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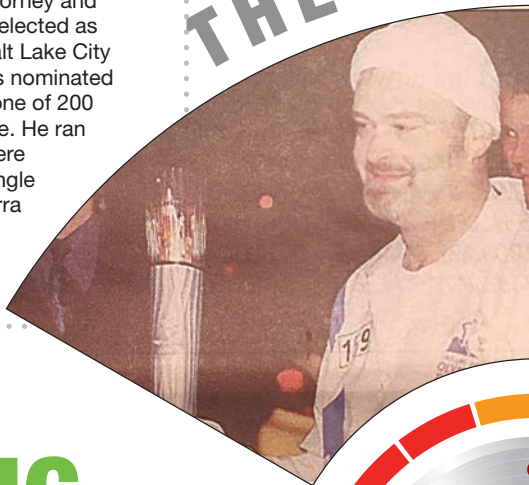
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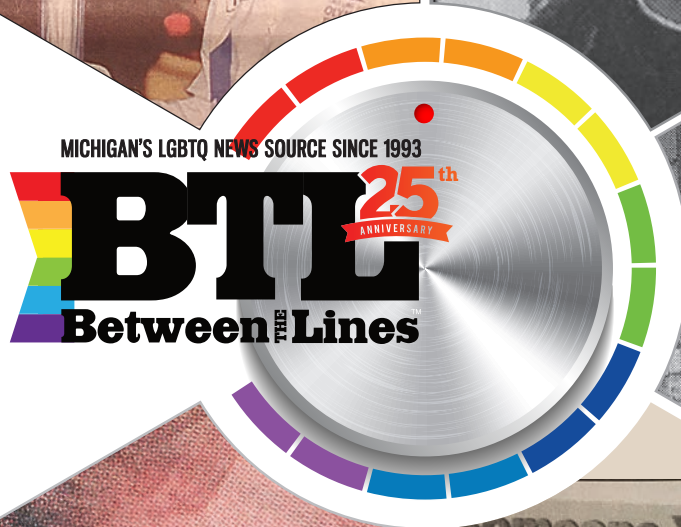
THE '00S - 2002

January - Olympic Torch Winds Through Michigan: Prominent Detroit attorney and LGBT activist Rudy Serra was selected as an official torchbearer for the Salt Lake City Olympic games. Serra, who was nominated by Ferndale's Ken Meuth, was one of 200 state residents to carry the flame. He ran it through the city of Warren where onlookers organized by the Triangle Foundation cheered him on. Serra chose to dedicate his portion of the run to everyone living with HIV/AIDS.



February - Gay Religious Radio Show First of Its Kind: Assistant Pastor Dr. Selma Massey and Darlene Franklin, pastor of the Full Truth Fellowship of Christ Church, co-hosted the radio show, "Getting the Word Out." Topics included what's going on in gay businesses, community news, domestic partnerships, coming out, transgender rights, African-American gays and gay pride. The show debuted on WMKM, 1440 AM in Detroit.

FLASHING BACK TO THE PAST:



February - BTL Makes News: BTL Publisher Jan Stevenson was one of five panelists asked to join a discussion, titled "Ask the Media," on a locally-aired TV show broadcast by Channel 7, the ABC news affiliate. Stevenson joined representatives of Detroit's major print and broadcast media outlets, like Peter Jennings and Mitch Albom, to answer questions about news reporting posed by the audience, which included leaders of various civic and cultural organizations.



November - Gays Jubilant Over Granholm Historic Victory: Jennifer Granholm became the first woman and the first pro-gay governor after defeating Lieutenant Governor Dick Posthumus by a vote of 1,629,748 to 1,504,281. Granholm was committed to "One Michigan," the theme of her campaign.



October - Love for Gays and Lesbians Posted on Highway Billboard: A strong message of love and acceptance for gay families towered overhead in Detroit's New Center area. "Someone You Know and Love is Gay" was the theme of a billboard sponsored by PFLAG Detroit. After two years of raising more than \$10,000 to be able to fund the billboard, the group said it wanted to raise awareness and visibility of LGBT people.

DETROIT PAYS UP OVER ROUGE PARK:

This specific point in history marks a big victory for the LGBT community and the Triangle Foundation in the year 2002 when more than a year of fighting and educating came to an end with a historic decision.

Rouge Park Timeline of Events:

February 2001: Detroit's 6th Police Precinct sends out a notice to the area, including the Triangle Foundation, that it will begin a sting in Rouge Park to sweep out prostitution. Within a month, Triangle received more than 700 calls of gay men getting caught up in the sting.

May 2001: Jeffrey Montgomery and attorney Rudy Serra held a meeting with two people from the Wayne County Forfeiture Office, the mayor, police chief and three deputy chiefs.

July 2001: Montgomery, Serra and one sting victim spoke at a Detroit City Council meeting for the first time about operations on Rouge Park. The council handed police officials 15 questions that needed to be answered by the next meeting.

August 2001: Second meeting with city council. Police officials weren't prepared with answers and Triangle received a call from

the new police chief that all operations in Rouge Park were suspended.



December 2001: Triangle and six sting victims file a suit against the city of Detroit, Mark Bostic and Danny Linares (the two primary undercover cops in the operation), and Danny Marshall, Jeffrey Hahn, Judy Dowling and Curtis McGhee, officials within the 6th Precinct. The plaintiffs were represented by the ACLU.

May 2002: The Detroit City Council approved the authorization of a \$170,000 settlement over the alleged sting of entrapping gay men at Rouge Park.

July 2002: District Court Judge Arthur J. Tarnow ruled in favor of Triangle and six individuals regarding the Rouge Park sting operation in 2001 and awarded the plaintiffs \$170,000. No money went to Triangle. It was split between the six individuals.

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Huntington Woods Drag Queen Story Time Comes Under Fire

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

For the Huntington Wood Library's Drag Queen Story Time, a glittering drag queen comes to the library to read to young children once a month. The program, said to be the third of its kind in the nation, has been going on for just over a year now with great success. But despite the good reviews it's been receiving, Allison Iversen, a Huntington Woods city commissioner, has stepped up to say she has a problem with the program and finds it offensive.

In an email sent to Huntington Woods Library Youth Services Coordinator Joyce Krom Nov. 17, Iversen wrote, "I know there is a desperate need for people to understand and accept people that are different. I believe using 'drag queens' as a means to aid in this process is a mistake. Children are innocent little beings and we, as a society, should be banding together to preserve that innocence for as long as possible."

Seemingly not seeing the opportunity for teachable moments, Iversen went on to express that drag queens were merely to be laughed at.

"A [drag queen story time] for adults would be hilarious and would make much more sense than DQST for preschool/elementary children," Iversen wrote.

Iversen went on to call drag queen story time "provocative, controversial, 'unabashedly queer' demonstrations of diversity."

Iversen even went so far as to request that the event not only be "reconsidered or changed to an adult event," but asked that signs advertising drag queen story time not be posted in the children's area of the library.

"We can opt to not attend the event," Iversen said. "But we can't 'opt out' of our children reading the flyers lining the bookshelves. I'd rather not be forced to explain what an 'unabashedly queer drag queen' is to my younger two children."

Between The Lines has also learned that Iversen has been corresponding to members of an LGBT hate group using her official Huntington Woods email account. The group, called Mass Resistance, features an article on its website about its efforts to end drag queen story time in not only Michigan but also Alaska and New York. Mass Resistance has also announced plans to picket the next drag queen story hour in Huntington Woods, which is scheduled for Jan. 26.

In her first appearance at drag queen story time, the bejeweled

See **Story Time**, continued on p. 10



December 2017 gathering of Story Time. File Photo: Crystal Proxmire

Openly Gay Jeremy Moss Sworn in as State Senator

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Openly gay State Rep. Jeremy Moss was sworn in Sunday to his new role as state senator. An enthusiastic crowd of more than 100 came out to the Plumbers Local 98 headquarters in Madison Heights to hear speaker after speaker laud the young leader with praise before the oath of office was administered by Michigan Supreme Court Justice Bridget Mary McCormack.

Southfield Mayor Kenson Siver acted as the afternoon's emcee and was the first to address Moss's crowd of supporters.

"This is the evolution; the next step in Jeremy's political journey," Siver said. "It all started when he was 5 years old and his mom and dad asked Jeremy where he'd like to go on a trip. Normal 5-year-olds would say Disney World. No. Jeremy said Washington, D.C."

Siver added that he felt Moss was uniquely qualified to hold public office.

"He bleeds politics," Siver said. "This is his passion: public service and being in the political arena."

U. S. Sen. Gary Peters praised Moss's maturity.

"Although he may be fairly young in age, 32 years old, we're all from Detroit so we know in the car business it's not the age it's the mileage that really matters," Peters said. "And, in Jeremy's case, he has a lot of mileage. ... The thing about Jeremy is he's authentic about this. He's sincere. I've watched him through his career over these last years and I just think he's ideally suited to be in public service and the kind of man that he is is more important than ever right now."

Michigan Attorney General-elect Dana Nessel brought a little levity to the proceedings. She mentioned that post-election she had been taking meetings with folks on the other side of the aisle.

"Over and over when I had these meetings to try to get to know Republicans they'll say to me, 'Hey, you don't have to worry about me. I'm cool. I'm a friend of Jeremy's,'" Nessel said. "I never really know what they mean by that. Does that mean you're cool with the gays, or cool or with the Jews or maybe, like, a little of both? I'm not exactly sure. But either way, Jeremy, thank you so much for being an ambassador on behalf of Democratic gay Jews everywhere."

Turning serious for a moment, Nessel added to her speech that it was "a privilege and an honor to be here



Newly sworn in State Sen. Jeremy Moss poses with Attorney General-elect Dana Nessel. Nessel jokingly referred to Moss as "an ambassador on behalf of Democratic gay Jews everywhere."

"We rank as the least transparent and least ethical state government in the country and in this lame duck period the majority party has proven why that's the case."

- State Sen. Jeremy Moss

today to speak on behalf of Jeremy Moss."

"Jeremy cares so deeply about the people that he serves and is so full of the conviction that he can actually make a difference," Nessel said. "He can help people and he has helped people for so many years."

Just 25 when he was elected to the Southfield City Council, Moss became particularly close with then-mayor Brenda Lawrence, who had already been something of a mentor for him for several years. When she was nominated for lieutenant governor in 2010, Moss was her only staffer. Then, in 2015, Moss began the first of two terms in the state House.

"His love of public service is something that I'm so proud of, and I was excited to vote for him to be my state senator," Lawrence said. "Many of you have mentored people and it comes

a point in time when you step back from the mentoring and you become a supporter. Publicly, I want to say to Jeremy today [that] I congratulate you and take the title of mentor away from us and stand here today as a supporter, as someone who honors and respects you and is so excited for you."

Looking ahead, Lawrence made sure to emphasize that she feels Moss will have a long future in politics.

"His future is just unlimited," she said. "I want to be healthy and alive so I can be on his campaign for president of the United States."

After taking the oath, Moss spoke for only a few minutes, but he was direct in his message.

"We rank as the least transparent and least ethical state government in the country and in this lame duck period the majority party has proven why that's the case," Moss said. "They have gutted ballot proposals that you voted on. House Republicans have sent a plan to the state Senate to strip some of the authority from our incoming secretary of state. This undermines the will of the Michigan voters."

He then vowed to bring change to Lansing.

"Trust in state government is broken and I'm going to the state Senate to restore that trust," he said. "We don't have to remain the least transparent and the least ethical state in the country."

