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MOLLY SHANNON,
Queering a Ladybug Seat

**'SNL' Alum Reflects
on LGBTQ Following**

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**APRIL 25, 2019
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**A Trans Woman's Battle to Avenge Her
Friend's Death Turns Toward Advocacy**

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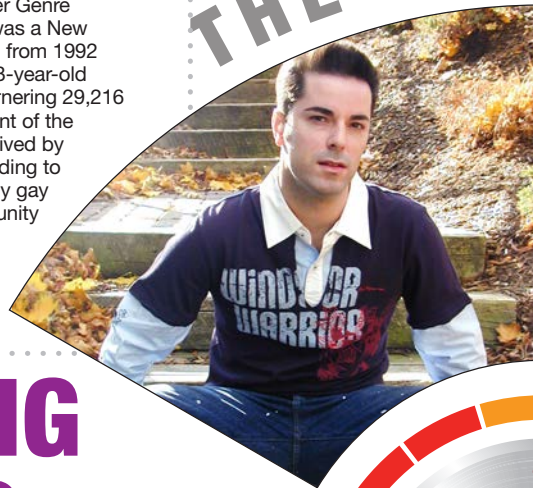
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THE '00S - 2006

March - Michigan's Joe Fitzryk is Genre's 'Man of the Year' A Michigan man, Joe Fitzryk, became Genre magazine's first-ever Genre Man of the Year. Genre magazine was a New York City-based monthly periodical from 1992 to 2009 written for gay men. The 33-year-old trounced his 83 competitors by garnering 29,216 votes – slightly more than 10 percent of the total and more than twice that received by the runner-up. A Genre Man, according to Fitzryk, is supposed to be an openly gay man who contributes to the community in a meaningful way – and who possesses that “certain something extra.”



April - Cleaning Out Her Closet Debbie Nelson, Eminem's mother, spoke out against anti-gay hate during a BTL interview. Nelson became an advocate for the gay community after her brother, Todd, was killed in 2004. New Baltimore's police said it was a suicide. Nelson believed it was a hate crime. Because of her devotion to her brother, who she says gave her clues that he was gay, she continued to pursue the case. Nelson expressed her interest in working with the Triangle Foundation as a public spokeswoman on hate crimes in the gay community.

FLASHING BACK TO THE PAST:



June - Muskegon Holds First Ever Pride Event A continuous rainstorm didn't prevent members of the community from gathering on the beach at Pere Marquette Park to celebrate Muskegon's first gay Pride event. More than 30 people got soaked while making history in the community of 150,000 people.

December - Jay Kaplan Named BTL's Person of the Year Since arriving at the ACLU in June 2001, Jay Kaplan has been at the forefront of societal change in Michigan. An early, but important, case involved suing the city of Detroit over its anti-gay undercover sting operations in Rouge Park. Other battles involved transgender rights and second-parent adoptions involving same-sex couples. A singer and performer since childhood, Kaplan can often be found on stage at community theaters throughout the area. “You never hear anyone say anything negative about Jay,” said Susan Horowitz, co-publisher and editor-in-chief of BTL. “In fact, he's probably the most loved and respected of our community leaders – with accomplishments to back it up - and that's why we chose him as our first-ever Person of the Year.”



July - Bringing Home the Gold Ferndale bodybuilder, Sandi Forrest, 45, won two gold medals in body building at the Gay Games in Chicago - first in the woman's single competition at 5' 2", 104 pounds, and then again in teams with a 51-year-old male body builder.

MICHIGAN BANS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION 2006

Programs that have eased the way for women and minorities to be full partners in Michigan's workforce and educational system were under threat because of a ballot initiative that would erase affirmative action efforts by public employers, contractors and educational institutions. The proposal was sponsored by the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, an organization founded by California anti-affirmative rights crusader Ward Connerly.

January Leaders of the LGBTQ community launched an educational effort to illustrate the importance of equal opportunity and why efforts to ban affirmative action should be defeated. The LGBTQ Coalition for Affirmative Action was founded by the Triangle Foundation, ACLU

of Michigan's LGBT Project, Between The Lines newspaper, American Friends Service Committee LGBTQ Project, Michigan Equality and Affirmations.

February The LGBTQ community responded to the affirmation action threat. A town hall meeting was held about the importance of affirmative action. LGBTQ community leaders joined civil rights activists to discuss Michigan's affirmative action programs.

April Leaders of the coalition One United Michigan appeared at a press conference on April 6 to pledge their joint opposition to the proposed state constitutional amendment to ban affirmative action programs. Over 100 Michigan organizations had announced their opposition to the proposal. LGBTQ leaders were active in the coalition meetings, were organizing at a grassroots level and were an important partner with One United Michigan.

June On June 22, a suit was filed in federal court by Operation King's Dream to prevent the anti-affirmative action ballot measure from being placed on the November ballot. The suit was supported by Macomb County NAACP, Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, the Legislative Black Caucus

and AFSCME 207. Operation King's Dream claimed that the more than 125,000 signatures collected were gathered under false pretenses. Those who signed, the group said, believed that the ballot was in favor of affirmative action, not against it.

July On July 25, representatives from 50 LGBTQ organizations announced during a press conference their united opposition to the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative.

September Speakers passionately condemned Proposal 2 to ban affirmative action during the Affirming Action: Uniting Our Communities for Change town hall forum held at Zion Lutheran Church in Ferndale. The event was held as part of an ongoing effort by the LGBTQ community to defeat the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative.



One United Michigan Executive Director Trisha Stein, Ruth Ellis Center Executive Director Grace McClelland, Affirmations Executive Director Leslie Thompson, Triangle Foundation Director of Policy Sean Kosofsky, HRC Board of Governors member Michelle Brown, ACLU of Michigan Executive Director Kary Moss, Ken Collins, a board member of That All May Freely Serve, and Johnnie Jenkins, co-founder of the Detroit Black Pride Society, at the July 25, 2006 press conference announcing the LGBTQ community's opposition to the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative.

November Affirmative action is dead in Michigan. LGBTQ leaders were disappointed when on Nov. 7, residents approved Proposal 2 by a count of 2,131,096 to 1,545,060.



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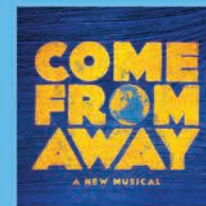
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Bridget Butts. BTL Photos: Andrew Cohen

“I am strong-minded. I’m not going to shut up and I’m not going to hide. There are already a lot of girls who live that lifestyle, live in fear, and we all can’t live like that because no justice ever gets served.”

Fighting Despite the Fear

A Trans Woman’s Battle to Avenge Her Friend’s Death Turns Toward Advocacy

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Bridget, better-known as LaKyra, Butts has faced violence and discrimination in every aspect of her life as a transgender woman of color. For her, it’s a harsh reality that women who make up her demographic get killed at disproportionately higher rates than any other group within the LGBTQ community — a fact that’s not lost on her.

“It’s a scary feeling knowing you could die tomorrow,” she said.

In 2018, advocates tracked at least 26 deaths of transgender people in the U.S. due to fatal violence, the majority of whom were transgender women of color. And this year, the Human Rights Campaign reported that already there have been two more women of the same demographic killed by other violent means.

But despite the looming presences that violence and discrimination have in Butts’ life, she’s firm that they don’t make up the sum total of her life. Butts’ dreams and hobbies mirror those of many 30-year-olds; a fan of the silver screen, she hopes to one day become an actress and she has a love of acoustic guitar. She is active in Detroit’s ballroom scene and finds time once a week to satisfy her Monopoly addiction, playing

with friends who love, respect and trust her.

“Do I hide in the closet? No,” she said. “Either way it goes, if I allow you to keep me in my box, I didn’t live my life. So, I gotta do what I gotta do.”

For Butts, part of that means speaking up for other victims of violence and discrimination. Most recently as a witness in the case of Kelly Stough, a 36-year-old transgender woman of color who was murdered in December 2018 in the city’s Palmer Park neighborhood.

“I’m not going to be quiet because this was a sister of mine ... She kind of was like a mother figure as well because she was older than me and she taught me some things ... a parent figure would teach you,” Butts said. “This is someone who’s in my heart. I couldn’t see myself just not saying anything.”

Butts took the stand in February in Detroit’s 36th District Court to testify against Albert Weathers, a Sterling Heights pastor who was charged with Stough’s murder.

“I was able to see her in a completely different light than I’ve ever seen her and that was when she was on the stand testifying,” said Lilianna Reyes, Second Stories Director at the Ruth Ellis Center in Highland Park and co-executive director of the Trans Sistās of Color Project. “Her ability to not blink an eye when the defense attorney was very transphobic and the strength that she had — and I knew that she had strength, but to see it in that way was just really beautiful.”

A Growing Movement

Butts coming forward is an example of the mobilization happening amongst transgender women of color in Detroit.

Reyes said in the last year or two she has seen more transgender women of color seek each other out in an effort to work together, serving as their own support system during times of crisis.

Emani Love is a spiritual justice activist and a friend of Butts and she concurs.

“Our safety is up to us, because the forces of the legal system have failed us time and time again,” Love said.

