted his own experience before the Olympic games when he criticized Vice President Mike Pence's role in leading the U.S. delegation to the opening ceremony in Pyeongchang, South Korea. He said that though Pence invited Rippon to a one-on-one meeting to discuss those events, he declined.

"I feel like sometimes as people within the LGBTQ community we feel only good enough to be the supporting role in our own lives," Rippon said. "We feel sometimes that we just can be the best friend, we feel sometimes we can be just the gay best friend. And I said, 'No, not this time. I can be my own champion.'"

Rippon's final message was a clear one: vote.

He urged those in attendance to make sure that their voices are heard.

"There is still work to be done, and the people who feel that us as LGBTQ people are not of the same level, the only thing that we should say to them is that, 'From up here, I can't see you either,' because they are a dying breed and we must fight forward," Rippon said. "We must act and we must act now. With the Trump administration even earlier this week (saying) same-sex partners of foreign diplomats will be denied visas. That is cruel and unnecessary. We need to find and elect people who are champions of LGBTQ rights because LGBTQ rights are human rights. Women's rights are human rights, and we are all equal. We must vote. we must get out there and vote."

Gillibrand and Whitmer Tour Affirmations

U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Michigan's Democratic gubernatorial candidate Gretchen Whitmer toured Affirmations Community Center Oct. 8 on the final stop on their whirlwind weekend of events in support of Whitmer's campaign for governor. State Senate candidate Jeremy Moss welcomed the guests to Affirmations, describing Ferndale as, "the area in Michigan with the highest concentration of LGBT people." He lauded Whitmer for her strong support of LGBTQ rights while minority leader in the State Senate saying her record alone

made her a great choice for LGBTQ voters. But, he said, another reason the choice is so easy for our community is because Whitmer's Republican opponent Bill Schuette has, "spent his entire political career fighting against the LGBTQ community."

Affirmations Development Director Katie Koch led the tour of the center. Gillibrand, a strong supporter of LGBTQ equality, is a leading progressive voice in the U.S. Senate and it is widely speculated that she may make a run for the White House in 2020.



U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) (second from right) and (far left) on tour of Affirmations. Pictured here with current State Rep and candidate for State Senate Jeremy Moss, State Rep. Robert Wittenberg (D-Hazel Park) and Ferndale City Councilwoman Melanie Piana listening to Katie Koch of Affirmations.

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Williamston School Board Members Targeted for Recall for Supporting Trans-Positive Policies



From left to right the members of the school board targeted for recall: Christopher Lewis, Sarah Belanger, Nancy Deal and Greg Talberg.

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

When Ingham County voters head to the polls on Tuesday, Nov. 6, they'll find a usual list of candidates on their ballot everywhere except where it concerns the Williamston School Board. In that election, voters will find that four of the seven existing members have been targeted for recall: Board President Greg Talberg and Nancy Deal, whose terms would have expired in 2020; and Sarah Belanger and Chris Lewis, who would have been in office until 2022. The recall of these candidates concerns two 2017 policies they each supported, 8011 and 9260 which were adopted Nov. 6 of 2017, that allow students who are questioning their gender identity to get case-specific resources from their school, and for access to private, non-gender-segregated restroom facilities.

A Need Seen

Lewis said that as early as late 2016, the issue was one that board members saw a need to address.

"We started to see more and more faces that were popping up across the country of students that were concerned about accommodations and school districts that did not have accommodations or policies in place that would recognize transgender students," Lewis said.

"We didn't feel as a board that we were educated enough on the issue to understand what kind of need was out there, so we did bring in some experts to do some training with the board, not only to look at the legal aspects and the legal issues, but also some of the other issues that go around that."

Talberg added that it was at an event at Williamston High School where "some of our kids indicated they felt threatened" about being LGBTQ that spurred the board on to create inclusive policy measures.

"So we actually had someone from the Department of Education from the State of Michigan come to Williamston Community Schools and talk to some of our students," Talberg said. "And they indicated that the students did feel threatened so we decided as a board to take some action on this issue."

It was then that the board's policy committee began to create policy 8011, referencing existing policies in places like Ann Arbor and Philadelphia. Over several months the committee crafted a draft of 8011 and during an early fall board meeting last year stated that they would like to take it to a vote at the board's next meeting. That's when Lewis said a community member voiced her concern.

"Now, she asked for copies of the policy and after that she started posting the draft policy in community forums and, basically, got a lot of people that were not for the policy up in arms

and wanting more buy-in and talking about it," Lewis said. "There were a lot of people who felt we had not been talking about it enough to the public."

That's when the school board scheduled an open forum to expand discussion on the issue that turned into two separate meetings.

"They were highly-attended by people on both sides from inside the community, outside the community and in those conversations we heard both sides of things," Lewis said. "We actually made adjustments to policy 8011 as well as the other policy on bathroom and shower usage."

That other policy is 9260. According to former Williamston School Board member and Michigan Association of School Boards Assistant Legal Counsel Joel Gerring, it was designed to help compromise with those on the other side of the issue.

"This was instead of just being for transgender students and being comfortable to choose any bathroom they want to use, this is for any student who says, 'I no longer want to use that mens bathroom because a transgender boy uses that bathroom and that makes me uncomfortable,'" Gerring said. "They could say that and they could be given use of another facility nearby, maybe a faculty restroom because they felt like their policy rights were being violated by the mere presence of trans person being in there or possibly entering."

Gerring himself was a board member who supported passing of the policies but resigned the day after the vote. The final draft of 8011 doesn't actually mention the word "transgender," though it originally was titled "Transgender and Non-Conforming Students."

"We ended up with 8011 which really doesn't come right out and say what we're doing for the transgender students," he said. "It's not a definitive guarantee that it'll be granted in every situation, unlike the Ann Arbor policy."

Community Backlash

The current recall measures were put forth by parents who felt the language included in the policies was unclear and therefore jeopardized their access to their children's affairs, but this isn't the first time that a recall proceeding was attempted. According to a Lansing State Journal article, on Jan. 9, 2018, the election commission voted 2-1 to approve recall petitions from 2017. However, even though the appropriate number of signatures were obtained, the four members of the board filed a lawsuit against the Ingham County Election Commission because they claimed the language of the petitions wasn't "factual" or "clear." On May 3, Washtenaw County Circuit Judge Patrick Conlin ruled the language of the petition wasn't valid.

"They failed over a dozen times submitting language that was neither factual nor clear,"

Talberg said. “Now we’re here, they finally got the language approved.”

The Ingham County Election Commission approved the language on the newly-created recall petitions on June 19 of this year, and the petitioners submitted the required signatures per board member by the required date of Aug. 3. Though just like last time the board members could have appealed the petitions, they chose not to and their seats are up for re-election on Nov. 6.

“Well, you know, when we voted somebody in the audience yelled out ‘recall,’ so they made those threats all along, that if we go down this path that recall was definitely a possibility,” Talberg said of the initial vote on the policies last year. “So we knew from the start that there were people adamantly opposed to this policy and no matter what compromises we made or what language we added, they were determined that recall was the path they were going to take because we brought the issue up in the first place.”

For instance, a parent in the school district, Lori Johncheck, wrote an Op-Ed in the Lansing State Journal a few weeks after the confirmation of the recall proceedings. She claimed that the language included in the policies was “vague” and jeopardizes “student privacy” by not including language that said “everyone will use the bathroom, shower and changing facility that matches their biological sex,” despite the policy’s intended support of transgender students. Johncheck also cited support for the Facebook page Williamston for Truth which she said has “the rest of the story.” The Facebook page’s moderators regularly post content that supports the recall of all four of the policy-supportive candidates. They also support the election of candidates Walter Holm, Karen Potter, Debbie Hutchison and Craig Hagelberger as replacement candidates in the recall election. Neither did the Williamston for Truth-endorsed candidates nor the page’s moderators respond to BTL’s request for comment.

Weight On Wording

The main concerns of parents regarding the two adopted policies seem to be in policy 8011 usage of the words “and/or” in this sentence:

“WCS shall accept the gender identity that each student asserts reflecting the student’s legitimately held belief once the student and/or his or her parent/guardian, as appropriate, notifies District administration that the student intends to assert a gender identity that differs from previous representations or records.”

The argument of the pro-recall parents against the usage of “and/or” before “parent/guardian” contends that the board is aiming to exclude parents from being notified if a student were to request different bathroom accommodations because they came out as transgender. In her Op-Ed, Johncheck addressed this issue.

“You will notice ‘and/or’ language in paragraph two of 8011. The ‘or’ leaves room for the school to decide whether parents will be contacted. You won’t find qualifying language in 8011 that expressly mandates parental notification. Because of this, it’s possible for a minor to be recognized as the opposite sex at school without parents knowing.”

However, the writers of the policy stand by their decision to put in “and/or.” In fact Talberg cited it as “good policy language” because of exceptions like domestic abuse or if a student is over 18. Gerring said he understands the concerns of the parents, but agrees with Talberg.

“Parents have a fundamental right to be involved in the education of their children and to be involved in the decisions regarding their safety and welfare while they’re at school. And that doesn’t change. Williamson cannot create a policy that changes that,” Gerring said. “The only reason that policy has an ‘and/or’ — and a lot of district policies read that way — is because you have got to give your administrator — in this case the superintendent — the flexibility to make certain calls and the only time they would make a call on whether or not a parent would be immediately informed or not informed, is when the student reveals something.”

He went on to say that many policies today feature such writing because in decades past students would confide in teachers or administrators and say they were pregnant.

“They would indicate that they needed help, that they were pregnant, but then they would say, ‘You cannot tell my parents, my dad will kill me,’ or ‘I’m being abused at home, if my parents find out that I’m gay, or ‘I’m pregnant I’m going to get physically abused.’ That is the one situation that an administrator has to be able to make a judgment call, ‘Is this believable? Is what this student is telling me true?’” Gerring said. “... that’s why the ‘or’ is there.”

Gerring emphasized, too, that in the case of transgender students — the original group who stood to benefit from 8011 — the likelihood that they would request bathroom facilities but request not to tell their parents is very slim.

“By the time a transgender student is coming to a school district and requesting accommodation like a bathroom accommodation, they’re already out. That’s sort of the end of the transgender transitioning process,” Gerring said. “You can be gay and hide it from your parents, you can be pregnant — for a period of time anyway — and hide it, but being transgender is a journey to the outward manifestation of what you feel inside, and, when that’s the case, there is no hiding that you’ve made this transition. By the time you’re making a request for the bathroom accommodation, nine times out of 10, the parents are sitting there right with the student as it’s happening while they’re making the request.”

Legal Battles

The community’s outrage was significant

enough that all four board members and Gerring as well, despite his resignation, are the targets of a lawsuit brought last January by community parents and represented by David Kallman of the conservative group Great Lakes Justice Center. Kallman claimed that the two policies went beyond the limits of Michigan’s Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act which doesn’t include protections for gender identity and ran counter to his client’s religious beliefs.

“Common sense and common decency demand that biologically intact boys should not be showering with girls, should not be allowed to use girls’ bathroom and locker room facilities, or take a girl’s spot on an athletic team,” said Kallman in a press release concerning the case. “Moreover, parents should not be denied critical health information about their children.”

Jay Kaplan is the staff attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan. In March of this year his organization filed a motion to intervene in the lawsuit.

“We filed in Federal District Court for the western district and we filed the motion back in March to intervene and we mentioned the high school has a Gay Straight Alliance and there’s also a chapter of Stand with Trans that serves the Williamston Area,” Kaplan said. “Our argument is that we want to represent their interests, because if a school district cannot pass a policy that protects LGBT students against discrimination this puts LGBT kids at risk for not only bullying, but for harassment and being deprived of equal opportunity in education.”

Currently, that motion to intervene has not yet been decided on by Judge Paul L. Maloney. It has been over six months and is still pending. Kaplan said that there have been other similar lawsuits in Michigan’s history that were dismissed in federal district courts and he’s hopeful that this one will proceed similarly.

