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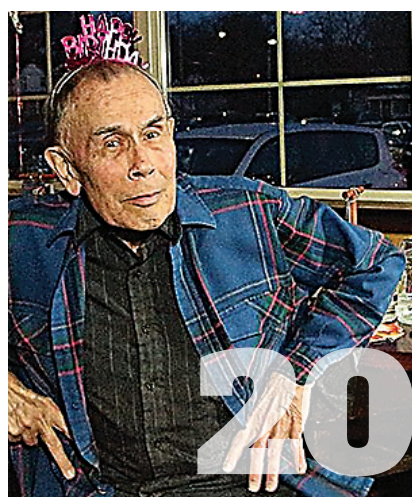
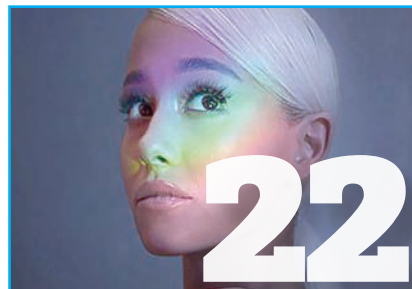
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6 Cover: Equality Michigan Shares 'Bigger and Bolder' Agenda.
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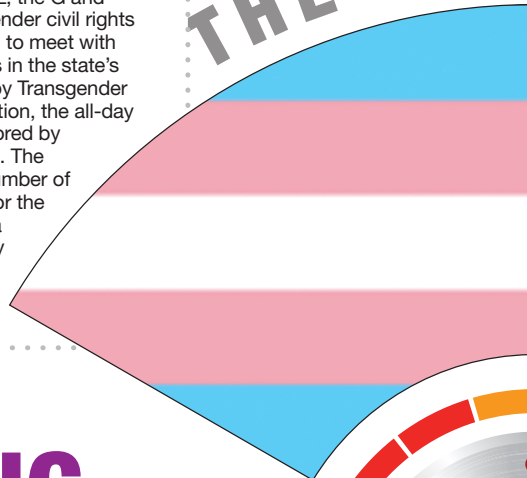
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THE '00S - 2005

March - Trans Issues Take Center Stage in Lansing: Putting concerns of the L, the G and the B aside, advocates for transgender civil rights issues stormed Michigan's Capitol to meet with senators and state representatives in the state's first Trans Lobby Day. Organized by Transgender Michigan and the Triangle Foundation, the all-day event on March 17 was co-sponsored by organizations throughout the state. The Trans Lobby Day represented a number of firsts in Michigan. It was the first for the LGBTQ community and possibly a first encounter with gender identity and expression issues for some lawmakers.



June - Protest By Anti-Gay Parents in Troy Backfires: A poster at Troy High School that read "Gay People are Everyday People" multiplied instead of coming down after parents fought the Troy School District for over a year to have the poster removed from an English classroom, claiming it promotes sexuality and a homosexual lifestyle. The school's English department ordered 25 more copies instead of taking it down. The poster, distributed by the Ferndale-based Affirmations LGBTQ Community Center, originally went up in 2003 at the request of the student group Human Equal Rights Organization, which was doing a project on tolerance. It portrayed five teenagers surrounded by photos of professionals such as caterers, mail carriers, musicians and teachers.

FLASHING BACK TO THE PAST:



August - Dream Cruise Party Invites LGBTQs: Up until August 2005, the LGBTQ community had been left out of the Dream Cruise mix, restricted to private house parties. But Victory Home Loans in Birmingham changed that by adding an LGBTQ element to the event. Senior Vice President Chris Campbell, who is gay, hosted an LGBTQ party in the company's parking lot the night before the Dream Cruise's official start with a special performance by singer Barbara Payton (pictured).

October - New Affirmations LGBTQ Community Center Breaks Ground: After four years of meetings, fundraisers, consultations with architects, building inspectors, governmental red tape and gallons of coffee, the Building Committee at Affirmations LGBTQ Community Center finally got a chance to celebrate Oct. 23 at a groundbreaking ceremony that included special guest appearances from many dignitaries, most notably former Gov. Jennifer Granholm. Affirmations raised \$5 million toward the construction of a new center building to be finished by the fall of 2006.



September - Marriage Amendment Does Not Reach the Workplace: In a victory for Michigan same-sex couples, a state judge ruled in September 2005 that public employers are not prohibited from offering domestic partner benefits to employees. The request for a declaratory judgment was filed by the ACLU of Michigan on behalf of 21 same-sex couples who were in danger of losing health care benefits after Proposal 2, the anti-gay marriage ban, passed in November 2004. Pictured: Moms and plaintiffs in the Proposal 2 lawsuit, Kathleen Moltz and Dahlia Schwartz, with Jay Kaplan, attorney for the LGBTQ Project of the ACLU.

BUILT FORD TOUGH?

A tense two weeks came to a happy ending in December 2005 when Ford unequivocally stated its support for the LGBTQ community in words and actions, distancing themselves from the extremist, right-wing group, the American Family Association, that had threatened to boycott the company. Ford executives had met with AFA representatives on Dec. 1 then discontinued their advertising for Jaguar and Land Rover in LGBTQ publications, raising fears that Ford had made a deal with the anti-gay AFA to avert a boycott. Ford executives claimed it was a business decision. Following a meeting with seven LGBTQ leaders and Ford executives on Dec. 12, Ford released a statement on Dec. 14 that Ford would continue its support for LGBTQ organizations and events, and that the automaker would place corporate advertising in LGBTQ publications for all eight of its brands, including Jaguar and Land Rover. Ford's statement put to rest the worries of LGBTQ leaders that the corporation was backing off its support for LGBTQ consumers, employees and community groups.

Ford Drives the Extra Mile on LGBTQ Issues

2000 - On June 8, Ford, General Motors, and the Chrysler Division of DaimlerChrysler announced same-sex health care benefits.
 - Ford sponsored Lambda Car Club D2K Grand International Invitational.
 - Ford received its first corporate "Outie" Award for Significant Strides for Progress at the 2000 Out and Equal Leadership Summit.
 - Ford and Ford GLOBE presented the Corporate Equality Award at the HRC Detroit dinner.
 - Ford's first LGBTQ-friendly recruiting ad in a national magazine appeared in the Diversity Careers in Engineering and IT in conjunction with an article on LGBTQ engineers.

2001 - Ford expanded same-sex domestic partner benefits to include vehicle programs, legal services, and more.
 - Ford ranked as 18th on the 2001 gfn.com 50, a list of the "50 Most Powerful & Gay-Friendly Public Companies in Corporate America" published annually by the Gay Financial Network.
 - The Gay and Lesbian Values Reports scored Ford nine out of 10 points on its 2001 GLV Index.



- Ford sponsored PrideFest in Michigan for the first time.
 - Ford Marketing undertook the most comprehensive study of LGBTQ consumers by a major corporation.

2003 - DiversityInc named Ford the number one company for diversity, and the number two company for LGBTQ employees.
 - Ford brands Jaguar and Volvo begin the first LGBTQ-targeted advertising by a Ford brand with ads in The Advocate.
 - Ford named winner of 2003 Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation Fairness Award.

2004 - Ford Motor Company Fund announced a \$250,000 gift to the Capital Campaign of Affirmations LGBTQ Community Center, the largest gift ever from a Fortune 500 company to an LGBTQ organization.
 - Volvo Cars of North America, LLC received the Advertising Research Foundation David Ogilvy Award and the Association of National Advertisers Multi-Cultural Excellence Award for its "Starting a Family" advertising campaign targeting LGBTQ consumers.
 - DiversityInc announced that Ford ranked in its annual Top 10 Companies for LGBTQ Employees list.
 - Ford added "Gender Identity" as a category protected against discrimination, the first of the Big 3 to take this step.
 - Ford received a 100 percent score in the HRC Corporate Equality Index.
2005 - Ford ranked second in the annual DiversityInc list of The Top 10 Companies for GLBT Employees.
 - Ford received a perfect score of 100 percent on the HRC Corporate Equality Index.



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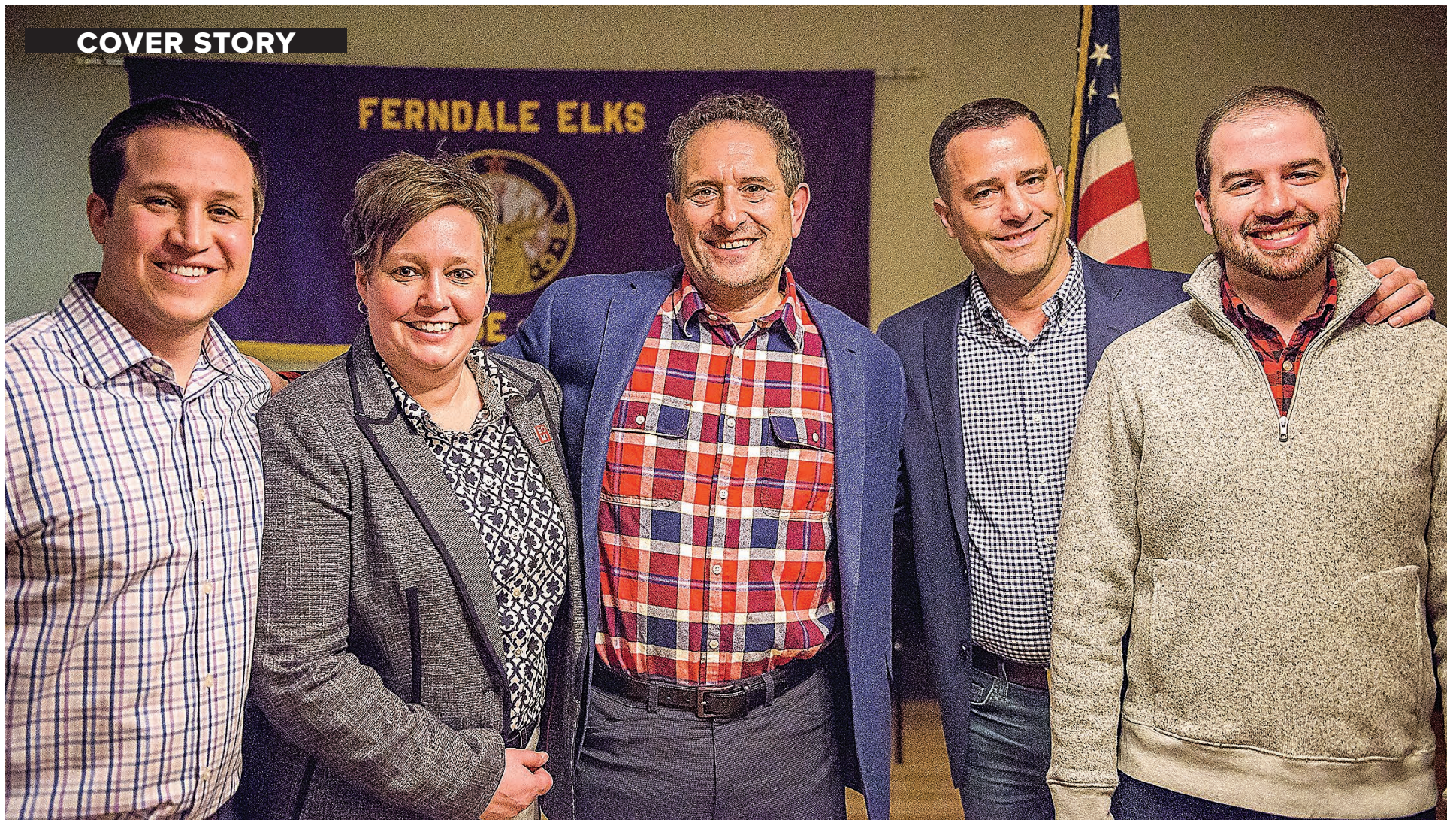


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Rep. Robert Wittenberg (District 27), Equality Michigan Interim Director Erin Knott, Rep. Andy Levin (District 9), EQMI Board of Directors Chair Michael Rowady, and Sen. Jeremy Moss gathered on Sunday, March 3 at the Ferndale Elks Lodge for EQMI's fundraising event to announce their 2019 breakthrough goals. BTL Photo: Andrew Cohen

Equality Michigan Announces Breakthrough Goals for 2019

Organization Shares 'Bigger and Bolder' Agenda, Four Key To-Dos on Behalf of the LGBTQ Community Across the State

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

There's no doubt the LGBTQ community can celebrate the political gains made in 2018, but the Trump administration's attacks on the LGBTQ community have escalated since then – particularly toward transgender people. And last year's midterm election results, while encouraging, do not reduce the imminent threats the LGBTQ community faces; there is a lot of work yet to do.

Recognizing that, Equality Michigan – a statewide, LGBTQ-centered, anti-violence group – is planning for rapid progress on the issues that matter most to the organization's members and supporters. With a more politically balanced incoming legislature and a pro-equality governor, attorney general and

secretary of state, EQMI's Interim Executive Director Erin Knott said 2019 is a pivotal year for work to build movement leaders and empower their supporters and community members across Michigan.

"We've set an agenda that's bigger and bolder than anything that you've seen from Equality Michigan in the past," Knott said, during an EQMI fundraising event on Sunday, March 3, at the Ferndale Elks Lodge.

Knott stepped into her existing position in January when the organization's board unanimously decided not to renew former Executive Director Stephanie White's contract. This decision, according to a press release, was made as a result of EQMI's efforts to retool for 2019 and years to come. White held the position since October 2015.

Her departure marks the sixth executive director to come and go since 2007. Jeff Montgomery resigned from the Triangle Foundation – formerly EQMI's name – in 2007, Kate Runyon in 2008, Alicia Skillman in 2010, Denise Brogan-Kator in 2012 and Emily Dievendorf in 2015.

Michael Rowady, EQMI's 501(c)(3) board chair, confirmed a search will be conducted for a new executive director later this year by both the board of directors and the Equality Michigan Action Network, the 501(c)(4) arm of the organization.

Rowady had this to say about Knott, who is an established political operative, Kalamazoo Vice Mayor and EQMI's previous political director.

"[She] has led the organization through

recent high-level changes with grace and strength."