One study, titled *A National Epidemic: Fatal Anti-Transgender Violence in America in 2018*, by the Human Rights Campaign explores why discrimination happens and many of the factors that can contribute to or facilitate fatal violence. In many instances, according to the report, systemic discrimination at the intersection of gender identity and race lead to significant barriers to employment and housing. This pushes many transgender people into underground economies to survive, including sex work, and into circumstances where they may be more likely to face violence.

Love points to the murder in October 2011 of Shelly Hilliard, known by friends and family as Treasure. Her death was at the intersections of police coercion, criminalization of sex work, Jim Crow drug laws, cissexism and transphobia.

Similar to the relationship she had with Stough, Hilliard was Butts’ chosen daughter who she met and befriended over a decade ago.

“I feel like I had to come up and speak about that because there was a lot of people who claimed to have known her but really didn’t, and there were a lot of people who had questions that couldn’t get answers because people wouldn’t speak up,” said Butts, adding that she was “terrified” while the Hilliard case was ongoing, “kind of like I am right now.”

Despite that fact, Butts doesn't let the fear dampen her voice.

"I am strong-minded. I'm not going to shut up and I'm not going to hide," she said. "There are already a lot of girls who live that lifestyle, live in fear, and we all can't live like that because no justice ever gets served."

Local Resources and the Need for More

Conquering her own fears has been much easier with support from other transgender women of color and from the Fair Michigan Justice Project, which investigates and prosecutes crimes against the LGBTQ community.

On behalf of the FMJP, a partnership between the Wayne County prosecutor's office and Fair Michigan, Julisa Abad — a transgender woman of color herself and FMJP's director of transgender outreach — helps transgender women like Butts, via support services that range from transportation to housing while they seek justice for victims of violence and discrimination.

"I am very grateful that Kyra had the knowledge, the wisdom and the bravery to not only come forward but to be able to advocate for herself and get services so that she can make it through this process as easily as we can make it," Abad said, "because obviously, it's not an easy situation."

Abad has called on the community before to take action, emphasizing that there is a "lack of attention to the very real issues" faced by transgender women of color on a daily basis.

Love added that without more help and community supporters this can lead to "burnout" for many who involve themselves in the social justice movement.

One of the most important services that Love said "helps keep us afloat" is transgender-affirming mental health care which she said is sorely lacking. Lack of financial benefits from existing services is also a problem.

To tackle these problems Reyes said that TSOCP has taken steps to put reliable systems in place.

"We are now at the point of building programs in conjunction with the Ruth Ellis Center and Fair Michigan where these women are getting paid something," Reyes said. "Some girls are getting paid a monthly stipend ... We believe in paying people for their worth."

She went on to say that the financial aspect is especially important because agencies in the past have, intentionally or not, "manipulated and used" the demographics they've tried to help.

"... To do volunteer work to get numbers, to get research, and, at the end of it there's not many girls that we see stably employed," Reyes said.

Not an uncontroversial stance, Reyes said she has received backlash previously for stating her opinion on the issue, and while she is thankful to the people, agencies, organizations and even

companies that are supportive of transgender women of color, she emphasized that it's important to let members of the community know that TSOCP gets no local funding.

"Zero. I think in our few-year history we've only ever got maybe \$5,000 to \$10,000 from a local grant from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan," she said. "Our programming first and foremost is emergency assistance funds, which is almost impossible to get funded ... We're doing it alone and the Ruth Ellis Center has been so supportive by allowing us to do that work here."

The need for programs like these was put into even starker perspective when the National Center for Transgender Equality released their U.S. Trans Survey in 2015. Those statistics showed that transgender people experience unemployment at three times the rate of the general population, with rates for people of color up to four times the national unemployment rate.

Funding or no funding, however, Butts is still aware that her friends and loved ones are being murdered, and Stough was the last straw for her. Following her death, Butts reached out to Reyes and said, "I want to do this work and I want to do it well."

Together, Butts and Reyes have been working on a plan.

"We know that there's going to be another trans woman of color that's going to be murdered at some point," Reyes said. "We want to create a program, working with organizations like Fair Michigan and the ACLU of Michigan, to help trans women of color to better understand the legal and law enforcement systems along with supporting trans women of color who are going through criminal justice cases — whether that's to testify or they have had violence happen against them. If there's an issue, we want to make sure that we understand our rights and what we can do as a community to really push back against this violence."

Reyes has been writing grants in search of funding for this program, which Butts will facilitate as a leader in the community.

"A lot of people say that now. Like community leader — and I don't look at it like that. I just do it from the heart," she said. "I've always been a people person. And I do have a lot of people who follow behind me, but it comes from my experiences and my childhood."

The Difficulties of Advocacy

Since testifying during the Stough trial, Butts has become more visible. She has been subjected to local media reports that focus solely on her gender identity and her history of sex work.

"What people need to know is that even though someone is a sex worker it does not deter them or mean that they can't do anything great," Reyes said. "People who give sex workers the ability to show them something other would be gladly surprised. If people also see that Kyra

See **Fighting**, continued on p. 12



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This panel will be an informal discussion with both transgender and non-binary people in an effort to showcase the stories of those who have come out and begun the process of transition. The event will be held at Temple Beth El from 7 to 9 p.m. with coffee and dessert included. Panelists include

Dubbs Weinblatt - They/Them Pronouns

Weinblatt is the education and training manager at Keshet, a national organization that works for the full LGBTQ equality and inclusion in Jewish life. Dubbs uses their story as a transgender Jew as a way to connect and educate folks on inclusion.

Hunter Keith - He/Him

Keith is a college student pursuing a degree in psychology, a graduate of Hillel Day School and The Frankel Jewish Academy and is a self-identified gay, trans man who began his transition from female to male in middle school. He's given numerous presentations about being transgender and sharing his own journey to help others.

Rachel Zaback - She/Hers

Zaback is a high school science teacher who recently came out to herself, friends and family as a transgender woman. Since then, she has begun her gender transition and gotten involved in local transgender and LGBTQ groups, both in and out of the Jewish community. Confident in her new identity, she is excited to help transgender and LGBTQ youth feel comfortable being themselves.

For more information contact Roz Gould Keith at 248-739-9254 or by emailing roz@standwithtrans.org.

How to Do Life Workshop Series



The first event in a still-in-the-works series, Stand With Trans is hosting its How to do Life event on Saturday, May 4, at the Affirmations LGBTQ community center in Ferndale.

The targeted audience is kids in middle and high school who identify as transgender and non-binary in an effort to aid in "building personal confidence and finding healthy habits."

There is no fee to attend this free event and lunch will be provided. Register online at standwithtrans.org.

From HRC to Hoadley Headquarters

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

"I had to say yes"

What do you do when you're the Human Rights Campaign's state political director who just oversaw Michigan's blue wave and your old friend calls and asks you to manage his historic run for U.S. Congress? For Amritha Venkataraman, making the choice to leave a fulfilling job was tough, but the Bloomfield Hills native said she couldn't pass up the opportunity to pack up, relocate to Kalamazoo and join Team Hoadley.

"It was a hard decision," she said. "I really loved working with the organization, and I got to work with so many tremendous advocates and activists all around the state, so that was so much fun and such a privilege. You don't often get a candidate who you know really well and you support like this running for office, so when he asked, I had to say yes."

As campaign manager, Venkataraman said her duties will include keeping the day-to-day operation running, managing staff, fundraising and sending emails to provide regular communication with supporters. Plus, she mentioned "other duties as assigned," since a campaign manager must be a jack/jill-of-all-trades and an expert at everything campaign-related.

As a matter of fact, Venkataraman hit the ground running, dispatching an email the morning following Hoadley's official launch. It was in response to the Republican National Congressional Committee's press release issued within hours of the announcement of Hoadley's run for Congress, which called him, among other things, an "[Ilhan] Omar protégé," and an "open socialist."

Signed by Venkataraman, the email began, "Republicans in Washington are petrified of Jon. They flipped out yesterday after his announcement with a name-calling and Islamophobic rant that would make Donald Trump proud."

A request for a donation followed. To be sure, she said there will be many more attacks and responses in the next year-and-a-half, but Venkataraman appears to have a knack already for being quick on her feet.

Special Significance

On numerous fronts, Hoadley's campaign has meaning and resonance for Venkataraman. She and Hoadley aren't simply old friends; she was his field organizer in 2014 when he first ran for state House, which led to what is now his

third term. A 2015 graduate of Kalamazoo College with a degree in political science, Venkataraman has roots in West Michigan as well.

"Kalamazoo is a community I care a great deal about," she said. It's the place in Michigan I really consider home. So first of all, I'm just really excited to be back in Kalamazoo, that's awesome. And then I think that this is a really important time for our country and a leader like Jon is the



progressives, because we've got a lot of power when we all vote together. So, hopefully, this campaign will do that."

Connecting with voters is what Venkataraman said she is most looking forward to in her work for Hoadley's campaign.

"My background has always been in field campaigns," she said. "So I'm really excited to start talking to voters."

She mentioned being eager to kick off a 16-city listening tour that started the weekend of April 13.

Where it Began, Where It's Headed

At 25, Venkataraman has wide-ranging political experience through her work on numerous political campaigns, as well as Emerge California — an organization which trains Democratic women to run for office — and of course as HRC's state political director. Not only that, Venkataraman has worked in the advocacy arm of politics, with groups like the League of Conservation Voters.