Senate HIV Bills Package Explained

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

A package of bills is moving through the Michigan Senate that could change the way Michigan health officials monitor and address the HIV epidemic. Introduced last May in the Michigan House of Representatives, the eight-bill package contains HIV-specific bills that are aimed at updating Michigan's existing laws that contain outdated language regarding issues like the spread of HIV, the role of local health departments in the virus' treatment and criminal punishment for those who do not inform their sexual partner of their HIV-positive status.

Criminalization and Spread of HIV

Two bills within the package, 6020 and 6021, have come under extra scrutiny by some HIV advocacy organization around Michigan since they were amended from their original form to pass through the House. They were proposed by Democratic State Rep. Jon Hoadley of Kalamazoo who intended to "modernize our outdated HIV criminalization statute" by reducing the sentence for non-disclosure of one's HIV status to a sexual partner from a felony to a misdemeanor.

"But the legislative process is never a linear line and there were still concerns that folks had around disclosure, around folks who are intentionally trying to transmit HIV without discussions and a number of other issues," Hoadley said. "So, working in a bipartisan way to get as much as we could in the 99th legislative session, Dr. Canfield and I worked together with other stakeholders to put together a version of a bill that was able to then move."

In a Dec. 11 Senate health policy committee, Republican State Rep. Edward Canfield said that the emphasis of the bill's changes are on promoting treatment for HIV.

"I believe that what we've come up with in this package as it's presented to you today really does bring the state of this health condition forward and helps people realize that getting treated is the best pathway," he said. "... So it not only helps people live lives, but it protects our public health as well."

The two bills now rest in the Senate, waiting on a decision before the lame duck session is over. Should they not come up for a vote, the bills will die and will need to be proposed again in the 100th legislative session in 2019. Hoadley said that despite the amendments the bills will provide two main benefits.

"The first is that we strike the very outdated definition that was used in the current law that criminalized behaviors, some of which can literally not transmit HIV. So, we're really limiting the type of behaviors to vaginal and anal intercourse," Hoadley said. "Second, we

create a tiered system. So, if someone knows their status, does not disclose, acts with reckless disregard, and transmits HIV, that is treated at current felony level still. But, if they don't transmit then that would potentially be a misdemeanor if all the other criteria are met."

To illustrate his point, Hoadley said that currently there were 19 cases prosecuted under the current law that were considered felonies even though no transmission of the virus occurred.

"So, if this had been in the law, 19 people would have spent fewer of their years in prison," he said.

Hoadley added that he feels the new bill will make current HIV transmission cases fairer because they will provide an extra level of defense for those who have been able to take medication and suppress their viral load — or literally reducing the function of the virus to undetectable levels within their system. People who have been medically suppressed for six months are "by definition not acting with reckless disregard, so they are not eligible for prosecution under the law."

"So, for the first time in Michigan, as we work to continue making the criminal justice system fairer — there's still a lot more to do there — people have a shield from accusations that they didn't disclose or whatever the case may be, they have an affirmative defense," Hoadley said. "That part is really groundbreaking as well."

6020 and 6021's Critics

But as groundbreaking as that defense is, it is only viable for those who can afford care to suppress their HIV. Critics of the bill's changes like former BTL contributor Todd Heywood who is the chair of the Ingham Community Health Center board, testified against the legislation as an HIV expert. He said that this unfairly discriminates against people of color without access to treatment centers.

"There is already a racial disparity as it relates to the prosecution of people living with HIV. ... Black men who have sex with women represented just 16 percent of the cases of people living with HIV (outside of Wayne County). They represented 36 percent of the prosecutions," Heywood said. "We know in the state of Michigan and nationally that people of color have less access to medical care and



State Rep. Jon Hoadley

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See HIV Criminalization, continued on p. 17

Closing Party for Common Language Revives Years of Memories



Common Language owners Martin Contreras and Keith Orr pose with State Rep. Yousef Rabhi and a representative from Congresswoman Debbie Dingell's office after being presented with an award that recognizes their contributions to the LGBTQ community and Southeastern Michigan at large. BTL photo: Jason A. Michael.

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

It was Winnie the Pooh, with an assist from author A.A. Milne, who said, “How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.” Such was the emotion at the closing party for Common Language Bookstore on Saturday. A crowd of about 65 came out to walk through the store one last time and enjoy snacks and drinks in Ann Arbor’s intimate Braun Court near a warming fire pit. The party was hosted by Between The Lines publishers Susan Horowitz and Jan Stevenson.

“The closing of Common Language signifies the end of an era — a time when LGBT bookstores thrived as resource centers, meeting places and informal community centers,” Stevenson said. “[The store’s owners] Keith [Orr] and Martin [Contreras] value this legacy and role and provided this space for years, long after it made any kind of economic sense. It’s so important to recognize their commitment and to thank them for their leadership and compassion for the LGBTQ community.”

Both Contreras and Orr said they were

genuinely pleased with the party and with the community’s turnout.

“I love seeing so many people in the bookstore,” Contreras said. “I love hearing the stories and learning that people have fond memories. A lot of people were coming to the bookstore even before we purchased it. You never realize how you affect people. You just slug along and do what you enjoy doing or you feel it is the right thing to do.”

Orr said that he has made peace with the business’s closing.

“It’s bittersweet,” he said. “For us it’s a little bit out of kilter with other folks because by the time we made the announcement [to close] we had gone through a lot of this process already. ... There’s five stages of grief so we may be a couple steps ahead of the rest.”

Orr then added that the bookstore’s closing signifies a greater trend of change for LGBTQ bookstores across the nation.

“It’s not so much about a sadness about his place as it is about a sadness in general,” he said. “LGBTQ bookstores are closing and it’s harder for LGBTQ authors to find an audience.

It’s harder for readers to find the stuff that they want. When they come in here, they’re getting something that’s already curated in a sense. No matter what algorithms Amazon creates, it’s not going to be the same.”

On hand to recognize Contreras and Orr’s contributions to the community were State Rep. Yousef Rabhi and a representative from Congresswoman Debbie Dingell’s office. They presented Contreras and Orr with a special tribute from the Washtenaw County contingency of the state legislature and a recognition in the congressional record respectively.

“It’s a thank you, basically, for being around for so long to be a place where people could come and feel safe,” Rabhi said. “They all signed, the Washtenaw delegation plus some of our gay members of the legislature. It’s been an interesting journey for you, but you should know there are people all across the state who appreciate what you’ve done here in Ann Arbor.”

Returning customers to the store came from near and far to pay their respects and

“LGBTQ bookstores are closing and it’s harder for LGBTQ authors to find an audience. It’s harder for readers to find the stuff that they want. When they come in here, they’re getting something that’s already curated in a sense. No matter what algorithms Amazon creates, it’s not going to be the same.”

- Keith Orr

say goodbye. Will Daniels and Arne Spohr, for example, came all the way from Bowling Green, Ohio.

“I used to live in Ypsilanti,” Daniels said. “I went to school at Eastern Michigan University and I studied literature and I would always come to this bookstore to finding cutting edge stuff.”

Spohr, who is originally from Germany, said he’d been coming to the store for almost a decade.

“I grew up in a time in the 1990s that gay bookstores were happening and they were amazing places,” he said. “I feel very attached to bookstores like these. You can connect with people, meet people. These are great places and you don’t get these places online.”

Brian Derey of Royal Oak said he’d been coming to the store since just after it was originally opened in 1991 in a location on Fourth Street.

“I have fond memories of being at the original store, buying copies of Out magazine and the Advocate and putting them in Tower Records bags [to conceal them].”

Looking back on the store’s history and the legacy that will live on, Contreras said he has accepted the fact that the store is closing but that he will miss the customers.

“You’d get people who’d come in for the first time that didn’t know a gay book store existed or that there was gay literature and not just gay erotica,” he said. “So we’ve had a lot of those conversations. Or people dealing with a change in their life, ‘I’m coming out to my parents’ or, ‘My dad is in transition’ or, ‘My mom is a lesbian. What can I do?’ We’d help them understand what’s going on. So I think it’s sad that the bookstore won’t be there for people, because that need will always be there and you can’t get that online through Amazon and you can’t get that from going into a straight bookstore because they don’t know the catalog as well.”

Common Language will shut its doors for good on Dec. 31, 2018.



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Services Take Place for Slain Trans Woman

Suspect Arraigned in the Death of Kelly Stough

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

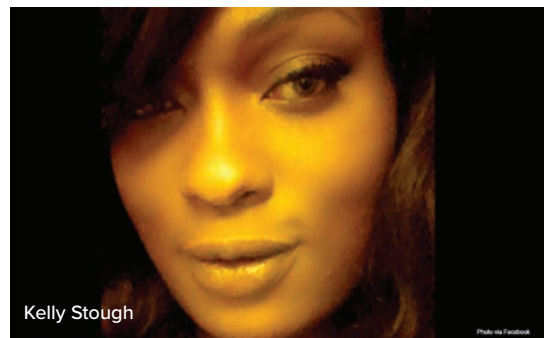
Kelly Stough, known to some as Keanna Mattel, was laid to rest in fine style Saturday with a funeral at the James H. Cole Home for Funerals in Detroit with a memorial service later in the evening at the Affirmations LGBTQ community center in Ferndale. Stough was murdered Dec. 7 in the Palmer Park neighborhood and was remembered fondly by friends and family. That, her mother said, is the way it should be.

"She would be tickled pink to know that everything was so grand," said attendee Jessica Williams. "She lived her life as such. I was just pleased with everything, I didn't realize she touched so many lives and knew so many people. It was awesome."

Jeynce Poindexter Mizrahi, transgender victim advocate for Equality Michigan and member of the mother board of the Trans Sisters of Color Project – Detroit, attended both services.

"Her funeral was one of the most respectful and honorable funerals," Mizrahi said. "There was not one thing disrespectful, one thing dishonorable. Her mother, Miss Jessica Williams, is a beautiful, strong, loving woman. And she made sure that her daughter was acknowledged properly and that she was sent away with the best regards."

However, it doesn't always happen that way for transgender women who are victims of hate crimes. According to a variety of sources, 36-year-old Stough's murder was either the 24th, 25th or 26th of the trans woman to be murdered in the United States in 2018. However, in each of these statistics, overwhelmingly



the victims have been women of color.

On Monday, Dec. 10, the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office charged Albert Weathers of Sterling Heights with shooting Stough. Weathers, 46, was identified in some reports as a preacher. He first told police he shot someone who was attempting to rob him, but authorities believe the story was fabricated and that it was Stough's gender identity that made her a victim.

Weathers' was arraigned on charges of open murder and possession of a firearm. A probable cause conference has been scheduled for Dec. 20 and a preliminary exam for Dec. 27. Judge Michael Wagner of the 36th District Court set Weather's bond at \$1 million.

The Prosecutor's office assigned the case to Special Prosecutor Jaimie Powell Horowitz of the Fair Michigan Justice Project, which is a collaboration between the Prosecutor's Office and Fair Michigan Foundation that assists Michigan law enforcement officers and prosecutors in solving serious crimes against LGBTQ people.

"This case reflects the excessive brutality that members of Detroit's transgender community constantly face," said Fair Michigan President Dana Nessel, who is also Michigan's attorney general-elect. "We thank the Detroit Police Department for their efforts to investigate the facts of this tragic crime."

Mizrahi said she is still processing the loss of her friend.

"Her murder was very personal to me," she said. "She isn't just a name or a statistic. This was my niece. This was someone who I watched grow up and come out into the LGBTQ community, go through her transition, perform, do the balls and still hold

onto God and her family values."

Williams said she is bothered by the disregard society seems to have for transgender women of color.

"They are people," she said. "I don't understand the fear and the stereotyping. Not just of trans women but gays, lesbians, bisexuals. I don't understand the hatred. Why not talk to somebody? Have a dialogue. They eat and breathe, have a family that loves them. They contribute to their community. I don't understand why there is so much hatred or the perception that they are trash ... that people don't care what happens to them. This is not true."