When asked what it's been like taking on this new responsibility, Knott said, "It's been a balancing act of doing the fundraising that's needed, focusing on the administrative work that needs to happen and supporting my teammates here. But the primary purpose is getting up and doing the work on behalf of the LGBTQ community across Michigan, our supporters, our allies. And that work's not stopping just because we've had some leadership changes."

Despite Knott's positive attitude, questions from community members continue to arise regarding the sustainability of EQMI with its frequent turnover in employees, executive directors and board members resigning.

In response, Knott said the board is “being incredibly mindful about what they need to do to right the ship” to ensure they’re never in a similar position again.

Knott’s current teammates consist of Serena Johnson, director of victims services; Jey’nce Poindexter, transgender victims advocate; and Genny Maze, lead victims advocate. Other staff positions were cut as part of “substantial adjustments” EQMI made to their budget including consolidating services and by finding services that better meet their needs that aren’t as expensive.

“We know that our financial health is in question,” Knott said, who said she wants to be transparent with EQMI’s supporters and the general public. “We know that our expenses outpaced revenue that was coming in.”

In an effort to fix that, Knott said, “We’ve tightened our spending.”

“In previous years, we had a budget that was much bigger than we were able to cover with revenue coming in and that focused us to take time away from the mission,” she said. “But we’ve made some adjustments. We have the right people in place. In 2017 and 2018 we were out of balance, we recognize that. It’s not going to look like it has in previous years.”

When donor Henry Messer died in 2014 he left \$3 million to EQMI in two parts. The first was a \$1 million gift to be disbursed over four years for general operating expenses. The second part of the bequest was \$2 million in an endowment fund housed at the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan. Interest earned on the endowment is available to the organization for general operating expenses.

The original plan was to use the \$250,000 per year over four years – in part – to build fundraising capabilities so that when the four years of disbursements ended the organization would be in a position to replace those funds. According to available financial reports, operating income from donors and grants did increase substantially, increasing over 50 percent from \$406,000 in 2016 to just over \$600,000 in 2018. But that was not enough to replace the \$250,000 spent per year from the Messer gift.

In late 2018 the board realized the organization had expanded and was staffed at an annual operating budget of about \$800,000 with only the capacity to raise about three quarters of that.

Despite budget concerns, the organization continues to focus on its policy and its electoral work. Knott said EQMI will renew and increase investments in year-round programming to build a base of active, civically engaged LGBTQ people and allies to help propel their work forward.

First, to help achieve their breakthrough goals, EQMI will work toward changing the minds of decision makers.

“There are two people in positions of power that control the legislature that have said an amendment to the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act is not going to see the light of day,” she said.

They are Republican Majority Leader of the Senate Mike Shirkey and the Republican

Speaker of the House Lee Chatfield. When asked about the expansion of LGBTQ rights after Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s first State of the State address in February, Shirkey told Michigan Radio he believes his chamber has higher priority issues. And during a live interview on *Off the Record* in January, Chatfield said, “I’m never going to endorse a law or allow a bill to come for a vote that I believe infringes on someone’s ability to exercise their sincerely held religious beliefs.”

Knott has publicly said to both of them that they are not on the right side of public opinion.

“The public is behind us and believes in fully-inclusive benefits for all Michiganders, including those from the LGBTQ community,” she said. “We are going to get the Michigan House to pass a fully-inclusive bill to amend Elliott-Larsen. That’s the benchmark for this year, to get a vote in the state House.”

The first time the legislature tried to amend ELCRA to include sexual orientation and gender identity was in 1983. Since then, a number of additional bills have been introduced to add protections for the LGBTQ community without passage. This makes Michigan one of 31 states that do not have fully-inclusive protections for LGBTQ people. Although there are more than 40 municipalities that provide a “patchwork framework” of non-discrimination ordinances, Knott said, “That really doesn’t work so well” when, for example, an LGBTQ couple can go out to dinner in one city without being discriminated against, but in another city in the same county, that LGBTQ couple may be asked to leave the restaurant because of how they identify.

“It’s unjust and it’s unfair and we’re going to change that this year,” she said. “Our focus will make sure that we are prepared going into 2020 and beyond. In order to change the lived experience of LGBTQ people, we need to do four things.”

Building Political Power

To build the kind of political power EQMI needs to make changes, they will work at strengthening “farm teams” across the state of Michigan.

“We need to change who is making decisions up and down the ballot. I think we’ve done this, but there’s more room for improvement,” Knott said.

But how is the organization going to get there? EQMI plans to engage more members of the community to support LGBTQ city and township elections.

“2019 is a year that often times we don’t think about civic engagement because it’s municipal elections. Those folks are the farm team, like me. We need to be electing more pro-equality lawmakers at the municipal level,” Knott said.

Cultivating LGBTQ individuals to run in local races requires training, which EQMI is prepared to do. Knott said they will host three perspective LGBTQ candidate trainings across the state. EQMI will also hold an advocate training day to help members of the community

learn how to grassroots lobby at the Capitol in Lansing or in municipalities where NDOs are to be voted on. This particular training, Knott said, will help members of the community who have experienced various forms of violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, hate violence, harassment and discrimination to “effectively tell their stories in whatever capacity that they feel safe so that it impacts lawmakers.”

Crisis Services

As they have in the past, the advocacy and political arms of the organization will continue working together to gather those important stories. Last year, EQMI’s Victim Services Program – which provides 24-hour, seven days a week, crisis support and advocacy services for LGBTQ, SGL (Same Gender Loving), and HIV-affected people – was able to serve over 400 LGBTQ people.

“Our goal for 2019 is to grow the program budget by 65 percent to provide accredited support to over 600-plus LGBTQ people in crisis,” she said.

The organization has already expanded their reach across the state to cities like Bay City, Grand Rapids, Holland and Traverse City, maintaining regular pop-up office hours where the community has direct access to Johnson, Poindexter and Maze, a staff of three that Knott said is doing more than the work of three employees.

“There is so much opportunity, unfortunately, for us to go deeper,” Knott said, who is faced with finding a way to provide additional support for her staff so they are able to serve more members of the LGBTQ community, especially the transgender community.

“The fact that trans women of color are getting gunned down in the streets, they’re getting physically attacked just because of who they are – we need to be amplifying that call, that crisis, like ring the bell that this is an emergency.”

Community Education

Part of going deeper means educating the community. EQMI plans to engage companies, universities, schools and maybe even governmental units on diversity inclusion workplace education through facilitated employee trainings. EQMI will work in partnership with organizations like the ACLU of Michigan, community centers across the state and PFLAG to hold Michigan town halls and community forums to explain what Whitmer’s historic executive directive means. And, EQMI will help its supporters learn how to file complaints with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.

Legislative and Executive Branch Advocacy

EQMI is currently working in partnership with the ACLU of Michigan and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson to create a more inclusive

policy for gender markers on drivers licenses and state IDs.

“We’re exploring the possibility of a third option regarding gender,” Knott said.

In addition, EQMI is working to ensure that the Michigan Department of Civil Rights can continue taking the complaints of LGBTQ discrimination that the organization will be helping members of the community learn how to file.

Knott said the organization is going to work with the governor’s office, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Insurance and Financial Services to make sure that Michigan’s Medicaid programs do not discriminate against transgender recipients and that their medical care is provided.

“It’s not about cosmetic surgery, it is medically necessary and we’re going to change that,” she said.

Knott said that EQMI will work with their partners in the legislature to reintroduce a bill to ban conversion therapy.

“Plain and simple. This is a barbaric policy principal that happens,” she said. “Other states are doing it, heck, other cities across the U.S. are doing it. It’s time for Michigan to pass a conversion therapy ban.”

And if the organization can’t get the legislature to move on this, Knott said they can work with the governor’s office, particularly as it relates to Medicaid programs.

“There’s ways in which the Department of Insurance and Financial Services can put some rules in place so that if you are a recipient of Medicaid funds, you can’t be engaging in conversion therapy practices.”

EQMI hopes to make a lot of progress in the next few years, but none of this is possible without support from members of the community.

“We need people to join our movement,” Knott said. “I need to build my network of folks that I can mobilize. Whether it’s a lobby day that comes up later this year. Whether it’s a rapid response event we need to turn out for a particular committee hearing. I need people to flood the phone lines. ... We need stories and obviously, we need the financial resources to be able to do this work. We can’t do it without the support of the broader community and our allies. I’m trying to make the pitch so that people understand why investing in Equality Michigan, particularly after marriage, is so critical for this work going forward.”

Board of Directors

Currently serving on the EQMI board is Michael Rowady, chair; David Worthams, vice chair; Mira Krishnan, treasurer; Tim Atkinson, secretary; Buzz Thomas, member at large; Chuck Otis; Richard Vaughn; and Jeff Hastedt.

The EQMI Action Network consists of Trevor Thomas, chair; Cheryl Gilliam, vice chair; Mira Krishnan, treasurer; Tim Atkinson, secretary; Ronald Moore, member at large; and Chuck Otis.

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Protests against the gag rule in June 2018 at former Attorney General Bill Schuette's private gubernatorial fundraiser, attended by Vice President Mike Pence. BTL photo: Eve Kucharski

Planned Parenthood of Michigan Fights Back Against Title X Gag Rule

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

More than 40 years old, Title X has long been the nation's only federal grant program that provides family planning and preventative health services to roughly 4 million people across the U.S. Perhaps the best-known organization funded by Title X is Planned Parenthood. It, along with other health care providers, has received funding via Title X since it was passed in 1970 and today, of the 4 million people who benefit from Title X funding, the century-old Planned Parenthood serves 1.5 million across roughly 1,600 clinics, providing regular health services like ultrasounds, prenatal care, birth control and STD testing. However, due to the Trump administration's recent passage of a Reagan-era gag rule that bans Title X funds from reaching service providers who provide abortion services, the myriad other services Planned Parenthood provides are at risk. At the beginning of the month, Planned Parenthood filed a lawsuit against the rule.

"The Trump-Pence administration's gag rule is unethical, illegal and harmful to public health, which is why Planned Parenthood is joining together with the American Medical Association to sue to protect patients' rights and access to health care," said Dr. Leana Wen, president of Planned Parenthood. "... Title X serves women and families with low incomes,

the majority of whom are people of color, Hispanic or Latino, and the gag rule will worsen existing racial, socioeconomic and geographical health disparities."

In total, of the \$286 million Title X distributes to providers, Planned Parenthood receives almost \$60 million annually. In a previous article for BTL on the same issue, Planned Parenthood of Michigan Director of Media and Communications Ruth Lednicer said that what many who support the Trump administration's push to end Title X funding for Planned Parenthood might not understand is that there are already processes in place that prevent public funding from being used for abortion services.

"There is a law in place called the Hyde Amendment which prohibits federal funds to be used to pay for abortion. So, whether you're on Medicaid, Title X or privately insured, you're going to be paying out of pocket for that. What federal funds do pay for is all the things that President Nixon put in place, which is for people to have control over reproduction and to have access to family planning," Lednicer said. "We actually see 70 percent of the Title X patients in the state of Michigan. So, without us here there's nowhere else they can go."

Misconceptions

And that's not the only confusion

surrounding Title X funding. Emily Clancy is Planned Parenthood's East Michigan community organizer. She said that frequently she talks with people who are completely unaware of Title X's impact on their own health.

"People are often surprised to learn that, 'Oh, I probably used Title X when I went to Planned Parenthood because I couldn't pay for my visit,'" Clancy said. "It's not something like Medicaid and health insurance that you know that you're utilizing those services. So, when I go into what Title X is and how it really helps our patients who can't afford our whole visit, then people see how they may have benefited as well."

Lednicer added that confusion about the abortion services provided by Planned Parenthood is frequent, too.

"Abortion is less than 5 percent of what we do. The number one thing that people come to us for is birth control followed very closely thereafter by STI testing and treatment. We also do cancer screenings and pap smears, breast exams, HIV testing," Lednicer said.

However, the biggest difference between most other providers is that Planned Parenthood provides abortion as an option when pregnant patients come in to use services.

"We do all the things that people need for reproductive health and well-being," Lednicer said. "I said to someone recently, 'Can you imagine, as a man, going to see

a doctor for treatment and there's three options for treatment and you're only told two?' That says so much about how we value women."

LGBTQ Impact

Angela Vasquez-Giroux is the communications and media specialist for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan. She said that as of May 3, 2019, the rule will officially take effect, but Planned Parenthood won't be affected until the 2020 fiscal year begins.

"So it wouldn't mean that on May 4 our doctors would have to stop offering services, it's just that it would take effect for the next fiscal year of funding, Vasquez-Giroux said. "We still have the funding for this year, it's in the bank account, but for the following year. One thing we do want to stress is that we're not closing, we're not going away. There's no danger to anyone's care at this moment and at the moment that there is, we will do everything in our power to make sure that everyone who needs care will still get it."

While that is good news for those who utilize the organization's services in the short-term, Vasquez-Giroux pointed out that there are six rural Michigan counties where Planned Parenthood is the only Title X provider. Should lack of funding shutter those locations, she said that filling that gap with another provider won't be simple.

"So, people will say, 'Oh, some other provider will step in,' but they won't because that's a very difficult program to administer and that's why there's not a great diversity of organizations who participate in this program because it's not easy to do," she said. "The other thing is that, we are the only Title X provider in the city of Detroit and we're talking about problems of access. And [when] you think of access in terms of income and then being part of marginalized group like the LGBT community and about things like transportation, in Detroit, all those things kind of intersect. The thought of someone having no other place to go for basic reproductive health care in the city of Detroit, it terrifies me."

Planned Parenthood is also a provider of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis pills which are used to treat HIV. As of 2018, the city had an infection rate that was four times that of other counties in Michigan which could increase should the Detroit location close its doors.

Getting Involved

When asked how supporters of Planned Parenthood's overall services could get involved, Clancy cited an upcoming Lansing event designed to bring awareness about the issue to the public and to the Michigan legislature.

"Right now I am really kind of spending the next couple of weeks planning for our big Powering Change Action Summit that's going to take place in Lansing on April 16," Clancy said. "Title X will definitely be a huge part of the conversation and the way we're envisioning this day going is gathering hundreds of our

"We're not closing, we're not going away. There's no danger to anyone's care at this moment and at the moment that there is, we will do everything in our power to make sure that everyone who needs care will still get it."