She said her interest in all things political was something she learned at home from her parents, where there was always talk of politics around the dinner table. But she described the 2000 election as a sort of awakening when she was just seven years old.

"I was so sure that Al Gore was gonna be president. I knew it. And it was like a holiday for me," she said. "I camped out in front of the TV, in my Barbie sleeping bag, ready to watch the results come in, of Al Gore becoming our next president. And I watched the election results and I was so confused. I went to my mom, and I said, 'What happened? We both knew that this was the right candidate.' And she said, 'Sometimes, the candidate you think is gonna win, or you know should win, doesn't win. It's not set in stone that the folks who share our values are gonna be winning elections.'

"So, that was kind of a big turning point for me. I was young, but I haven't taken an election for granted since then," she said. "And I'm not gonna start now."

type of person I want to be supporting."

She added that she believes he has the right values, and expressed how much she is looking forward to connecting with the community across the 6th District in new and innovative ways.

The fact that Hoadley is an openly gay candidate and stands to become the first openly LGBTQ member of Congress from Michigan is certainly not lost on Venkataraman either.

"You can't be what you don't see," she said, in reference to LGBTQ representation in politics. "So I think it's really important that we're supporting LGBTQ candidates across the board. I think that Jon is such a strong, deep candidate, and he's a leader on LGBTQ issues but also so many progressive issues."

Further, Venkataraman said in some ways she wants to continue in the same vein as she did with her work on behalf of HRC. Of that experience, she said, "I wanted to be in that role because I really want to energize and mobilize LGBTQ voters in Michigan and allied voters and



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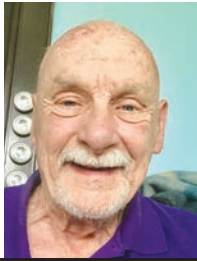
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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

May Babies May Be Gay Babies!

The “Coffee Table Book of Astrology” tattles that “taurus is the astrological sign of sexual deviancy.”

Or, as a friend of mine used to tell me year after year of our 40-year friendship, “Brandy” — his nickname for me, as in the alcoholic beverage, brandy Alexander — “May babies are gay babies.” There may be some truth to this observation.

In fact, three of my longtime friends share and celebrate my birth date, May 12, as their own: Ted Kirby, Daniel Scott Snyder and Kat LaTosh.

And just last week I ran into Wayne State University Philosophy Chairperson Dr. John Corvino, who turns 50 this year — and looks more handsome than ever — on May 15. (He had several columns in BTL 10 years ago. As the ancient gay Romans might say, “In Corvino veritas.”)

Dr. John missed it by one day to be birthed on the same day — May 16 — as Liberace, and contemporary new entertainer Joey Graceffa. And also five days before Harvey Milk’s natal debut on May 22.

Two famous bisexual/lesbian birthdays also occur on my birthday: Florence Nightingale and Katherine Hepburn. (The less said about another May 12 celeb — straight — Casey Stengel, the better.)

Lest my PG readers feel that I’m bragging about my taurus elitist standing, the truth is that all astrological signs are replete with LGBTQ birth dates. (Check lgbtcelebritybirthdays.com)

The May Facebook listing remembers 24 members of our own rainbow community, both current activists and allies: Tom Groom (1); Peter Gierak (1); Cole Cassidy (2); Kat Delph (3); James Jennings (6); Anton Anderssen (7); Bob Cafagna (8); Jim Stone (10); Chaz Beach (13); Doug Risner, Ph.D., (14); Ray Schultz, Ph.D. (14); Rick Chizmadia (14); Mateo Michael McGough (16); Michael Hill (20); Dave Gelbach (23); David Herge (24); Susan Crocker (24); Jeri Hill (26); Paul Chrustowski (27); Richard Krause (28) Rosemary Jozwiak (29); Abraham Caraballo (29); Scott Mattson (30). Oh, yes: Dignity Detroit (17)!

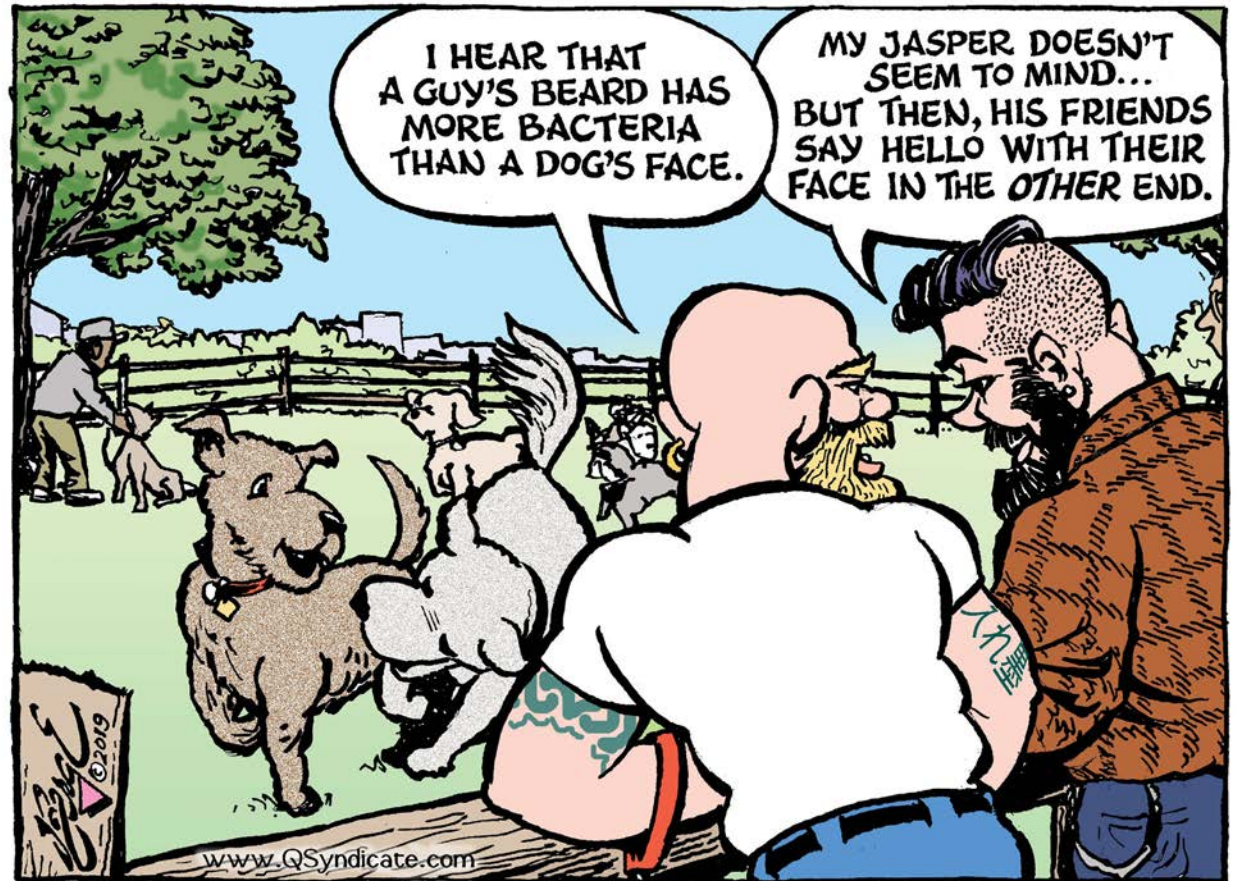
A touch, too, of special remembrance: Jeff Montgomery was born on May 8, 1953. He sadly, unexpectedly died three years ago. A full-length documentary, “America You Kill Me,” of his years as head of the Triangle Foundation and strong, outspoken, well-respected advocate of LGBTQ human rights issues in Detroit, Lansing and nationwide is scheduled to be shown locally in May.

And what’s there special about those born under the arena sign of taurus? A simple summation of us taken from “The Sun in the Sex Horoscope” website provides one of many timely astrology summations. Applicable to activism, as well as to sex. Take your pick. One or both.

“Taurus takes time, in a good way, and makes sure to do the work necessary. Taurus is not eager to seduce, nor easy for anyone else to seduce. It’s a question of patience and persistence. Taurus is there for the long run, and very physical all through.”

There’s one special taurus standout among the LGBTQ group however: Christine Jorgensen, the first person in America

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Viewpoint

Supreme Court Takes Cases of People Fired for Being LGBTQ

The Court to Consider Whether to Take Anti-Discrimination Protections Away From LGBTQ People



BY JAY KAPLAN

Can a business fire someone because they’re LGBTQ? The Supreme Court will soon tell us.

After a funeral home outside Detroit fired Aimee Stephens because she is transgender, Aimee won a federal appeals court ruling that the firing violated the federal law barring sex discrimination in the workplace. After Don Zarda was fired from his job as a skydiving instructor because he’s gay, another federal appeals court ruled that his firing, too, was sex discrimination.

On Monday, the Supreme Court announced that it would take up Aimee and Don’s cases, plus a third, to decide whether to take those civil rights protections away from Aimee, Don and all LGBTQ people in America. Not surprisingly, President Trump’s Department of Justice will argue that it should.