Stough was special, her mother said, and that's how she should be remembered.

"If you took the time to just talk with her you'd know that there's nothing wrong with her," Williams said. "I'm very proud of the attitude that she had, through all the teasing, bullying, she never got bitter. She was still happy. She had some down moments, but she was still happy and still confident. The fact that she decided to live her life as she chose made me very proud."

A benefit was held at the Woodward Bar to help raise funds for Stough's funeral. A GoFundMe page was also created by Stough's cousin and her mother said all arrangements have been paid for and thanks the community for their support.

► Story Time

Continued from p. 6

Miss Motorcity Pride 2017, Raven Divine Cassadine, read to the children and spoke to them candidly.

"I was nervous coming here," she said. "There's a lot of little people in this room and it made me nervous. I didn't know if you guys were going to like me or not. Do you like me?"

Cassadine receive cheers and yays and hugs from several children.

In a feature on the program last year,

Between The Lines reported that a large crowd came out to the inaugural event. Erica and Brian Conklin and their children, ages 2 and 3, were among them.

"We just wanted them to experience it and see all sorts of people," the couple said. "We didn't want it to be a big deal. We just wanted them to have these early memories of experiencing diversity as a social norm. Nothing out of the ordinary."

Today, amid the controversy, Cassadine said she is disheartened.

"It actually makes me upset and it hurts me," Cassadine said. "I grew up in Huntington Woods. I grew up doing homework in that library with my friends.

So it's like a homecoming to me. How can you say it's not a good idea when you've never come to support it or check it out? They just need to get over themselves and look at the big picture. It's educating kids."

And the children, Cassadine said, have responded well.

"The kids love it," she said. "They get so excited. They're so active in the reading and they have so much fun."

For now, no plans have been made to cancel the program. But it will likely be a topic of discussion at Huntington Woods' city council meeting, which is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 18.

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Detroit Derby Hustles

An Inclusive League for Diverse Participants

BY DAVID RYALS

Starting in January 2005, a group of Metro Detroit women, ranging from mothers to students to careerists, craved an escape from their day-to-day lives and sought to discover their competitive and edgier sides. It was among the city's roller derby rinks that they were able to familiarize each other with those aspects of themselves. Soon after joining together, they founded the Detroit Derby Girls league and held their first event in February 2006. In November of that year, the league announced it had officially changed its name to Detroit Roller Derby. Eventually, it became a group that stands out as a premier team.

Melissa McDonald is a member of the league. She said the group's success is a "reflection of the city" within which it was born.

"We hustle. We've got grit and tenacity (and) our members work hard on and off the track. Most of our members work full-time jobs, many are parents, and, on top of all of that, they're coming to practice two to three times a week, working a league job and contributing to the community," McDonald said. "I'm biased, but I would also say we have the best fans, and the best venue. It feels amazing to play at the Masonic temple, in the heart of the city, to a crowd who is just as invested in the teams, their rivalries, their struggles and successes."

Perhaps one of the reasons behind the team's success and the drive of its members is Detroit Roller Derby's overall attention to inclusivity. Adam Kenyon is a member of DRD whose team name is AK40oz. He said that roller derby has always had "strong representation from queer skaters and staff from the beginning."

"Though I'd never want to speak for everyone, I can say it has largely been very socially liberal as a subculture and movement," Kenyon said. "There are plenty of people across the sport who are not only on the vanguard of social movements, there are even folks in politics who are, or were, very involved in roller derby. There has always been a strong push within Detroit Derby to be at the forefront of conversations about diversity and gender equality, even across the community at large."

And DRD doesn't seem to be unique in this push for versatility and progressive change. Throughout its history, those qualities seem to have been a hallmark of the sport itself. In fact, during its modern revival, roller derby has come to be one of the most inclusive sports there is today. Since its inception in the early 20th

century, the sport has constantly changed its image — from a roller-skating competition to a stunt-oriented, stylized version — eventually, becoming an athletics-heavy sport that has shot up in popularity both locally and around the country.

One of the reasons is because there is no mold for a "classic" roller derby participant. Amanda Draft, whose team name is Meryl

things. It is 'for the skater, by the skater' and is not owned by an outside entity — we have ownership over our sport."

Still, as inclusive as the sport is now, that didn't come easily for all groups involved. And, in fact, there have been some stumbling blocks along the road.

"The inclusion and acceptance for trans skaters has been a much tougher conversation

"We hustle. We've got grit and tenacity (and) our members work hard on and off the track. Most of our members work full-time jobs, many are parents, and, on top of all of that, they're coming to practice two to three times a week, working a league job and contributing to the community."

— League member Melissa McDonald.



Photos by Lex Dodson used with permission from Detroit Roller Derby.

Slaughterburgh, is also a member of Detroit Roller Derby. She talked about how that lack of distinct player definitions has created a huge pull for skaters to join leagues everywhere. Draft said that roller derby can attract anyone from lifelong athletes who are looking to stay fit after high school and college, to first-time sportspeople.

"Roller derby attracts a wide variety of age groups. In Detroit alone, we have adult skaters ranging in age from 18 to mid-40s. Derby is played by 'real' people with day jobs," Draft said. "Petite or robust, a skater can see their body type represented on the track doing amazing

through the years in the sport and league, and even still is in roller derby at large," Kenyon said. "Though the official stance of the leagues (Detroit and internationally) moves toward inclusion there are still people in the sport that have different perspectives. For a long time, there was the general feeling amongst a lot of us that derby was a place for any number of folks who didn't feel totally comfortable in 'square' society."

Draft talked about the arc of inclusion inside the league and the sport as a whole through policies enacted by the Women's Flat Track Derby Association, or the sport's international

governing body. She said it has "evolved over time" in terms of acceptance.

"The WFTDA implemented a gender policy in 2011 that required hormonal documentation for trans and intersex women," Draft said. "They revised that policy in 2015 to remove the hormonal requirement, stating that trans women, intersex women and gender-expansive individuals can play if they feel that women's roller derby is the place for them. As an organization, we have followed that change, but we acknowledge that we still have work to do in this area."

But even with what remains to be done, DRD is visibly working to include anyone interested in playing and retaining its members.

"Detroit is also the biggest league in Michigan. We have four home teams, three travel teams, a men's team, two juniors' home teams and two juniors' travel teams," McDonald said. "There's a place for you here no matter who you are or what you want to do."

Detroit Roller Derby's next boot camp for new skaters will start the second week of January. Those who are interested in joining can email hr@detroitrollerderby.com to get more details, or by visiting detroitrollerderby.com, following the group on [facebook.com/DetroitRollerDerby/](https://www.facebook.com/DetroitRollerDerby/) or by finding them on Instagram @detroitderby.



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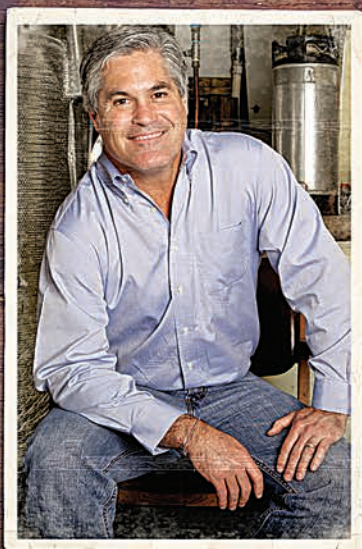
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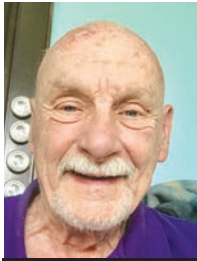


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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Christmas with Liberace

My grandmother Lottie Lee Alexander lived with my parents and me from the time I was five until she died in 1954 when I was 18, and had just finished Cass Technical High School where I was a commercial art major.

My grandmother did much to encourage my interest in the visual arts, church music and — I kid you not — her TV idol and friend each week: Wladziu Valentino. LIBERACE!

Granny was herself born in 1880 in Fort Payne, Alabama, a distant cousin removed from Robert E. Lee. In her mid-30s she was a Methodist Church organist and a dabbler in watercolors. She was an excellent cook, and her down-home corn bread and sweet potato pies highlighted many of our family chats in our small 444 Peterboro apartment kitchen. Just barely room for four and the small stove on which she performed her mealtime miracles.

In the late 1950s we owned a small 13" black and white RCA Victor TV. (I remember when I was 15 watching "The Howdy Doody Show," "The Auntie Dee Show" and the weekly big-name Paul Whiteman Band program. I had my first crush on a teenage guy on Whiteman's program.)

Liberace was a big star in the late '50s, '60s and '70s and my grandmother was a devoted fan — in spite of the fact that my dad had questionable comments and dinnertime remarks about the smiling, winking, waving, fluttering, kiss-blowing, all-showbiz keyboard wizard.

"No wonder that British journalist called Maestro Libby a 'fruitcake!'" said my dad, helping himself, no doubt, as a subliminal commentary item a similar fruit Christmas treat that Granny had just baked. (The journalist, by the way, was sued for his slandering and Liberace won a few thousand British pounds for the remark.)

For my grandmother, Liberace's nationally viewed, weekly TV performance was the highlight of her week. My mother, dad and I knew Granny was getting ready for the weekly event by her behavior early in the day on Fridays.

"Here we go again," my dad would signal mom and me. "Granny's humming to herself, and moving her own music performing 10 fingers."

As TV time drew closer, Granny would retreat to the bathroom to comb her hair, put on fresh makeup, and make sure her lipstick and dentures were secure. She'd then carefully pick one of her many, newly ironed dresses to wear. And, of course, smile, smile, a lot. Her usually uneventful old age was about to be given a touch of piano spark and pizzazz!

Granny decided that the Christmas Liberace TV Show — unbeknownst to us all, it would be her life's closure event — needed a special touch. To her tailored red-and-green outfit she added a Santa fan to wave and to keep beat to the Holiday music, and promptly one half hour before Liberace was to appear, she sat herself squarely, comfortably, belongingly, adoringly, in front of our family TV.

Then the Christmas magic began for Granny! And for us! The cameras lit, the keyboard music cascaded forth! Liberace smiled,

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



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

A Holiday Wish

So, once again, we reach the closing of the year. For many of us, this is a time of trees festooned with tinsel and glass baubles, or nights filled with candlelight or a myriad of holiday traditions. It's a time of gingerbread and gelt, kinarah or hanukkiyah, and all sorts of things we hold dear.

When I was much younger than I am today, I would find myself making my holiday wish list as the scent of the Douglas fir my father set up in the front room would waft through the house and the glow of holiday lights would produce a diffused swatch of color against the window blinds in my bedroom.

This would start with long study of the Sears Wish Book, as I considered if the latest offerings from Mattel, Kenner or Mego would best fit under the tree. Or, maybe I'd want a new bike or some other big item — like that year I asked for a telescope from ol' Saint Nick.

I'd surely hand my list to my parents, secured in an envelope so they could send it in the mail to Santa on my behalf. Later, after the ruse was revealed, I would just offer my list to them.

Even in those years when I might have snuck in a wish for a more feminine doll or toy, I'd still avoid asking for my dearest wish on my wish list.

It was the same thing I prayed for every night. Lowering my voice to barely a whisper, I held my hands clasped before going to sleep and I would wish upon the first star I'd happen to spot at dusk.

A simple wish, nothing more than a trifle to an omnipotent presence no matter if he wore flowing robes in heaven or a fur-lined suit at the North Pole.

I wished that I could be a girl.

My parents, who weren't exactly rich, did provide me with a decent haul for each Christmas, but I never woke up on Christmas morning with a new gender under the tree. Such seemed to be out of the hands of any entity being I may have opted to wish to at the time.