- Angela Vasquez-Giroux

supporters in Lansing to hear from our champions, our community leaders and our legislative champions and then going through a series of breakout sessions on a whole variety of our issues."

Those breakout sessions will include the topics of abortion, birth control, Title X and more.

"We'll be dissecting all the information surrounding it because I think it's really kind of a confusing rule and people aren't sure about how they can help and we'll be giving people some tips for how they can take action," she said.

Clancy added that for those who might not be able to attend the event but would like to stay informed, she recommended texting "STAND" to 22422.

"That is just a text update system and when something moves around the ruling and it will alert you when new messaging material is available," she said. "[Planned Parenthood also] created this whole website dedicated to Title X and patients sharing their stories and videos that really just kind of break it all down. I highly recommend our supporters breaking that down and taking time to educate themselves on what this is."

Lastly, Vasquez-Giroux recommends reaching out to local politicians to inform them of the multi-state lawsuit and spreading awareness.

"We've talked to a lot of elected people at the capitol and in Washington and it's not a partisan issue, this is something that everyone recognizes is an accessible program. So hearing from constituents I think is really important," she said. "The other thing is that one of the best ways that people at large can support Planned Parenthood is to come see us for services, we take insurance and we are a quality health care provider. That's another way to just show your support and get your exam taken care of in one fell swoop."

Visit istandwithpp.org to find out more about Planned Parenthood's national awareness campaign, or go online to plannedparenthoodaction.org for more information about the organization.

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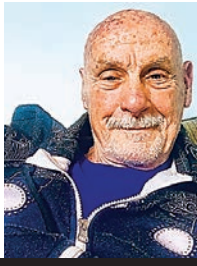
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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Go for Gluten-Free Communion Wafers

According to a tad too many fundygelical church know-it-alls, we LGBTQs are doomed to spend an eternity in hell. (Purgatory be damned!) So agree President Trump and VP Mike Pence, America's hand-me-down present political and past-tense, self-styled saints.

By the way, sinners means you, me and a now retired Lady T Tempest. But not necessarily in that order.

It also means that, try hard as our doomed LGBTQ lost lot might wish it, or encourage it, there will be no backroom confessional worship available – or allowable on the qt – for us lost sinners in heaven; so far, that is: unsaved but not unhappy.

And we will miss the golden opportunity of forever singing God's praises day after day after day after day after ... well, you get the heavenly off-key, on-key, drift.

But things may be soon changing for us doomed Noah's Ark rainbow rejects. A newly formed, ecumenical religious group called St. Peter's Approval Method, or SPAM, has developed a surefire – but not hellfire – strategy for LGBTQs to get past the pearly gates into bona fide, cloud seven condo heaven.

It's hoped, by advocates for this SPAM born-again coalition, that at long last we'll be blessed with equal "praise God" rights too long denied us; although, it's occasionally been considered an enterprising option over the redemptive centuries by the blessed virgin mother's celibate priesthood. (Need one say more?)

SPAM spokesperson Adam Edenfig, one of America's 23 people living gay and out as a Jehovah's Witness, admits to developing the necessary strategy and steps for LGBTQs to follow that will get everyone gaily singing into heaven. And before the world ends in a big bang left behind.

Boasts Edenfig, "Not many may know this, but to begin with we gay Watchtower JW's don't believe in hell or GOP politics for that matter. So, as a gay Watchtower queen I've never had to worry about hellfire. I've never been into Log Cabin theocratic flame kink anyway."

According to Edenfig, here's how the SPAM Admission Strategy System works, "We take the one thing from each American, home-brewed faith that sets it apart as 'special' for sure salvation and make certain that our LGBTQ friends wanting to be saved subscribe to each of these rituals as required. (God knows its worth a try. What in hell have we got to lose anyway?)

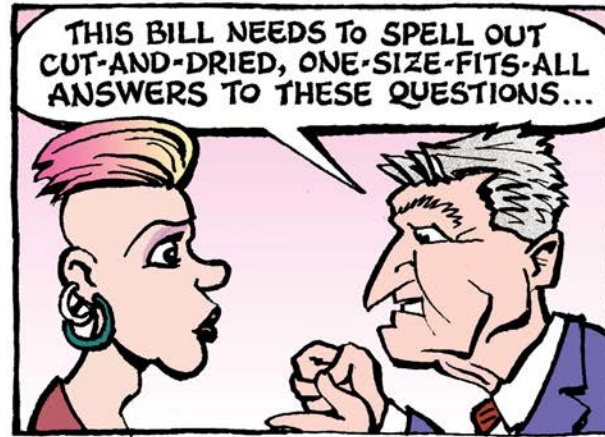
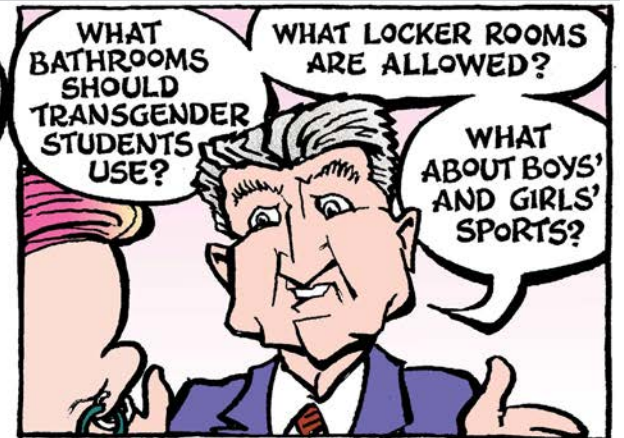
"We at the SPAM don't mean to brag, but for each LGBTQ sinner who follows our Redemption Plan we have an attorney team we call the Salvation Six – including one straight Harvard Law School Grad – to document a suitable-for-heaven admission proof ID form.

A sure guarantee of admission. And printed as true with words in Gothic letters and New Testament red."

"First and foremost is baptism," says Edenfig. "LGBTers need to be baptized twice. By sprinkling and by immersion in water. But not necessarily in that order. Just for old times' sake, a touch of patchouli can be added to the holy water. Robe choice is optional but festive. Nude baptism's a no-no.

"Baptism in a Mormon temple would be an additional salvation touch for probable admission guarantee. Although you

See **Parting Glances**, continued on p. 11



Viewpoint



Adoption Case Settlement is Win for LGBTQ Michiganders

BY JAY KAPLAN

This past Friday came the announcement that the ACLU of Michigan and the state of Michigan settled a lawsuit that we, the ACLU, had filed – challenging the state's practice of allowing state-contracted, taxpayer-funded foster care and adoption agencies to use religious criteria to exclude same-sex couples.

Our plaintiffs, Kristy and Dana Dumont and Erin and Rebecca Busk-Sutton, wanted to become foster parents with the intention of adopting children who are wards of the state, but they were turned down by two faith-based agencies Bethany Christian Services and St. Vincent Catholic Charities. The adoption agencies have contracts to with the state of Michigan to act on behalf of the state but turned the plaintiff's down because of their own religious objections to accepting same-sex couples.

The state of Michigan actually has the agencies it contracts with sign a statement that pledges they will not discriminate based on a number of categories, including sexual orientation. Despite the fact, that the two faith-based agencies signed the statement and proceeded to discriminate. Though the state was aware that it was violating the language of the contracts, it took no action. We filed our lawsuit in federal court in September 2017, arguing that the state's refusal to act, violated the federal Constitution because it singled out LGBT families for discrimination while crossing the line between the separation of church and state.

The state of Michigan, represented by then-Attorney General Bill Schuette responded by saying that the same-sex couples turned away by these specific faith-based agencies could just go to other agencies who wouldn't discriminate against them. However, as a result of the 2018 elections, current Attorney General Dana Nessel reconsidered that position and is now requiring that all contracted foster care and adoption agencies not discriminate against same-sex couples in their provision of services. Elections do have consequences, and in this case, some very positive ones for the LGBTQ community.

We applaud the state of Michigan for recognizing that discrimination has no place in our child welfare system. This move will support the nearly 12,000 children in foster care in Michigan – particularly those who are in group homes because of the lack of available families or those currently waiting to be adopted by a loving family. It also sends a powerful message that discrimination will not be tolerated, nor taxpayer-funded in Michigan.

Same-sex couples like the Dumonts and the Busk-Suttons, who want to open up their hearts and homes to a child in need, should be judged on only one thing: their capacity to provide love and support to a child, not whether they pass a religious test. Allowing agencies to turn away qualified families does nothing to provide more families for children in need of

See **Viewpoint**, continued on p. 11

We applaud the state of Michigan for recognizing that discrimination has no place in our child welfare system. This move will support the nearly 12,000 children in foster care in Michigan

► **Viewpoint**

Continued from p. 10

a loving, stable home – it merely reduces the pool of eligible families for these kids. Whether agencies are faith-based or secular, when they choose to accept taxpayer dollars to provide a critical government service, they must put the interests of children above everything else.

It's important to note that when religious criteria are used in the child welfare system, it is not only same-sex couples who are at risk. In South Carolina, because of such a policy, the largest agency in the state accepts only Protestant Christians and has turned away Catholic and Jewish families. This denies children countless families who could provide them that loving home.

As part of their legal arguments, St. Vincent Catholic Charities, which was permitted to intervene in the case, stated that if they were not permitted as a contracted agency to turn away same-sex couples that they would have to shut down and that this would result in an insufficient

number of foster/adoption agencies to care for children. However, the fact is that there is a shortage of families for kids in Michigan, not a shortage of agencies. Currently, there are close to 80 agencies, including faith-based agencies that are willing to accept all qualified families, including LGBTQ families. As experience in other states has demonstrated, when agencies have chosen to discontinue providing foster care services, other agencies, including faith-based agencies, seamlessly took over that work and services to children continued uninterrupted.

Freedom of religion is a core American value but that freedom does not give anyone the right to a government contract that deprives children in the foster care system of families who could care for them. Last week's case settlement was a strong statement by the current administration in Michigan that it's the welfare of children that should come first.

Jay Kaplan is a staff attorney with the ACLU of Michigan since 2001. He can be reached at jkaplan@aclumich.org

► **Parting Glances**

Continued from p. 10

might have to give an elder – maybe one of those young, biking-about missionaries – a generous tip for admission to the neighborhood Angel Moroni baptismal tubs.

“You could also take an oath of celestial loyalty on the Book of Mormon and those famous, self-polishing golden tablets. The Latter-day Saints also do proxy baptisms for the dead. (Farfetched but nonetheless worth considering for LGBTQs willing to give proxy salvation long-shot a try.) If you have plural LGBT spouse or spouses, so much the better.”

Edenfig says the final strategy for guaranteed admission of LGBTQs to denied evangelical, quasi-fundamentalist, Trump-blessed heaven may prove challenging for many gay men and a few sports-minded dykes.

“Going to church service on both Saturday and Sunday is challenging. No time to party. Or, for lesbians, to play softball.

“Sunday is of course the day when most Americans do pew sitting, but according to Seventh-day Adventists, JHVH (short for Heaven's equivalent of Donald Trump's title) didn't authorize the change from Saturday to Sunday. It's the Mark of the – you know who – beast. (Oh, no! Mary. It can't be!)

“Our SPAM plan of keeping both days of worship is the real test for convincing admission. If any unsaved gay guy, for example, can show he earned our NT red Salvation 6 Attorney proof by observing each Sabbath, it almost goes without saying that even St. Peter can't say no to a gay somebody.

“From one repentant Peter to another St. Peter, repeat after me, ‘Welcome home, homo no more!’ It's that simple,” says Edenfig. “Ask Mike Pence. He should know.”

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](https://www.pridesource.com).

Creep Of The Week

Donald Trump

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Well, the Mueller report is out and to hear Donald Trump tell it the entire thing contained only a hand-lettered note on wide-ruled notebook paper that read, “I like you, do you like me? Circle YES or NO.”

I, like many people, believe the entire report needs to be released. But I also never believed that Mueller alone could save us. Trump's presidency is such a colossal mess that one man, even one man with a team of lawyers and a huge budget behind him, cannot save us.

Now Trump and his supporters feel vindicated, getting matching “NO COLLUSION” tattoos on their pasty white butt cheeks. If you'd like to see a pic of Jared Kushner's, just hit him up on WhatsApp.

Regardless of what the Mueller report says, or doesn't say, that doesn't change the fact that we have a dangerously unstable and incompetent leader at the helm. Trump is unfit for office.

But he is also pretty popular with Republicans. Why? Because he's fulfilling his main campaign promise: “I will hurt the people you don't like!” Mexicans? Check. LGBTQ people? Check. Muslims? Check. The poor? Check. African-Americans? Check. The list goes on.

Here's the thing. The Republican Party has been preaching for decades that government is bad, that it can do nothing positive and that the smaller it is the better. So their appeal to the average Republican voter is, “Government ain't gonna do shit for YOU, but at least it's gonna do shit to THEM.” That's how you get people to vote against their own interests.

It's pretty bleak stuff.

But let's not lose our collective minds. Or try not to, at least. Because we really need to keep them if we want Trump the hell out of office in 2020.

Something to remember: Democrats took control of the U.S. House in 2018. That's not nothing. It's not enough, mind you, but it's a start.

Also, as Mark Harris wrote on Twitter, “Without collusion, I'm concerned that the only thing Democrats will be able to use against Trump in 2020 is literally every other issue.”

In other words, try something like health care (suggested slogan for Democrats: “We aren't the ones actively trying to kill you!”), the environment (same slogan applies), social security (suggested slogan: “No cat food for Grandma!”), public schools (“Stupid is painful, so let's not”), equality (“We're the only party that thinks LGBTQ people are human”), voting rights (“Stop this anti-voting bullshit!”), criminal justice reform (“Let's stop murdering black men and locking the rest of them in prison for no good reason”), etc.

And yet, the Democratic Party has a long

Regardless of what the Mueller report says, or doesn't say, that doesn't change the fact that we have a dangerously unstable and incompetent leader at the helm. Trump is unfit for office.

history of disappointing the very people it needs support from. If Democrats are to win, my advice: knock it off, Democrats.