In Aimee’s case, she worked for six years in a job she loved as a funeral director, getting great reviews. Her boss and co-workers knew her as a man, but she always knew she was female. In 2013, Aimee gathered the strength to come out to her supervisor as the woman she is. She was hoping to find acceptance and to be judged on her good performance alone. Instead, her boss fired her, leaving no doubt that that the reason was that she was transgender.

In Don’s case, he worked at a skydiving company on Long

Island, New York. Don’s teaching often involved tandem skydives, in which he was strapped hip-to-hip and shoulder-to-shoulder with customers learning how to jump. In the summer of 2010, as Don was strapping himself to a female customer for one of those tandem dives, he told her that he was gay to assuage any concern she had about being strapped to a man she didn’t really know. He never thought the comment would cause the end of his career at Altitude Express. But after the dive, Don’s boss fired him because he had come out to the woman.

In both Aimee and Don’s cases (both ACLU cases), the appeals courts ruled that they were discriminated against because of their sex. If Aimee was a fine employee when her boss thought she was a man, but unacceptable when he learned she was a woman, it’s frankly hard to see what it could be other than sex discrimination. In addition, the court in Aimee’s case — following court decisions over many years — held that discrimination based on transgender status is a form of sex discrimination because it’s impossible to describe what it means to be transgender without talking about a person’s sex.

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Similarly, the court in Don's case held that discrimination based on sexual orientation is a form of sex discrimination because you can't describe what it means to be gay without talking about the sex of the people involved.

In addition, the courts held that both Aimee and Don were penalized for failing to conform to their employer's sex stereotypes — in Don's case that men should be attracted to women and in Aimee's case that people who are assigned the male sex at birth are not supposed to look and behave as women.

The Equal Opportunity Employment Commission agrees that anti-LGBTQ discrimination is a form of sex discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. And for several years it has been enforcing that statute on behalf of LGBTQ people from every corner of the country who face workplace discrimination.

Unfortunately, President Trump's Justice Department has taken the opposite position — arguing in both of these cases that it's perfectly legal under federal law to fire Aimee because she's trans and Don because he's gay.

The Supreme Court ruling that Trump seeks — that firing LGBTQ people is legal — would shock most of America. A core American value is that people should be judged in the workplace based on their performance, not their identity. It's a travesty that our government is advocating for discrimination to be legal. Seventy percent of the American public agrees that not only that LGBTQ people should be protected, but thinks that we are protected under federal law.

The stakes here are huge. If federal law says it's fine to fire someone because she's lesbian or transgender, other federal civil rights laws may well not protect LGBTQ people, either. The federal education anti-discrimination law may not stop schools from harassing transgender students. The Federal Housing Act may not stop landlords from evicting same-sex couples. And

► Parting Glances

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to become widely known for having sex reassignment surgery (1951).

Christine was born George William Jorgensen Jr. on May 30, 1926, in the Bronx, New York City; and she died on May 3, 1989, aged 62, in San Clemente, California. Trans taurus from start to finish!

Way back in the mid-1950s my family over dinner discussed the startling — shocking — courage of Christine Jorgensen to transition at the time. (She was not, however, the first to do so. That was Danish-born Lili Elbe in the 1930s.)

My grandmother Lottie Lee Alexander, who always dressed for Liberace's TV show and waved at him as he appeared on our black and

the Affordable Care Act may not prevent health care providers from turning away transgender people. In fact, such a ruling could lead to the very "erasing" of transgender people from civil rights laws that the Trump Administration is reported to have been considering last fall.

For Michigan, there could be unique consequences. In May 2018 the Michigan Civil Rights Commission interpreted our state civil rights laws to cover LGBTQ discrimination under the protected category of sex. In doing so, the Commission specifically referred to the Aimee Stephens legal decision. Since that time the Michigan Department of Civil Rights has been investigating LGBTQ discrimination complaints and for the first time ever, LGBTQ Michigan residents have a state remedy to address discrimination. In January 2019, Gov. Whitmer issued an executive directive prohibiting LGBTQ discrimination in state employment, government contracts and accessing government services. Her executive directive also made specific reference to federal case law precedent regarding LGBTQ discrimination as sex discrimination. All of this could be upended if the Court sides with the Trump Administration. Elections do have consequences.

Tragically, Don died in a skydiving accident in 2014. Don's surviving partner, Bill Moore, and his sister, Melissa Zarda, have continued the lawsuit on behalf of Don's estate. Bill and Melissa will be at the Supreme Court this spring along with Aimee, and all three will fight to ensure that the court doesn't strip millions of LGBTQ people in America of the federal non-discrimination protections that current law provides.

Here's hoping the court lives up to the nation's values and rejects the Trump administration's effort to relegate LGBTQ people to second-class status.

Editor's Note: Director of the National ACLU LGBT Project James Esseks helped contribute to this piece.

white 12-inch screen, told me, my mom and dad, that Christine was "just giving outward expression to her unique, innate inner feminine beauty.

"Some people are born to be different in very, very special ways. Christine was one such. Maybe you are, too, sonny boy," she winked at me knowingly my way. She was early on the mark for me.

By the way, Granny was born on May 13, 1886, in Rome, Georgia. (For what it's worth: Trump and Pence were born — cusp and lisp — in June.

Charles Alexander is prolific both as a BTL columnist (700-plus columns) and as a well-known LGBT community artist (1000 Facebook images). He is a Spirit of Detroit Award recipient and an Affirmations LGBT CENTER Jan Stevenson awardee. Connect with him at Charles@pridesource.com.

Creep Of The Week

Franklin Graham



Hello and welcome to a world where a gay man with the word "butt" in his last name is running for president and it is not a joke. Pete Buttigieg, who has been Mayor of South

Bend, Indiana, since 2012, is an absolute contender in a crowded Democratic field. He made headlines when he kissed his husband Chasten Buttigieg IN PUBLIC. It is honestly shocking the hell out of everybody, right and left. Although it's just the conservative right that is calling Buttigieg's rise demonic and saying he should be put to death.

Also, his last name is pronounced "boot edge edge" and once you figure out how to say his name you will find it is truly delightful and you will never want to stop saying it. I'm thinking of getting a second dog just so I can name him Buttigieg. And I mean that as the highest compliment.

Right-wing Christians are going absolutely bonkers over Buttigieg, and not in a good way. I mean, they didn't overlook Trump's breaking just about every commandment just so they could see a homo in the White House, amirite?

Take Franklin Graham, for example. He has said of Trump's election, "I think God put him there." Buttigieg, though? Not so much.

Right-wing conservatives have made it a habit of heckling Buttigieg at events, something he has handled with grace and maturity. And even Graham has said that heckling Buttigieg isn't cool.

Referring to protesters who shouted 'Sodom and Gomorrah' at Buttigieg during an Iowa rally Graham wrote on his Facebook page, "I don't agree with heckling anyone — I think we should be respectful."

I mean, why heckle him when you could put him to death?

Did Graham call for Buttigieg's murder? Not in those exact terms. But he did cite Leviticus 20:13, a Bible verse that says homosexuals "have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them."

I mean, he didn't say that part out loud, but he didn't have to.

Buttigieg reportedly told the protesters, "The condition of my soul is in the hands of God."

And Graham took issue with that.

"Mayor Buttigieg is absolutely right, Graham wrote. "His soul is in the hands of God, so is everyone's. He also says that he's

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

In other words, Graham isn't impressed that Buttigieg professes to believe in God because Buttigieg is a homo and those things are incompatible.

a Christian and wants to become the first openly gay president in America's history. What's wrong with that picture?"

Um, nothing? I'm going to go with nothing.

"Being a Christian isn't just a title we select or a church membership," Graham continued. "It is a faith in God and His Word that transforms our lives to be more like the One we follow — Jesus Christ. Jesus said, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments.'"

In other words, Graham isn't impressed that Buttigieg professes to believe in God because Buttigieg is a homo and those things are incompatible.

So after essentially saying being a gay Christian isn't a thing, Graham plays the Leviticus card.

"The Bible makes it very clear that homosexuality is a sin. 'If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination,'" Graham wrote, citing Leviticus 20:13. "That's what God says and that settles it for me. I stand with the Word of God. I care enough about people to tell them the truth and to warn them about the judgment to come for all sin."

So you see, by indirectly calling for Buttigieg's death, Graham is actually just doing him a solid by warning him because he cares. It's the whole "hate the sinner, not the sin" thing. Wait, I got that right, right?

Essentially Graham's invocation of the "kill the gays" part of the Bible was basically just a great big no-homo bro hug.

Also, as far as I know Buttigieg is still on his first husband, hasn't paid off an adult film star to keep silent about their affair, doesn't brag about sexually assaulting people, has actually served in the military, sees brown and black people as human beings and doesn't think poor people are gross. Buttigieg probably knows how to read and isn't even afraid of stairs. At this rate, Buttigieg will never reach Trump Level Christian, and seeing as that's the only kind of Christian Graham and his followers care about, the Graham and Buttigieg bromance was over before it even started.

I suspect that's a pretty big relief to Chasten Buttigieg. Then again, the Buttigiegs are clearly very much in love. And ain't no God worth worshiping sad about that.

and every other girl is more than their survival then you would see the great changes and the great ideas and the passion that come behind that.”

Butts began a local factory job in June last year and no longer participates in the street economy to survive.