When I was 8 or so years old, I decided that it was foolish to keep wishing for such, as no jolly old soul was going to drop that down the chimney.

It would be 16 more years later, after years of denial, and pain and even the occasional glimmer of fleeting hope — that I would decide that this was something I could approach. I would simply have to serve as my own jolly elf of sorts, discovering my own path forward.

In the course of this journey, I lost a few things. Some of my birth family decided to not be part of my life. Financial security became a fleeting thing. Some things have proven to be more difficult than others, and harder than they might have been if I hadn't needed to transition.

Nevertheless, my wish was granted.

Continued on next page

The holidays can be hard times for those of us who are transgender. We may have to spend time with family who are less than supportive, hiding ourselves from them to remain safe and well. We may have been cast out by family and friends, too, and feel lost, cold and alone during this time that is sold to us as “the most wonderful time of the year.”

► Transmissions

Continued from p. 14

Today, this may be easier. There are a lot more resources available, and they are easier to find. When I was wishing as a child, I had only the slightest inklings that this was even possible, fed by what little was said in the media at the time.

Even when I did start transition, there was no World Wide Web to find the steps forward. I assure you that I had to walk uphill both ways to transition, and today you have the great and good opportunity to not go through all that I did.

That said, while the path is easier, it is not without difficulty. While more people support transgender people today, we are not supported by all. We still have to often jump through hoops to get care, and — especially right now — all of our rights remain in question.

The holidays can be hard times for those of us who are transgender. We may have to spend time with family who are less than supportive, hiding ourselves from them to remain safe and well. We may have been cast out by family and friends, too, and feel lost, cold and alone during this time that is sold to us as “the most wonderful time of the year.”

It can be hard to hold onto hope in the

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 14

dazzled, performed and — the moment our beloved Granny had been waiting for — ‘waved’ to Granny.

And Granny, once more bonded with her musical paramour, waved back, smiled and heartily rhythm’d her Santa fan at Libby! It was a true moment of bonding for Granny at 85.

Later, my father tried to enlighten Granny. “Mom, come on now! No way Liberace can see into our tiny apartment. He can’t see you, me, mom or Buzz. But, dear heart, if this Christmas make believe makes you happy that’s really all that matters. Merry Christmas mom. Merry Christmas Liberace!”

Many years into the mid-Detroit ‘60s I was partying with friends at the history, long-vanished Diplomat Drag Bar on Second Boulevard, a few blocks north of the

middle of all this, and you may feel that there is little recourse. No sleigh is on its way, ready to deliver a box containing your deepest desires.

There is so much mythology around the season, and so many Hallmark-styled expectations of a warm, happy holiday with family and friends. Even under the best of circumstances, most family gatherings this time of year won’t measure up to the images fed to us in the sentimental tales that make their way to big and small screens this time of year.

When you add in being transgender, these experiences become just a bit further out of reach.

So, this is my gift to you this holiday season. I wish to offer you a moment of hope.

As you read this, should you too be under this grand umbrella of transgender identities, no matter how you opt to define it, I want to assure you too that you too dreams are achievable.

You hold the power and the magic to form your needs into your reality, should you just wish it.

Gwen Smith wishes you the happiest of holidays, no matter what path you follow. You’ll find her at gwen.smith.com.

famous Fisher Theater. Among the visiting guests that holiday night were show business entertainers, including an unexpected drop-in: Liberace! (Ethel Merman also once performed at the Dip on a drop-in visit.)

I observed him intently, and — as did everyone else I’m sure that special night — Liberace wasn’t flamboyant, wasn’t a tad queeny, not one iota. Certainly no Christmas time ‘fruit cake’ in his actions. In fact, I was downright disappointed. He was just Wladziu Valentino.

Nonetheless, I smiled and waved to Liberace mentally. Granny would have wanted me to do so. Mary Christmas.

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

Mass Resistance

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

Mass Resistance’s latest focus is on Michigan, my home state, where they are forming a chapter. And MR has a pretty interesting view of how LGBTQ friendly Michigan is.

Just about every LGBTQ person has a story about something that confirmed for them that they were LGBTQ. For me it was Lynda Carter as Wonder Woman. That is, you might say, my root.

For the next generation of LGBTQ folks their root will be Drag Queen Story Hour at their local library.

A whole host of kids who would have otherwise been 100 percent heterosexual and have a rigidly traditional masculine or feminine gender identity that matches 100 percent with their genitals will now grow up to be some variety of gender nonconforming homo. Ugh, and they’ll probably love books and reading, too.

Thankfully a group that calls itself Mass Resistance is rising from the depths to defeat the drag queen story hour menace and make sure children are trained up to be bigots just like them.

Yes, I used the “B” word, which I know Mass Resistance would take offense to. As they write on their website, “It’s becoming common for the media or left-wing public officials attempt to marginalize any group of people who oppose the liberal agenda and support religious values by publicly calling them a ‘hate group.’” MR calls this “childish and offensive.”

Well, I call Mass Resistance a hate group. And I’d love to attend a Drag Queen Story Hour. Call me childish, I guess.

Mass Resistance’s latest focus is on Michigan, my home state, where they are forming a chapter. And MR has a pretty interesting view of how LGBTQ friendly Michigan is.

“The LGBT Movement has been plowing ahead at the local level, and even the state-level in Michigan,” the MR website reads. “Republican party members have developed a pro-gay attitude and even reach out to ‘gay’ groups, we’ve been told. Sadly, this even includes former Michigan GOP Chair and current Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.”

So Michigan Republicans are on some kind of pro-equality mission” I think someone forgot to tell them. I’ve lived in Michigan my whole life and I can tell you that the GOP isn’t pro-LGBTQ, and Betsy DeVos sure isn’t leading any pride parades.

“Thankfully,” the MR website continues, “Michigan pro-family activists have held back most of these changes, but as is happening across the country, the homosexual-transgender ideology is still making headway on the Wolverine State.”

Case in point: Mass Resistance’s first target: shutting down Drag Queen Storytime at the Huntington Woods Library.

“Drag Queen Storytime captures the

imagination and play of the gender fluidity of childhood and gives kids glamorous, positive, and unabashedly queer role models,” the library’s website reads. “In spaces like this, kids are able to see people who defy rigid gender restrictions and imagine a world where people can present as they wish, where dress up is real.”

And the theme of storytime is “I Like Me Just the Way I Am!”

Now, to me, this sounds amazing. But to the hateful folks at Mass Resistance, it sounds downright apocalyptic.

“Drag Queen Story Hour is nothing more than a subtle push of the harmful and immoral LGBT ideas,” MR warns in a poorly written message. “This agenda is anti-family, anti-life, anti-biology, and it is coming for your children!”

That doesn’t appear to bother the parents who bring their kids to the DQS. As one parent told the local news about his 2- and 3-year-olds, “We just wanted them to have these early memories of experiencing diversity as a social norm.”

Mass Resistance believes that this parent is committing child abuse. They also have no idea what the difference is between being transgender and drag queen performance. They are very confused.

In an email to the library MR Organization Director Arthur Schaper wrote, “The very idea of allowing adult, perverse entertainment into a public library and offering it to preschoolers — it is beyond outrageous.”

I’d have to agree, if that’s what was happening. Drag shows can definitely get pretty raunchy. But this isn’t a drag show. This is a person in a costume reading a kids’ book to kids.

In a local news story about the library event there is a photo of a child with fairly long hair who is wearing pajamas with footballs on them. No doubt someone is holding this picture up at a Mass Resistance chapter meeting screaming, “Is this a boy or a girl? How can we know for sure? CURSE YOU DRAG QUEENS!”

And hey, I didn’t even know that there was a Drag Queen storytime at a library near me, so I thank MR for letting me know. My son’s a little too old for storytime, but you can bet your Mass that we’re going to be at the next one.

Because you know what’s a real drag? Hatred and illiteracy. Drag queens reading to kids combats both.

Pelosi Visits Floriana, Plugs Equality Act

BY LOU CHIBBARO JR.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) told LGBT activists and others who joined her on a visit Friday to a Christmas tree outside Floriana Restaurant on 17th St., N.W. near Dupont Circle that's dedicated to her that she will give top priority to passing an LGBT rights bill in 2019.

Dito Sevilla, who works as Floriana's bar manager, said he has been in charge of arranging for the installation of a large Christmas tree on the plaza in front of the popular Italian restaurant. He said he decorates the tree each year with a different theme, drawing the attention of Floriana customers and nearby residents and visitors.

"This year I said, 'Oh my God, it has to be Nancy Pelosi,'" he told the Blade. "She's going to be our next Speaker. She's the Democratic leader. And she looks terrific. And so that's where it all began."

The 17-and-a-half-foot tall Douglas fir tree has a large photo of Pelosi holding the Speaker's gavel from when she was House Speaker in 2007 as its tree-top ornament. In addition to having more than 9,000 lights glowing at night, Sevilla placed on the tree more than a dozen American flags and large white ribbons with the names of the women elected to the U.S. House in the 2018 mid-term election along with photos of some of them.

"This is really something," said Pelosi when she arrived at the site at 1602 17th St., N.W.



Rep. Nancy Pelosi stopped by Floriana on 17th Street on Friday. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)

"It's really remarkable. I'm going to show the pictures to my grandchildren."

Among those joining Pelosi were members of her staff and friends and well-wishers, including several gay activists who live in the neighborhood. Among them were former Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance President Rick Rosendall and Democratic activist and political commentator Peter Rosenstein.

Pelosi agreed to numerous requests by

neighborhood residents to pose with them for photos.

When asked by the Blade whether she thought the LGBT rights bill known as the Equality Act would come up for a vote in the House after Democrats take control of the body in January, Pelosi said she was certain the measure would pass in the House.

"But the way that we will be successful – not only that we can pass it but we want it to

become law," she said referring to its prospects of passing in the Republican-controlled Senate.

"So we think our best friend in all of this will be public opinion," she said. "The public sees what this is and says let's just get on with it – let's just get on with it."

Pelosi said that along with the Equality Act, House Democrats would be pushing hard for "responsible background checks to end gun violence" and for legislation to protect "dreamers," the mostly young undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children and who have lived in the U.S. most of their lives.

Sevilla said Pelosi's visit was initiated by some of her staff members who live in the neighborhood.

"The tree started getting some traction and people started getting their picture taken in front of it and hash-tagging it," he said. "And a couple of people from her office I think live up the street and they ended up stopping by. And they said we have to bring her by. She would love this," he said.

"And one thing led to another and they gave me a call ... and here they are," said Sevilla.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) with Dito Sevilla.

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

Bermuda Government Appeals Ruling Against Marriage Repeal Law

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

The government of Bermuda has asked a British territories appellate court to overturn a ruling against a law that rescinded marriage rights for same-sex couples.

The appeal was filed in the Privy Council in London on Dec. 13, less than a month after Bermuda's top court ruled the Domestic Partnership Act is unconstitutional.

Governor John Rankin's decision to sign the law in February sparked outrage among local LGBTI advocates and prompted calls to boycott Bermuda's tourism industry.

The Domestic Partnership Act took effect on June 1, thus becoming the first jurisdiction in the world outside the U.S. to rescind marriage rights for same-sex couples.

Bermuda Supreme Court Chief Justice Ian R. C. Kawaley five days later ruled the law is unconstitutional. Rankin's overnment

appealed the decision to the Bermuda Court of Appeal.

"The government's efforts to repeal same-sex marriage have come at quite a cost, not only monetarily, but also in terms of the impact on Bermuda's LGBT community, and our island's reputation overseas," said Roderick Ferguson, one of the plaintiffs in a lawsuit that sought marriage rights for same-sex couples in Bermuda, in a press release that OUTBermuda, a local LGBTI advocacy group, released last week. "The courts have not found merit in the government's legal defense thus far, and are highly unlikely to do so upon appeal. At this point, an appeal to the Privy Council would merely serve to suit a political purpose. I implore the government to stop playing politics with the right to same-sex marriage. Let the law uphold the dignity of all Bermudians."