Look, you don't need to go very far back in history to see how we got to this point. In fact, you can't go very far back in history because the United States is still a baby as far as countries are concerned.

We've seen the Democratic Party scrambling to get back to being the party of the people. But there is so much work to do. It's frustrating to a lot of younger and more liberal folks that Democrats aren't unanimously calling for single-payer health care, reparations for racial injustice, breaking up corporate juggernauts and impeaching Trump.

But change is slow. And difficult. The Democratic Party isn't a Jet Ski we can just flip to change directions, it's a huge cruise ship that takes a long time to turn around. And in the meantime, deck chairs and tables are sliding back and forth and crashing into people as the ship navigates some hella rough seas. Also, everyone on the ship has norovirus. So, it's a literal shit storm.

That said, it's survivable for most people. But it sucks. And the best way to get through this mess is to work together. Even when we feel sick and tired, literally and figuratively.

Any Democrat vying for the party's nomination would make a far superior leader than Trump. Even the terrible ones. Seriously, the bar really couldn't be set lower.

Trump is an ignorant and cruel man. So it's no surprise that he's governing that way. The country is looking to the Democrats to counteract this. But “love thy neighbor” is a hard sell, even though I think some famous guy said it once. As someone so brilliantly posted on Twitter during the first time (or was it the 2nd? Or 3rd? Or ...) Republicans were trying to take away health care: it's hard to convince someone that they should care about other people if they, you know, don't.

Trump cares only about himself. He is a disaster. Democrats are the only party offering disaster relief. So all hands on deck.

Michigan Department of Civil Rights Announces 2 Grand Rapids Hearings in Response to Discrimination Allegations

BY BTL STAFF

GRAND RAPIDS – The Michigan Department of Civil Rights has scheduled two fact-finding hearings in Grand Rapids on March 28 in response to allegations of discriminatory conduct against people of color. The hearings will be held on Thursday, March 28, 2019, at Greater Grand Rapids NAACP located at 1530 Madison Ave. SE, Grand Rapids.

“We are present because of the two recent videos as well as other such events from the past 18 months. Each of these instances are disturbing and should not be happening,” said Dr. Agustin V. Arbulu, director of MDCR. “We want to hear more from the community and assess what our next steps may be as it relates to the ongoing issues between communities of color and the Grand Rapids Police Department. Following these hearings, the department staff will determine our next steps.”

Anyone with an interaction with the Grand Rapids Police Department who would like to share their experiences is invited to attend one of the two hearings. Speaking time may be limited due to time constraints. Written statements will also be accepted during the hearings.

Written statements will be accepted electronically starting at 1 p.m. March 21, 2019, and ending at 1 p.m. on Friday, April 4, 2019. Statements must include a name, address and a telephone number or email address for contact. Statements can be emailed to Community Engagement Liaison Gwendolyn Moffitt at MoffittG@Michigan.gov.

The Michigan Department of Civil Rights, the operational arm of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, is charged with investigating and resolving discrimination complaints and works to prevent discrimination through educational programs that promote voluntary compliance with civil rights laws. The Department also provides information and services to businesses on diversity initiatives and equal employment law.

The entrance to the facility is on the Cottage Grove side of the building. Session one will be held from 1 to 4 p.m., while session two will be held from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. For more information on the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, go to Michigan.gov/mdcr.

Famika Edmond Named Black AIDS Institute Detroit Ambassador

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

On a national scale, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have reported that new HIV diagnoses have remained relatively stable in recent years – as of 2017, new diagnoses hovered roughly around 39,000. Despite that stability, however, people of color, in particular black, Hispanic and Latino men who have sex with men, are disproportionately affected by the virus; of all the women in the U.S. who have HIV, 72 percent are black. The Black AIDS Institute is one organization working to stop those trends of infection, in particular in communities of color. Though the national group is Los Angeles-based, this year they’ve introduced a volunteer-centered national Women’s Ambassador Program dedicated to taking the virus head-on across the nation and reducing its spread. For Detroit, Famika Edmond answered the call.

“The Black Women’s Ambassador program is dedicated to amplifying the voices and the leadership of black women around the country and having conversations about HIV treatment and prevention,” she said. “This cohort of women comes from around the country including Puerto Rico and includes women who are living with HIV and who are HIV-negative, women of the trans experience and cisgender women. These women will be leading both [in-person] educational outreach and through social media in their communities while they receive support from the Black AIDS Institute to support their work.”

Edmond, who is a community outreach specialist at the Detroit Health Department when not volunteering, said that she was drawn to BAI’s ambassador project because of its inclusion and overarching goals. This role will officially last a year during which time she’ll be responsible for curating a social media account dedicated to providing HIV/AIDS awareness, leading community conversations about the virus, linking community members to resources and more. She said her first community-driven event will kick off in April.

“The first thing I’m going to be doing is a table for the National HIV/AIDS Youth Awareness Day,” Edmond said. “So I will be putting on a table that day [April 10. And that’s] where I’ll be putting my literature out from BAI. And then in the month of May, I’m actually going to be doing a pamper and prep party. So people come, get prettied up and I’m going to be able to have the opportunity to give them the education while they’re there.”

Even before she joined with BAI, Edmond said that she spent part of 2018 educating

people on HIV/AIDS advocacy and on advocating for one’s own health when visiting health providers. She said that she took an interest in that more when she had her own HIV/AIDS health scare.

“A couple of years ago when I was in my late 20s I had a scare myself. My husband was very free loving and was having outside relationships outside of our marriage and I had to get tested. It was the worst two weeks I ever had before I found out that everything

you’re opting out of certain services. And people have to know that they still should be getting tested and checked out. They may be taken aback and made to feel like they aren’t meant to have these questions.”

In addition to her existing knowledge about HIV and AIDS, Edmond underwent a five-day training sessions in New Orleans Sponsored by BAI to emphasize not only goals for 2019 but to get to know other women around the country in similar situations to her own. She



Famika Edmond. Photo by Nina Lavoy

came back OK,” she said. “After that, it made me more aware of why we have to be aware of who we’re having sex with, what their status is, what our status is. And then, I also had a few family members that were also positive. We had to bury one and one is still with us right now, so it has impacted me as a caregiver and in my [personal] situation.”

She now advises anyone who suspects they may have HIV/AIDS or another STD or STI, particularly those in the LGBTQ community like herself, to be firm with their health care providers in accessing the resources.

“I had just had an experience recently myself,” she said. “I do date women and my doctor is aware of that and she felt like because I have dated women and have had a hysterectomy that she didn’t have to give me a pap smear or any kind of HIV or STD testing, even though I was requesting it. And it baffled me because if you’re using your vagina or your penis, you should be getting checked. I felt like a lot of times, especially with lesbian women, they figure in a same-sex relationship

said that though she doesn’t have HIV herself it has impacted her life, and meeting people from the program has given her perspective on fighting it and increased her excitement about her new role.

“[I’m excited about] being able to get information, awareness out there to black women. Because with me doing the type of work I do, that, unfortunately, is a demographic we can’t hit because they’re not considered an at-risk population,” she said. “So being able to have that platform not just being able to talk about medical intervention but also about sexual health and reproductive justice, all of those topics, trying to lump that all in together.”

Follow Edmond on social media to learn more about specific events she’s hosting and to get HIV/AIDS resources. To find out more about Edmond and the women in her cohort go online to blackaids.org/ambassador-program-for-black-women/



Michigan Rainbow flag on the mast. Photo by Creative Photo Corner.

State Settles Same-Sex Adoption Case

BY BTL STAFF

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel today announced a settlement with the plaintiffs in *Dumont et al. v Gordon et al.* (Case No. 2:17-cv-13080), a case centering on some state-contracted foster care and adoption agencies’ (agencies) refusal to work with same-sex couples or LGBTQ individuals wanting to foster or adopt children referred to the agencies by the state Department of Health and Human Services.

“Discrimination in the provision of foster care case management and adoption services is illegal, no matter the rationale,” Nessel said. “Limiting the opportunity for a child to be adopted or fostered by a loving home not only goes against the state’s goal of finding a home for every child, it is a direct violation of the contract every child placing agency enters into with the state.”

Two same-sex couples (plaintiffs) filed a complaint in September 2017 challenging MDHHS’s contracts with taxpayer-funded, state-contracted foster care and adoption agencies that refuse to provide contract services involving same-sex couples. The complaint alleged that the plaintiffs approached St. Vincent Catholic Charities and Bethany Christian Services directly to adopt children the agencies had accepted through referrals from MDHHS. The plaintiffs claimed the agencies refused to work with them in violation of the non-discrimination provisions in the agencies’ contracts with MDHHS.

According to MDHHS, each agency was providing foster care case management or adoption services for one or more children referred to them by MDHHS. Because the plaintiffs were not seeking direct-placement or private adoption services and because they were not referred to the agencies through MDHHS, the agencies could not reject them under existing state law.

When Attorney General Nessel took office Jan. 1, 2019, she reviewed the facts of the case with her team of legal experts and determined that MDHHS could be subject to liability on the claims of the plaintiffs. As a result, the attorney general strongly recommended resolving the

“Limiting the opportunity for a child to be adopted or fostered by a loving home not only goes against the state’s goal of finding a home for every child, it is a direct violation of the contract every child placing agency enters into with the state.”

- Attorney General Dana Nessel

case on terms consistent with the law and existing agency contracts and that best serve the health, safety and well-being of children in need of state-contracted foster care case management and adoption services.

The plaintiffs and the Michigan Department of Attorney General, on behalf of its client MDHHS, entered into negotiations and agreed to settle the case. Under the terms of the settlement agreement, MDHHS agrees to maintain non-discriminatory provisions in its foster care and adoption agency contracts. MDHHS also agrees to enforce the non-discrimination provisions up to and including termination when a state-contracted agency discriminates against same-sex couples or LGBTQ individuals that may otherwise be qualified foster care or adoptive parents for any child accepted by the agency for services under contract with MDHHS. The agreement also specifies that MDHHS is not required to take adverse action against an agency on the basis that the agency has decided not to accept a referral from MDHHS.

MDHHS has established an online complaint form for individuals who believe they’ve been a victim of illegal practices by an adoption facility, agency or provider. Individuals can fill out a complaint at michigan.gov/mdhhs.



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Hoyer Announces House Vote March 28 Against Trump's Trans Military Ban

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) announced Thursday a vote would take place on the House floor next on a resolution against President Trump's transgender military ban.

Hoyer, the No. 2 in the Democratic caucus, said in a statement the vote for take place on Thursday, March 28, which is days before the ban is set to take effect on April 12.

"President Trump's ban on transgender Americans who are serving or wish to serve their country is discriminatory, and the House will vote next week to reject it and call on the Department of Defense to not reinstate it," Hoyer said. "Not only does it denigrate the service of patriots serving in the military, but it weakens our national security by undermining our ability to recruit and retain the talented personnel we need."

The introduction of the non-binding resolution was first reported by the Washington Blade last month. The measure, which is non-binding, was introduced by Rep. Joseph Kennedy III (D-Mass.), chair of the Congressional Transgender Task Force, and rejects the Trump's transgender ban as a

discriminatory policy based on junk science.

The resolution cites Trump's 2017 tweet pledging to ban transgender people from military service "in any capacity" as well as



U.S. House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) has set a vote on a resolution against the trans military ban next week. (Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)

the implementation plan from former Defense Secretary James Mattis, which critics say relies on junk science in its justification for Trump's policy.

The House "strongly opposes" Trump's ban, the resolution says, and rejects "the flawed scientific and medical claims" in the Mattis implementation plan that justify it. Additionally,

the resolution urges the Pentagon to refuse to instate Trump's ban and to "maintain an inclusive policy allowing qualified transgender Americans to enlist and serve in the armed forces."

Kennedy in a statement said his resolution affirms the United States "is founded on the promise that we are all created equal," adding "our march towards that ultimate goal of lived and legal equality is being led by transgender service members who volunteer to fight for our nation and its promise."

"By implementing a ban that ignores basic science, the sworn testimony of military leadership and mountains of research, our president and his enablers will inject intolerance into our military, demean their sacrifice and cast doubt on our commitment to that promise," Kennedy said. "This resolution says to the thousands of trans servicemembers keeping us safe and every other American that their government not only sees them, hears them, and fights with them, but that they count in this country."

According to the San Francisco-based Palm Center, an estimated 14,700 transgender people are currently serving in the armed forces.

Hoyer brings the resolution to the floor after the Defense Department unveiled plans to begin the transgender military ban on April 12.

Although under the policy transgender troops currently in the armed forces are expected to be able to stay, a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and or obtaining transition-related care will be disqualifying for transgender people to enlist. Troops not grandfathered in who obtained a diagnosis of gender dysphoria at a later time will be also be discharged.

The Kennedy resolution, which has 191 co-sponsors, is likely to succeed on the House floor with Democrats in the majority. In the previous Congress, even when the House was under a Republican control, an amendment from Rep. Vicky Hartlzer (R-Mo.) seeking to bar the U.S. military from paying for transition-related care, including gender reassignment surgery, failed to garner enough votes to make it as part of the annual defense authorization bill.

Kennedy's resolution isn't the only congressional action against the ban. New legislation introduced by Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.) in the House and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) in the Senate seeks to codify openly transgender military service. During a House hearing on the transgender policy last month, Speier told the Blade she'd seek to include proposed her legislation as an amendment to the upcoming defense authorization bill.

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

Prominent US Activist Denied Entry to Cuba

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

A prominent LGBTI activist from San Francisco claims the Cuban government has prohibited him from entering the country.

Michael Petrelis on Wednesday wrote on his Facebook page that an Interjet airlines ticket agent at Cancún International Airport in Mexico told him as he tried to check into his flight to Havana that Cuban authorities "had denied me entry into the country." Petrelis said the agent wrote the message he received on his computer screen onto a piece of paper.

"We cannot allow him to travel to Havana because of migratory questions," reads the handwritten message in Spanish, which Petrelis posted to his Facebook page. "He will not be allowed to enter the country."

Petrelis has traveled to Cuba three times, with his most recent trip in January.