“I’m just normal like everybody else,” said Butts, a dog-lover who jumped at the chance to share pictures of her two-year-old Maltese Yorkie mix named Trevor.

“I can talk about having a job, talk about having a family, people who love me. They don’t think that. They think that nobody loves us because that’s probably what they would do to people in their family. But no, my family loves me. I can go home. I can chill, be comfortable.”

Struggles Around Visibility

When asked if more visibility makes her feel like more of a target, Butts said, “I have times where I’m nervous because I don’t know who’s all on his (Weathers) side. I don’t know who all watches the clips. I don’t know who knows me. I don’t know who all was in the courtroom or who’s going to be in the courtroom when I have to testify again,” she said. “It’s a scary feeling, but it’s also an empowering feeling. If I don’t do it, he could just walk away. I don’t know what the verdict is going to be, but if I didn’t speak up, they could have believed everything he said. Now we have a chance to make it a case, to make it a fight.”

And Butts encourages other women to get in the fight.

“You’re going to be scared, but oh well. Like I told my friend, ‘It’s either fight or die.’ If I die from me testifying, I would have died anyway from being a target,” she said. “It could have been me and people could’ve not spoke up ... You have to speak up.”

Contributions to support Trans Sistas of Color Project programs can be made in care of the Ruth Ellis Center (Be sure to write TSCOP on the memo line) 77 Victor St., Highland Park. Contact Julisa Abad from the Fair Michigan Justice Project at 877-432-4764, ext. 3.

Additional Resources:

Equality Michigan Victim Services Department
Jey’nce Poindexter, Transgender Victims Advocate
19641 West 7 Mile Road, Detroit
313-537-7000, ext. 12

LGBT Detroit
Kole Wyckhuys, Counselor and Community Advocate
20025 Greenfield Rd., Detroit
313-397-2127, ext. 111
kolewyckhuys@lgbtdetroit.org

Transgender Michigan
855-345-TGMI (8464)
info@transgendermichigan.org

ACLU Files Federal Class Action Lawsuit Challenging Detroit Cash Bail System

BY BTL STAFF

Last week the ACLU of Michigan, the national ACLU and the law firm Covington & Burling LLP filed a federal class action lawsuit against the 36th District Court in Detroit for violating the constitutional rights of people who are presumed innocent but are confined to jail because they cannot afford to pay bail following their arrest. The lawsuit seeks an overhaul of the cash bail system that discriminates against those who cannot pay enough money to go free.

“A person’s freedom should not depend on how much money they have,” said Dan Korobkin, ACLU of Michigan Deputy Legal Director. “Bail was originally intended to ensure a person returns to court to face charges against them. But instead, the money bail system has morphed into mass incarceration of the poor. It punishes people not for what they’ve done but because of what they don’t have.”

“Detroiters deserve a justice system that is smart, fair and works for everybody,” said Aaron Lewis, a partner at Covington, which is co-lead counsel in the lawsuit. “The cash bail system is devastating to families, it separates parents from their children, it harms communities and businesses, and it wastes taxpayer dollars keeping people locked in jail who should be at home.”

The lawsuit, filed on behalf of seven black plaintiffs in U.S. District Court, describes a two-tiered legal system in which a person’s freedom depends on their ability to afford bail, which the ACLU describes as a “clear violation of due process and equal protection.” The lawsuit also claims violations of the right to counsel because poor people accused of crimes are not provided attorneys to represent them when bail is being set.

The lawsuit additionally notes that Michigan’s court rules mandate meaningful inquiry into an arrested person’s ability to pay bail, and require pretrial release without cash bail except in extraordinary circumstances such as a truly severe flight risk or danger to the community. Additionally, Michigan’s Indigent Defense Commission now requires that counsel be appointed to represent defendants at arraignment. But these requirements have been violated in the 36th District Court, where arraignments last only a few minutes, defendants appear without counsel, ability-to-pay determinations are not conducted and 85 percent of those who are arraigned while under arrest are required to pay cash bail in order to be released.

Detroit’s 36th District Court is the largest district court in Michigan and one of the busiest courts in the United States. Named as defendants in the lawsuit are its chief judge, who has overall responsibility for its operation and the five magistrates who regularly set bail at arraignments. The Wayne County Sheriff was also named in the lawsuit because his office has administrative responsibility over the jails where people who cannot afford bail are detained. The case is a class action and asks a federal court to order systemic reforms to Detroit’s pretrial bail system.

Before filing the lawsuit, the ACLU observed hundreds of court proceedings, which are described below:

- The vast majority of bail arraignments are done via video teleconference between a 36th District courtroom and the Detroit Detention Center where arrested people are initially held;

- The DDC guards instruct those arrested off camera that the only purpose of the arraignment is to plead ‘not guilty;’ they are only to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the judge’s questions, and they should not attempt to explain their situation to the judge;

- The typical arraignment lasts just two to four minutes, with the bail-setting phase lasting less than a minute;

- Magistrates begin by reading the person’s charges and rights in a rapid-fire manner and then ask if the person understands the charges and their rights. If the person does not understand the charges, the magistrate often recites the charges or rights again using the exact same verbiage but speaks a bit slower and in a louder often more exasperated tone;

- When setting bail, magistrates make no inquiry into the person’s ability to pay;

- In 85 percent of the cases, the arrested person was required to pay cash bail in order to be released;

- After setting bail, magistrates instruct the person to step away from the camera. If the person complains that they cannot afford it or attempts to ask questions, they may be “shushed” by guards; and

- In 95 percent of the cases, the arrested person does not have an attorney. But, ironically, magistrates do consider ability to pay for people who can afford legal

representation, as was the case on March 1, 2019, when Chief Magistrate Wood told an arrested person that having an attorney present was a factor in reducing their bail since the arrestee was “taking this case seriously because he’s retained counsel.”

The research clearly shows that with each day in jail, the chance for a fair trial diminishes as it is tougher to mount a defense when behind bars. Pretrial detention is the single greatest predictor of a conviction and a sentence to jail or prison time. It is also more likely that the person will plead guilty even when innocent just to go home. Also, just three days behind bars puts a person at risk of losing their job, home and custody of their children.

For many people, paying bail is simply not possible. In 2017, the number of people in Detroit living below the poverty line was 34 percent, with the median household income about \$30,000, less than half of the nationwide median household income. The federal reserve recently reported that 40 percent of adults in the U.S. are unable to afford a \$400 emergency expense.

The bail system is also very costly to taxpayers. The Wayne County Jails collectively house more than 1600 people every night. About 62 percent are there as pretrial detainees, typically because they cannot afford bail. It costs about \$165 a night to detain a person in Wayne County jails, so pretrial detainees cost taxpayers about \$164,000 a day or about \$59 million a year. Around half of the pretrial detainee population in Wayne County are held on charges exclusively originating in the 36th District Court.

The use of bail also has a severely disparate impact on people of color, including African-Americans, who are more likely to be held in jail because they cannot afford bail.

“36th District Court’s broken bail system is wreaking devastating consequences in a city where the population is nearly 80 percent African-American,” said Twyla Carter, senior staff attorney with the ACLU’s Criminal Law Reform Project. “In addition to being unconstitutional, this further impoverishes people who are already facing extraordinary challenges and enduring severe racial disparities in our criminal legal system. That is why we are challenging bail systems like this across the country. They are dooming people who are presumed innocent but can’t afford their freedom. We will continue to challenge bail systems where prosecutors, judges, and law enforcement rely on an unfair and ineffective money bail system.”

Federal Court Ruled Local Govts Can Exclude Foster Agencies That Discriminate Against LGBTQ People

BY LISA KEEN

For the first time, a federal appeals court has ruled that a local government can exclude a child foster care agency from city-funded programs if the agency refuses to abide by a local ordinance that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation.

In *Catholic Social Charities v. Philadelphia*, the Catholic-run child placement group tried to claim an exemption to the city's non-discrimination law by contending its refusal to place children with same-sex couples was based on its religious beliefs. But a three-judge panel of the 3rd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals said the agency's religious views did not entitle it to an exemption from city's non-discrimination law.

"The City's non-discrimination policy is a neutral, generally applicable law, and the

"This ruling is devastating to the hundreds of foster children who have been waiting for a family and to the dozens of parents working with Catholic Social Services who have been waiting to foster a child," said Lori Windham, senior counsel at Becket. "We're disappointed that the court decided to let the city place politics above the needs of kids and the rights of parents, but we will continue this fight."

The conflict in Philadelphia mirrors that in some other major cities, including Boston and Lansing, where child placement agencies run by religious-based groups have sought government funding for their work but have refused to abide by local or state laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. It also exacerbates a growing crisis in many cities and states who are experiencing an increased number of children needing placements — sometimes on

Supreme Court with a petition.

A similar dispute in Massachusetts ended with Catholic Charities pulling out of state-funded child placement programs. In Michigan, a federal judge ruled against St. Vincent Catholic Charities last September, saying a lawsuit on behalf of the same-sex couples by the ACLU could proceed against a state policy

allowing adoption agencies to discriminate if the agencies claim such adoptions would violate their religious beliefs. That conflict is still under litigation, but another faith-based child placement group in Michigan announced last month that it would end its policy of excluding same-sex couples.