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

Angela Ponce is First Transgender Contestant in Miss Universe

BY MARIAH COOPER

Angela Ponce made history as the first transgender contestant to compete in Miss Universe during the 2019 competition.

Ponce, 27, represented Spain in the Miss Universe competition, which took place in Bangkok, Thailand, and aired live on Sunday. The competition featured women representing 94 nations around the world.

She didn't win the crown, that honor went to Miss Philippines (Catriona Gray), or even make the top 20 but Ponce was grateful just for the representation.

"I don't need to win Miss Universe," Ponce said after her elimination. "I only need to be here."

Later in the show, Miss Universe aired a pre-recorded segment which gave Ponce a platform to speak on the importance of her being in the competition.

"I'm here to represent diversity of humans in the world," Ponce says. "My hope is for tomorrow to be able to live in a world of equality for everyone, simply for us all to understand that we are human and that we must make all our lives easier together. That reality for many

people is going to change."

She also posted how monumental her inclusion in the pageant was on Instagram.

"What an honor and pride to be part of the history of @missuniverse," Ponce penned in Spanish. "This is for you, for those who have no visibility, no voice, because we all deserve a world of respect, inclusion and freedom. And today I am here, proudly representing my nation, all women and human rights."

Transgender women were banned from competing in Miss Universe until Jenna Talackova (Canada) challenged the ban and it was lifted in 2012. Ponce is the first transgender contestant to advance to the final competition.



► HIV Criminalization

Continued from p. 7

have higher viral loads already. The way the current legislation is written will exacerbate this prosecution and create a deeper racial disparity that is unfair to people of color without addressing any of the other underlying issues.”

When asked about these racial disparities, Hoadley said he understands there is still much work to be done, but said he feels that this is a better alternative to the existing law on the books, citing it as “terrible about what it criminalizes.”

“I think we have to always be looking at race-based discrepancies in both our health system and our criminal justice system. One of the reasons I think the bill addresses a part of that is by eliminating many of the unscientific ways that someone could have gotten charged with these crimes previously, regardless of someone’s intent or not; everybody’s a little bit safer,” Hoadley said. “When we talk about discrepancies in the criminal justice system, this bill will, across the board, limit the number of folks who could even enter into eligibility of the law and also creates tiers. And part of that balancing act is that the current law captures so many more folks who could not even to some degree transmit HIV.”

In his testimony, Heywood also provided a numerical representation of the additional cost of maintaining a prisoner who has HIV using his own medication.

“Four bottles of one month’s worth of HIV drugs for me and I will tell you that that adds up to be between \$62,000 and \$67,000 a year to keep me alive,” Heywood said. “And we as taxpayers will then have to bear that burden when we put somebody in prison. That information is not in your fiscal analysis and I think that that needs to be taken into account. It is fiscally irresponsible when we have other options and ways to address this.”

Heywood’s reference to “other ways” refers to Michigan’s section of the public health code that addresses people infected with diseases that are “health threat[s] to others.” That statute does not criminalize those with contagious diseases, but rather puts them into immediate emergency treatment. His testimony suggested an amendment that would link the new bills to existing legislation.

“We could tie ‘health threat to others’ to this legislation which would then require that a person go through the probate process to address their HIV and the psychosocial issues that are involved in likely transmission behavior before they go through a criminal process,” Heywood said.

Hoadley said that he recognized the existing faults of the bill, but sees the currently rewritten legislation as a jumping off point to a more inclusive law.

“I think we have to continue to tackle places where we see discrepancies in health care,” he said. “For me, this shows why this project is a

step in the right direction but not a finishing line.”

Privacy Concerns

Also included in the package of bills was a move to require women in their third trimester of pregnancy to get tested for HIV, Hepatitis B and syphilis. As written, the legislation would not allow a woman to opt out of such testing which essentially creates a system of mandatory testing. Currently, lawmakers are floating amendments that would allow a woman to opt out from the testing verbally. A second bill on testing would have mandated HIV testing consent be included in other general medical consents, and that a person not wishing to take an HIV test opt out in writing which presents a barrier to that process. Lawmakers are working on an amendment to allow people to verbally opt out of HIV testing.

Additional legislation would eliminate the 90-day record retention rule related to HIV partner services. The new legislation would allow the state to maintain those records indefinitely. Something they already do, in violation of Michigan law.

“Currently under Michigan law, the partner notification information that is solicited after somebody is diagnosed with HIV is only supposed to be kept for 90 days. What the state has not said publicly is that since 2003 they have been collecting that data,” Heywood said. “They currently have a database containing over 500,000 names and information of people at risk for HIV, living with HIV or tested for HIV. In addition to that, they shifted about three years ago to a federal database owned by the CDC not in the state of Michigan that all of that information is being stored on, in violation of Michigan law.”

Lawmakers are working on an amendment which will allow the data to be maintained no longer than 365 calendar days.

An amendment related to partner services is also being considered which will prohibit local and state health officials from contacting a person identified as a sexual or needle-sharing partner of a person living with HIV, or the persons living with HIV when they have declined partner services.

“The problem with this is that there is nothing to stop me when I have a partner notification conversation with a health department official from saying — and I apologize Sen. Shirkey for identifying you — Sen. Shirkey and I shot needles of methamphetamine up and now Sen. Shirkey’s name is in a federal database as a methamphetamine user,” Heywood said. “Whether it is true or not, the senator would have no knowledge of that and no option to remove that from the database. That is deeply problematic.”

The lame-duck session is scheduled to end this week, Thursday. More updates about this legislation will come out as it moves through the Senate.



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Photo: Focus Features

'Mary Queen of Scots' Star Talks LGBTQ Allyship, Coming Out Scenes and Naked Men In Her Movies

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Name a 24-year-old Oscar nominee more qualified to take the throne as a crown-donning, queer-friendly queen than Saoirse Ronan. The "Mary Queen of Scots" star's own life is rich in queer-adjacent roles and gay besties, and as powerful progressive Mary Stuart, the Irish actress sees her real-life allyship translate to a supreme role based on the Scottish royal who precedes her by, oh, 500 years.

Then and now, leave it to rascally men to get in the way of reigning women, as Stuart

requests to succeed her cousin Queen Elizabeth I; egos clash in the name of peace, and the queens wind up in a tempestuous and fatal feud. This was the 16th century, but here we are hundreds of years later: women are asserting their power and uniting to disband centuries of oppression, the kind Elizabeth and Stuart, together, never could.

Given her masterful and awards-honored work in other sublime periods dramas like 2015's "Brooklyn" and 2008's "Atonement" (resulting in her first Oscar nod, at just 13), Ronan's precocious acting career could very well

go down in history too. In Greta Gerwig's 2017 dramedy "Lady Bird," as a true-to-life awkward teen, the actress shared a tender moment with a gay boy she'd fallen for named Danny (Lucas Hedges, "Boy Erased") that ranks as one of cinema's great coming-out scenes.

In 2015, when you could vote for the first time in Ireland, you voted in favor of the same-sex marriage referendum. You also spoke at a campaign event in Dublin organized by the Yes Equality group. Why are LGBTQ issues important to you?

So many of my friends are gay. And especially in the arts, I'm surrounded by people of all different sexual orientations all the time. The best thing about the experience of being in this world is that everyone just becomes this one thing and, for me anyway, there's never been any sort of separation at all or segregation. So yeah, that's why. I also just feel like as much as it's important to tell any sort of love story if it's between a man and a woman, it's equally important to shine a light on gay relationships too.

Which “Mary Queen of Scots” does. The film’s emotional core is really the result of Mary’s relationship with her private secretary and confidante David Rizzio, who’s portrayed as just one of the girls. Reflecting on the LGBTQ people in your life, how did that scene personally resonate with you?

I guess it goes back to just what I was saying: That there’s no difference for me at all, and we’re all together working and being friends and supporting each other. And actually, the thing is, at that time there was a lot of sexual fluidity because it was pre-Victorian era, where everyone got a bit poker-up-their-arse, and so everyone was quite open. I don’t know whether you could say accepting, necessarily, but certainly sort of nonjudgmental. Also, marriage was a separate thing to love and sex back then. So Mary really was that open; she came from France, she came from a very culturally rich Renaissance country and, yeah, I feel like the arts still embody that.

You know, I’ve even noticed with one of my best friends, because he’s a little bit younger than me, but all of his friends were coming out from such an early age in a way that even mine weren’t, and I’m only a few years older than him. He’s grown up with just being around everything and everyone, and it made him a much happier person.

Without giving too much away, you walk in on two men in bed together. Were you as happy as I was to have a period film acknowledge that men slept with other men during that time?

Well, yeah – especially when they’re both so beautiful! You know what? The thing was, for me: I was quite excited that – like, more often than not it’s the women who are naked in the bed, and it’s the woman’s arse that you see. Usually the man is completely covered up. And so what I loved about it being two men together in bed is that you got to see *them* in all their glory and beauty. It was two male bodies being exposed in a lovely way, which I really, really liked. There was something about that that as a female actor I found quite exciting.

Piggybacking off a major plot point that I won’t spoil for readers: Have you ever been in love with a gay man?

(Laughs) Have I ever been in love with a gay man? I think I’m in love with every gay man I know, probably! I think most women have been in that situation. But yeah, so many of my friends are gay and I love them to death. And what I’ve experienced with, specifically, the gay men that I’m close to is that there’s just a safety as a woman, a real safety that you feel. And a security. It’s a safe space.

And you’re that same place for them?

Yeah, I hope so. Luckily, the friends that I have who are gay are very confident anyway and they sort of don’t give a shit, but you want all your friends to feel supported, and I think we all do support each other. I think it’s one of those things: Their sexual orientation or mine doesn’t really come into it because we’re just people and friends, and so it’s got a real purity to it.

You’ve said that you don’t take gender into consideration when choosing roles, but yet you’ve not played a man.

No, I haven’t. None have been offered to me. But I would! I would, I would. I’ve always liked the idea of playing someone from the opposite sex just because of what you get to do with it. I love the idea of being able to blur lines in such a kind of extreme way, but then also just from a pure actor point of view being able to work out somebody’s physicality and really embodying someone who would just move in a completely different way to you, and their voice register would be different and how they communicate and interact would be different and their gestures would be different. So yeah, I would love to do it. Even just for that alone.

See **Saoirse Ronan**, continued on p. 24

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Royal Starr Returns To Host Filmmaker Community Mixer

BY BTL STAFF

ROYAL OAK — LGBTQ and ally filmmakers can look forward to the upcoming Royal Starr Arts Institute's Community Mixer, scheduled to be held on Jan. 8 at 7 p.m. The Royal Starr Arts Institute itself is a non-profit arts organization that encourages filmmakers from across the Metro area to meet up, chat about upcoming projects and possibly even collaborate. President of the group Luke Castle said he's excited about the kick-off event for 2019.

"We really want to strengthen the filmmaking community here in Michigan, and we can do that by connecting filmmakers," Castle said. "I'm looking forward to the continue growth of the Royal Starr Arts Institute. The Monthly Filmmaker Mixers were a great success last year. This year, we are adding RSAI Memberships as a way to support our ongoing mission to support our local artists while bringing them

discounts and benefits with area businesses."

There is no charge for admission, and attendees are encouraged to bring their business cards and headshots. Additionally, local directors will be accepting headshots for upcoming films.