Petrelis told the Washington Blade in a series of exclusive interviews during and after his latest trip that a Cuban immigration official interrogated him upon his arrival at Havana's José Martí International Airport on Jan. 2. Petrelis said the agent had printouts of the

Facebook posts he wrote about his trip before he left San Francisco and asked him about the 10,000 rainbow stickers and 1,200 Pride bracelets in his luggage that he planned to distribute across Cuba.

Petrelis said an agent with the Cuban Interior Ministry the following day came to the private home in which he was staying and again asked about the stickers and bracelets he brought into the country. Petrelis told the Blade the agent then summoned him to a meeting.

Petrelis said officials at what he described as ministry barracks interrogated him for two hours and told him not to attend any protests, including the "human rainbow" at the Cuban Capitol that he had previously proposed. Petrelis said the agents directed him to bring his stickers and bracelets to the National Center for Sexual Education, an organization directed by Mariela Castro, the daughter of former Cuban President Raúl Castro who spearheads LGBTI issues in Cuba.

Petrelis told the Blade that officials again interrogated him at José Martí International Airport before they allowed him to board his flight out of the country.

"I'm disappointed I won't see my friends,

experience more fabulous times and share my suitcases full of rainbows," wrote Petrelis in his Wednesday Facebook post. "To my Cuban friends I say, my love and respect for you is not diminished because of your government's decision to deny me entry."

LGBTI activists who work independently of Mariela Castro and her organization have sharply criticized the decision to deny Petrelis entry to Cuba. Tremenda Nota, the Blade's media partner in Cuba, has sought comment from Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parilla.

Petrelis tried to enter Cuba less than a month after voters overwhelmingly approved the country's new constitution that activists had hoped would have extended marriage rights to same-sex couples. The Cuban government on the eve of the Feb. 24 referendum blocked access to the websites of Tremenda Nota and other independent media outlets on the Communist



A rainbow flag tied to the fence outside of Cuba Libro, a privately-owned coffee shop in Havana's Vedado neighborhood, on March 1, 2019. Michael Petrelis, a prominent LGBTI rights activist from San Francisco, says the Cuban government has prohibited him from entering the country. (Washington Blade photo by Michael K. Lavers)

island.

Editor's note: The Blade will update this story with additional reporting from Tremenda Nota when it becomes available.

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



Sally Field in Human Rights Campaign's 'Americans for the Equality Act.' (Screenshot via YouTube)

HRC Kicks Off 'Equality Act' Campaign with Sally Field and Son Sam Greisman

BY MARIAH COOPER

Human Rights Campaign launched its new campaign "Americans for the Equality Act," a video series which features celebrities who support the Equality Act, on Monday. The proposed bill would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The video series, filmed by award-winning directors Dustin Lance Black and Paris Barclay, kicked off with actress and LGBTQ advocate Sally Field and her gay son, Sam Greisman, as they have a video conference conversation on why the Equality Act is instrumental in ensuring that the LGBTQ community has equal rights across state lines.

Other celebrities who will give their input in upcoming videos include Black, Barclay and his husband Christopher, Adam Rippon, Shea Diamond, Alexandra Billings, Blossom Brown, Charlie and Max Carver, Gloria Calderon Kellett, Jamie Lee Curtis, Jane Lynch, Jesse Tyler Ferguson and Justin Mikita, Justina Machado, Karamo Brown, Marcia Gay Harden and Nyle DiMarco. The series will continue as the legislation is under review in Congress.

"This is an exceptionally important effort, and I'm so proud to have had the opportunity to both direct this series and participate with my family," Barclay praised the campaign in a statement. "So much of the progress of the LGBTQ movement has hinged on our ability to tell our stories and move people — and that's the same spirit with which we've approached this compelling project. I was moved by the stories from the talented people participated in this campaign. We join them in working to make history again by passing the Equality Act."

Black added: "Every American deserves a

fair shot at a job to support themselves and their family, and the security of a roof over their head. These are key ingredients in what we've long cherished as our 'American Dream.' But until the Equality Act is signed into law, this dream may not be a reality for far too many Americans in many areas of our wild and wonderful country. I believe we must all share our personal stories and struggles with our fellow Americans in order to help this great dream become a reality for more of our loved ones, coworkers, and neighbors."

50 percent of LGBTQ Americans currently live in one of the 30 states that do not provide statewide legal non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people in the areas of employment, housing, credit, education, public spaces and services, federally-funded programs or jury service.

In a recent survey by PRRI, poll findings determined that seven out of 10 Americans support laws that prohibit LGBTQ discrimination. This includes the majority of every state's population and the majority of Republicans, Independents and Democrats.

"The advocates and artists featured in HRC's 'Americans for the Equality Act' video series amplify the chorus of voices urging Congress to pass the Equality Act," HRC President Chad Griffin said in a statement. "The harsh reality is that LGBTQ Americans still face real and persistent discrimination in their everyday lives, and Congress must pass the Equality Act to protect them."

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

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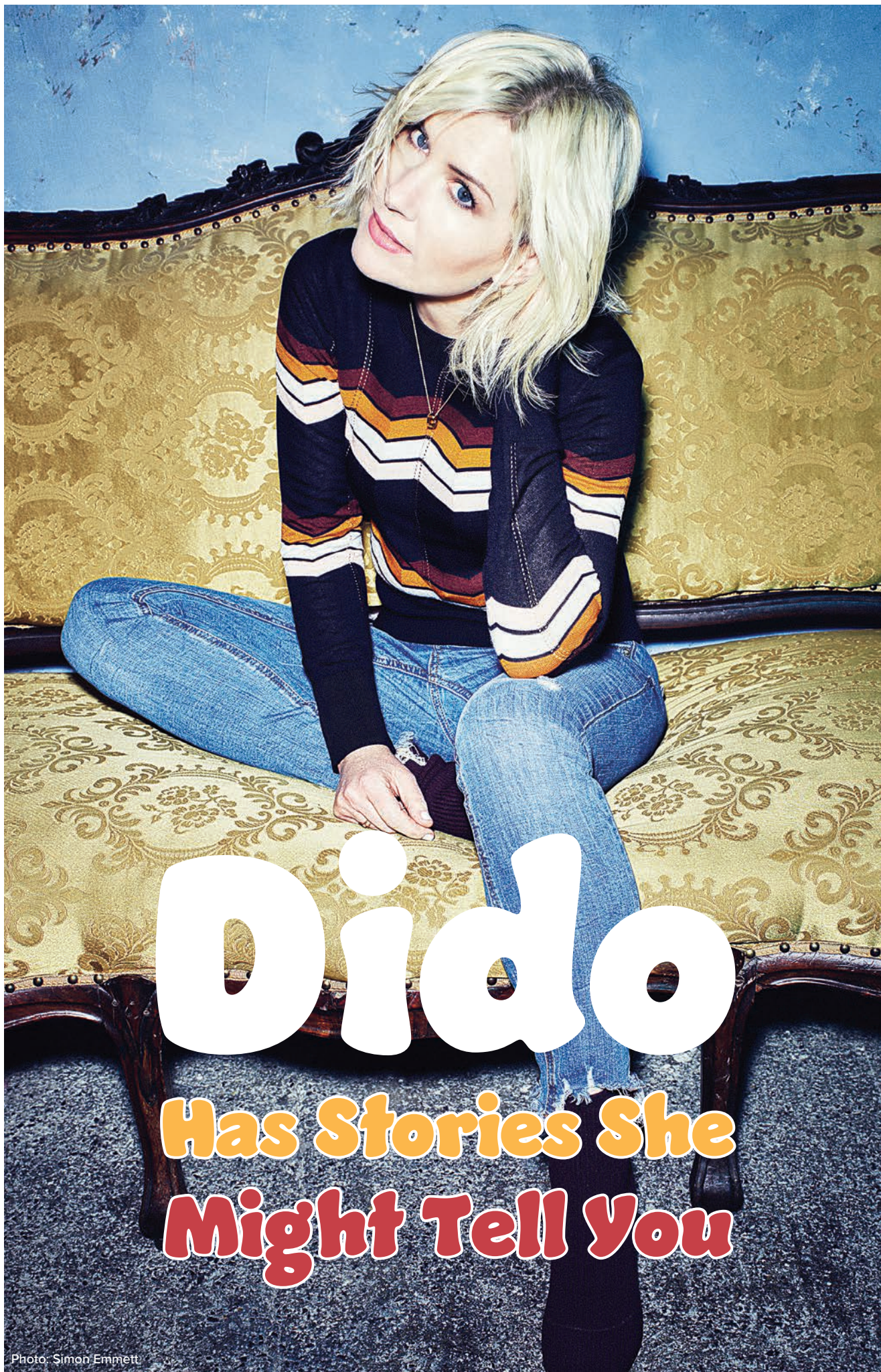


Photo: Simon Emmett

With Her First Album in Six Years Out, the Musician Talks Confidence From Madonna & Her Real-Life Drag Name

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

If you want Dido to tell you a story, don't be weird. It helps if you're a fan. It especially helps if you're a fan in a sea of other fans, "White Flag" sweeping you away to that soothingly introspective Dido place at one of her shows. Just don't be some nosy journalist out to get a good Dido story – you won't get a good Dido story. And don't ask her to say her full, iconic birth name. She'll playfully decline because the name, Florian Cloud de Bouneville O'Malley Armstrong, is "terrifying," she says.

But when I recently jumped on the phone to discuss the British chill-queen's first album in six years, "Still on My Mind," Dido *did* tell stories ("Sand in My Shoes," from her 2004 album "Life for Rent," is literally about sand in her shoes). In fact, according to a rep for the artist who called me after with some feedback, she apparently broke through her usual press-shyness, laughing her way through our talk about dressing like Madonna, getting over stage fright and being a "messy" producer.

Has a gay man ever told you your full name would make a good drag name?

(Laughs) Oh, I love that.

If I asked you to say your full name, would you?

Do I have to? (Laughs) It's just terrifying. I love getting other people to say it and it's actually really funny because they always say it slightly differently, but I've never thought about it like that. But I feel better about it now!

In dance clubs and collaborations with your brother Rollo's dance act Faithless you cultivated an LGBTQ fanbase early. When did you realize you had a loyal LGBTQ following?

I don't know. I think it's just always been there. Probably because everything I was doing at the beginning was in the clubs, and I think because I just started off in the dance music world, I didn't really know any different.

You grew up as a Madonna fan, like many gay boys.

Yeah, like most everyone! She's just amazing.

Was your interest in her something you shared with your gay friends?

With *everybody*. I was trying to dress like her in the "Papa Don't Preach" video as soon as I could, as soon as I was allowed to cut my hair off and dye it blonde. But I remember going to see "Desperately Seeking Susan" with my mom, and I think even my dad came, and we were all just completely enamored with her. She was just the most awesome thing ever.

What about Madonna appealed to you at that age?

She just felt so strong and could sort of do everything, and so unique and so confident. She just has this confidence that as a teenage girl I was looking at like, "Wow." Everything she wore in the video, when you're

a teenage girl and you're just feeling really insecure and anxious and not comfortable in your own skin, you see this woman being so proud to be herself. I think she's so inspiring.

And you dressed like her for a period of time, didn't you?

I did! Allegedly, according to my husband, I still do! (Laughs) I came down the other day and he was just like, "You know you're dressed as the 'Papa Don't Preach' video right now?" And he was just laughing because my hair is really white-blonde at the moment.

My next question was gonna be: When did you realize that being Madonna wasn't possible? But, well...

I can still dream. (Laughs)

What song of yours do gay fans tell you they connect with most?

Originally it might've been "Take My Hand." That was the first song I wrote, I think, that ever got recorded and I remember that always used to connect.

After 20 years, how do you end up coming back to a sound that is quintessential Dido?

I don't really know. I did this album in a very instinctive way, I didn't really overthink anything. Because when I was making the record, I didn't have a record deal. When I was doing this album and I wasn't even sure I was gonna put this out, I just thought, "We're just gonna do it." It inadvertently ended up very similar to when I made "No Angel" and I didn't think anyone was going to hear that record. I think a lot of the feeling of starting again and that feeling around that time 20 years ago sort of crept into this record, just because I felt like what I'm having is a good time here and I might put it out; there was a point I even thought I'd give these songs to someone else. I just didn't know.

I was learning all sorts of stuff about production, so a lot of them, I was producing and doing the beats more so than I'd done before on songs like "Hell After This" and "Mad Love." I was experimenting and people started really enjoying that sound because it was a bit less professional than my brother (laughs) – he's much more professional with his productions; mine are way more haphazard. I have such low patience and everything I do has to be in one take because I'm just like, "I don't know, this edit button is just driving me mad," and I'm always deleting stuff. I basically record everything in one take, every beat and every bassline, so it's a mess. But I think it's created a bit of fun on this record as well.

Are the long breaks you take between album releases a necessary part of your creative process?

I think it is. It just sort of happens. I don't know how to write any differently because I'm writing from such a personal point of view, like I have to go through the experiences to be able to write them. I've never approached

making records in any sort of methodical way; it just happened. I go through life and I write songs because that's how I see the world, and it's what I see when I look around the world and how I process any thought I have, and then it sort of builds up into a record. It feels like they all sort of just appear.

Do you read reviews?

I read some of them, yeah. I read a couple really lovely reviews.

I wondered what you thought of Uncut referring to the dancier songs on this album as "mum at the disco."

(Laughs) I love it.

I mean, I'm here for "mum at the disco" music. Could be a whole new genre of music!

(Laughs) Can you imagine? I love it! I didn't read that, but yeah, I do think that should be a new genre, basically. I just think on this album I'm pretty unashamedly just doing the music I like and also, a lot of people on this album – well, it's basically me and my brother – were on the first record as well. So, it's sort of nice. I mean, I haven't changed my friends much in the last 25 years, so I think there's a familiarity there. It's so nice that that can just be who you work with through your whole career.

Is there a genre of music you want to explore completely outside the musical identity you've created for yourself?