"Prospective foster and adoptive parents should be judged by their capacity to provide love and support to a child, not the religious views of a tax-funded agency."

- Leslie Cooper, director of the ACLU's national LGBT Project

religious views of CSS do not entitle it to an exception from that policy," stated the panel.

The judges said CSS had failed to make a "persuasive showing that the City targeted it for its religious beliefs, or is motivated by ill will against its religion." The judges said the non-discrimination law was based on the city's "sincere opposition to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

The panel included Judges Thomas Ambro — a Clinton appointee — Anthony J. Scirica — Reagan — and Marjorie Rendell — Clinton.

The ACLU, which was an intervenor on behalf of LGBTQ parents in the case, declared victory.

"This is a victory for the thousands of children in Philadelphia's child welfare system," said Leslie Cooper, director of the ACLU's national LGBT Project. "... Prospective foster and adoptive parents should be judged by their capacity to provide love and support to a child, not the religious views of a tax-funded agency."

Religious views, said Cooper, do not "entitle taxpayer-funded child welfare agencies to impose their own religious eligibility criteria on important government programs."

The religious-based legal advocacy group Becket, which led the lawsuit on behalf of CSS and several foster parents who used CSS, expressed disappointment with the ruling and said it was weighing its options for appeal.

an emergency basis — due to the opioid crisis.

Just two months ago, President Trump expressed support for allowing adoption and foster care agencies that discriminate against LGBTQ people to claim a religious exemption. And the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under President Trump granted South Carolina a waiver that allows it to funnel federal funds to foster care agencies that discriminate against LGBTQ people and people of certain religions.

In Philadelphia, the city Department of Human Services learned that two child placement agencies receiving fund from the city were refusing to place children with same-sex couples who were willing to serve as foster parents. When confronted, the two agencies claimed they were acting on their religious beliefs. The city did not challenge that claim but stopped referring children to the two groups.

One of the groups, the Catholic Social Services, filed a lawsuit, claiming its First Amendment right to free exercise of religion was being violated. A district court judge ruled against CSS's request for a preliminary injunction and the appeals panel upheld that ruling. Typically, the case would go back to district court for a hearing on the First Amendment issues raised by CSS. But the group could choose to ask the full appeals court bench for a hearing or even go directly to the U.S.



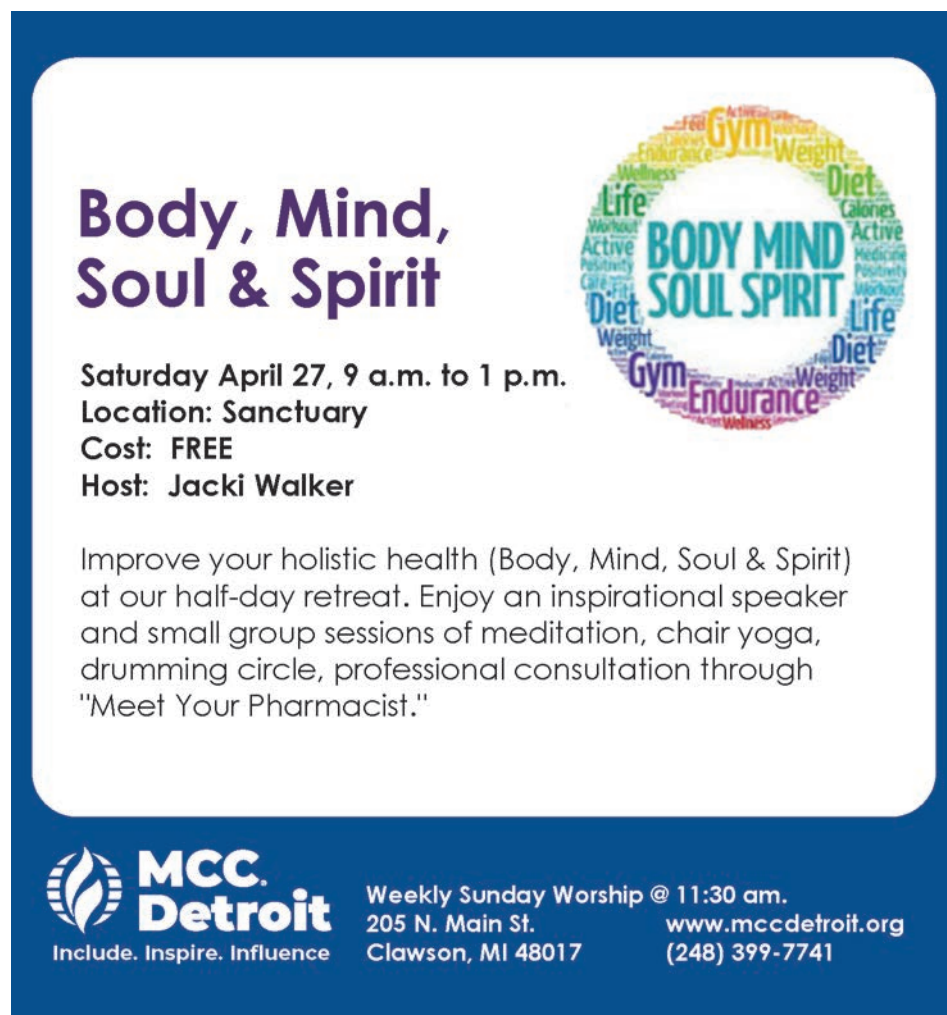
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Molly Shannon as Emily Dickinson in "Wild Nights with Emily." Photo: Greenwich Entertainment

MOLLY SHANNON

Queering a Literary Icon

'SNL' Alum Reflects on LGBTQ Following & Talks Reclaiming Emily Dickinson's Sexuality In New Film

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Consider this: Emily Dickinson was not all grandma curtains and sad, sad, sad. But she was fun! She was funny! And she was – says at least one very convinced filmmaker – a lesbian with a sizzling sex life.

Of course, many have noted the likelihood of the 19th-century poet's queer bent, but based on research and the reexamination of Emily's letters that uncovered erasures using spectrographic technology, writer-director Madeleine Olnek is taking a hard, gay stance on the popular poet's sexuality in her comedic drama, "Wild

Nights with Emily," which seeks to rectify the totality – she wasn't some spinster, either – of Dickinson's identity. "Homoeroticism for the whole family," Olnek emphasizes, noting the film's PG-13 rating so that parents can take their kids to the film to experience the Dickinson she says, according to all scholarly evidence, was the lover of her sister-in-law, Susan Gilbert Dickinson (played by Susan Ziegler).

On her side of lesbian history is "Saturday Night Live" alum Molly Shannon, whose Dickinson is fresh, feminist and heroically queer. Though the 54-year-old actress catapulted to Hollywood fame by taking a

good two-handed whiff of her armpit stench as zealous Catholic schoolgirl and "superstar" Mary Katherine Gallagher on "SNL," Shannon's career after 2001, when she left the late-night sketch show after six years, has since drawn upon her NYU education for more serious dramatic fare.

Shannon and Olnek, who met while studying drama at NYU, recently spoke about Dickinson as an LGBTQ hero, gay censorship and being met with resistance. And the Molly-obsessed gay guys doing their best Mary Katherine impression? You bet she has stories about catching them in the act.

If only I could've learned about gay Emily Dickinson in high school. Why is it important to reexamine who she was in terms of her sexuality?

Molly Shannon: That's such a great question. And this idea that I grew up with, like you – that Emily Dickinson was a victim, a frightened woman who spoke to people through walls, had no desire to have her voice heard, wanted her poems burned upon her death – it really sabotages people today, women and men. People who are struggling to get their voices heard, who are looking for role models.

So I think that it's really important that we tell the truth about her: that she was a trailblazer, she's an LGBTQ hero. In the mid-1800s, how she was able to eventually rise out of obscurity and become recognized as part of the literary canon is just incredible. And I think it's important because it examines sexism through the lens of comedy, making the film more approachable. I just feel like the "reclusive spinster" thing just doesn't really work anymore. It's now time to tell the truth. And our movie, instead, reveals a woman whose efforts to get published were repeatedly rejected by this sexist, oppressive establishment. It's important to realize she was a very gifted writer who was experiencing rejection so she can serve as a role model to modern female writers with similar struggles currently.

Madeleine Olnek: Yeah, I think that's a good point because probably what you remember from school is this idea of, "She hid her poems away." But the truth is that her work wouldn't have even been published if after her death her sister hadn't paid for it to be a vanity publication. Because the story always told was, "She was a good girl and she didn't want to be published, she didn't want attention. She just lived simply and modestly, and then after her death the world worked the way it should and recognized her." But that wasn't true. She actually put all these efforts into getting published.

Madeleine, before doing this film, were you surprised to find out that Emily Dickinson's sexuality hadn't been explored to this extent?

Olnek: It's depressing that it's the first time that people have heard about it, because an article (in *The New York Times Magazine*) did come out in 1998. And I wrote a play, but it was in downtown New York. I got good reviews for the play but the reviews were "Madeleine Olnek decides to imagine, 'What if Emily Dickinson were a lesbian?'" like it was my imagination. It was treated like something I made up. And the resistance to it is interesting: It's as much of a resistance to what a rebel she was.