These mixers are intentionally leading up to the annual Royal Starr Film Festival, an international movie gala celebrated in downtown Royal Oak, in September of 2019. The festival attracts filmmakers from all over Michigan, the United States and the world. Royal Starr is now accepting entries for the 2019 festival. Interested filmmakers can find more on submitting their films at RoyalStarr.org

The event will be held at Hamlin Corner at 386 N. Main St. in Royal Oak. Tickets to the January Filmmaker Mixer are limited, they can be reserved for free at mixers.RoyalStarr.org.

Detroit Zoo Kicks Off Wild Winter Weekends in Jan. 2019

Just because there aren't as many holiday celebrations to look forward to post Jan. 1 doesn't mean that the Metro Detroit area doesn't have winter-embracing events. In fact, starting Jan. 19, Royal Oak's Detroit Zoo is hosting its annual Wild Winter Weekends tradition through Feb. 2.

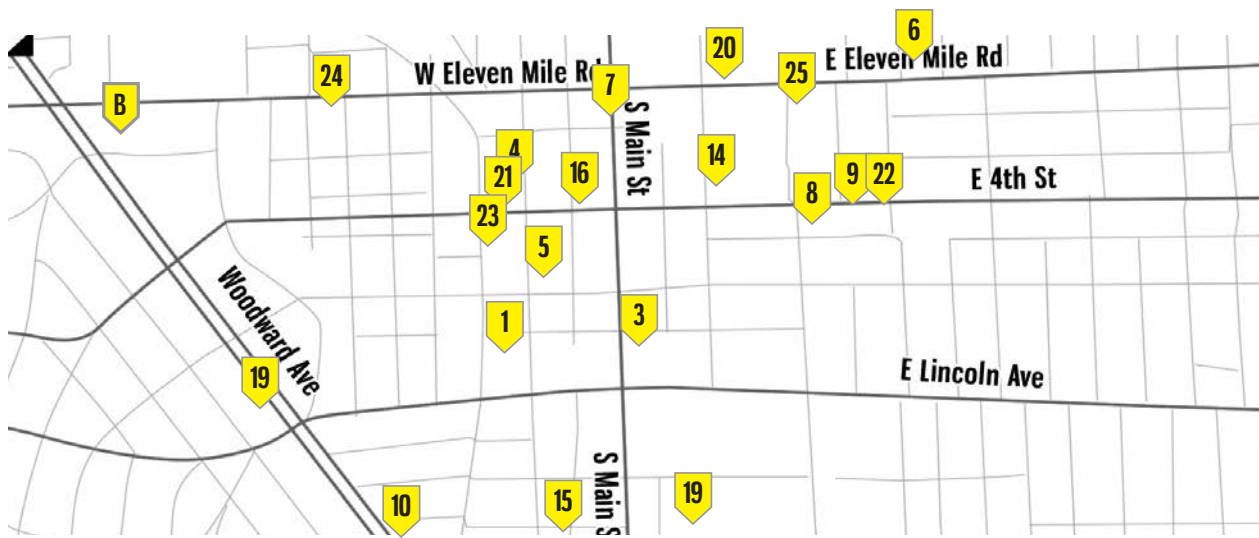
"The Detroit Zoo is open 362 days a year, and winter is a magnificent time to see animals both indoors and out," said Ron Kagan, Detroit Zoological Society executive director and CEO in a 2016 Wild Winter press release. "A visit at this time of year for a healthy dose of 'Vitamin Z' is the ultimate cool experience."

Guests are encouraged to enjoy their favorite exhibits both indoor and out "along with special



activities, zookeeper talks, crafts and more."

To find out more about Wild Winter at the Detroit Zoo visit detroitzoo.org or call 248-541-5717.



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Held at Royal Oak's Mr. B's Gastropub on Main Street on Dec. 19 is an event brimming with holiday cheer, karaoke and ugly Christmas sweaters. This annual party encourages guests to bring their wild side when expressing holiday cheer and serves as a way for Mr. B's to say thank you to its regular karaoke crowd.

"In addition to our fabulous karaoke and \$3 drink specials, we'll be giving away hundreds of dollars in cash and presents all night," write event organizers.

Though the event starts promptly at 9:30 p.m., attendees are advised to come early to secure a table for optimal holiday fun.

Find out more on the gastropub's Facebook page or by calling 248-399-0017.

'Phantom' Cast to Perform Jan. 28 Benefit Concert of 'Next to Normal' for Affirmations, Broadway Cares

FERNDALE – Cast members of the national touring production of "The Phantom of the Opera" — coming to Detroit Jan. 24 to Feb. 3 at the Detroit Opera House — will perform a special concert to benefit Affirmations and Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. The event takes place at 7 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 28 at The Loving Touch in Ferndale.

"Next to Normal" is a 2008 American rock musical that tells the story of a mother who struggles with mental health problems. Along with the performance the evening will feature live and silent auctions, raffle and cash bar. Admission is a \$20 suggested donation and tickets are available at Affirmations, located at 290 West Nine Mile Road in Ferndale, at the Woodward Avenue Brewers box office, located at 22646 Woodward Ave.

The cast performing "Next to Normal"

is involved in Cameron Mackintosh's new production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's "The Phantom of the Opera" makes its triumphant return to Detroit

by Maria Björnson, lighting design by Tony Award-winner Paule Constable, new choreography by Scott Ambler and new staging by director Laurence Connor.



The production, overseen by Matthew Bourne and Cameron Mackintosh, boasts many exciting special effects including the show's legendary chandelier. The beloved story and thrilling score — with songs like "Music of the Night," "All I Ask of You," and "Masquerade" — will be performed by a cast and orchestra of 52, making this Phantom one of the largest productions now on tour.

The Loving Touch is located at 22634 Woodward Ave. in Ferndale. Doors open at 6 p.m. for the 18-plus even. Tickets available at the door. Tickets for "The Phantom of the Opera" are available by calling the Fisher Theatre at 313-872-1000 or online at broadwayindetroit.com.



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► Saoirse Ronan

Continued from p. 19

You're starring in Greta Gerwig's upcoming remake of "Little Women" as Jo March. Jo was a tomboy, and some have speculated that she might be queer. Are you portraying Jo with that in mind?

I can't say much about what we're doing at the moment because we're still shooting, but I do know there was a lot of speculation that ("Little Women" author) Louisa Alcott, who Jo is obviously based on, was probably at least bisexual. Whether you want to put a label on it or not, (she) fell in love with whoever, regardless of their gender. She was very forward thinking in that way, and she was liberal in that way. And Louisa came from a very Bohemian, pretty radical background – her family was amazing and really forward-thinking, so Louisa certainly explores that part of herself.

In both "Lady Bird" and "Mary Queen of Scots," the approach to the gay reveal has been refreshingly played without blame. Queerness isn't framed as betrayal. Are these situations handled as delicately as they seem to be?

Yeah, I think so. I think in both cases the directors are close to gay men themselves and have been in similar situations with mates of theirs; so they know how delicate a thing that is and how important it is to honor that and be as sensitive with that as possible because it's such a huge thing for a person. It's certainly been a lovely thing to be a part of, honoring that and shining a light on that experience for someone.


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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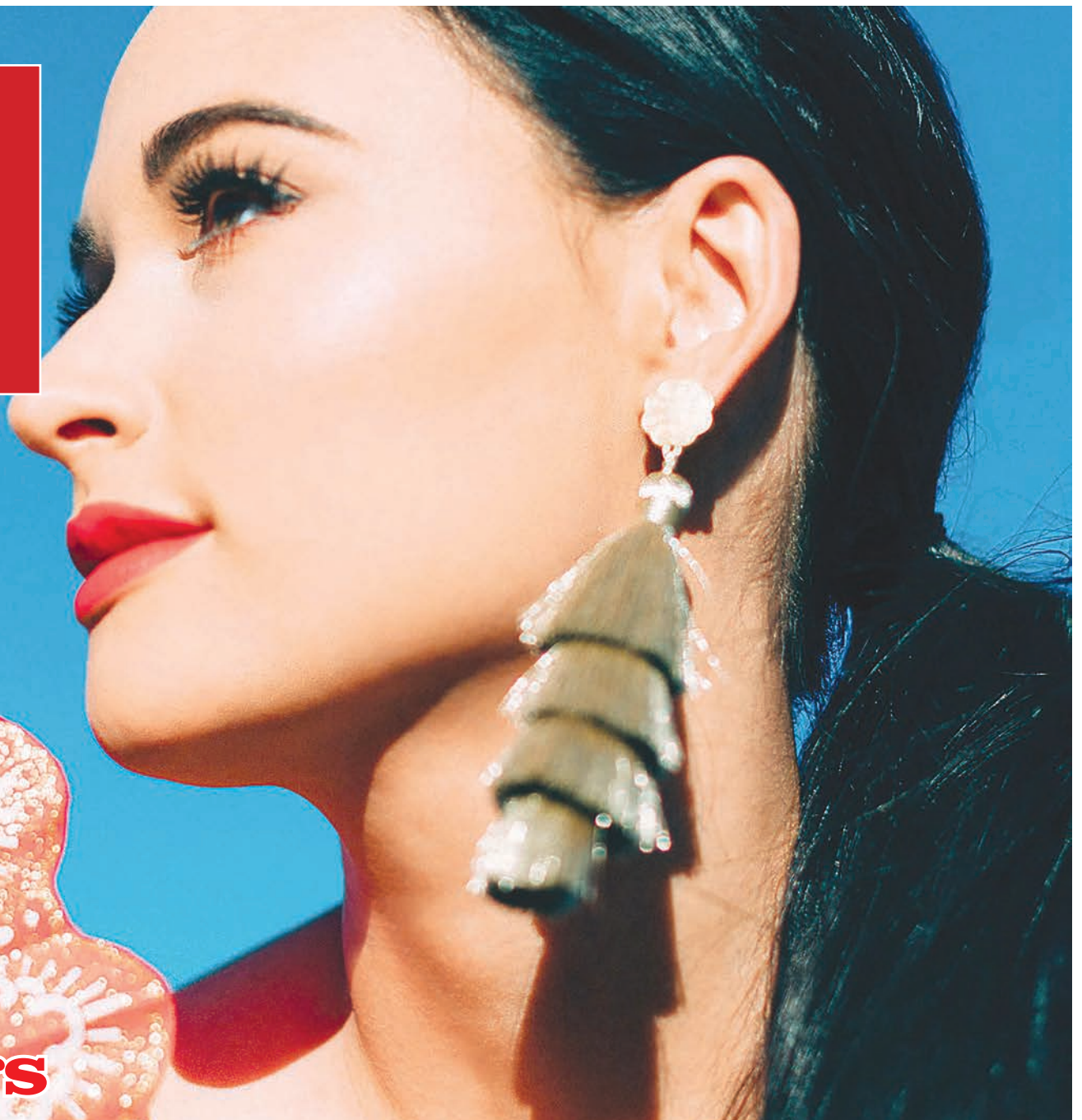
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Kacey Musgraves at Royal Oak Music Theatre

See her in concert at the Royal Oak Music Theatre. This is a part of her Oh, What A World: Tour that promotes Musgraves' brand-new "Golden Hour" album that was the winner of the 2018 Country Music Awards Album of the Year category. Tickets start at \$39.50. Find out more about tickets prices and show details at royaloakmusictheatre.com.



Happenings

OUTINGS

Saturday, December 22

MCC Detroit – Christmas Elves Celebration! 1 p.m. We will be gathering with the families that we have adopted for Christmas to give them their gifts and share some holiday spirit. There will be MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main St., Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

Monday, December 24

MCC Detroit – Candlelight Christmas Eve Service 7 p.m. Join us for our annual candlelight Christmas Eve service. MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main St., Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

Tuesday, December 25

Stand 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.