“There was a lawsuit filed against the Howell School District several years ago by parents in the school district. One of their claims was that by having a nondiscrimination policy that violated their religious freedom in terms of the policies they wanted to instill in their children, and, as to that claim, a federal district court dismissed their claim,” Kaplan said. “There have been other courts that have looked at this issue and felt that certainly, parents are entitled to hold the religious beliefs that they have but using that as a basis to challenge a nondiscrimination policy has not been found by federal courts that have looked at this issue.”

Kaplan went on to say that there’s been a recent uptick in the usage of religious beliefs as a way to allow discrimination in both local and national cases — something that he views as a serious threat to LGBTQ rights.

“It’s been an effective tactic, it’s been a tactic that certainly opponents are using. They lost on the issue of marriage equality, they have lost — for the most part — in terms of demonizing gay and lesbian individuals and some of the mistruths still no longer hold true, but they have

found a vulnerable target: transgender people,” Kaplan said. “Awareness of what it means to be transgender is less prevalent in general in society so they’re acting upon that and they’re focusing on the issue of bathrooms and they’re using in terms of religious beliefs as a way to try to prevent pro-LGBT policies from taking effect, painting themselves as victims. And I see, particularly in Michigan, it’s apparently a tactic from David Kallman and the Great Lakes Law Center as a way to try to prevent local entities from considering and supporting policies that are favorable to LGBT people.”

Kaplan also said that in his work with the case he visited several of the Williamston school board meetings. He said he was struck by the blatant misunderstanding surrounding the transgender community by those who were most adamant about the board’s recall.

“I attended two of the school board meetings where they discussed this policy and I’ll tell you, I’ve been in my job for 17 years and I’ve attended a lot of public hearings. I have never heard such awful things being said about, particularly, transgender people,” he said. “A lot of it was based on mistruths, based on fear, based on lack of knowledge and I think the bigger thing was the idea that their child might have to share a restroom with someone who is transgender seemed to be more of the motivating factor than anything else.”

Re-Campaigning

As Nov. 6 draws nearer, all four board members being targeted by the recall are in the midst of re-campaigning to hold their spots. Among other methods, the group now has a website that outlines all four of their campaigns and a dedicated Crowdpac that evenly splits campaign donations to the four of them. Right now, they are nearing the end of their \$10,000 goal.

When asked what keeps him campaigning for his spot despite all the struggle, Talberg said it’s the “high-achieving” and “high-functioning” school district he serves. He said that the primary benefit for Williamston voting for the existing incumbents is to maintain the forward “momentum” already in place.

“We have passed those policies that clearly indicate that we intend to and will be an accepting community so that’s important,” Talberg said. “I would encourage anyone who values inclusion and acceptance to support the current board and if you value the success and achievement of the district.”

To find out more information about each of the targets of the recall visit keepwilliamstonboard.com. For more information about Williamston for Truth and their endorsed candidates visit their public Facebook page at gaybe.am/Kf.

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ELECTION 2018

Breakdown of Michigan Ballot Proposals

BTL Supports Yes Votes on All Three Initiatives

BY BTL STAFF

With Nov. 6 fast approaching, not only will voters be gearing up to vote on their chosen candidates, but they'll need to decide whether to vote "yes" or "no" on three ballot proposals that affect everyone in the state. In advance of the election, here is a list of each of the three proposals.

Proposal 18-1: Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol

Put forth by the coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol, proposal 18-1 would allow individuals age 21 and older to "purchase, possess and use marijuana and marijuana-infused edibles and grow up to 12 marijuana plants for personal consumption," according to the official ballot wording. According to the coalition's site regulatemi.org, they earned over 250,000 signatures in time to put the proposal on the ballot in November.

The proposal would also impose a 10 ounce limit for the amount of marijuana permissible to be kept in one's home, and require that amounts over 2.5 ounces be "secured in locked containers."

If passed, the proposal would require the state to create a licensing system of marijuana businesses that would "allow municipalities to ban or restrict them." For communities that did allow the retail sale of marijuana and edibles, there would be a 10 percent tax dedicated to "implementation costs, clinical trials, schools, roads, and municipalities where marijuana businesses are located."

Lastly, the proposal says that if passed it would "change several current violations from crimes to civil infractions." According to statistics from the American Civil Liberties Union, "Of the 8.2 million marijuana arrests between 2001 and 2010, 88 percent were for simply having marijuana." And Vox reported that in 2016 alone, "more people were arrested for marijuana possession than for all crimes the FBI classifies as violent." If regulated like alcohol, there is a chance that there will be a significant cut in arrests for minor infractions.

BTL supports a YES vote.
Learn more at regulatemi.org

Proposal 18-2: Voters Not Politicians

This proposal is aimed at stopping the process of gerrymandering. If passed, the

proposal would require Michigan to adopt a constitutional amendment that creates a commission of 13 registered voters randomly selected by the Michigan Secretary of State to adopt district boundaries for the Michigan Senate, Michigan House of Representatives and U.S. Congress every 10 years. According to the votersnotpoliticians.com website, this is to fight politicians who "draw voting maps that directly benefit themselves, instead of putting the interests of voters or communities of Michigan first."

According to the official ballot language, of the 13 registered voters selected, four must "self-identify as affiliated with the 2 major political parties," and five must "self-identify as unaffiliated with major political parties." Additionally, the proposal would prohibit "partisan officeholders and candidates, their employers, certain relatives, and lobbyists from serving as commissioners."

The proposal would require that members of the commission would redistrict in an effort to reflect "Michigan's diverse population and communities of interest," and ensure that newly-drawn districts do not "provide disproportionate advantage to political parties or candidates."

BTL supports a YES vote.
Learn more at votersnotpoliticians.com

Proposal 18-3: Promote the Vote

According to statistics from the Secretary of State, in 2014 of the almost 7.5 million registered voters only 42 percent of them turned up to cast their ballots — with a similar trend in previous gubernatorial election years in 2010, 2006 and 2002. In an effort to fight this weak turnout in the upcoming election and all future ones, Proposal 18-3 aims to make the process of voting and registering to vote easier.

It proposes to authorize "automatic and Election Day voter registration, no-reason absentee voting, and straight ticket voting; and add current legal requirements for military and overseas voting and post-election audits to the Michigan Constitution."

BTL supports a YES vote.
Learn more at promotethevote.com

To learn more about each of the proposals visit their sites: Promote the Vote can be found at promotethevote.com. Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol's site is regulatemi.org. Voters Not Politicians' website is votersnotpoliticians.com.



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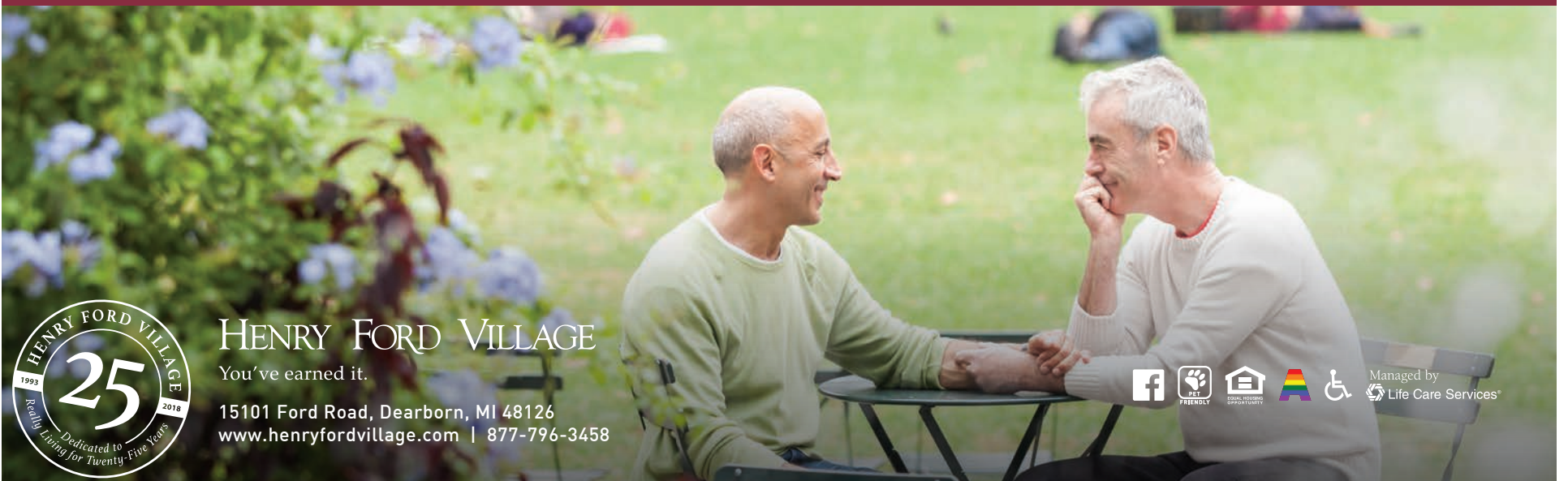
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Emily's Ribbon At a Time ... Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

The 19th Century poet Emily Dickinson wrote over 1,800 poems in her five-decade life. In one of these exceptional, divinatory and uniquely insightful, poems she spoke of “a certain slant of light.”

She found this sunlight “oppressive as cathedral tunes.” Only a poet of her one-of-a-kind sensitivity, born of her New England solitary existence — her friends and companions were select and very few — could make the comparison. Cathedral tunes.

Oppressive for Emily, perhaps in this instance, but in another poem she speaks awesomely, joyfully, happily, “I’ll tell you how the sun arose: a ribbon at a time.”

As a longtime admirer of Emily Dickinson I have memorized many of her poems. Her comment on light made me — born 50 years after her untimely death — recently to think of several times in my long life I too have found sunlight, sunshine and sky radiance of such to memorably punctuate my own earthly stay.

However briefly. However much in passing. However now and then. Sunlight is the daily citadel of souls. Yours and mine.

Cathedral tunes. Dark days — and there are so many of late, thanks to the cosmic political overcasting of cloud gloomers Trump, Pence, day-drooping McConnell, abuse-mongering Kavanaugh — provide no positive emotional nexus for me — or we LGBTQS — to respond to. Their vision is constant, threateningly overcast. A horizon of storms.

But, when the sun shines for me, say about 3:30 or 4 p.m. in the summer or fall afternoon, I have an automatic, inner, touching, almost visceral, unflinching response.

Its message is urging, ingrained in me as a boy, automatic as a questioning teenager, and if-only-I-could-do-it-again, now as an adult in aging memory.

Look up ... hurry home, Charles Robert Alexander, Jr.! It’s your dinner time! Your seat in the family’s small, 444 Peterboro apartment kitchen awaits you. Dinner with your mom, your father, your grandmother. Roast chicken. Corn bread. A slice or two of granny’s pumpkin pie.

Comfort. Security. Shared voices. So long silenced. But never forgotten. One by one I can still hear my family speaking ... Buzz. Bobby. Granny’s Old Bubba. The one-on-one names they call me.

And here’s this recent sunshine nexus that happened to me so vividly that for several moments it seemed incredibly real. I’m driving with my artist friend Jon Strand in his, now-outdated blue Volkswagen Beetle.

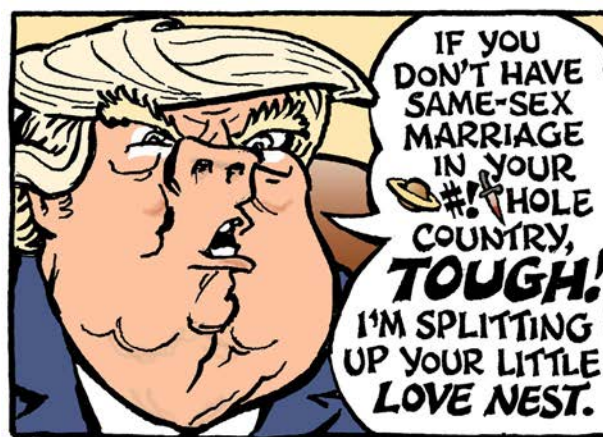
Seated between us is Jon’s highly intelligent black lab Otie, who now and then buddy-buddy rubs affectionately against me. We’re driving to Otie’s Vet’s Office in Birmingham.

The sunlight surrounding our drive, brightly lighting up well-manicured, turning leaves trees, quiet homes, the smooth, well-paved streets — it affects its radiant magic. And it surely must radiate to Jon and Otie. We’re a congenial threesome.