The scholar Martha Nell Smith, who put together *EmilyDickinson.org*, which is the reason you can see all of Emily Dickinson's letters online, said that she found, when she was working and writing about this, there was as much resistance to the idea that Emily Dickinson had an intellectual collaboration/partnership with a woman as a romantic one. Like, people were like, "No, no, no, a woman couldn't have been Emily's main influence." So the story, in terms of its censorship, is really about it being about two women together as much as it is about gay censorship.

Do you think people now are more open to Emily Dickinson being lesbian?

Olnek: There was an exhibit at The Morgan Library (in New York) a couple of years ago and it had a daguerreotype in it that we reference in our movie that was the picture of

Emily Dickinson with her arm around Kate (Scott Turner, a fellow poet), and Kate is the other woman. Emily is involved with two women in the movie, and so this woman Kate, after her affair with Emily, ended up living openly gay in Europe. So that story is a little story to find, and I think as the years go on a little harder to hide. With the Emily/Susan thing, people are often like, "Oh, women were friends like that back then!" But I think we are the first people telling this story, so of course we're gonna be met with resistance because people don't want to feel like they've been lied to.

Molly, what kind of considerations did you have to make when it came to portraying Emily and her sexuality in this film?

Shannon: I really just looked to Madeleine to guide me because Madeleine is a scholar, and then we worked closely with Martha Smith, who is also an Emily Dickinson scholar. So I really just looked to them. I was asking Madeleine questions because I really wanted to get it right. And I just felt passionate about telling this story because I can't believe this whole woman's true history was kind of erased and not represented the way she was.

I feel like this story still sells on the cover of magazines. The heartbroken spinster story still sells! It sells magazines! Cover of *Us* and *Star*, and people love this shit. They buy it. What is it that we're so attached to this brokenhearted woman thing? It's horrible, I hate it. I don't like to contribute to that. It's just ridiculous. Why is this still going on?

How much consideration did you give the ethics of outing someone posthumously before making this film?

Olnek: She herself wrote lesbian poems, so she outed herself on the page. Now, granted, at one point when she sent in some poems for publication, she changed the gender of some poems herself just in hopes to get them printed, but she left so many poems that were love poems to women. And because her work is so complicated, of course, some people couldn't understand what they were about and would come up with all kinds of funny things. But let me tell you something that's very important: Very close to her death she wrote a letter to Sue which said, "Remember what Hamlet whispered to Horatio?" And what she was talking about is Hamlet, as he was dying, had said to Horatio, "Tell my story." And that really was important to her. Martha Smith believes that the book of poems that (Emily's niece) Mattie brought together – "The Single Hound," that came out right after Susan's death – that Susan probably actually worked on it with Mattie and said, "If I die, you can put this out," so there's no doubt we have in our minds that they wanted people to know.

Also, I mean, Emily Dickinson was a poet. Poets are lovers. They have big emotions.

See **Molly Shannon**, continued on p. 16

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See **Molly Shannon**, continued on p. 16



Molly Shannon as Emily Dickinson and Susan Ziegler as Susan Gilbert Dickinson in "Wild Nights with Emily." Photo: Greenwich Entertainment

► Molly Shannon

Continued from p. 15

And that becomes poets. It's not like we're "outing" someone who was an accountant. Emily also never married, although she had offers; it's like she clearly wanted to live life on her own terms. She couldn't, of course, at that time have come out. It was a big deal that her father recused her from coming downstairs for morning prayers; she was allowed to use that as writing time. So she couldn't have rocked the boat at home. She needed to choose her battles carefully, but she loved two women that we know about. But Susan, she was in love with. And when you write a poem that ends with "Sue forever more," I mean, can we say we're outing her? (Laughs) That's an actual ending line to her poem that's published! So, she wrote her letter and called her the only woman in the world. Just incredibly romantic letters.

*The Poets light but Lamps —
Themselves — go out —
The Wicks they stimulate
If vital Light*

*Inhere as do the Suns —
Each Age a Lens
Disseminating their
Circumference —*

We're in a different age now. And the lens of this age is freer to understand the circumference of her poems and what they were about.

Molly, you've been committed to making more

LGBTQ-themed films. What qualities do you look for in a story that is LGBTQ-themed?

Shannon: Let me think here. I guess passion with the writers/directors. I really identify with that. Like this is so special. Madeleine is so passionate about this movie and it comes from her heart, so to me, it's like, what an opportunity for me. I remember when Madeleine pitched me the movie she wrote pages and pages about all this information that she had from her scholarly research and working closely with Martha that I was like, "How could I not do this? I've never been offered anything like this in my life! This is so cool!" So I really do just kind of see how I feel in my heart: Do I feel passionate? Or eh, this doesn't seem fun. It's a meter as simple as that.

Because I'm a mother and I have children and I'm married and I have a family and a house, I'm very busy with my children, so my considerations are also my family and wanting to be at home and driving the kids to school, but Madeleine is like, "Look, I'll make it work." She was like, "What do you want? OK, you wanna be home by dinner? Fine. You don't wanna start till then? Fine. You wanna shoot in L.A? Fine. I'll fly out, you can keep close to your neighborhood. Great." Like, she would not take no for an answer.

Olnek: (Laughs)

As someone whose LGBTQ following has seemingly grown over the years with your work in queer-inclusive films like "Other People" and "Miles," when were you first aware you had an LGBTQ following?

Shannon: I was in the West Village when I first started "Saturday Night Live" and I remember it was the first really warm day. It was suddenly in the 70s and people were

wearing sandals and everybody was so excited and I hadn't been on "SNL" that long. I remember walking by an outside cafe and I heard a man – the man didn't see me, but I just heard a guy, a stranger, go (affects "SNL" "Joyologist" Helen Madden's voice), "I love it, I love it, I loooooove it!"

Olnek: (Laughs)

Shannon: And I was like, "Oh my god," then he saw me and he was like, "Oh my god!" He got so embarrassed and turned red and I was just like, "What?! Maybe I'm influencing people!" There was another time I was in a cafe in the West Village where I lived, eating breakfast with my then-boyfriend. We were sitting at the glass window and a man just came right up while we were eating right in the window and did "SUUPERSTAR!" My boyfriend just looked away and ignored him and continued eating, and then that relationship ended soon after. (Both laugh.)

How do you feel about the progress we've made in terms of how LGBTQ people are portrayed in modern films and also the kind of LGBTQ films being made?

Olnek: It's interesting. As an older person who has seen a lot of queer films and has talked to young people, what I think is that every generation thinks they are the first people to complain. (Laughs) "Oh, we're so mainstream!" But people were saying that in the '80s! Which is ridiculous, in the late '80s, '90s, considering, "Oh, it's mainstream, it's sell-out." People were accusing... like now it's homogenized. So I've heard that story over and over, and I actually think that there's always been people making experimental queer work and there's always been people making mainstream queer work and they

have always existed side by side. It's just that it's new to the younger people watching them.

"Wild Nights with Emily" made me consider the ways in which we recognize someone posthumously. When that time comes, how do you think the way people will describe you will differ from the way you'd describe yourself?

Shannon: Well, I hope that nobody will say, "She was zany." I don't like that. I hope that people know that I can be deadly serious. My friend John C. Reilly talked about me and he was like, "Molly can be deadly serious!" I joke around but I really am more serious in real life than people would think. Serious and thoughtful. And I love asking questions and learning. So I don't think I'm just some zany comic.

But people are gonna remember you for "SNL" and Mary Katherine Gallagher, right?

Olnek: I want them to remember her for Emily Dickinson.

Shannon: Awww!

Olnek: And for her birthday I want to give her a cake that has her as Emily Dickinson on it, because this is a huge moment that we're reclaiming a story and it's so important. And the fact that Molly is playing this part literally means that people are going to understand who Emily Dickinson really was.

As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBTQ wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. His work has also appeared in GQ, Vanity Fair and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.