I don't know if I know how to. I think the nice thing about what I do is I do so many different things on a record, so I can go from dance music to more hip-hip stuff. I don't feel restricted. If I wanted to do something in a genre I haven't done, I would do it because, in a way, it all works as long as there's a song at the core. For me, that's always been the sort of principle: to make whatever music you wanna make but have a good song. That's what I tried to do anyway.

What's the most unusual place that has given you inspiration for a song?

I wrote "Sand in my Shoes" literally on a plane when I took my shoes off and they were full of sand. One of those really stupid moments (laughs). It was actually a really stressful flight because my dad had got really ill and I just arrived in L.A. and I wanted to go straight home. While I was on the plane, I was just writing, because it's all I know how to do to get through. I sort of took my shoes off and I literally had just run off the beach onto a plane and all this sand went everywhere and sort of followed. Anyway, it was cool. It gave me the idea for the song. I wrote that whole song on the plane.

What about songs on "Still on My Mind"?

The last song on the album, "Have to Stay," we recorded it as I was writing it and that's what's on there, as in that's all just a first thought. ("Have to Stay" was written about Dido's son, Stanley Gavin.)

See **Dido**, continued on p. 18

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► Dido

Continued from p. 17

That probably doesn't happen very often, does it?

No, and it was really cool: I had the idea for the song and I knew what I was singing, and the guy I was writing with was literally feeling out the chords and that's why he doesn't actually move chords for the first two verses, because he's getting to grips with what I'm singing. So, it's actually making it up as we go along. I just love the feel of it. When I came to record it properly, it never felt the same, so I just kept that very original idea of it.

Because you're used to recording in an intimate setting with your brother, I imagine taking songs from the record this close to you and performing them in front of massive crowds must feel a little different.

It does.

How so?

I sort of love it. When I first went on tour with "No Angel," I was just like, "Oh my god, why are you making me sing these songs with other people (around)?" Like, they are so personal. I remember my manager saying to me, after running on stage and running away as soon as I'd sung, "It wouldn't hurt for you to talk a little. You could say your name. You could say what city you're in. Anything, just the basics. Like, 'Hello, New York!' *Anything*. Just say something

because you just look so scared right now." And it was really scary for me! Then I performed on stage for nine years, and I just have to say I genuinely have such cool fans and they make me feel we're part of something together.

Before the days of having recording devices at shows, I remember journalists used to get so annoyed with me, like, "Why do you tell all these stories when you're on stage that you would never tell us?" Like, "You tell stuff to your fans that you don't ever say in an interview." It's not intentional. It just felt like a really friendly environment and I'm quite an instinctive person and if I feel comfortable, I'm a very open person, so it was just really funny. Because they'd come to the show and they were like, "I just did an hour interview with you and you didn't tell me anything and then you get on stage and tell all these stories." With fans, the feeling that I get back is such a two-way thing and such a magical thing.

Do you feel comfortable now?

Yeah. Now I'm older so I'm like, "Yeah, whatever!"

So you'll tell me a story then?

(Laughs) No. You're gonna have to come to a show. I just think I've always felt pretty comfortable singing the songs because I always have felt a lot of love coming from the fans, that they've made the effort to come out and see you and you're sharing an experience, and it just feels good to sing the songs live. It always feels different every night.

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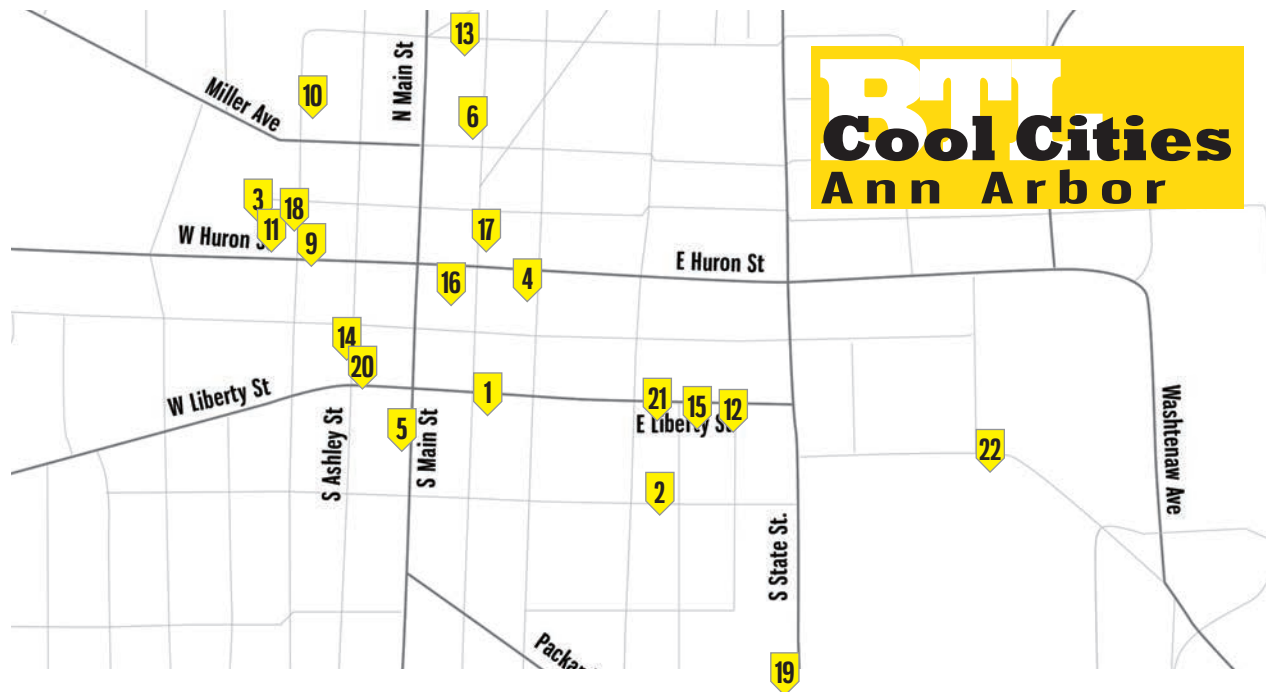


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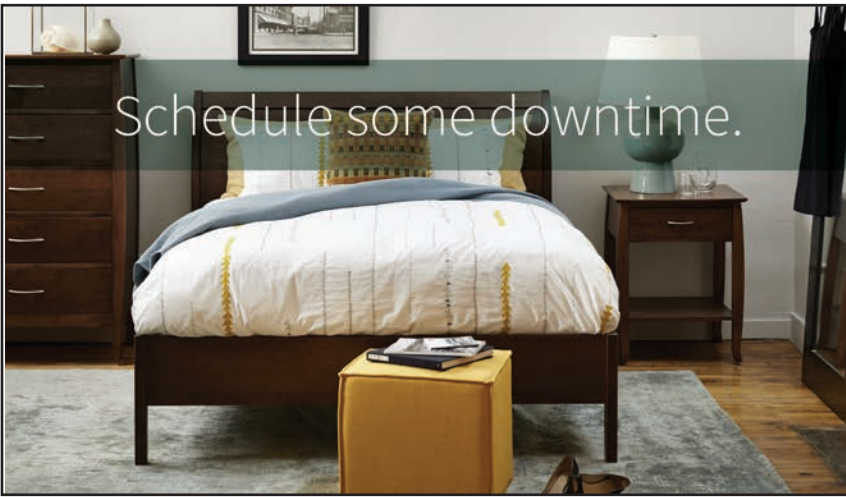
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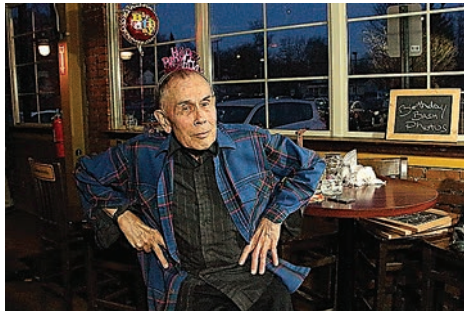
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Jim Toy Birthday Bash

Known as the first publicly “out” man in Michigan, after coming out in 1970, Jim Toy developed the first-ever campus center dedicated to supporting those

in the LGBTQ community. And because of his almost 50-year career of service to the LGBTQ movement through speaking, teaching, writing, administrating, organizing and protesting, Ann Arbor’s LGBTQ Center dedicated its name to his legacy. On Thursday, April 4, the Center will

honor him again at its annual Jim Toy Birthday Bash held at Bona Sera Restaurant.

“The Jim Toy Birthday Bash is a fantastic event to honor our namesake, the legendary Jim Toy, while also bringing our community together for an enjoyable evening celebrating an incredible man and his lifetime of advocacy and accomplishments on behalf of the LGBTQ community,” event organizers wrote.

Not only will the event serve to celebrate Toy, all proceeds from the Birthday Bash will benefit the Jim Toy Community Center to further its mission of creating an “inclusive community where people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity are visible and live together in equality, respect and happiness.”

Bona Sera Restaurant is located at 200 West Michigan Ave. in Ypsilanti. The event is from 6 to 8 p.m. and tickets are \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door. They can be purchased online by visiting secure.lglforms.com or by going online to jimtoycenter.org.

Silky Nutmeg Ganache at Necto April 5

Reginald Steele might not be a memorable name for “RuPaul’s Drag Race” fans, but Silky Nutmeg Ganache certainly is. Previously known as Lasagna Froezen, she changed her name after she saw a Food Network chef prepare a silky ganache — a glaze made from chocolate and cream. It was then that her new identity was sealed and she took to the stage with the brand-new name. Eventually, she earned a spot among “Drag Race” queens in season 11 of the show and is now on tour, scheduled to hit Necto’s Pride Night on Friday, April 5.

“The life of the party, you always know when exuberant ‘Big Silk’ is in the building. But scratch the surface of this gregarious queen and you’ll find a softer side to Silk — one who was raised in the church, has a master’s degree in organizational leadership and is even on her way to becoming a doctor of philosophy,” wrote event organizers. “Let’s hope her accolades translate into success in the competition.”

Attendees will not only see Big Silk perform, they’ll get a chance to meet her, too, at a meet-and-greet after her show.



The performance starts at 9 p.m. Cover for the show is \$5 for those who are 21 and up and \$10 for those 18 and up. Meet-and-greet tickets are \$25. Find out more about the show by visiting necto.com.

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Art + Feminism Comes to Ann Arbor

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

The leather-bound encyclopedias found on library shelves can be a great resource, but type a quick query into a search engine and Wikipedia's likely to have the same answer, just at one's fingertips. A 2005 study done by the journal *Nature* even found that the user-updated free online encyclopedia's results tended to have just as much accuracy as *Britannica*. But as accurate as the site generally is, the representation of its editors isn't; a fact not unnoticed by the founder's of the Art+Feminism campaign who report that fewer than 10 percent of Wikipedia's editors are women.

"Art+Feminism is a campaign improving coverage of cis and transgender women, non-binary folks, feminism and the arts on Wikipedia," campaign organizers wrote. "From coffee shops and community centers to the largest museums and universities in the world, Art+Feminism is a do-it-yourself and do-it-with-others campaign teaching people of all gender identities and expressions to edit Wikipedia."

Using events called edit-a-thons, attendees from all walks of life are taught how to properly source information, cite it and input it on Wikipedia articles. The collective hosts events across the world, and this coming March 30, will host one in Windsor, Ontario, at Hackforge and at the Shapiro Undergraduate Library at the University of Michigan on April 2. BTL caught up with A+F members Siân Evans, Jacqueline Mabey, McKensie Mack, Michael Mandiberg and Melissa Tamani in advance of the events to chat about Art+Feminism's beginnings, how events work and how to participate.

Having started A+F only a few years ago, are you surprised by how quickly edit-a-thons have been adopted around the world?

Yes! We often joke that when we held our first event at Eyebeam, we thought we'd have to beg 15 of our closest friends to show up and edit.

How did Art+Feminism come to be?

The event was the result of a series of conversations between a number of artists, educators and librarians about the dearth of content about women and art on what is increasingly the most popular online research tool.

In October 2013, Siân Evans and Jacqueline Mabey discussed organizing an event around art and feminism, similar to the Ada Lovelace Day edit-a-thons; Evans wanted to do something concrete as the coordinator of the Women and Art Special Interest group for Art Libraries Society of North America, a professional organizations of art librarians. Mabey mentioned this to Michael Mandiberg, because of their use of

Wikipedia in teaching. Mandiberg had actually had a similar conversation earlier that day with curator Laurel Ptak. At the time, Ptak was doing research around cyberfeminism as a fellow at Eyebeam, a center for art and technology in New York City. Mandiberg had encouraged her to hold an edit-a-thon focused on art, technology and feminism.

This project also came on the heels of a very public debate about structural sexism in Wikipedia. The debate began when writer Amanda Filipacchi wrote a *New York Times* op-ed on a problematic editorial practice being implemented by a number of Wikipedia editors: women were being removed from the "American Novelists" category and moved into a subcategory for "American Women Novelists." Filipacchi's piece generated a maelstrom of writing on Facebook and other social media platforms, speaking out against this subcategorization. At the same time, Wikipedians were having an entirely separate conversation on Wikipedia about whether to change this practice of subcategorization. These conversations were worlds apart. We wanted to help give people the training to shape the conversation directly on Wikipedia.

As important as it is for people to realize that 10 percent of women editing on Wikipedia are women, it's arguably more striking that their edits are the ones most likely to be reversed. What are some of your techniques to make sure that the edits that are submitted by edit-a-thon participants are lasting?

These two issues are not unrelated. You're right that women's edits are more likely to be deleted: according to a 2011 study by Lam et al, of the "user's first seven edits, the average reverted edit percentage for females is significantly higher than that for males." This means that a much higher percentage of women are having their contributions negated by other editors, which is an extremely disheartening experience and contributes to their continuing lack of presence.

It's important to remember that Wikipedia is both an encyclopedia and a community. So, part of our work is not just improving the content of the encyclopedia but also equity within the community. We work with local Wikipedia chapters and we have a Slack channel where we convene with organizers on issues that come up when editing on Wikipedia. We also invest heavily in our training materials and encourage editors to start small and work their way up to things like article creation.

The existing training videos provided by Art+Feminism are very comprehensive. What was the process like for creating those tools?