However briefly, however totally improbable the feeling — laughingly so perhaps — I am once more feeling I’m 30! Happy. Content. Adventuresome. Glad to be gay. Out. My promising life yet still ahead of me. Challenging, but rewarding.

Yes. The sunlit induced experience is magic, even though it’s only mental, wagtail hocus pocus. (Thanks to Emily’s Sunlight for letting me remember.)

See **Parting Glances**, continued on next page



Bring Out Your Dead

BY TIM RETZLOFF

Oct. 11 marks the 30th anniversary of the first National Coming Out Day. That first NCOD in 1988 is seared in my memory because Charlotte, Ginny, Rob and I painted The Flint Block with a giant pink triangle in a bit of small-scale renegade activism. My 24-year-old gay self felt like I was doing something to fight hometown homophobia.

NCOD was created by psychologist Robert Eichberg and activist Jean O’Leary to commemorate the first anniversary of the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Publicity for the Day invited people to “Take Your Next Step.” In the years since, NCOD has been marked with mass coming out events, kiss-ins, Facebook announcements and celebrity reveals. The idea has been to encourage LGBTQ people and allies to be as open as possible about their lives.

The clarion call for visibility has been embraced by the Human Rights Campaign, which showcases NCOD as an annual collective action.

“Coming out — whether it is as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or allied — STILL MATTERS. When people know someone who is LGBTQ, they are far more likely to support equality under the law,” reads its website. “Beyond that, our stories can be powerful to each other.”

The imperative to go public dates back to the gay liberation movement, when militant activists proclaimed that visibility was key to social change. As historian John D’Emilio notes, prior to gay lib, coming out had meant coming out into the gay

world. After gay lib, it came to mean coming out to everybody.

Harvey Milk famously told attendees of the 1978 Gay Freedom Day rally in San Francisco, “You must come out.” In background context, John Briggs wanted to ban homo teachers in California and Anita Bryant was crusading to defeat local gay rights measures in Florida, Kansas, Minnesota and Oregon. Milk’s sense of coming out was an out-to-everybody-you-know definition.

“Come out to your parents. I know that it is hard and will hurt them, but think about how they will hurt you in the voting booth!” he said. “Come out to your relatives. Come out to your friends, if indeed they are your friends. Come out to your neighbors, to your fellow workers, to the people who work where you eat and shop.”

Media scholar Mary Gray critiques the politics of visibility in “Out in the Country,” her 2009 study of queer Appalachian youth. For Gray, the obligation to be out may actually bring harm to rural populations of LGBTQ people.

In a similar vein, activist and writer Preston Mitchum wrote in *The Atlantic* on the 25th anniversary of NCOD in 2013 about having mixed feelings regarding the valorization of coming out. He cautioned that for some people revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity could be dangerous, “particularly when one belongs to multiple marginalized communities.”

See **Retzliff: Viewpoint**, continued on next page

► Retzloff: Viewpoint

Continued from p. 12

Mitchum stressed that homophobia, biphobia and transphobia can bring real consequences, ranging from rejection by family to workplace discrimination to threat of bodily harm.

“Certainly no one should be forced to come out. Our personal journeys are just that: personal,” he said. “The last thing a closeted LGBT individual needs, faced with a hostile social environment, is to feel like those individuals most accepting of his or her identity won’t support him or her unless that identity is publicly proclaimed.”

But what about when people are no longer among the living? Must we respect their wishes? Shall they forever be kept in the closet?

I’m a historian, committed to understanding the past, especially the queer past, as best we are able. As such, I’d like to urge everyone who can (and who is willing) to bring out your dead.

Which raises two questions: Can you out the dead, and should you out the dead?

Public exposure was once a matter of scandal, and a ready tool of anti-queer institutions and individuals determined to us harm. Exposure served as tabloid fodder going back to Liberace, who sued the scandal magazine Confidential in 1957 over insinuations that he’d had a homosexual tryst with a young male press agent.

More consequentially, during the 1950s, in a witch hunt that targeted homosexuals in government, gay and lesbian federal employees were pressured to name names. The people questioned and those they named lost their jobs. The purges are the subject of the new documentary film “The Lavender Scare,” based on David K. Johnson’s 2004 book of the same name. Meanwhile, at Michigan State University police forced a student to name names of gay people he knew and where they met. Unless compelled, LGBTQ people protected each other’s secrets.

Jump ahead to the early 1990s, when some queer folk thought it okay to expose others. Michelangelo Signorile stirred considerable controversy in the pages of Outweek with peekaboo celebrity teasers in his column.

Meanwhile, guerilla artists plastered New York with broadsides of closeted celebs labeled with big letters “Absolutely Queer.” Take that Jodie Foster!

The Advocate on its cover outed Pete Williams, now a legal affairs correspondent for NBC News, who was then serving as Pentagon spokesperson under Defense Secretary Dick Cheney.

Proponents of outing justified their actions as

needed in order to expose the hypocrisy of anti-gay politicians and public figures amidst the ravages of AIDS and the venom of the Culture Wars.

Yet outing the dead is not the same as outing the living. Revealing someone’s sexuality or gender seems different when its post mortem. As a historian who focuses on mid-20th-century queer life, I am sensitive to the closet and believe it important to follow an ethic of self-disclosure, for those still alive to consent.

At the same time, as much as possible we need to know, and share, the real names of the real people with familiar faces and hidden lives whose discreet existence defined much of the pre-Stonewall era. Rather than outing the dead, we should think in terms of bringing them out. Consider it an act of sharing. How else to understand the realities, complexities and power of the closet?

Over the years, the LGBTQ community has collectively embraced the idea of bringing people out with the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt and candlelight vigils for Transgender Day of Remembrance. Do we disclose only those who died in tragic circumstances?

From the beginning of Michigan LGBTQ Remember, I have included a spectrum of queer forebears for which, to quote the About page, “some were out during their lifetime, some were not.” I continue to believe that each person presented in the gallery “deserves to be remembered as part of the LGBTQ communities that came before us.”

So, for this year’s National Coming Out Day, bring out your dead.

If you have deceased LGBTQ friends or relatives who may not have been out during their lifetimes, bring them out, even in some small way. Help them take their next step.

Tell someone about them. Write up an account of their lives for some future reader (or perhaps a historian). Maybe, in the fashion of cemeteries planting American flags on veterans’ graves, place a rainbow flag at their final resting place.

Why?

Return again to Harvey Milk.

“Once and for all, break down the myths; destroy the lies and distortions for your own sake, for their sake, for the sake of the youngsters who are being terrified by the votes coming from Dade County and Eugene,” he said.

And, I might add, for the sake of remembering our LGBTQ pasts.

Tim Retzloff teaches history and LGBTQ studies at Michigan State University. This is reprinted from his blog Queer Remembering.

always look for the inner and outer light of our LGBTQ being. (And surely see more than a rainbow ribbon at a time.)

Charles Alexander is prolific both as a BTL columnist (700-plus columns) and as a well-known LGBT community artist (1000 Facebook 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

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

The 50 Senators Who Voted to Confirm Brett Kavanaugh

If you’ve ever wanted to commit sexual assault, now is your chance. I mean, has there ever been a better time, especially for men assaulting women? We are in the midst of the Kavanaugh Window where no accusation of sexual assault, no matter how credible, will be believed.

After all, any woman accusing any man, especially any powerful man, will just be accused of jumping on the #MeToo bandwagon.

So go get your ‘sault on. And, honestly, the weirder the better. Sexual assault is shame-inducing and demoralizing all on its own, but if you can make the experience extra embarrassing then that makes it even less likely to be reported at all! Not that you have to worry, because people won’t believe her even if she does report. You could do something really crazy like ask her, “Who has put pubic hair on my Coke [can]?” Or tell her that you want to rub her [expletive] with a falafel. Shout out to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas and celebrity “news” host Bill O’Reilly who were accused of those very things respectively. And terrible things happened to them like (checks list) getting confirmed to the Supreme Court and continuing to be paid outlandish sums for pretending to be a journalist. Harsh!

Or maybe you committed a smidge or two of sexual assault in your past, say, as a young child of 17 who couldn’t have possibly known that trying to make sex with a girl who didn’t want to make sex with you was in any way wrong. Well, you’re in luck, too, because attempted rape doesn’t count if you were in high school. (It’s also super helpful to be white and rich.)

Now, if you’re a man and you want to sexually assault other males, well, that is not recommended, but who knows? Maybe sexual assault tide raises all sexual assault boats. Then again, some men tend to take that sort of thing marginally more seriously, or at least are a lot less concerned about punishing a homo than, you know, a “normal” guy who rapes.

If I seem angry, then sorry, but not sorry BECAUSE I AM ANGRY AND YES I AM YELLING.

With Brett Kavanaugh confirmed to the Supreme Court, where he and Clarence Thomas can drink all the Cokes they want as they vote to take away a woman’s right to make decisions about

her own body, by a president who has himself been accused of sexual assault and harassment many times over and who was caught on tape bragging about grabbing women “by the pussy,” we are saying to women and men who have been sexually assaulted, “You do not matter. We do not see you, we do not hear you, we do not care.”

**Wake. Up. And. Vote.
Everything and everyone
depends on it.**

#HimToo is trending on Twitter. The idea is that men are the real victims here. Men have to live in constant fear that they will be falsely accused. In reality, men are much more likely to be sexually assaulted themselves than falsely accused. The idea that women make this stuff up for attention is insane. But it’s a lot easier to believe that than to actually address America’s systemic rape culture problem.

Thankfully if you search for #HimToo on Twitter you find mostly Tweets that begin “This is my son” with pictures of people who are, in fact, not the users’ sons, in order to mock a post purportedly by a mother who Tweeted a picture of her son in a sailor suit and claimed that “he won’t go on solo dates due to the current climate of false sexual accusations by radical feminists with an axe to grind. I VOTE.” The responses are truly hilarious.

And, man, I need to laugh because I feel like breaking something. But I can’t come up with anything worth breaking compared to democracy. America is broken. And as far as I can tell, this break isn’t going to ever fully heal. I’m not saying America will never walk again. But if we ever get back on our feet, we will always have a noticeable limp.

We will always have a reminder of what happened when we were careless. When we were cruel. When we didn’t #BelieveWomen. When we didn’t #BelieveSurvivors. When we went home with the drunkest guy at the party — the guy who’d spent the night boasting about sexual assault, making fun of disabled people, praising Nazis, and gambling with other people’s money — handed him the keys and said, “I’ll sleep while you drive.”

Wake. Up. And. Vote. Everything and everyone depends on it.

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 12

Another brief Dickinson poem aptly sums things up for me and so many of us these troubling days, “Had I not seen the Sun/ I could have borne the shade/ But Light a newer Wilderness/ My Wilderness has made.”

Let us always learn to resist the shade. The Cathedral tunes of political oppression. Let us

Inclusive Justice Brings LGBTQ Conference to MCC-D

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Inclusive Justice will present a day-long conference called Faith, LGBT Inclusion & Human Rights on Friday, Oct. 19. Inclusive Justice is a statewide, faith-based coalition inclusive of all traditions that affirms the inherent dignity and worth of every human being as a matter of spiritual conviction, and its conference will take from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Metropolitan Community Church – Detroit in Clawson.

“We’re really looking forward to a variety of opportunities to learn about the full spectrum of gay, lesbian, bisexual and, in particular, transgender youth and adults, and their faith and spiritual beliefs,” said Pat Horton, Inclusive Justice’s co-chair.

As in all their efforts, Inclusive Justice will advocate at the conference for the acceptance of LGBTQ persons in spiritual communities and for the equitable treatment of all in local state and federal public policy.

“The goal of the conference is to take a more in-depth look at the LGBT perspective and the interaction of spirituality and faith,” Horton said. “So we start with people who are voiced in Biblical and theological debate about gender and orientation and what the Bible really says about it and what it doesn’t say about it that has worked its way into popular belief systems.”