Wednesday, December 26

MCC Detroit – GenderSpark Monthly Program 7 p.m. Founded by a group of trans-identified folks and their loved ones. The groups message is essentially that you don't have to choose between your identity and your spirituality. MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main St., Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

Thursday, December 27

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Farmington Hills – Oakland County 7 p.m. All youth are welcome to attend this free group. 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. lawrencemoeb@gmail.com. speakout.toastmastersclubs.org.

Monday, December 31

MCC Detroit – New Year's Eve Party!

7 p.m. Come ring in 2019 with MCC Detroit! Vassel's Banquet Hall, 26750 Eight Mile Road, Southfield. 248-354-0121 vasselscatering.com. mccdetroit.org.

Tuesday, January 1

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Lake Orion / Oakland County 7 p.m. Free and open to the community. For parents of transgender kids, this group meets the 1st Tuesday of each month @ St. Mary's In-the-Hills Episcopal Church.

Parent Support Group Facilitated by Lisa Goyette, ally, activist. St. Mary's In The Hills Episcopal Church, 2512 Joslyn Court, Lake Orion. 248-391-0663 stmarysinthehills.org. standwithtrans.org.

Thursday, January 3

Pride Night at Thunderbowl! 7 p.m. Meet

& Greet First Thursday of every month, unlimited bowling, shoe rental, private room, private bar area, drink specials, billiard room, 250 foot video wall. Come as you are! Thunderbowl Arena, 4200 Allen Road, Allen Park. 313-928-4688. thunderbowl.org.

Sunday, January 6

MCC Detroit Testimony Sunday 11:30 a.m. Join us as we reflect on God's

Editor's Pick

2018 Detroit Winter Avant-Garde Art & Craft Show

Last-minute holiday shopping can be highly stressful, but with the Farmington Hills-based Detroit Winter Avant-Garde Art & Craft Show's wares available, there's a chance to find a gift for art lovers everywhere. This year the event will be held on Sunday, Dec. 23 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Studio Center, located at 23689 Industrial Park Drive in Farmington Hills. Find out more by emailing amanda@ag-shows.com. Admission is \$3.



Editor's Pick

Trans-Siberian Orchestra at Little Caesars Arena Dec. 29

Made a holiday tradition by millions of fans across the globe, Trans-Siberian Orchestra is a holiday staple for fans of both holiday and rock music alike. This year is the group's 20th anniversary tour, commemorating their millions of records sold and hugely popular event. For more information about the performance go online to 313presents.com. Tickets start at \$48.25.



goodness over the past year. Share your testimony in word or in song. MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main St., Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Adrian-Lenawee County 6:30 p.m. Free and open to the community. For parents of transgender kid. For Trans Youth Support Group information, contact facilitator Socorro Sevilla, MSW: socorro@hilltopcounseling.org. Hilltop Counseling, 115 W. Maumee St., Adrian. 313-909-5408. standwithtrans.org. hilltopcounseling.org.

Wednesday, January 9

Stand with Trans Youth Support Group – Flint – Genessee 6:30 p.m. Free to all. Trans Youth Support Group meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month @ Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Flint. Facilitator Sara Griffin, MA, LPC is a psychotherapist and a parent of a transgender son, eiregriff@aol.com Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Flint, 2474 S. Ballenger Hwy, Flint. 810-232-4023 uufliint.org standwithtrans.org

MUSIC & MORE

Christmas Market at the Anton Art Center 10am Shop with us for unique gifts and holiday decor by Michigan artists! The Holiday Market is the Art Center's largest juried indoor artist market. Anton Art Center, 125 Macomb Place, Mount Clemens. 586-469-8666 information@theartcenter.org theartcenter.org theartcenter.org/holiday-market

Pewabic Holiday Showcase 10 a.m. Pewabic presents new ceramic giftware and featured holiday favorites and other pieces only available this magical time of year, including work from our Gallery of North American Artists. Pewabic Pottery, 10125 E. Jefferson Ave., Detroit. 313-626-2000. pewabic.org

New 'Holiday Belles' House Tour at Ford House 12 p.m. With replica holiday décor and new stories, this new tour gives you a glimpse into the society scene of the 1960s. Edsel & Eleanor Ford House, 1100 Lake Shore Road, Grosse Pointe Shores. 313-884-4222. info@fordhouse.org.

Home for the Holidays! December 21, 10:45 a.m. Share Detroit's favorite holiday musical tradition with family and friends and thrill to the spectacle of the season. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5111 dso.org.

MCC Detroit – Fellowship Friday 6:30 p.m. Come join our gathering of music lovers who share in song, prayer and a meal. Held in the Fellowship Hall. MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main St., Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

MCC Detroit – Christmas Elves Celebration! Dec. 22, 1 p.m. Come and join us for an amazing holiday time. MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main Street, Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

MCC Detroit – GenderSpark Monthly Program December 26, 7 p.m. The group's message is that you don't have to choose between your identity and your spirituality. MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main St., Clawson. 248-399-7741 mccdetroit.org.

Sound Board Presents Bret Michaels Dec. 26, 8 p.m. Poison was at the forefront of the Glam metal scene in the 80s and 90s, their leading man Bret Michaels was launched into superstardom and hasn't come down since. Motor City Casino Sound Board, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313-309-4700. motorcitycasino.com.

Sound Board Presents Nelly Dec. 27, 8 p.m. Cornell Haynes Jr., known professionally as Nelly, is an American rapper, singer, songwriter, entrepreneur, investor, and occasional actor from St. Louis, Missouri. Motor City Casino Sound Board, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313-309-4700 motorcitycasino.com.

Sound Board Presents Cedric, The Entertainer Dec. 28, 8 p.m. Cedric Antonio Kyles, better known by his stage name Cedric the Entertainer, is an American actor, comedian, and game show host. Motor City Casino Sound Board, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313-309-4700. motorcitycasino.com.

MCC Detroit Testimony Sunday Jan. 6, 11:30 a.m. Join us as we reflect on God's goodness over the past year. MCC Detroit, 205 N. Main St., Clawson. 248-399-7741. mccdetroit.org.

The House on Poe Street at The Detroit Repertory Theatre Jan. 10, 8:30 p.m. Gothic ghosts encounter modern monstrosities when twin sisters inherit the house where Poe is reputed to have composed *The Raven*. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. 313-868-1347. DetRepTh@aol.com.

ART 'N' AROUND

Holiday Art Shop at Ann Arbor Art Center Opens November 16! Thru Dec. 31, 10 a.m. Support local artists this holiday season by shopping for one-of-a-kind gifts from the Art Center's gallery shop! Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 W. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-994-8004. annborartcenter.org.

Christmas Market at the Anton Art Center Thru Dec. 22, 10 a.m. The Holiday Market is the Art Center's largest juried indoor artist market. Anton Art Center, 125 Macomb Place, Mount Clemens. 586-469-8666. information@theartcenter.org.

Pewabic Holiday Showcase Thru Dec. 30, 10 a.m. Pewabic presents new ceramic giftware and featured holiday favorites and other pieces only available this time of year. Pewabic Pottery, 10125 E. Jefferson Ave., Detroit. 313-626-2000. pewabic.org.

THEATER

THE ELVES AND THE SCHUMACHERS by Carla Milarch and R. MacKenzie Lewis World Premiere Theatre NOVA, 410 W. Huron, Ann Arbor. 734-635-8450. A2TheatreNOVA@gmail.com.

Disney's Aladdin at the Detroit Opera House! Thru Jan. 12, 7:30 p.m. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St., Detroit. 313-237-SING broadwayindetroit.com.

Williamston Theatre Presents 'A Hunting Shack Christmas' Thru Dec. 23, 8 p.m. Charlie heads up to the hunting shack that's been in his family for generations, hoping for the peace he needs to sort out his life. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Road, Williamston. 517-655-SHOW. info@williamstontheatre.org.

The Purple Rose Theatre Presents 'Divya Royale' Thru Dec. 29, 8 p.m. The play follows the exploits of three midwestern stay-at-home moms who plan a last minute trip to NYC to see their favorite star Celine Dion perform and maybe experience a bit of the romance. Purple Rose of Chelsea, 137 Park Street, Chelsea. 734-433-7673. info@purplerosetheatre.org.

Evidence of Things Unseen at The Detroit Repertory Theatre Thru Dec. 23, 8:30 p.m. Two sisters, Abigail, an investigative journalist and atheist; and Jane, a stay-at-home mom and born-again Christian, are in an intimate family story. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. 313-868-1347. DetRepTh@aol.com.

'Rent' is Back at The Fisher Theatre – 20th Anniversary Tour! Thru Jan. 20, 8 p.m. A re-imagining of Puccini's *La Bohème*, RENT follows an unforgettable year in the lives of seven artists struggling to follow their dreams without selling out. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000. broadwayindetroit.com.

A2CT Presents "Oliver" Thru Jan. 13, 7:30 p.m. In a musical adaptation of the Dickens novel, young Oliver runs away to London. There he falls in with the Artful Dodger, and through him, the shady Fagin, but this is just the start. A2CT Studio Theatre, 322 W. Ann St., Ann Arbor. 734-971-2228 a2ct.org/shows/oliver

The House on Poe Street at The Detroit Repertory Theatre Thru March 16, 8:30 p.m. Gothic ghosts encounter modern monstrosities when twin sisters inherit the house where Poe is reputed to have composed *The Raven*. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. 313-868-1347 DetRepTh@aol.com detroitreptheatre.com/dauphin-island/

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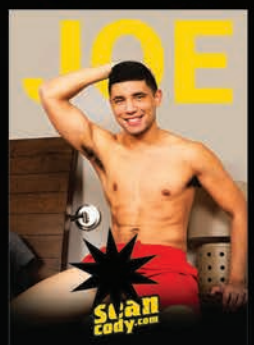
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The Frivolist

Don't Commit These 6 New Year's Eve No-Nos

BY MIKEY ROX

New Year's Eve is a time to reflect, cleanse and get pumped for starting anew, but that happy train could crash and burn if you don't avoid these countdown-to-disaster no-nos.

uncanny ability to turn you into a lunatic after a few ounces of liquor hit your system. There are plenty of fish in the sea, remember, but you won't find new ones if you keep dipping your dick in the same shallow pond.

2 Booking a harbor cruise

After spending a couple New Year's Eves teetering on the brink of frostbite in Times Square, I booked a cruise around the New York Harbor for a change of pace. Big mistake. What started out as a benign evening of dining, dancing and open bar gradually digressed into a nightmare scenario on the USS Get Me Off This Fucking Boat. That's what happens when you pump a hundred 20-somethings full of booze, run out of alcohol mid-cruise, and offer no reasonable escape. Bottles were broken, punches were thrown, mascara-filled tears drenched sparkly party blouses. It was like that

1 Drunk texting your exes

Nothing good will come from this. Best-case scenario, you bump uglies after the ball drops, but then you're starting the New Year in a state of regression instead of progression. Worst case, he ignores you, leaves you on "Read", and you keep texting him like the psychopath you might be until you pass out in a puddle of your own piss and self-pity. Do yourself a favor and resolve to leave the past in the past this time around. Block and delete all the formers lovers that have the



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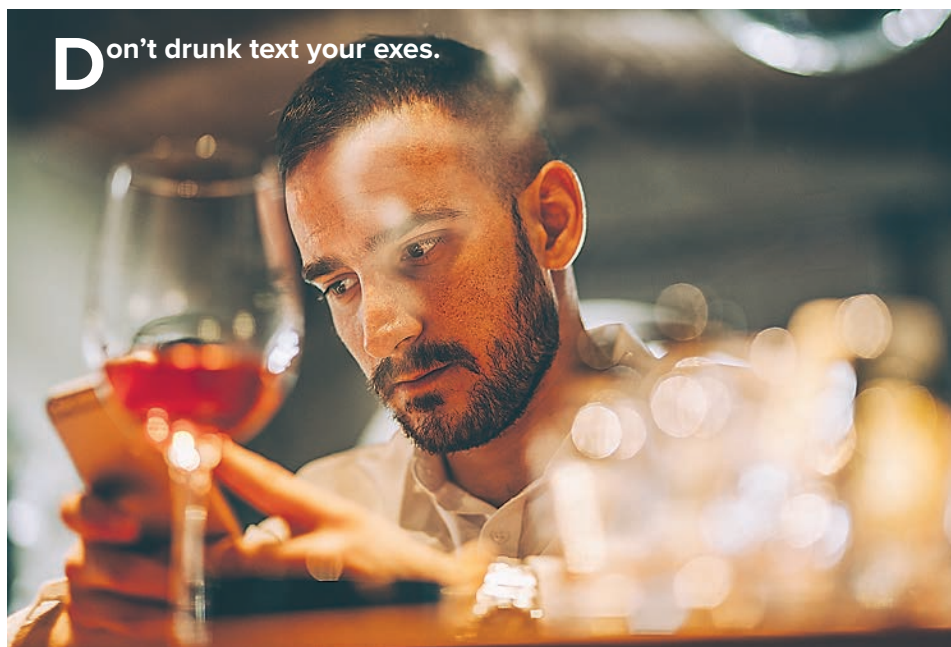
cafeteria jungle scene in “Mean Girls,” but with actual bloodshed. Stick to a house or ballroom party – and identify all exits in the event of an emergency.