Wikimedia Commons. Photo by Léonie Butler.

All of our trainings materials have been built collaboratively and iteratively over the past six years. It's also important to note that we were building upon lots of lesson plans and training documentation that already existing within in the community. Last year, we hired an instructional designer [Susana Aho] who helped remix some of our training materials.

Can anybody participate in an edit-a-thon?

Yes! Absolutely. Although it is important to us that anyone who does attend adheres to our Brave Space Policy. [It can be found online at [Wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org).]

How do you hope that enhancing the visibility of women and of nonbinary artists will impact the art world?

Here we would like to quote the great Okwui Enwezor, who passed away recently:

"... people oftentimes ask me, 'Can art change the world?' I say, 'I don't know if art can change the world, but by trying to expand the table of content of our field, we can have an effect.'

Providing visibility to the lives and work of women and non-binary gender people not only introduces their views and perspectives, but also introduces and values topics and knowledge that were relegated in the construction of art narratives.

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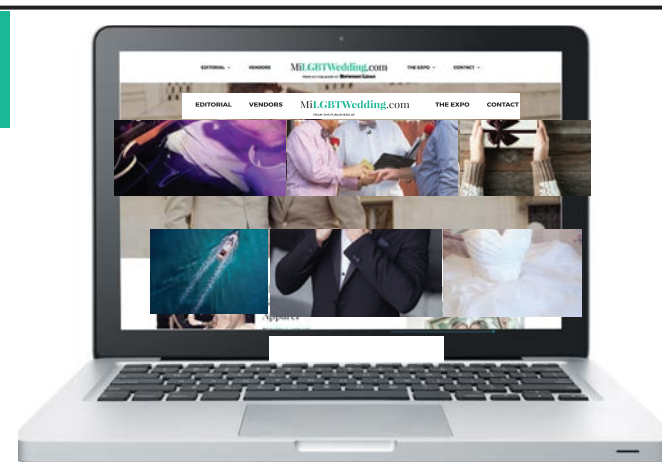
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Happenings



Ariana Grande at Little Caesars Arena

With hits like “Thank U, Next,” “Side to Side,” “Breathin” and “7 Rings” at only 25, pop star Ariana Grande has made a huge impact on the music world. Not only has she earned eight hits on the Billboard Hot 100 Chart, she’s been listed in Time’s “100 Most Influential People” and delivered three platinum-selling albums. Catch her April 5 at Little Caesars Arena for the Sweetener World Tour. Find out more online at ticketmaster.org.

OUTINGS

Friday, March 29

LGBT Social Meet Up 6:30 p.m. Lgbt social meet up group is a group for all lgbt people. Hazel Park Community Center, 620 West Woodward Heights, Hazel Park. 248-632-8274. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Saturday, March 30

LGBT Community Chat 11 a.m. Saturday LGBT Chat is an on going social discussion group meets every week to discuss issues LGBT people face. Coming out, dating and much more. Come join us every Saturday at 11 am. Java Hut Ferndale Michigan, 165 W 9 mile, Ferndale. 248-632-8274. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Spring Bash at MGM Grand Detroit 6 p.m. Come celebrate Affirmations 30 years of service to the LGBTQ community! MGM Grand Detroit, 1777 3rd Ave., Detroit. 877-888-2121. mgmresorts.com.

Sunday, March 31

Lavender Graduation 1 p.m. Our 7th annual Lavender Graduation Celebration will congratulate and honor the OU LGBTQIA+ graduates of 2019. OC Banquet Room A. hrc.org.

Men’s Swing/Latin/Ballroom Lessons 4 p.m. Same Sex Men’s Touch Dance lessons, Casual Attire This is touch

dancing where you hold your partner close. No partner needed. Jordan Mac Studio 444 W. Maple Suite E Troy, MI, 444 W. Maple Suite E, Troy. 248-288-7624. Calls only. xanaduspa@me.com.

Monday, April 1

LGBT Game Night 7 p.m. LGBT Game Night is an opportunity for all LGBT people and allies to come play a board game, drink coffee and socialize with other LGBT individuals. Java Hut, 165 W Nine Mile, Ferndale. 248-632-8274. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Tuesday, April 2

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Lake Orion / Oakland County 7 p.m. Free and open to parents of transgender kids. St. Mary’s In The Hills Episcopal Church, 2512 Joslyn Court, Lake Orion. 248-391-0663. stmarysinthehills.org.

Wednesday, April 3

Affirmations Senior Koffee Clatch! 1 p.m. A discussion and networking group for people 45 and older. Various discussion topics, social outings and potlucks are held throughout the year. With age comes wisdom but, for LGBTQ seniors, loneliness can often come along. Affirmations, 290

W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org.

GSC Discussion and Support Group 4 p.m. Join us at our GSC Discussion and Support Group to discuss current events and get the chance to chat with other students on campus. OC Lake Erie.

Rainbow League Bowling! 7 p.m. This is a fun bowling league and provides a great opportunity for anybody to become acquainted with bowling. Lodge Lanes, 46255 S. I-94 Service Drive, Belleville. 734-697-9178. info@a2bowling.com. lodgelanes.com. rainbowbowlingleague.com.

Thursday, April 4

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, April 7

Stand with Trans Wyandotte Support Group for Trans Youth and Parents of Trans Individuals 4 p.m. Free. For Parent Support Group information, contact

Editor's Pick

4th Annual Motown Honors at Gigi's Cabaret

Gigi's Cabaret Detroit has long been a drag staple in the city and on Sunday, April 14, some of the city's best performers will be celebrated at The 4th Annual Motown Honors. Featuring Edie Franklin, Diva Cliche, Latoya Ross, Sabin, Ka'Juan D. Hill and Jamar Boykins, the event will be hosted by Shauntrelle Blu and feature dinner, drinks and a show. Admission is \$10. Find out more about ticketing and reservations online at facebook.com/gigiscabaret or call 313-584-6525.



facilitator Kim Tooley, 734-747-4363. St. Stephens Episcopal Church, 2803 1st St., Wyandotte. 734-747-4363. standwithtrans.org.

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Adrian-Lenawee County 6:30 p.m. Free and open to the community. 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.

Monday, April 8

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Macomb County 6:30 p.m. Macomb Teen/Youth Support Group: All youth are welcome to attend this free group. Come and meet other trans youth and teens and support each other through your journeys. Dakota High School, 21051 21 Mile Road, Macomb. 586-723-2700. chippewavalley.schools.org.

Tuesday, April 9

Serving Up Knowledge: Bold Beauty for the Trans Community 12 p.m. Bring a lunch and join us for our session on Bold Beauty for the Trans Community. Open to all OU students! OC Rooms 128-129.

Thursday, April 11

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.

Friday, April 12

Gender and Sexuality Center Semester Send-Off! 12 p.m. Make crafts, socialize and celebrate the end of the semester at our last event of winter 2019! OC Gold Room B. GSC@OaklandUniversity.edu. oakland.edu/gsc/events/.

MUSIC & MORE

57th Ann Arbor Film Festival March 29, 5 p.m. The six-day festival presents 40 programs with more than 180 films from over 20 countries of all lengths. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. stamps.umich.edu.

Sarah Vowell April 4, 5 p.m. By examining the connections between the American past and present, she offers personal, often humorous accounts of everything from presidents and their assassins to colonial religious fanatics, as well as thoughts on utopian dreamers, and Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397.

Michigan Philharmonic Presents 'PhilPalooza2' April 6, 7:30 p.m. Highlighting our local stars playing cool music with an urban vibe. To help us celebrate and "raise the roof," we have several of our favorite guest artists and more. Michigan Philharmonic, Plymouth Arts & Recreation Center, 650 Church St., Plymouth. michtix.com/events/phil-palooza-2.

Intervention to Durable Recovery: The Power of Family April 16, 7:30 p.m. Best-selling authors, educators and clinicians Debra Jay and Jeff Jay will provide practical, helpful, hopeful information about how to do an intervention and how to build a recovery team that unites the person with addiction. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725. dawnfarm.org.

People Like Me: Mutual Aid and Recovery from Substance Use Disorders April 23, 7:30 p.m. Dawn Farm staff member Todd Diana will provide an overview of mutual aid addiction recovery programs, research supporting the efficacy of mutual aid participation, and include a panel discussion. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725. dawnfarm.org.

Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship April 30, 7:30 p.m. Father Gregory Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries and best-selling author, will share how compassion, kindness and kinship are the tools to fight despair and decrease marginalization. Towsley auditorium, 4800 East Huron River Drive, Ann Arbor. dawnfarm.org.

THEATER

Young Frankenstein March 29, 7:30 p.m. This monster musical comedy is an adaptation of Mel Brooks' legendary cult classic film. Following the grandson of the infamous Victor Frankenstein, Frederick Frankenstein inherits his family's estate in Transylvania. Watch as hilarity abounds! The Marlene Boll Theatre, 1401 Broadway, Detroit. tasiopeg@udmercy.edu. udmercy.edu.

Detroit Public Theatre Presents 'Girlfriend' March 29, 8 p.m. Romance unfolds in a new musical wound around the tender love songs of Matthew Sweet's landmark album, *Girlfriend*. Two teenage boys – one a social outcast, the other a quintessential jock – realize there's more to their relationship. Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-576-5162. dso.org.

Williamston Theatre Presents 'The Gin Game' March 29, 8 p.m. Winner of the 1978 Pulitzer Prize for Drama! Weller Martin is playing solitaire on the porch of a seedy nursing home. Enter Fonsia

Dorsey, a prim, self-righteous woman. Williamston Theatre, 122 S. Putnam Road, Williamston. 517-655-SHOW. info@williamstontheatre.org.

Stagecrafters Presents 'Boeing Boeing' March 29, 8 p.m. Meet Bernard, a Parisian bachelor whose well-ordered life spins out of control when his three stewardess fiancées unexpectedly land in the same city at the same time. Baldwin Theatre, 415 South Lafayette, Royal Oak. 248-541-8027. stagecrafters.org.

Theatre and Dance at Wayne Presents 'Venus' March 29, 8 p.m. Traveling from her home in southern Africa for what she hoped would be a better life, Saartjie Baartman became an unfortunate star on the 19th Century London freak show circuit. Venus is a tragic-carnival. Studio Theatre at the Hilberry, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. theatreanddanceatwayne.com.

Detroit Repertory Theatre Presents 'Aubrey' March 29, 8:30 p.m. Aubrey Gagnier, a heroin addict, haunted by her role in her lover's overdose death, seeks out the grave digger and coffin maker. They become each other's best hope to live. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. 313-868-1347. DetRepTh@aol.com. detroitreptheatre.com/aubrey/.

Mamma Mia! Presented by Theatre and Dance at Wayne April 5, 8 p.m. Over 54 million people all around the world have fallen in love with the characters, the story and the music that make Mamma Mia! the ultimate feel-good show. Bonstelle Theatre, 3424 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-577-2960. theatreanddanceatwayne.com/mammamia/.

Ann Arbor Civic Theatre Presents 'Fahrenheit 451' April 25, 7:30 p.m. In a dystopian none-too-distant future, "firemen" don't extinguish fires, they start them. Arthur Miller Theatre, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-2538. smt.d.umich.edu.

Angels in America: Part Two – Perestroika April 26, 8 p.m. Following the events of Part I: Millennium Approaches, Perestroika continues the complex and fantastical examination of homosexuality, race, and AIDS in 1980s America. Fighting illness and losing hope, Prior Walter is hesitant to become the prophet as demanded. Hillberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. 313-577-2972. wsushows.com.

Stagecrafters Baldwin Theatre Second Stage Presents 'Southern Comfort' April 26, 8 p.m. Southern Comfort is based on the true story of Robert Eads, a transgender man with ovarian cancer, who lives in rural Georgia with his chosen family of transgender friends. Baldwin Theatre, 415 South Lafayette, Royal Oak. 248-541-8027. stagecrafters.org.

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The Frivolist: 5 Ways Laziness Is Costing You

BY MIKEY ROX

Laziness is the byproduct of many catalysts – fear, depression, general unhappiness – and it can negatively affect all facets of your life. From costing you money to ruining relationships, here are five ways laziness can turn your world upside down if you let it.

1. Financially

There's a rather exhaustive list on Forbes.com on the ways laziness can bleed your bank account dry – from failing to negotiate better deals to putting off opening a retirement fund – but these expensive oversights begin on a micro-level, like buying memberships you don't justify with enough use, for instance. And then there's the bad habit of simply paying full price for things you buy because you don't "feel like" looking for discounts or convince yourself you don't have the time.

With regards to the latter, let me change your mind. Consider, as an example, planning a trip to the supermarket or, on a larger scale, vacation. If you dedicated time to researching savings and discounts, you *will* find money

that you can keep.

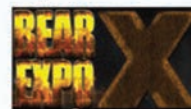
Using coupons, cash-back deals, and shopping only sale items at the supermarket can reasonably save you upwards of \$30 or more on a large order if you're hitting the savings at all angles. You might think of that as an amount not worthy of your effort, but what if you think of the savings as reward for your time dedication. How much do you make an hour at your full-time? Do you get paid \$30 per hour at work? Do you think you deserve to pay yourself \$30 an hour at home?

Same principle applies to vacations. I spend several hours searching for savings on every getaway and vacation I take. If at the end I've spent, say, three hours rounding up deals and I've saved \$200, I can celebrate a job well done that I've managed to make nearly \$67 an hour for myself, money that will now be better spent on the actual trip for dinners, drinks, or an experience I'll remember for a lifetime.

2. In Love

My marriage didn't work for many reasons – both faults of our own – but one of my biggest gripes with my husband was his laziness.