Participants of the conference will choose a morning and afternoon workshop to attend. Morning selections include: *Shepherding and Supporting LGBT Youth and Their Families*, which will be facilitated by Peter Tchoryk and Roz Keith; *Transgender: Basic Understanding and Beyond the Binary*, facilitated by Rev. Phiwa Langeni; *The Bible and Inclusion (Jesus and the Purity Code)*, facilitated by Rev. Joe Summers; and *Leading By Example: Cultivating Inclusivity in Progressive Congregations*, facilitated by Ben Hollenbach.

For the afternoon session, workshops will include: *The Bible and the Transgender Experience*, which will be facilitated by Julie Nemecek; *Working with Conservative Congregations*, facilitated by Tom and Linda Nelson and Rev. Dr. Roland Stringfellow; *Peace Making Dialogues*, facilitated by Jim Toy; and *Creative Destruction*, facilitated by Felix and Paula Sirls.

There will also be a keynote

speech in the afternoon delivered by Stringfellow. The title of his talk will be “Liberating Religious Liberty.”

“This conference is an opportunity for religious people, or people of faith, to receive guidance on how to make their congregation more welcoming and inclusive for LGBT individuals,” said Stringfellow. “We have several issues that we will be addressing. One is religious liberty and how conservatives are using religious language to promote a narrow agenda of masking discrimination.”

Stringfellow adapted his speech from his doctoral thesis.

“I have developed a curriculum for congregations to help understand why a contemporary definition of religious liberty is harmful when used by religious conservatives,” he said. “The name of the curriculum is called ‘Liberating Religious Liberty.’ I wanted to put this kind of complicated topic of why religious liberty is bad into an accessible format for people to know, especially I think even now with our current political climate we’re going to see more and more assaults on LGBT equality under the guise of a person’s personal religious liberty. My goal is to help equip congregations to understand to recognize these types of attacks and what to do to help educate their people on how to vote on these topics and how to stand for inclusion for all people.”

The conference will close out with a press conference co-sponsored by Freedom for All Americans on the topic of forthcoming legislation in support of LGBT equality.

“To continue to advance LGBT equality, we must elect pro-equality candidates that have committed to making Michigan stronger by advocating for the rights of all Michiganders, including those of the LGBT community,” said Equality Michigan’s Political Director Erin Knott. “As we face ongoing attacks at the state and federal levels, and the threat of anti-LGBT candidate Bill Schuette in the governor’s office, investing in races up and down the ballot and fighting for a pro-equality majority in the Legislature has never been more important. We must elect leaders who will stand up and fight for our civil rights and social justice.”

Admission to the conference costs \$10. Register for the conference at inclusivejustice.org.

Mombian: Three Wins for LGBTQ Families

BY DANA RUDOLPH

Could you use a pick-me-up this week? I could. Without denying the significant challenges that remain, here are a few recent wins for LGBTQ families on the federal, state and local levels — proof that even in this era, we can still stand strong and make progress.

Adoption Discrimination Amendment Defeated

First, the U.S. House of Representatives on Sept. 26 followed the Senate in passing the Fiscal Year 2019 appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Defense, without an amendment proposed by Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-Ala.) that would have permitted taxpayer-funded foster care and adoption agencies to cite religious beliefs as a reason to discriminate against LGBTQ prospective parents, LGBTQ youth in care and others.

After the House Appropriations Committee had passed the amendment in July and the bill moved to the Senate, 40 senators led by Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) signed a letter to Senate Appropriations Committee leaders in opposition to the amendment. And the Every Child Deserves a Family Campaign, a project of the Family Equality Council, organized hundreds of child welfare, LGBTQ, faith-based and allied organizations to sign letters to committee members asking them to drop it. The final version of the bill removed the amendment and was passed by both houses, killing it for this session of Congress.

There are still unfortunately 10 states that have religious exemption laws allowing Aderholt Amendment-style discrimination in adoption and foster care. We’re not out of the woods yet, but there’s a little more light peeking through the trees.

Parentage Law Made Equal

On the state level, California Governor Jerry Brown (D) signed legislation on Sept. 28 that updates state law “to provide equal treatment to same-sex parents, transgender parents and their children.” Among other provisions, the new law says parents of any gender who used assisted reproductive technology to conceive may establish parentage, even if they are unmarried, simply by signing a no-cost form at the hospital.

At the same time, the new law will protect unmarried intended parents who didn’t sign a written consent and allow courts to find that they were still an intended parent. It also updates genetic testing provisions, making them gender neutral and enshrining in statute the existing case law that says genetic testing cannot be used to challenge a nonbiological parent’s parentage.

Additionally, the new law requires sperm and egg banks to allow children conceived through donated sperm or eggs to receive non-identifying medical information at any point — their parents could receive

it if the children are minors — and if the donor agrees, to obtain personal identifying information at the child’s option after 18 years of age.

The legislation is based on the Uniform Parentage Act (UPA), a model law developed by the Uniform Law Commission and intended as a guide for state laws. It was updated in 2017 with language to ensure equal treatment for the children of same-sex parents, among other things. California is the third state to adopt a version of the 2017 UPA after Washington in 2017, and Vermont this past May. Unlike the first two states, California explicitly names transgender parents as one of the groups targeted for equal treatment — though the other two have gender-neutral language that encompasses transgender parents.

Despite the new law, however, Cathy Sakimura, deputy director and family law director at the National Center for Lesbian Rights, told me, “We do still recommend second parent adoptions or parentage judgments.”

“The form signed at the hospital, which will not be available until 2020, should be recognized in other states, but we advise people to get court orders until more states have recognized this,” she said. “As people are likely to face hostility in these early days of such laws.”

At the same time, this law is a significant step forward. Sakimura explained, “We are proud to have worked on this legislation, which not only establishes key protections for LGBTQ parents and their children generally but particularly helps low-income parents who cannot afford to consult with an attorney and are less likely to have written agreements.”

LGBTQ Books Retained

On the local level, three pastors in Maine missed the point when they tried to remove children’s and adult books they felt “promote homosexuality” and are “risque and immodest” from a local library display set up to honor Banned Books Week which lasts from Sept. 23 to 29. The American Library Association’s annual event focuses on the freedom to read and the harms of censorship.

In a letter to the library on Sept. 12, the pastors wrote that certain books on the display were inappropriate because, “Children should not be subjected to an early sexualization.”

The display, however, was in the adult section on a different floor from the children’s section. They felt that by showing them, the library was promoting “a far left political view that sees homosexuality as acceptable.”

At a library board meeting on Sept. 17, they presented their case. Members of the library staff and local community, including allies and one librarian who had been motivated to come out as a member of the LGBTQ community because of the incident, spoke in support of leaving the books. In the end, the board voted to retain them on the display.

We still have a long road ahead to full equality, inclusion and acceptance, but it’s heartening to see some signs of positive change. Kudos to all who helped make them happen.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian which can be found online at mombian.com. It’s a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBTQ parents.



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5 Coming Out Tips

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Founded 30 years ago by Dr. Robert Eichberg and LGBTQ activist Jean O'Leary, the first official National Coming Out Day was celebrated exactly one year after the anniversary of the 1987 March on Washington. Its goal was simple: become visible. And, since its inception, LGBTQ people from across all identities and walks of life have chosen to take a stand on Oct. 11 and speak their truths.

"Most people think they don't know anyone gay or lesbian, and in fact everybody does," was the quote used in Eichberg's 1993 New York Times obituary. "It is imperative that we come out and let people know who we are and disabuse them of their fears and stereotypes."

And much of what Eichberg said decades ago still holds true. According to statistics from Human Rights Campaign, a national LGBTQ organization, "one out of every two Americans has someone close to them who is gay or lesbian." For transgender people, "that number is only one in 10."

However, HRC cites perhaps one of the most important factors of coming out as increasing awareness and understanding of the LGBTQ community across the U.S., and potentially raising those statistics.

"Coming out — whether it is as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or allied — STILL MATTERS," read the HRC website. "When people know someone who is LGBTQ, they are far more likely to support equality under the law. Beyond that, our stories can be powerful to each other."

And in fact, Pew Research Center reports that in the past decade alone, 92 percent of surveyed LGBT adults have said that society has become more accepting toward the LGBTQ community as a whole, and it stands to get even more accepting in the future. Because of this, rates of people who come out, whatever their identity, have been on the rise and the ages of those who do have been getting younger. In a study published at American Friends of Tel Aviv University Dr. Guy Shilo reports that, "in 1991, the average coming-out age was 25. But as of 2010, he notes, it is 16 years old — a dramatic shift."

However, although coming out has become more frequent and become more popular among those in a younger age bracket, it's still a difficult obstacle for many to overcome. To help those who might want to use this year's Oct. 11 as their platform to come out, BTL spoke with three Michigan-based psychotherapists who each work with LGBTQ clients and have helped them through the process: Matt Sweet, Christine Cantrell and Joe Kort. Here are five tips to make the process smoother:

1 Find Other Coming Out Stories

Often the most difficult part of coming out is not knowing when to begin. According to Kort, one of the first things he tells his clients who are considering coming out is to do some research before planning to tell anyone.

"I recommend reading coming out stories online to see if they can find one that's best for them," Kort said. "And it's really individual, so don't think your story is going to match another person's."

Sweet also encourages clients to do so. He recommends watching videos of those who have come out and posted about it online, too.

"YouTube is a great resource in 2018 of people coming out of the closet and talking about their stories," Sweet said. "There's books out there and websites that are dedicated to that just to get the idea of people doing this."

2 Rehearse Your Message

Sweet said that after one looks through several coming out stories it'll be easier to plan one's own. However, as uncomfortable as the process might be, he said that practicing what one should say when coming out is a valuable tool.

"A lot of times when we come out of the closet we feel really emotionally activated," Sweet said. "It's better to have something that we've rehearsed rather than have something we come up with. This is something that, particularly with first disclosures, telling, for example, parents or an employer or something like that where it's going to have an impact. We want to make sure that it's done in a way that's healthy, in the best way possible. Take your time, it's not a rush, there's no race to come out of the closet."

3 Plan for All Responses

A frequent and unfortunate result of coming out is that reactions aren't always positive. Cantrell said that many of her older clients not only have to contend with the reaction of their friends, coworkers and parents, but they often have to consider how an existing partner or their children might feel and react.



"People who are older and who have not come out and have been in a traditional heterosexual marriage, often have adult children and often have a persona in society and in their social circles that seems fixed," she said. "The idea of falling in love with someone who is the same sex interrupts the marriage, interrupts the family and is really traumatic."

Cantrell added that custody issues, intolerant spouses and colleagues are a few outcomes to prepare for before taking steps to come out. On that point Sweet added that while those are important issues to consider, it's important not to blame oneself for a negative response.

"We never really know how someone is going to react," Sweet said. "One of the things that I remind people is that, usually by the time we are ready to come out of the closet we've already done some pretty significant work in coming to terms with our own identity, but it's entirely possible that the other person has not and they're not prepared for that at all. That's why we're coming out to them and they don't yet know, and they're starting from ground zero. So, sometimes it just takes some effort and some time to sort of come around so to speak."

4 Find a Support Group

All three professionals recommended that finding a strong support group — whether it be friends, supportive family, coworkers or group meetings — is vital to a smooth coming out process. It can be difficult to transition from a private identity to one that is fully public especially in the case of young people.

"Don't think your story is going to match another person's," Kort said. "(For students I recommend they) go to their school counselor immediately so they can tell them what

happened. What I have seen, is that most any school counselor has been trained in dealing with this. Also, they should go to their GSA group if they have that in their school, or even go online. There's a great resource called thetrevorproject.org."

5 Plan to Come Out to Everyone

Cantrell emphasized that many don't realize that coming out is not just a one-time occurrence. Once someone makes the decision to present their identity outwardly, it'll be a regular occurrence that they'll be asked about their LGBTQ identity.

"You have to deal with family, you have to deal with colleagues, and, often, there's a kind of surprise, if not shock, sometimes when people go, 'Oh, really? You're dating a woman?' That reverberates through the family and people have to worry about how their kids are handling it and how their kids are at school," she said.

However, Cantrell said she has noticed a "level of understanding and acceptance and sophistication" in young people facing a family member or friend coming out that "20 years ago didn't exist."

"What I've seen is actually a lot of the kids in high school, they're upset about the breakup in the family, but once they understand the concept they're like, 'Oh, this is cool,'" she said.