3 Making last-minute plans

You really ought to have your NYE plans locked down by now lest you want to be left out in the cold (literally) or spend more than you should on price-hiked tickets to blowout club and hotel extravaganzas. The best events sell out quickly, and you won't have the luxury of choosing wisely by delaying your decision on how to ring in the New Year. Wait too long and you may have no choice but to improvise on December 31, which is the first ingredient in a recipe for year-end disaster. During a year filled with notable lows, the last thing you need is to start Jan. 1 at rock bottom. Then again, the only way to go is up – right?

4 Making no plans

I used to put a lot of emphasis on having the BEST time on NYE, but after several memorable fiascos (I'm still traumatized by the cruise, and that was a decade ago), I decided to play NYE by ear on a holiday vacation to Hawaii – because it was Hawaii, and who needs anything else to do but Hawaii all night? Turns out Hawaii is just like every other place on the planet during the year's last hurrah: a cesspool of drunken assholes, long lines, huge covers and cheap champagne (if you



Don't drink text your exes.

can even get a drink). With that, I discovered that NYE plans are important (as is making them early), whatever they may be. I much prefer lower-key New Year's Eves with my boyfriend these days, but having something on the books is required. I've been without plans in the past, and all that did was distract from the good time we could have had because we ended up bickering about where to go and what to do before giving

up, slamming doors to separate rooms, and drunk texting exes – a great lesson in itself on learning how to take my own advice.

5 Hooking up with a rando

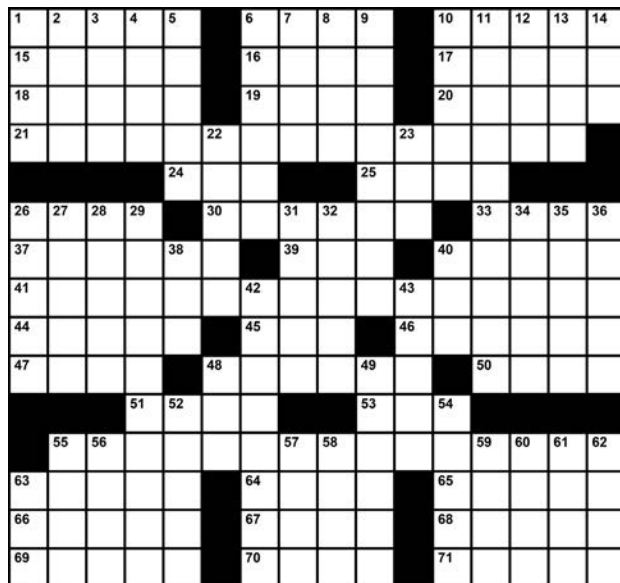
For many of us – OK, most of us – a night out, especially on an important occasion like NYE, isn't successful unless we've bagged someone to bang. While that's fine any

other day of the year, there's way too much significance attached to this holiday to kick off the New Year with kicking someone out of your bed. Do yourself a favor and be content with your own company on NYE. Beat your dick before you go out, delete Grindr from your phone, and stay present in the moment for once. Celebrate with your friends then go home satisfied with yourself that you don't need a fuccboi to validate your contentment or attractiveness. Sure, it's probably a change of pace from how you normally treat yourself, but isn't it about time?

6 Drinking and driving

You know better. And there's no reason you should be behind the wheel intoxicated when ride-sharing and taxi services are available in abundance (and sometimes free or discounted on New Year's Eve) and family or friends are willing to pick you up and deliver you home safely. Keep the car parked and enjoy your night. Happy New Year!

Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world. He spends his time writing from the beach with his dog Jaxon. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikeyrox.



- 45 Mandela org.
- 46 Anderson Cooper, to CNN
- 47 Queens ballpark of old
- 48 Most queer
- 50 Pull down
- 51 Sound like Harvey Fierstein
- 53 “Swan Lake” step
- 55 End of what Freddie said
- 63 Phallic oral pleasure
- 64 Wings for Julia Morgan
- 65 “___ Tom” (Langston Hughes poem)
- 66 Got to second base, perhaps
- 67 “The King and I” setting
- 68 H2O threesome
- 69 To the point
- 70 Makes costumes, e.g.
- 71 Chaz and family

Down

- 1 “Johnny Mnemonic” actor
- 2 Vanilla
- 3 Land of Sinead O'Connor
- 4 Declare firmly
- 5 Greek sorcerer
- 6 Prayer book, to Father Mychal Judge
- 7 Capital of Norway
- 8 Get off the breast
- 9 Either wife, right after the nuptials
- 10 Butler's burden on the Tara stairway
- 11 Working stiffs
- 12 James Bond opponent
- 13 Bit from Michael Musto
- 14 Suffix with musket
- 22 Head set?
- 23 “Thumbs up!”
- 26 Undercover agents
- 27 First extra inning
- 28 “Grease ___ word!”
- 29 Run-throughs on Broadway
- 31 Mark on the rear of a steer
- 32 Cup fraction
- 34 It comes with a lei
- 35 Opera guy
- 36 “Private Parts” author Howard
- 38 “Shop ___ you drop”
- 40 Great deal
- 42 What homophobe Trump got from Access Hollywood, e.g.
- 43 Glenn Close's “___ Attraction”
- 48 Fruit sugar ending
- 49 Orgasms, e.g.
- 52 Up ___ (stuck)
- 54 Young pigeon
- 55 Sexologist Shere
- 56 Role for Bela
- 57 Confession of mendacity
- 58 Leave marks on the back
- 59 “Render therefore ___ Caesar...”
- 60 Bus. major's study
- 61 Patron of people in the navy
- 62 Untouchable head
- 63 St. Louis clock setting

Bohemian Rhapsody

QPuzzle

Across

- 1 Erection supporter
- 6 Like recently cut leaves of grass
- 10 Janis Ian's “At Seventeen,” e.g.
- 15 Owen of “Closer”
- 16 Fortune-teller's opening
- 17 Short story writer and poet Bret
- 18 Dog-___ (shabby)
- 19 Cabbage salad
- 20 Doubleday of balls and strikes
- 21 Start of what Freddie said to

an upset Roger in “Bohemian Rhapsody”

- 24 Tooth care org.
- 25 Wine info, for Antoni Porowski
- 26 Direction from Rick Rodgers
- 30 You bend them in gay bars
- 33 Hustler from Minnesota
- 37 Coin in Lorca's pocket
- 39 Golden Girl McClanahan
- 40 Rent sign
- 41 More of what Freddie said
- 44 Lucy's gal pal

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For more information about PrEP and prevention services please contact our Lead Prevention Specialist Keith Hughes at khughes@miunified.org

WWW.MIUNIFIED.ORG



Holiday Yoga to Benefit Affirmations

Hosted by Chela Yoga from Waterford, all Affirmations-supporting community members are encouraged to come by on Monday, Dec. 24 from 9 to 10 a.m. to participate in a holiday-inspired yoga session. The Christmas Eve event will allow participants not only to donate money, but have a centering experience and get to know the Ferndale-based LGBTQ community center.

“(There is a) \$10.00 suggested donation, with all proceeds going to Affirmations,” wrote event organizers. “For more information about Affirmations please visit their website at GoAffirmations.org.”

This yoga class is gentle. Find out more on the affirmations Facebook page.



Fox Theatre’s ‘Christmas Story’ to Donate to Michigan Humane Society

DETROIT — “A Christmas Story, The Musical” has announced a local partnership with the Michigan Humane Society during their Fox Theatre engagement running Dec. 20 through 22. In honor of the stage production’s two featured rescue dogs, Stella and Hoss, who play “The Bumpus Hounds,” each ticket purchased now through Dec. 22 at 6 p.m., using the code “MHS” will help raise funds to support the organization’s mission to improve and save lives through compassionate care, community engagement and advocacy for animals.

The Michigan Humane Society, founded in 1877, is the oldest and largest nonprofit animal welfare organization in the state. Each year, MHS achieves 100 percent placement of more than 10,000 healthy and treatable animals through compassionate care, community engagement, and advocacy for humane treatment. The MHS operates three shelter and veterinary centers in Detroit, Rochester Hills and Westland; five adoption partnerships with Premier Pet Supply, Petco and PetSmart; and both a Cruelty Investigation Department

and a Statewide Animal Response Team.

“A Christmas Story, The Musical,” brings the classic 1983 movie to life on stage. Set in 1940s Indiana, a young and bespectacled Ralphie Parker schemes his way toward the holiday gift of his dreams: an official Red Ryder Carbine-Action 200-Shot Range Model Air Rifle. An infamous leg lamp, outrageous pink bunny pajamas, a maniacal department store Santa and a triple-dog-dare to lick a freezing flagpole are just a few of the distractions that stand between Ralphie and his Christmas wish.

Learn more at michiganhumane.org. To purchase Humane Society-supporting tickets customers must use the promo code “MHS” at Ticketmaster.com. The offer is valid on select price levels and performances and is not valid on previously purchased tickets. There is a 6-ticket limit per purchase. Some restrictions and fees may apply.

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Hydrate Detroit Works to Fend Off Detroit Water Shut-Offs

This holiday season, hundreds of families in Detroit will not have clean water running through their homes, due to impending Detroit Water and Sewerage Department shut-offs. Hydrate Detroit, a local 501(c)(3) water rights organization, would like to “Give the Gift of Water Restoration” to ensure that families and seniors who cannot afford to pay their water bills are able to enjoy a fully hydrated home throughout the holiday season. It is encouraging anyone who can to give to the organization via an online fundraiser to pay water bills.

“While we may not be able to afford everyone’s water bill, we can try our best to be a blessing to some who are in the greatest need,” said Demeeko Williams, Chief Director of Hydrate Detroit.

Even beyond water for cooking and bathing, Detroit has homes that are outfitted with water-based heat radiators that rely on water to fend off the winter chill. Donors would be giving charitable resources to help keep families maintain with clean running water through the winter months.

“The proceeds will be applied straight to the water bill accounts of pre-selected families at the Detroit Water



and Sewerage Department for restoration fees,” said a Hydrate Detroit press release. “Donors can help adopt a family or sponsor to help a family clear out their high water bill debt.”

For more information go online to hydratedetroit.org or by following the group’s Facebook page.

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