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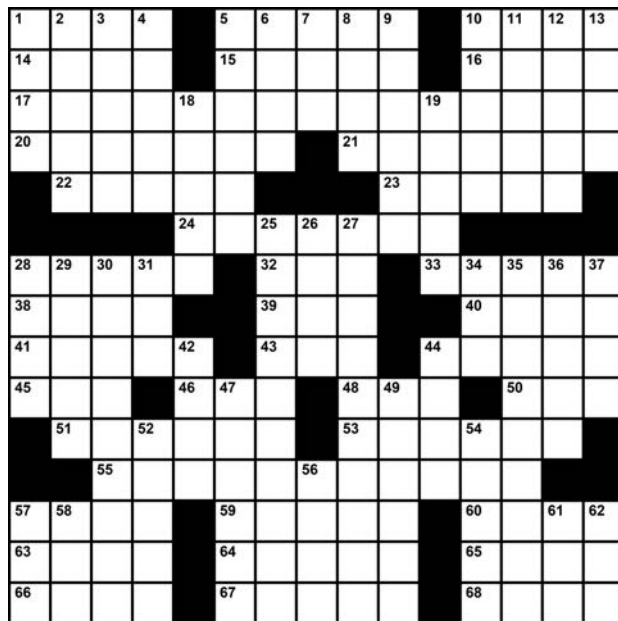
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THURSDAYS: COUPLES NIGHT
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when renting any room



For most of our union, I was chef, maid, caregiver to our dog, planner of date nights and vacations, and the instigator of what little sex we had, especially in the later years, and that took a major toll on my self-worth and eventually my general outlook on life. After years of trying to change his behavior (a futile effort in any relationship), I gave up. Not because I wanted to, but rather because

I realized that his laziness was a result of not being in love with me. As complicated as our situation was, the root problem was as simple as that. If he could have admitted that about six or seven years earlier, we would've saved ourselves a hell of a lot of heartache... and money.



Cat and Mouse Game QPuzzle

Across

- 1 Fashion designer Oldham
- 5 Erotic artist Tom, et al.
- 10 Where Galileo dropped his balls
- 14 Silver attachment
- 15 Shining example
- 16 What muscle Marys pump
- 17 Title character portrayer in 41-Across
- 20 In the manner of a nervous Nellie

- 21 Movie category of old Hollywood, with "the"
- 22 Composer Erik
- 23 Treats meat
- 24 "Mouse" in the cat and mouse game of 41-Across
- 28 Rosie's "The Flintstones" role
- 32 Halloween cry
- 33 Spousal nickname
- 38 Part of San Francisco's BART

Down

- 1 Boob, to a Brit
- 2 Where to find a date
- 3 Area of Tennessee Williams
- 4 It lessens the bottom line
- 5 Packing material
- 6 In a casual way
- 7 Born, to Bonheur
- 8 "Ixnay" and "No way"
- 9 Water channel
- 10 One who blows it
- 11 Cara of "Fame"
- 12 Puts into piles
- 13 Queen's "subjects"
- 18 Enlighten
- 19 Like a Liberace doll
- 25 Least enjoyable way to avoid STDs
- 26 He took on a pair of bears
- 27 Change one's opinion
- 28 What you touch getting to third base?
- 29 Flamboyant Flynn
- 30 Romeo and Juliet, for two
- 31 Decoration for skin
- 34 "I'm not eating that!"
- 35 Frigid
- 36 Ill-bred individuals
- 37 North Sea feeder
- 42 Drag queen's blade
- 44 Martin Crane's support
- 47 Cringe in horror
- 49 Ranger headgear
- 52 First indications of orientation
- 54 Green with a mostly unfabulous social life
- 56 Big name in footwear
- 57 Pussycat's partner
- 58 "Go Set a Watchman" writer Harper
- 61 In days past
- 62 "The Opposite of Sex" director
- 65 Roos

3. Health-wise

Your sedentary lifestyle manifests itself in ways that directly impact your health, like weight gain, depression and early death. Any study ever done on exercise will tell you that staying active improves your physical, mental and emotional health in myriad ways. But even if you don't get too fat to feel good about yourself anymore or kick the bucket in an untimely fashion, the money you will spend on medical services to put a patch on the damage you're doing to yourself could take you into a debt with no escape or at the very least limit your quality of life because you're consistently in the doctor's office when you would have been better off in a gym.

4. Personally

We're so involved with ourselves these days (when our faces aren't buried in a device) that we're all but convinced that we don't have time for relationships. The memes are right – like the one where we make plans but cancel at the last minute because we never intended to follow through anyway. Why though? Don't our "friends" deserve a couple hours of our time and attention? If not, are they even our friends? Why do we play

that game with them then instead of being truthful about not wanting to be around them in the first place? This mentality bleeds right into romantic relationships, too, with the swiping right and left and serial dating and the ADD of settling down ruining prospects of happiness that we're disallowing ourselves. And for what – casual sex and Netflix binges? We can do better than that.

5. Professionally

Laziness at work can get you fired, but it also prevents you from progressing. Your goal should be to show your company your capabilities and that you *want* to move up the ladder. And if you think you're doing a killer job at that but not being recognized or compensated for it, schedule a talk with your boss to talk about more responsibilities and, yes, a raise. You may not get it immediately, but at least it'll be on the table because you were motivated to address the situation. If the answer is no, reflect on what you have to offer, if those skills are better suited somewhere else, and pursue something greater. You're singly in control of that. It's just a matter of how much effort you want to put into your own overall life satisfaction.


Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world.

PrEP Clinic

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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

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Alzheimer's Association Michigan Great Lakes Chapter to Host Community Forum in Ypsilanti

BY BTL STAFF

In the U.S. alone there are almost 6 million Americans living with Alzheimer's Disease and nearly 200,000 in Michigan alone. The Alzheimer's Association is a voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating the disease through research and the promotion of brain health; its Michigan branch is inviting Ypsilanti residents to learn more about the disease April 13.

"We understand the importance of Alzheimer's disease care and support programs and services in Washtenaw County," said Ashley Elliston-Cowher,

Program Coordinator for the Alzheimer's Association Michigan Great Lakes Chapter. "Community Forums are hosted by the Alzheimer's Association in communities across the country, where families are invited to come together with Association staff and volunteers to mobilize our community in the fight against Alzheimer's disease."

The event will be held at the Ypsilanti Senior Citizens Center from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. The goal of the meeting is to provide resources to those individuals who might be going through the disease and for their family members.

"Working together with Ypsilanti

volunteers, the Alzheimer's Association can ensure families have the resources needed to face the many challenges associated with the disease," wrote event organizers. "Community volunteers are essential in helping the Alzheimer's Association best serve the needs of families affected by the disease, in driving awareness and in mobilizing the Ypsilanti community in the fight against Alzheimer's disease."

The Center is located at 1015 N Congress St. in Ypsilanti. Register by going online to AlzCommunityForum.org or call 800-272-3900.

Royal Oak Center for Relationship and Sexual Health to Host Suicide Discussion Event

BY BTL STAFF

On Friday, April 5, therapist Dr. Joe Kort will host an event at the Royal Oak Center for Relationship and Sexual Health to learn more about suicide and how to help loved ones who may be considering taking their own life.

"Do you know that suicide was the tenth leading cause of death for all ages in the USA in 2013? Males take their own lives at nearly four times the rate of females? If you want to know and understand more about this topic and how to help someone you love, then attend Dr. Joe Kort's 'Let's talk About Suicide' discussion," wrote event organizers.

This event is not only free but will provide attendees with light snacks and refreshments. For those who cannot attend the event but would still like to learn more, the event will be livestreamed on the Center's Facebook page. Register online at crsh.com/workshops/let-s-Talk-About-Suicide.

This event will be held at 7 p.m. and will last through 9:30 p.m. The Center is located at 25600 Woodward Ave., No. 215, Royal Oak. Online at crsh.com.

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AIDS/HIV

There are dozens of AIDS/HIV organizations and resources listed at www.PrideSource.com. Here are just three of them:

AIDS Walk Detroit

Contact info@aidswalkdetroit.org or 248-399-9255 for more information. The walk takes place this year on Sunday, Sept. 15, 8:30 a.m. at the Royal Oak Farmers Market

Macomb County STD Clinic

27690 Van Dyke
Warren, MI 48093
586-465-9217
<http://health.macombgov.org/Health-Programs-HPDC-HIVAIDSCounselingTesting>

Matrix Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program

120 Parsons Street
Detroit, MI 48201
888-226-6366
248-545-1435
www.matrixhumanservices.org/programs/ryanwhite/

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond

3011 W. Grand Blvd. Suite 230
Detroit, MI 48202
313-446-9800
www.miunified.org
Michigan HIV/STD Hotline
800-872-2437

Advocacy

Equality Michigan

19641 W. 7 Mile, Detroit, MI
313-537-7000
equalitymi.org
[Facebook.com/equalitymichigan](https://www.facebook.com/equalitymichigan)

Campus

Currently there are 19 organizations listed as active online at www.pridesource.com/yellowpages. The following are some in the southeast Michigan area:

U-M Ann Arbor

Spectrum Center
Spectrumcenter@umich.edu
<http://spectrumcenter.umich.edu>
734-763-4186

Oakland University Gender & Sexuality Center

gsc@oakland.edu
www.oakland.edu/gsc
248-370-4336

Eastern Michigan University

LGBT Resource Center
emich.edu/lgbtrc
734-487-4149

The Lawrence Tech LGBT Resource Center

ltu.edu/student_affairs/lgbt.asp
Wayne State JIGSAW
[Facebook.com/groups/WayneStateJIGSAW](https://www.facebook.com/groups/WayneStateJIGSAW)
wsujigsaw@gmail.com

Community Centers

Michigan has nine active LGBTQ community centers, with a tenth planned in Lansing. Here are three of them.

Jim Toy Community Center

Ann Arbor
www.jimtoycenter.org
www.facebook.com/jimtoycenter
or follow them on Twitter @JimToyCenter.
319 Braun Court
Ann Arbor, MI
734-995-9867

LGBT Detroit

Detroit
www.lgbtdetroit.org
[@LGBTDetroit](http://www.facebook.com/lgbtdetroit)
20025 Greenfield Road
Detroit, MI
Phone: 313-397-2127

Affirmations

Ferndale
<http://goaffirmations.org>
www.facebook.com/Affirmations/
or follow them on Twitter @GoAffirmations.
290 W. Nine Mile Road
Ferndale, MI
248-398-7105

Legal

American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan

Jay Kaplan, Staff Attorney, LGBT Project
2966 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI
www.aclumich.org
313-578-6800

Fair Michigan

PO Box 6136
Plymouth, MI 48170
877-432-4764, 313-556-2300
fairmichigan.org
[Facebook.com/fairmichigan2016](https://www.facebook.com/fairmichigan2016)

Know Your Rights Project

Outlaws U-M student group
outlawslegal@gmail.com
734-995-9867

Older Adults

SAGE Metro Detroit

290 W. Nine Mile Rd. Ferndale, MI
313-578-6812
sagemetrodetroit.org
Facebook: SAGE Metro Detroit

Political

The LGBT and Allies Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party

[Facebook.com/TheLGBTACaucusoftheMDP](https://www.facebook.com/TheLGBTACaucusoftheMDP)
Stonewall for Revolution
www.facebook.com/stonewall4reolution

Professional Groups

Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce

P.O. Box 32446
Detroit, MI 48232
detroitlgbtchamber.com
1-800-DET-LGBT

Ties Like Me

Professional networking events
third Weds. 5:30 - 8 p.m.
TiesLikeMe.org
Suits And The City
Lansing, MI
suitsandthecity@gmail.com
www.suitsandthecity.org

Transgender

FtM Detroit

<https://www.facebook.com/FtMDetroit/>
ftmdetroit@gmail.com

FtM A2 Ypsi

ftmannarborypsilanti@gmail.com
<https://www.facebook.com/ftma2ypsi/>

Transgender Michigan

23211 Woodward Ave.
Ferndale, MI
info@transgendermichigan.org
www.transgendermichigan.org
800-842-2954

Get Listed, Promote Your Events

You can add or update any listing by going to www.PrideSource.com and clicking on Yellow Pages. Once you submit your listing, our staff will contact you to confirm your information. You can add your event to the Pride Source Calendar online and in print by going to www.PrideSource.com and clicking on Calendar, then "Add Event." Send any press releases and announcements to editor@pridesource.com



Find a digital version of PrideSource Magazine online under Our LGBTQ Yellow Pages

Find these resources online

Adoption Services
AIDS/HIV Hotlines
AIDS/HIV Organizations
Alzheimer's Association
Animal Shelter
Anti-Violence
Archives/Collections
Campus; Student and Alumni Groups
Cancer Support Groups
Choruses
Community Centers
Employee Resource Groups
Families and Parents
Foster Care
Foundations and Funders
Hotlines & Switchboards
Labor Union
Legal Organizations
Museums
Music Groups
National Organizations
Political Organizations
Professional Organizations
Religious & Spiritual
Senior Living
Seniors
Social/Community Organizations
Sports
Substance Abuse
Transgender Groups/Services
Women's Health
Youth Services

March is Colon Cancer Awareness Month

The American Cancer Society has updated its colorectal screening guidelines.

They may be found on the following link:

www.cancer.org

To learn more, click on "signs and symptoms of colon cancer."

Colon Cancer is a non-AIDS related malignancy. Non-AIDS related malignancies, such as colon cancer, are the number one cause of death in people living with HIV. These malignancies occur more frequently and at an earlier age in persons living with HIV as compared to the general population.

Dr. Benson and his providers screen patients living with HIV for cancers earlier and more aggressively than the general population. Our standard of care is the cutting-edge.

Soon the American Cancer Society's guidelines will catch-up for those living with HIV. They will recommend what we are already doing.

We have the knowledge and experience to keep you healthy!

— Dr. Paul Benson



Dr. Paul Benson's
Be Well
Medical Center
1964 Eleven Mile Rd
Berkley, MI 40872
(248) 544-9300
doctorbewell.com

Dr. Paul Benson, mascot Baxter, and the staff at the Be Well Medical Center.

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Dr. Benson is an Associate Professor at Michigan State University providing training to our next generation of physicians.

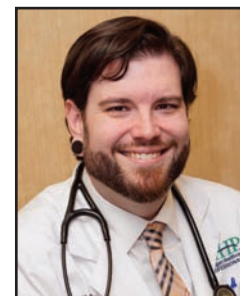
He leads our team of professional and talented Providers:



Caleb Youngblood, PA-C, AAHIV-S



Mark Rosen, PA-C



Leon Bullough, NP-F



Keyuna Nance, MSW