To find out more information and resources to help with coming out, go online to mattsweet.com, joekort.com and christinecantrell.com. You can find dozens of LGBTQ-supportive counselors online at pridesource.com and by searching our Yellow Page listings.



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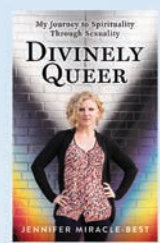


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Eric McCormack's Comedic Revolution

Sitcom Star on the Value of 'Will & Grace' Now

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Eric McCormack auditioned for the role of gay lawyer Will on "Will & Grace" without realizing the effect he'd have on closeted teenagers. "I was worried about network executives and what the gay community would think," he says, "but when I was thinking of the gay community, I wasn't thinking of 16 year olds."

In 1998, when the sitcom touched down on NBC in a TV universe that was distinctly less gay, the show presented itself as farcical comedy. But by the time it ran its course, ending (or so we thought) in 2006, "Will & Grace" was, through sheer existence, a cultural landmark leading the way for LGBTQ inclusivity in entertainment and in the broader world.

And those '90s teenagers? "What has been revealed is that it was (them) sort of peeking over (their) parents' shoulder going, 'OK, I like this show, this show's for me,' and, 'Hey, if my mom likes this show then I can do this,'" McCormack says.

Eleven years went by without Will, his roommate Grace (Debra Messing), his gay pal Jack (Sean Hayes) and Jack's rollicking, boozed bestie, Karen (Megan Mullally). Marriage equality happened. More queer characters – trans, of color – happened. And in 2017, with Trump jabs and jokes scoffing at discriminatory cake bakers, "Will & Grace" returned to NBC with a new agenda for the queer-comedy revolution it once led.

Recently, McCormack, 55, received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and this month, became the recipient of the Point Foundation's Impact Award in recognition of his significant impact on the LGBTQ community. Here, the actor reflects on playing Will during a more conservative time in America, the episode NBC cut from reruns and the significance of gay actors portraying his love interests.

When you first began playing Will, how much more attention did you get from gay men?

(Laughs) Well, I'm from the theater, so I was pretty much already gettin' my share!

But this is national primetime television, known to the world.

(Laughs) I think that was the most interesting journey, because in the theater, all through

my 20s, when I first started doing television guest spots in Toronto and Vancouver, I did a bunch of gay roles. I was a bartender at the gay bar, and I was the guy in the office who the girl thought was coming onto her – but I say, "Honey, I'm gay." These roles accumulated for me, and nobody else knew I was doing them. When Will finally landed for me, I didn't have to go out and do a lot of research. My best friends were gay men, I grew up in the theater. So, it was a natural extension.

But when it suddenly, as you say became "national," there was – yeah, you have to be careful with that (attention), though, because what happens automatically is NBC phones and says, "Hey, People magazine wants to do a thing on you," and of course People magazine always features you and your wife in the kitchen making pasta, right? Or something dopey like that. (Laughs) So within two months it's clear (I'm) married, but you don't want it to look like you begged People magazine to show the world that you're straight. It could've backfired, and that's the thing I'm always grateful for: the LGBT community could've just said, "Eh, another one, no." But they didn't.

Representation has evolved and shifted in the last 20 years, and now there's more criticism of straight actors taking on LGBTQ roles. Can you reflect on that era versus now as far as straight actors portraying LGBTQ characters?

I think the pendulum swings, and I really do think it's project to project. I think what we're doing with the trans community – first of all, that wasn't even an expression for most Americans five years ago, so it's important how we handle that because a lot of Americans will go, "Well, trans is like what? He puts on a dress?" A lot of people just don't know. So, it's important that, if there is a role that is specifically trans, we cast a trans actor so that we start to educate.

The flipside to me is that whenever someone says you were straight playing gay, I say, "Well, yeah, Neil Patrick Harris played the biggest womanizer and he's quite openly gay, so I feel like it's OK." So I think if there's a balance, and if it happens in the right ways, if we make sure that people of color and women are represented, that we're doing the right thing by all the communities that have needed it, then it's great. But if we swing too far the other way, we're starting to get to a



Photo: Andrew Eccles/NBC

point where I think we're missing the forest for the trees.

Did you ever experience any pushback being a straight actor playing a gay character on TV?

There was a little. I remember Larry Kramer, who of course was such an activist in the gay community, said something and I thought, Does Larry Kramer even know what "Will & Grace" is? That was just amazing to me. So, I thought if anyone is gonna pushback, I guess it'd be him. But in terms of pushback from America, it didn't really happen. There were no pickets, there were no letters to NBC. I think they were very wise and eased us into the weeks on Monday and then we eased onto Tuesday, and then the next thing you know it was Thursday and we were winning an Emmy and it was OK. America actually dealt with it very well.

Do you have any real-life examples of how Will and Jack spoke to the part of America that didn't understand or weren't accepting of LGBTQ people?

The thing I always loved from the beginning: We were making a very right-down-the-middle, must-see-TV kind of show that just happened to have two gay characters. But they were not matching gay characters, and to have those two as best friends who support each other but also occasionally criticize each other, I thought that was possibly the most educational piece for Americans who didn't have a lot of gay friends.

To see how Jack would criticize Will for not being out there, for not being loud and proud, for not dating enough, and Will would – there was an episode (called "Will Works Out," in season one) that was quite amazing where we were in the same gym and Jack was flouncing about. Will kind of mutters the "f" word under his breath – calls him a "fag" – and it's something that when (Jack) says it to Grace, he's like, "Will, what's the matter with you?" And Will is like, "He's embarrassing! He embarrasses me!" Will eventually apologizes because it's his own inability to be himself, but we tackle that. NBC stopped showing it in reruns for a while because it really was a big word to say, particularly from a character that we wanted you to love.

When the revival was announced, there were people who weren't sure what to expect from a "Will & Grace" in 2017 because the community had made so much progress since the show's first iteration. Were you guys hearing the noise, and if so, how were you responding to it behind the scenes?

Most of the noise that we got came after everybody saw the piece we did for Hillary (Clinton), the 10 minutes on YouTube, which just proved it was possible for us to do this

again. People generally were excited about that. That's what I heard, mostly. Then, as we got closer, there were pundits saying, "How valuable can it be in 2017?" And my response is always, it only needs to be this valuable because it's a sitcom. We're not a parade that is marching in city hall and shouting. We're a sitcom, and we shout in our own way.

Except you were a groundbreaking sitcom, so there's a lot of social and political weight attached to the show.

Yeah, so: Will we live up to that in that way? It's like your queer uncle that was marching back in '78: Maybe he doesn't have the loud voice, maybe he can't march as fast now, but he is still just as important. And, in fact, those older gay voices – I loved that episode where Will educates (a character played by) Ben

"It's like your queer uncle that was marching back in '78: Maybe he doesn't have the loud voice, maybe he can't march as fast now, but he is still just as important."

Platt (in season nine). It's like, "You young gays can't take any of this for granted. This was fought for and people were beat up and died to get here so that your father and your mother could throw you a wedding with your boyfriend." This is the result of a revolution, and so were Will and Grace and Jack and Karen.

So, I think we kind of showed up, but we didn't want to make it a victory lap, either. We wanted to make sure there was still currency, and I think the way in for that, particularly with Jack and Will, was: What's life like when you're almost 50 and you're not the hottest guy on the block but you're still living that life, you're still in New York and you've loved and lost, as they both have? And what do you want out of life? That's a cool, new storyline – and, again, nobody was telling exactly that story.

The show's first revival season in 2017 tackled

See **Eric**, continued on p. 20

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politics and other hot-button issues. What topic from this current season do you most appreciate the show working in?

I think, obviously, the umbrella topic they're using in the ads is the idea of marriage. Jack is going to get married, and so that's great. We had episodes (before the revival) where I had the closest thing you could get to marriage back then with Taye Diggs, and then again with Bobby Cannavale.

I mean, to me, that's one of my proudest moments on the show, that I actually had a commitment ceremony in Will's apartment with Taye Diggs, a white man and a black man, a big, long kiss. Hall & Oates performed (laughs). And it was virtually not even spoken of. This is probably season six or seven, but it barely even made the press because people were so like, "Whatever. Who's Will making out with this week?" But people don't remember that always. They always wanna talk about, "Well, Will is a bit sterile." It's like, No, no; if you watch the show throughout, I had Patrick Dempsey, I had Bobby Cannavale. I had lots of hot guys *and* married a couple of them.

And if anyone has forgotten, you get with Matt Bomer this season to remind people.

Well, first of all, he's the greatest guy. So freakin' funny *and* gay, so it's not like the old days where we get another straight guy to

come in and we both act gay together. Now there's a bit more authenticity to it, and he was so great that I think we'll see more of Matt.

Is the dynamic different for you when your love interest is played by a gay actor?

When I think of last season, it's three romantic moments I had and all three were with men who are actually gay and they were all Broadway guys, which was just great: Andrew Rannells and Ben Platt and Cheyenne Jackson. And yeah, for me I just loved that. It's a step forward, and there will always be someone from the community saying, "Well, why aren't they in bed?" And I'll go, yeah, I know, but we still have the Ku Klux Klan. Let's remember that this is a public network; it's 9 o'clock, and we want young kids that haven't been able to come out to their parents to watch the show and have that parent love the show. The show was never about overtly pushing buttons. We were competing with "Sex and the City" where they could do anything they wanted because they were HBO. We had to do it more surreptitiously, more subtly.

I've seen some steamy stuff on primetime, though. I remember "Desperate Housewives" had a lot of bedroom scenes with that gardener.

True, but there is a difference. We are actually a four-camera sitcom, so the way that we have to get under people's skin, the way that we have to be shocking is different; we have to do it with a lot of care. We're not callous about it. The jokes we choose, either politically or sexually, we play them throughout the week, we figure it out before we get in front of that audience, because we want to be around and



"Will & Grace" stars Sean Hayes, Debra Messing, Eric McCormack and Megan Mullally. Photo: Andrew Eccles/NBC

we want to continue to be a voice and an example.

Sometimes all it takes is one bad decision, one bad joke, one situation that turns people off and all of a sudden we're not in the top 20 or 30. Everything is calculated so that we can stay around and continue to be us, and it's certainly changed in 20 years, but it's still a country where people won't get their cakes baked by a freakin' baker, so it's changed, but not as much as we'd like to hope.

Sean alluded to possibly seeing Jack and Will together, romantically, in the future. Do you see that as a possibility?

In a gay way, that's the Sam and Diane of it all. (Laughs) Early on, because that's how conservative network television was, people were thinking, "Well, maybe Will and Grace will get together, maybe she'll fix him!" And as time went by, they started to realize that's not what this show is. This is not the gay-conversion comedy. But Will and Jack – it's my favorite stuff to play. When he and I are together, we have so much fun. But we have to be careful how much we tease that out, because you do that and then that's a different show.

You played gay at a time when some straight male actors were told not to for the sake of their career. As a straight man auditioning for a gay role, did you or your team have any concerns?

I don't remember that being a thing. I got two scenes into reading it and I just thought, "This is one of those shows. This is a Thursday night show. I bet they get Jim Burrows to direct it." It just read like that, and that overpowered any fears. Plus, by that time, I'm 35, I'd been in the business a while, I'd been watching "Seinfeld" and "Friends" for years – that's what I wanted. And I think probably the opposite happened, because I had played a number of gay roles – I'd done drag roles – so this not only didn't scare me but it made me think, "This is the one whose head will rise above the crowd because it's not just 'Suddenly Susan' or 'Caroline in the City'; this is its own thing. There's no other show like this at the moment." And that's what proved to happen.

But can you still walk in heels?

(Laughs) You caught me on a good day – I'm breakin' in a new pair of pumps.

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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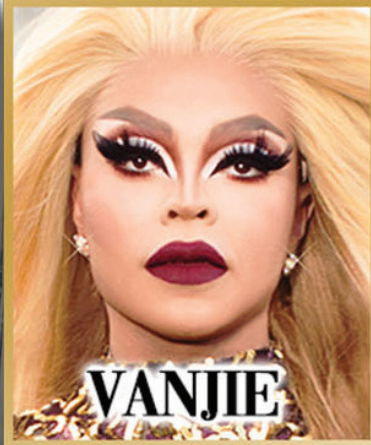
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Aizuri Quartet in Ann Arbor Oct. 26

BY BTL STAFF

The award-winning Aizuri Quartet has been lauded everywhere from Osaka to Ann Arbor and on Friday, Oct. 26, they'll be back at the University of Michigan's Rackham Auditorium to present what the Philadelphia Inquirer describes as a unique "balance between charisma of the individual and cohesion of the collective."

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The group was formed in 2012 and got its name from what is known as "aizuri-e." That is a style of usually blue Japanese woodblock printing that is renowned for its intense detail and boldness of pattern and color. In addition to their boldness in name and sound, the group is passionate about creating "diverse points of

entry into the string quartet repertoire."

"As its 2015 resident ensemble, the Quartet worked closely with Philadelphia's Barnes Foundation to develop programs and commission new works that forged meaningful connections between music and visual art. The Quartet was featured throughout the Curtis-Coursera online course 'The World of the String Quartet,' which was hosted by Arnold Steinhardt and has reached thousands of students from over a hundred countries," said organizers. "Finding great joy in working with contemporary composers and exploring unusual collaborations, the Aizuri Quartet is proud to have commissioned and premiered works by Pulitzer Prize-winner Caroline Shaw (Blueprint), Paul Wiancko (LIFT), Yevgeniy Sharlat (RIPEFG), Gabriella Smith (Carrot Revolution), Rene Orth (Stripped), and Alyssa Weinberg (Parallels)."

For ticketing information visit tickets.ums.org or by calling the ticket office at 734-764-2538. Student, senior and group discounts may be available.

Trans Together Offers Monthly Social Space

Hosted by Ypsilanti's Riverside Arts Center, Trans Together is a monthly group that meets on the second Thursday of each month. This week, interested members of the transgender community can visit the arts center on Oct. 11 at 6 p.m., but there will be another monthly meeting on Thursday, Nov. 8 at the same time. Find out more online at riversidearts.org.



Gay Every Day ...Just Like You

FRIDAY OCTOBER 5
9:30pm

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT
Benefit Show by Heads Over Heels

SATURDAY OCTOBER 20
8:00pm

DRAG-LY HALLOWS - PT. 1
Harry Potter Edition
Heads Over Heels Drag Show

THURSDAY OCTOBER 25
10:00pm

DRAG-LY HALLOWS - pt. 2
Halloween Drag Show

SATURDAY OCTOBER 27
9:00pm

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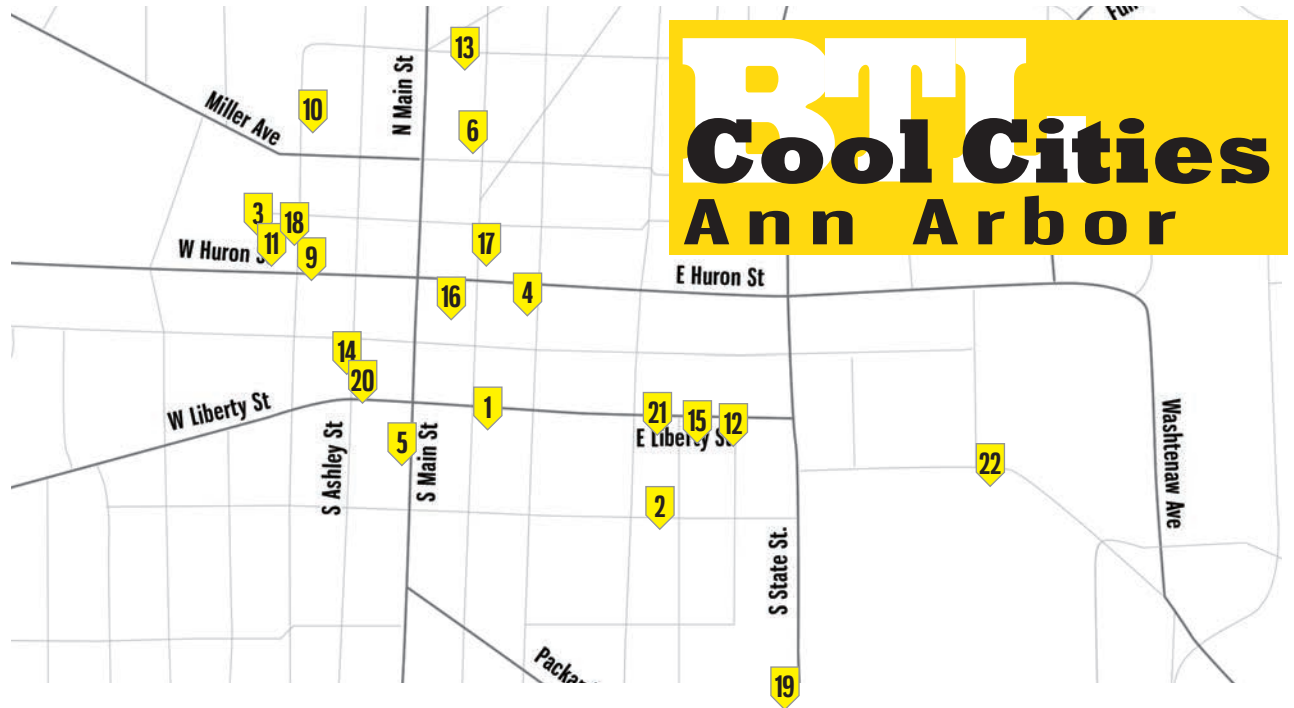
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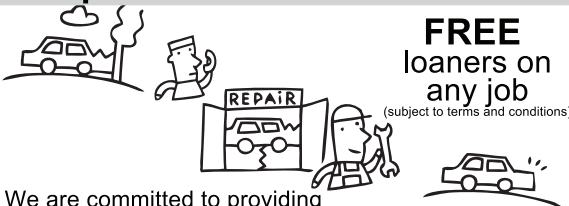
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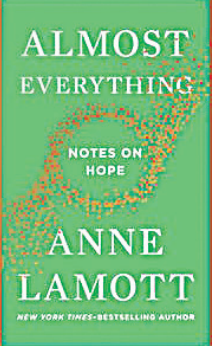
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THURSDAY, OCTOBER TWENTY FIFTH, FOUR PM

LITERATI BOOKSTORE

Anne Lamott at First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor Thursday, Oct. 25

Due to demand, the LGBTQ-inclusive First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor and Literati Bookstore created a second, earlier event in which author Anne Lamott reads from her latest book “Almost Everything: Notes on Hope.” In addition to the original event scheduled on Thursday Oct. 25 at 7 p.m., there is a reading at 4 p.m.

“I am stockpiling antibiotics for the Apocalypse, even as I await the blossoming of paperwhites on the windowsill in the kitchen,” Anne Lamott writes at the beginning of her book. “Despair and uncertainty surround us: in the news, in our families, and in ourselves.


But even when life is at its bleakest—when we are, as she puts it, ‘doomed, stunned, exhausted and over-caffeinated’ – the seeds of rejuvenation are at hand.”

Lamott is a New York Times bestselling author of “Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers,” “Bird by Bird” and more. In addition, she’s a Guggenheim Fellow and an inductee to the California Hall of Fame.

The church is located at 120 South State St., Ann Arbor. More information can be found by going online to this link: gaybe.am/IK.

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Happenings



Elton John Performs in Detroit
 Performing at Little Caesars Arena on Friday, Oct. 12, is LGBTQ icon and music legend Elton John. John has had nearly 60 Billboard Top 40 singles, five Grammy Awards, five Brit Awards and been inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, among many other notable achievements. Now on his final tour titled Farewell Yellow Brick Road, he'll visit Detroit. Ticket information can be found online on ticketmaster.com.

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OUTINGS

Thursday, October 11

Culture Lab: 'The Aesthetics of Tomorrow' 6 p.m. The Aesthetics of Tomorrow features artists and theorists working on the cusp of technological innovation: Mark Pauline and Eyal Weizman's. Senate Theater, 6424 Michigan Ave., Detroit.

Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce Merge & Mixer 6:30 p.m. Monthly Networking Event. All welcome. Host by: Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce. Check website for monthly location, RSVP is Required. Soho, 205 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-542-7646 info@detroitlgbtchamber.com. ferndalesoho.com. detroitlgbtchamber.com.

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups - Farmington Hills - Oakland County 7 p.m. Free. Oakland United Methodist Church, 30450 Farmington Road, Farmington. 248-626-3620. oaklandumc.org. standwithtrans.org.

Toastmasters International SpeakOUT! LGBTQ Meeting 7 p.m. Professional & personal communication skills development. Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Court, Ann Arbor. 734-995-9867 lawrencemoes@gmail.com. speakout.toastmastersclubs.org.

Not In My House at Planet Ant 8 p.m. This collaboration between Kristi Faulkner Dance and the Ruth Ellis Center radically shifts the narrative about LGBTQ+ identity. Planet Ant, 2320 Caniff St., Hamtramck. (313) 365-4255 Kristi@KristiFaulknerDance.com. planetant.com/tickets/notinmyhouse.

Friday, October 12

Culture Lab: Seeing and Being Seen 6 p.m. Seeing and Being Seen brings together three artists whose work shows how identity is both formed and performed and how this process can be obscured, embraced and exalted to create a culture of possibilities: Dream The Church of the Messiah, 231 E. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-267-1010

Friend w/ Benefits feature 'The Rocky Horror Picture Show' 8 p.m. Screening of the cult classic Rocky Horror Picture Show. Performances by Guilty Pleasures Burlesque artist Luna Legare and Drag King Rebellion's famous A-Train. Tunes spun by DJ Selina S. Tyle all night long and themed Bona Sera, 200 W. Michigan Ave, Ypsilanti. gaybe.am/oe.

Wednesday, October 17

Stand with Trans Support Groups - Livonia - Wayne County 6:30 p.m. Free to all. 12+. Parent Support Group Facilitators Karen Sessler, ksessler@yahoo.com or 734-673-3590 and Scott Sessler, pastorscott@emmanuel-livonia.org or 734-673-2485. Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 34567 7 Mile Road, Livonia. standwithtrans.org.

Friday, October 19

MCCDetroit - Inclusive Justice 9 a.m. A press conference on threats to LGBTQ Rights. Sign up at inclusivejustice.org MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main Street, Clawson. 248-399-7741 mccdetroit.org.

Voices of Freedom 6 p.m. Celebrate 35 years of welcoming those 'yearning to breathe free' with us. Motor City Casino,

2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 866-782-9622. freedomhousedetroit.org/index.php/voices.

MCCDetroit - Divinely Queer Launch Party 7 p.m. Come celebrate the debut of "Divinely Queer: My Journey to Spirituality through Sexuality," a memoir by Jennifer Miracle-Best. There will be a reading from the book, Q&A and time for book signing. Proceeds MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main St., Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

Saturday, October 20

Affirmations Fall Fling 2018 - Save The Date! 7 p.m. Join us in support of Affirmations for an evening filled with live entertainment, hors-d'oeuvres, drinks, desserts, a raffle and silent auction with fantastic prizes for you to win. The event is 21+ and Costume Optional, Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105.

Tuesday, October 23

Strand with Trans Support Groups - Ann Arbor - Washtenaw 6:30 p.m. Parent Support Group Facilitator - Yma Johnson, ymaj1968@gmail.com or 734-780-4092. Trans Youth Support Group Facilitator - Joy Cavanaugh, LPC. Journey of Faith Christian Church, 1900 Manchester Road, Ann Arbor. standwithtrans.org.

Saturday, October 27

MCCDetroit - Halloween Spooktacular! 8 p.m. Join us for a spooktacular time at this year's Halloween Party at the Montage Grill in Clawson! Admission price includes a taco bar, unlimited soda, music and prizes for best costume! MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main St., Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

Friday, November 2

Transgender Michigan Birthday Bash and Halloween Party 6 p.m. This dual celebration is for both Transgender Michigan's 20th Anniversary and celebrating the birthday of Transgender Michigan Co-Founder Rachel Crandall-Crocker. Find out how to donate and more about the event by visiting transgendermichigan.org/events. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105.

MUSIC & MORE

Dancing in the Street: A Symphonic Tribute to Motown October 12, 10:30 a.m. It was the music made in Detroit that called out as an invitation across the nation. Celebrate Motown and artists like Marvin Gaye, The Four Tops and Martha Reeves. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. dso.org.

Bible 101: A Bible Study Facilitated by Deacon Hattie Alexander-Key October 12, 12 p.m. Come explore the basics of the Bible and take some of the mystery out of what lies between the covers of this book. Held in the Clawson Conference Room. MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main St., Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

Arturo Sandoval October 12, 8 p.m. 10-Time Grammy Award Winning Jazz Legend Arturo Sandoval is coming to Ann Arbor. The Ark, 316 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. 734-763-TKTS. hell@blueellamclub.com. theark.org. blueellamclub.com/arturo.

Addiction and Older Adults October 16, 7:30 p.m. Charles E. Coleman LLM/MSW;

and Matthew Cremin, LMSW; will discuss the unique nature of how addiction affects older adults, myths and facts, and available local resources. Free. Sponsored by Dawn Farm. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725. gaybe.am/19.

The Firebird October 18, 7:30 p.m. Experience Stravinsky's "The Firebird" under the dynamic Fabian Gabel, plus Stravinsky's beguiling "The Song of the Nightingale and more. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. dso.org.

In Search of Satisfaction – Public Talk by Demo Rinpoche October 20, 11 a.m. The pursuit of happiness is a right under the American constitution, but among our friends, family, and in ourselves we find so much dissatisfaction. Birmingham

Unitarian Church, 38651 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. 248-647-2380. bloomfield@jewelheart.org. bucmi.org. gaybe.am/7h.

Christopher Titus October 20, 7 p.m. Christopher Titus' new show takes the audience on a wild ride through his personal life. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. 4th St., Royal Oak. 248-399-2980. royaloakmusictheatre.com.

The Intersectionality of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Substance Use/Substance Use Disorders October 23, 7:30 p.m. David J.H. Garvin, LMSW; and Barbara Niess May, MPA, MSW, will discuss the relationship between domestic violence/sexual assault and substance use. Free. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725. dawnfarm.org/programs/education-series.

Obesity and Your Gut Microbiome October 24, 6:30 p.m. In this presentation Dr. Swenor will discuss the symbiotic relationship between the effects of diet on the microbiome and its involvement in weight gain. Pre-registration required. Groves High School Little Theater, 20500 W. 13 Mile Road, Beverly Hills.

Dianne Reeves and Christian McBride Duo October 26, 8 p.m. Dianne Reeves and Christian McBride. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. dso.org.

All Souls/Day of the Dead gathering October 28, 6 p.m. An interfaith gathering to remember and honor those who have passed—through music, a meal and ceremony. Vegetarian stew and tea provided; bring a dish to pass if you like. Bring a photo or memento. Open Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, 3257 Lohr Road, Ann Arbor. 734-546-0243.

Personal Medicine: Becoming Active Agents in Our Own Recovery October 30, 7:30 p.m. Jerry Fouchey, MA, CADC will discuss how conditions common to early addiction recovery can be effectively managed. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725. dawnfarm.org/programs/education-series.

Cirque de la Symphonie November 2, 10:45 a.m. Back by popular demand, it's Cirque de la Symphonie! One event on Nov. 2 at 8 p.m. One event on Nov. 3 at 8 p.m. One event on Nov. 4 at 3 p.m. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111. dso.org.

Michigan Depression Glass Society Show and Sale November 3, 10 a.m. Enjoy one of the nation's best all-American made glass shows with makers such as Fostoria, Heisey, Fenton, Cambridge, Imperial, Westmoreland and more. One event on Nov. 4 at 10 a.m. Dearborn Ford Community & Performing Arts, 15801 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. 313.943.2350. dearbornfordcenter.com/michigandepressionglass.com.

Emanuel Ax Plays Beethoven November 9, 10:30 a.m. Emanuel Ax performs Beethoven's youthful "First Piano Concerto," while Cristian Măcelaru conducts "Play" by Andrew Norman. One event on Nov. 9 at 8 p.m. One event on Nov. 10 at 8 p.m. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111 dso.org.

Well-Intentioned White People by Rachel Lynett November 9, 8 p.m. Well-Intentioned White People explores how some people deal with discrimination not necessarily directed at them and how their "good intentions" can sometimes be just as problematic. Matrix Theatre Company, 2730 Bagley St., Detroit.

Editor's Pick

Detroit Spook Show Halloween Sale Oct. 20

Nearly 30 vendors will gather at Sanctuary Detroit to sell spooky movies, comics, art, toys, books, crafts and much, much more on Saturday, Oct. 20. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. attendees of the Detroit Spook Show Halloween Sale are invited to peruse items just in time for Halloween. Sanctuary Detroit is located at 2932 Caniff in Hamtramck. For more information on the sale find the event's Facebook page at gaybe.am/Sq.



313-967-0599 info@matrixtheatre.org. matrixtheatre.org/mainstage-season.

THEATER

Stagecrafters Presents Fool for Love October 11, 8 p.m. In a rundown motel on the edge of the Mojave Desert, former lovers May and Eddie square off to make sense of their intensely volatile relationship. Baldwin Theatre, 415 S/ Lafayette, Royal Oak. 248-541-8027.

Not In My House at Planet Ant October 11, 8 p.m. This collaboration between Kristi Faulkner Dance and the Ruth Ellis Center radically shifts the narrative about LGBTQ+ identity. One event on Oct. 12 at 8 p.m. One event on Oct. 13 at 9 p.m. Planet Ant, 2320 Caniff St., Hamtramck. 313-365-4255. Kristi@KristiFaulknerDance.com. planetant.com/tickets/notinmyhouse.

'CHICAGO' Returns to the Fisher Theatre! October 16-21, 8 p.m. "CHICAGO" has everything that makes Broadway great: a universal tale of fame, fortune and all that jazz; one show-stopping song after another; and the most astonishing dancing you've ever seen. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000. broadwayindetroit.com.

A2CT Presents 'Arsenic and Old Lace' October 25-28, 7:30 p.m. Ann Arbor Civic Theatre is proud to present "Arsenic and Old Lace" by Joseph Kesselring, directed by Alex Duncan. Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-2538. smdt.umich.edu.

ART 'N' AROUND

THE STONE WITCH by Shem Bitterman **Michigan Premiere** Through November 11, 8 p.m. Peter Chandler, a starving artist with his own literary aspirations, is hired to help "The Great Man" finish his overdue book, an unlikely friendship ensues, secrets are revealed, and the lines of reality begin to blur. Theatre NOVA, 410 W. Huron, Ann Arbor. 734-635-8450. A2TheatreNOVA@gmail.com. artful.ly/theatre-nova/store/events.

Michigan Depression Glass Society Show and Sale November 3, 10 a.m. Enjoy one of the nation's best all-American made glass shows with makers such as Fostoria, Heisey, Fenton and more. One event on Nov. 4 at 10 a.m. Dearborn Ford Community & Performing Arts, 15801 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. 313.943.2350. dearbornfordcenter.com/michigandepressionglass.com.

Saline Antiques Market November 11, 9 a.m. One event on August 12 at 9 a.m. One event on Sept. 9 at 9 a.m. One event on Nov. 11 at 9 a.m. One event on Dec. 2 at 9 a.m. Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds, 5055 Ann Arbor-Saline Road, Ann Arbor. 734-761-2796 salinemarket@gmail.com. foodgatherers.org.salinemarket.com/.

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The Ringwald Offers 'Clue' Based on Iconic Board Game

FERNDALE — The Ringwald Theatre offers a production of *Clue*, adapted from the screenplay by Jonathan Lynn with additional material by Hunter Foster, Eric Price and Sandy Rustin, running now through Nov.5.

The play based on the cult classic comedy based on the iconic board game *Clue*, is the comedy whodunit that will keep audiences guessing (and laughing) to the very end. On a dark and stormy night, six colorful guests — plus a butler, a maid and a cook — assemble for a dinner party at the home of Mr. Boddy. When Mr. Boddy's body turns up dead, it's clear that no one is safe. Soon the guests are racing to find the killer and keep the body count from stacking up.

Find out about ticket reservations: call 248-545-5545 or visit online at: www.TheRingwald.com.

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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

Stay home, eat candy, watch 'Wicked Halloween'

Choices: dress up like a Sexy Witch at a loud party and navigate a sea of drunk people, or sit on your couch, horde Reese's Cups for your own use, and watch NBC's "A Very Wicked Halloween: Celebrating 15 Years on Broadway." The more comfortable option seems clear – we'll be enjoying network television, complete with commercials, and hanging with Elphaba and Glinda, sister witches whose pre-Dorothy drama is the story of the smash hit Broadway musical. Hosted by original cast members Idina Menzel and Kristin Chenoweth, this new concert special will feature songs from "Wicked" performed by them, as well as by the show's current Broadway cast, Ariana Grande, Pentatonix, and others still to be announced. Now, if this were an old school TV special, those "others" would wind up being some sort of professional sports figure who can't sing, a comedian who can't sing, and a puppet. Aren't you glad you live in 2018 where it'll most likely be a synergistic appearance by Kelly Clarkson or a cast member from "This is Us"? You are.



Sandra Bernhard. Photo: KathClick

Heterosexuals to invade Broadway

Remember the 2000 film "Almost Famous"? Remember how it was full of charming straight dude rock star characters you could actually like? The kind who were laid back and nice to teenage band groupies and who led Elton John sing-alongs on buses? Well, you have Cameron Crowe to thank for that one, and if the forthcoming Broadway musical version of

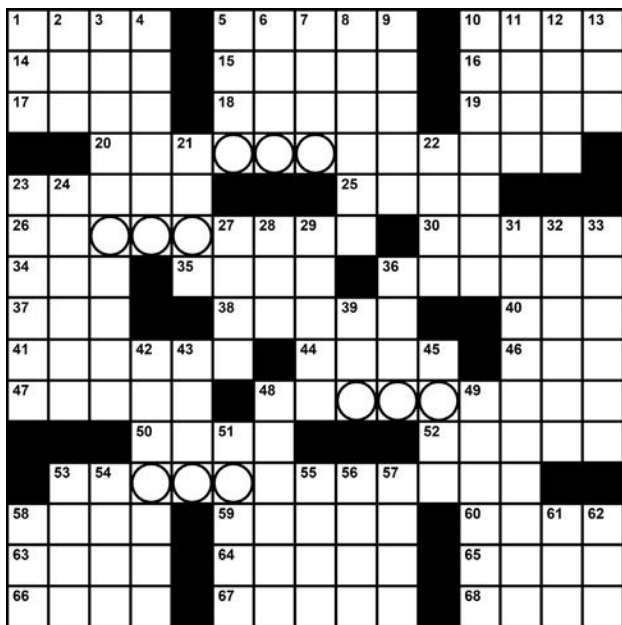
this film is successful it will be a testament to his powers. There's no casting news yet, but the project – the story of young Crowe-like music journalist on tour with an up-and-coming rock band – will feature a book by Crowe based on his Academy Award-winning screenplay, music by Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award winner Tom Kitt ("Next to Normal") with lyrics by Kitt and Crowe, and directed by Jeremy Herrin ("People, Places and Things"). We're hopeful for this one, and not just because we're looking forward to "Tiny Dancer" belted out by an ensemble cast. If the current political landscape has us soured on almost all heterosexual men, Crowe's superpower is reminding us that they can be soulful and sensitive and as sexy as young Billy Crudup.

Paul Feig sells NBC on 'Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist'

Paul Feig, the man from "Bridesmaids," is moving into musical television. He just sold a singing-dancing dramedy to NBC called "Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist." Co-created by Austin Winsberg ("Jake in Progress") and not to be confused with the film "Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist," the story concerns a young woman in her late 20s who is suddenly gifted with the ability to know the deepest desires of everyone around her. This is accomplished through music, somehow, and it sounds fairly delightful. "Smash" notwithstanding – and frankly, that show was kind of weirdly cool but never got its due – NBC is responsible for a lot when it comes to the re-introduction of music into primetime network TV, so this seems like the right home for a show like this. Now, what would be truly extraordinary is a great non-corny cast and some good money poured into production and lots of people spontaneously dancing in the streets. You'll have appointment television then and an audience of queer people keeping it in business.

Sandra Bernhard will regularly strike a 'Pose'

Nurse Judy is back from her break and she's still not having any of your nonsense. Oh, wait, sorry, have you caught up on the first season of "Pose" yet? Not yet? Then drop what you're doing and watch, because not only is it history-making, featuring the largest transgender series regular cast, as well as the largest LGBTQ cast ever for a scripted series, and not only is it coming back for a second season, but season one guest star Sandra Bernhard – as the tough nurse whose lonely job is caring for a hospital wing's worth of young gay men with AIDS – is coming back as a series regular. The amplification of this storyline on the show was inevitable, of course, as the series is set in the late 1980s when HIV/AIDS had already devastated a generation of queer people. And the casting is nearly perfect, since Bernhard has been a fixture – now legendary in her own right – of LGBTQ culture since that time. But as long as we're being given the gift of Miss Bernhard, we'd also love to see Nurse Judy moonlighting as a cabaret singer in her off hours. Listen, honey, you don't get it if you don't ask.



Dancing Around the Truth

Across

- 1 Like Barber's "Adagio for Strings"
- 5 Beachwear for a hunk
- 10 Fruity drinks
- 14 Auto dash dial
- 15 Greek poet who didn't look at porn

QPuzzle

- 16 "___ l'amour!"
- 17 Start to climax
- 18 "___ there yet?"
- 19 Kind of stimulating
- 20 Start of a quip
- 22 More of the quip
- 24 Mardi Gras, e.g.
- 25 Nook at the Cathedral of Hope
- 27 Hustler's stick
- 28 NNW's opposite
- 29 Albee's "Fam and ___"

- 32 Bygone nuclear agcy.
- 33 Billy Budd, for one
- 34 Pears and Cameron
- 36 Portable beds
- 37 More of the quip
- 41 Really big tale
- 42 Tennessee Williams title critter
- 43 33 1/3, for a Johnny Mathis LP
- 44 "In Cold Blood" writer, briefly
- 46 Sweaty guy on a sweaty guy on a wrestling mat
- 47 Symbol of punishment
- 50 "Xanadu" band, for short
- 51 Source of Mary's fleece
- 53 Speedy train
- 55 End of the quip
- 57 Burt, the source of the quip (1936-2018)
- 60 Alternative to "Go straight"
- 61 1996 Madonna movie
- 63 Second year student, for short
- 64 Like hand-me-downs
- 65 Word that may follow sperm or organ
- 66 Stable female
- 67 Like hotties in a gay bar
- 68 Burke or Close
- 69 Nose activator

Down

- 1 Everyone can go down on them
- 2 What knights stick in their foes
- 3 The song "Do Re Mi" explains this
- 4 Cry over spilt milk
- 5 Ethnic cuisine type
- 6 Game-ending sound, for Sue Wicks
- 7 Last letter on Lesbos
- 8 Like a crescent moon
- 9 Film directed by Randal Kleiser
- 10 Declare openly
- 11 Gus Van Sant, for one
- 12 Compare online stats, e.g.
- 13 Wall Street bears
- 21 More like a cunning linguist
- 23 Premature ejaculation meas.
- 26 Say "No, thanks" to
- 30 Went down on
- 31 One way to cook your meat
- 34 GI under a corporal
- 35 Scrap of cloth
- 36 USA spies
- 37 Appreciation expression on Broadway
- 38 Porn star also known as Dirt Nasty
- 39 Rink star Babilonia
- 40 Kofi of the UN
- 41 Homo ___
- 44 Pampering, briefly
- 45 Like "Finding Nemo"
- 47 Get ready to shoot off again
- 48 Experienced hand
- 49 One of Santa's reindeer
- 52 It leaves a salty taste in your mouth
- 54 Burt posed for an iconic centerfold for this mag
- 56 Warhol, who was shot in a film title
- 58 Thames school
- 59 Craft store bundle
- 62 Button you use to turn down REM

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Canton's Village Theater Shows 'Monster Mash' Oct. 20

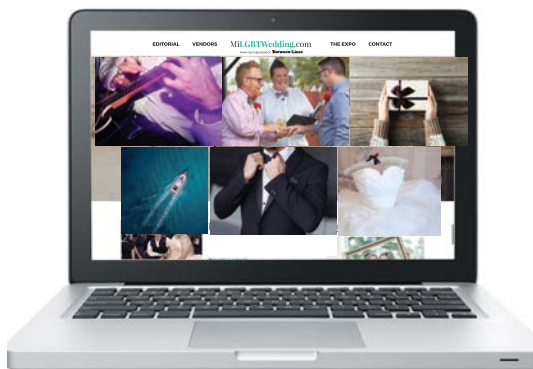
Anyone 21 years old and over is welcome to Canton's Village Theater's presentation of "Monster Mash" - An Adult Halloween on Saturday, Oct. 20. At 7:30 guests can expect Top 40 Billboard hits and Halloween covers done by Atomic Radio, along with games, a costume contest and a cash bar. The main focus of the night, however, will be a dance part on stage.

"This event is designed to give the local community a non-traditional and 100 percent fun theatrical event that is inclusive and intended to bring everyone together for a night celebrating Halloween without having to travel outside of Canton," said Performing Arts Coordinator, Joe Kvorjak. "Community members have been eager for this type of adult event, featuring costumes and cocktails, as well as great dance music."

Tickets for the event are \$15 for Canton residents and \$20 for non-residents. Purchase tickets online at cantonvillagetheater.org or by calling 734-394-5300. Tickets can also be purchased at The Village Theater Box Office one hour prior to event time.

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Michigan Author is Divinely Queer in New Book

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

They say that everyone has at least one book in them. However, it's in the getting it out and on paper where complications sometime arise. Jennifer Miracle-Best, the author of the soon-to-be-released book "Divinely Queer: My Journey to Spirituality through Sexuality" is all too familiar with that process. She is gearing up to sign copies of the book at a launch party at Metropolitan Community Church-Detroit in Clawson on Friday, Oct. 19.

"Writing a book is something I have always aspired to do but never dreamed I would actually accomplish," Miracle-Best said. "For years, as I would share with him the drama of the moment about who I was dating or where I was moving or what my family thought about it, my best friend would always ask me, 'When are you going to write a book?' I was always amused by this suggestion and insisted he was the only one who would be interested in reading it. So while I suppose I kind of always knew I had a story to tell, it's just been in the last year and a half that I've come to understand it's a story that people need to hear."

Ironically enough, when she finally took up the pen and started to write for real, Miracle-Best says it was primarily a business decision.

"When I moved back to Michigan from Georgia in 2013 after a two-year long-distance relationship with my now husband, Ethan, I also started a speaking and consulting business," she said. "Having been the person who books speakers on college campuses I knew authoring a book would give me a more specific platform on which to speak."

That's when she started writing. Miracle-Best began with a sort of LGBTQ 101 guide but quickly into the process began feeling stuck and uninspired.

"It wasn't until I attended a speaking event by another author that I was compelled to really reflect and ask myself what my story was," Miracle-Best said. "A culmination of the experiences I'd had, especially over the previous few years had brought me a new understanding of my journey and the message I felt like I was being led to share with the world. Inevitably, things kept lining up and falling into place for me to write this book."

In "Divinely Queer," Miracle-Best speaks directly to "anyone who has ever internalized the mainstream message that they are somehow unworthy of God's love, an abomination or irredeemable because of their sexual or gender identity."

"My hope is that anyone who is feeling disconnected or separated from the Divine for any reason will connect with my story and begin to understand that our Creator, by whatever

name we choose to use, makes no mistakes and that everything about each of us is absolutely Divine," she said.

It's a message that, by her own admission, took Miracle-Best a while to learn.

"Divinely Queer ultimately tells the story of my journey from a place of pain and unworthiness to a place of liberation, empowerment and Divine connection, and particularly how my sexuality was the very vehicle that got me there," she said. "When my dad first learned about my first relationship with

a woman, like many parents, he declared me unworthy of God's love and said some incredibly hurtful things."

Despite those harmful words, Miracle-Best said that something "burned inside" of her and guided her to "walk" in her authenticity. Still, it wasn't all smooth sailing and she struggled with her faith for a while.

"Ultimately, I came to understand that, had I not had that painful experience with my dad more than 20 years ago, I would not have the kind of intimate relationship that I have today with the Divine," she said. "That realization has completely reframed for me my relationship with my dad and brought me spiritual healing."

But the transformation happened gradually, just one step at a time.

"One of the things I often share with people about my spiritual journey is that it has pretty much been on God's terms," said Miracle-Best. "By that I mean I

sure didn't go looking for God! Well, not so directly anyway. I share in the book that there were times I can remember seeking something more in life, something larger than myself, but I did not consciously call that God."

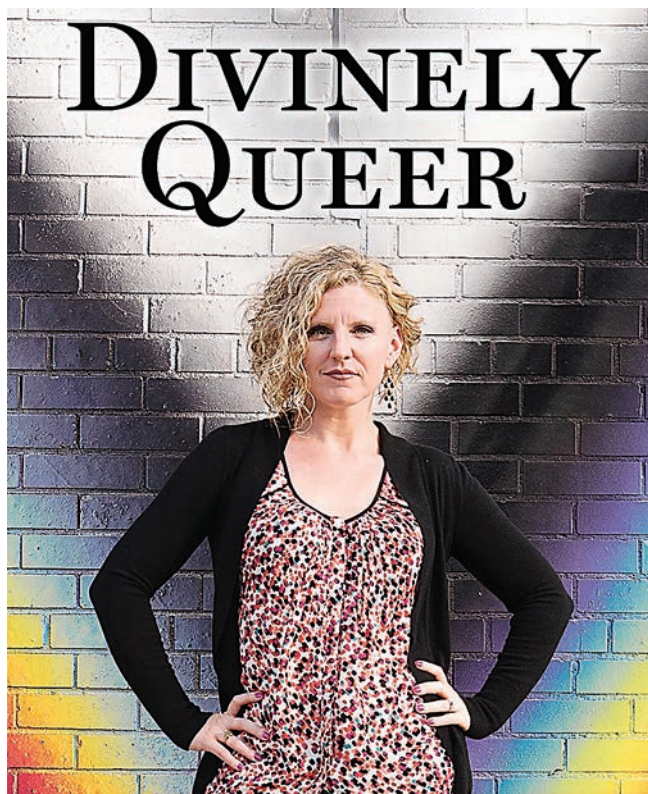
And for anyone who is skeptical or wary of anything spiritual or metaphysical, Miracle-Best said that she too once held those beliefs.

"However my story also explains how, gradually, over many, many years, the universe kept providing me with these experiences that could not be explained as anything other than Divine. Especially over the last five to seven years, since I reconnected with Ethan, I feel like my spirituality and connection with Spirit has blossomed, opening like a flower and continually expanding as I quiet my humanness and listen with my spirit."

Now, Miracle-Best doesn't just have a book under her belt. She also has a new mission.

"I wholeheartedly believe this is a message I came into this world to deliver," she said. "What started out as a business decision has organically morphed into a calling to help bring healing to the world."

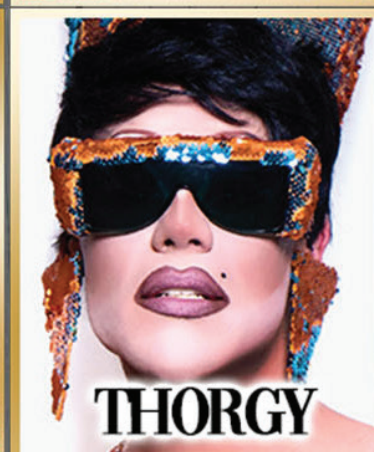
Divinely Queer is available for pre-order on Amazon.com. Jennifer Miracle-Best will be signing copies of the book at a launch party at Metropolitan Community Church-Detroit in Clawson on Friday, Oct. 19 from 7 - 8:30 p.m. At the launch party, Miracle-Best will read from the book and take place in a Q&A session. For more information, visit jennifermiraclebest.com.



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