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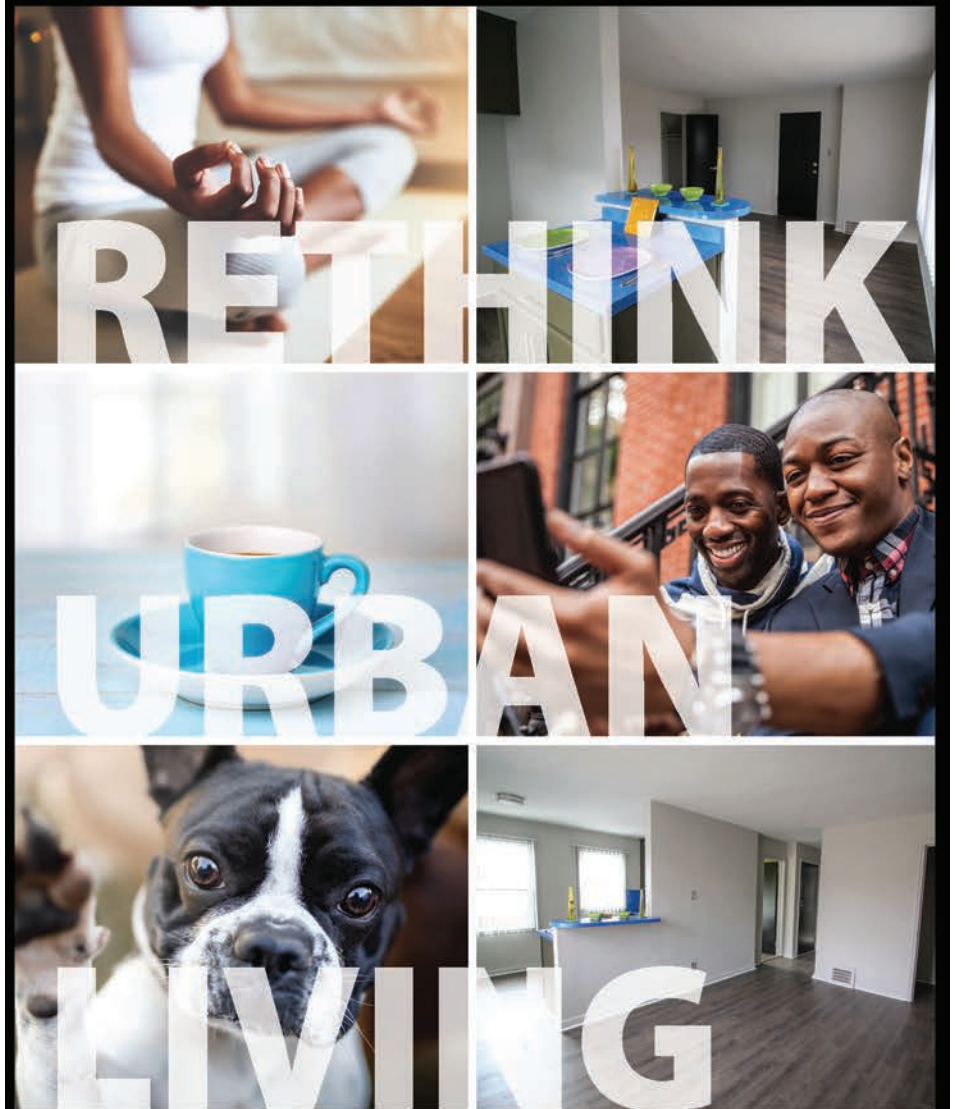
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A'Keria Chanel Davenport at Necto May 10

BY BTL STAFF

Gregory D'Wayne of Dallas, Texas, might not sound familiar, but his stage name, A'Keria C. Davenport, carries with it a long tradition of drag queen excellence. Specifically, Davenport is a part of the House of Davenport, a well-known group of queens who bring with them a long tradition of performance, and will be performing in Ann Arbor on May 10.

"[A'Keria Davenport is] the drag

daughter of Kelexis Davenport, whose other daughters include past contestants Sahara Davenport and Kennedy Davenport, as well as Silky O'Hara Munro (drag grandmother of Ra'Jah O'Hara), Deja Davenport (drag mother of Honey Davenport and drag grand mother to Monét X Change) and Chevelle Brooks (drag mother of Jiggly Caliente)," according to Davenport's "RuPaul's Drag Race" fan page.

In addition to the association with the long line of queens, Davenport is the

current reigning "Miss Black Universe" and has a "slick shiny look that makes you sit up and pay attention."

"This super accomplished pageant drag queen is doing the Davenports proud with her signature aesthetic: 'fit, fashion, mug and body,'" said fans. "Expect big hair, big attitude and big results from this competitor."

Find out more about A'Keria's upcoming performance at Necto by visiting necto.com.

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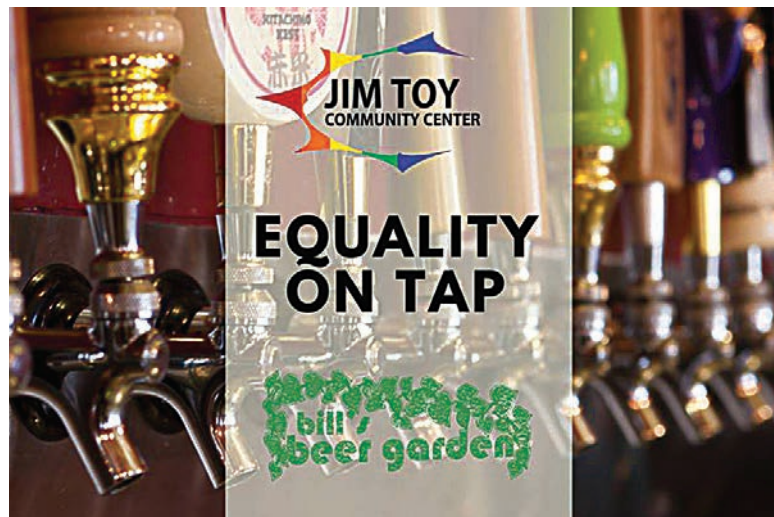
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Jim Toy Community Center to Host Equality on Tap

Held at Bill's Beer Garden, the Jim Toy Community Center is hosting a fundraising event, Equality On Tap, to raise awareness about

the Center and its local work.

"Are you #ThirstyForEquality? Join us for a drink!" wrote event organizers. "Bill's Beer Garden is – once again – generously donating \$1 to the Jim Toy Community Center for every drink sold, so come out, bring some friends and have a drink for a good cause!"

The mission of the center is to create an inclusive community "where people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity are visible and live together in equality, respect and happiness."

The Center's name honors a local activist who was the first "out" man in Michigan and campaigned heavily for 40 years to bring equality to LGBTQ Michiganders.

Find out more about the Center at jimtoycenter.org and about the event by visiting the Center's Facebook page.

LGBTQ Intergenerational Dinner Dance

An event that is free and open to the public, the Ann Arbor YMCA is hosting an Intergenerational Dinner Dance that's co-sponsored by SAGE Metro Detroit. Invited are local members of the LGBTQ community, their families and friends.

Seating is limited, so please come ready to dance, but for the sake of our gym floor, no stiletto heels please. Contact Toni Kayumi, President and CEO, Ann Arbor YMCA with any questions at tkayumi@annarborymca.org or 734-661-8059.



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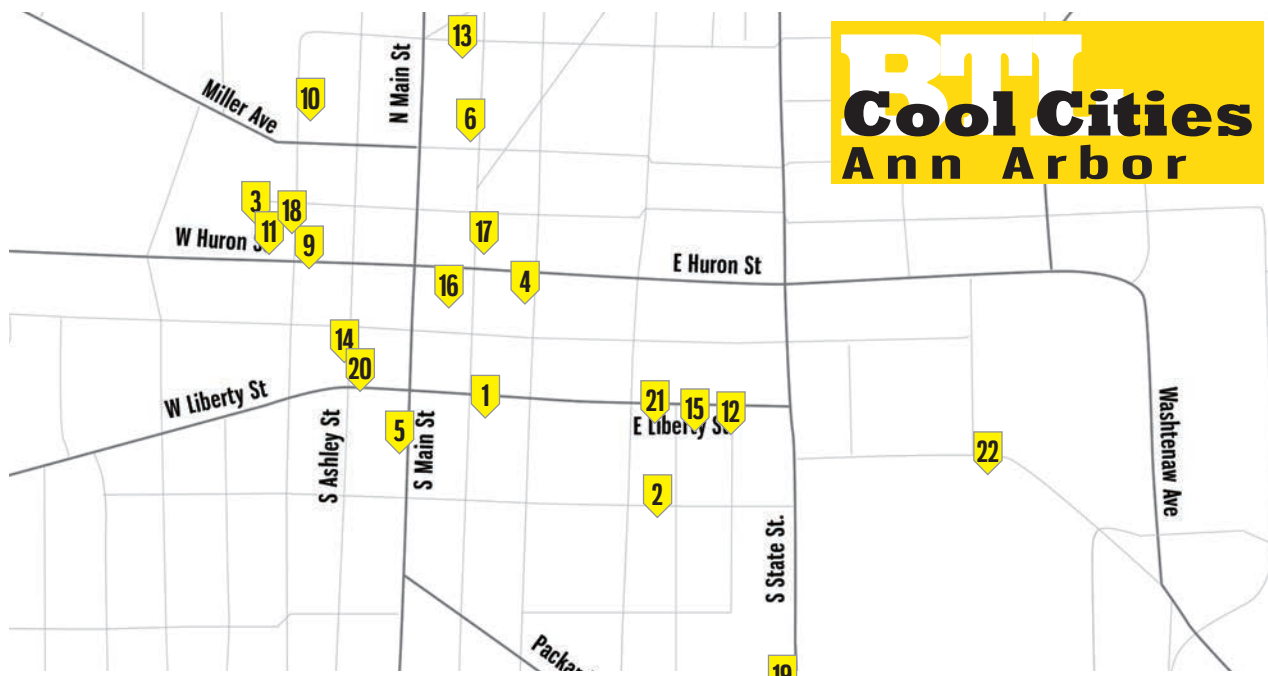
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Happenings



Lizzo at St. Andrew's Hall Detroit

Known for hits like "Boys," "Good as Hell" and "Juice," Lizzo is an American rapper, singer, actor, songwriter and flutist. The Detroit native has taken the American music scene by storm in recent years and is now visiting her city again on Wednesday, May 15, as a part of her North American tour. Find out more information about tickets and future dates at lizzomusic.com.

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 Road, Ferndale. 248-632-8274. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Wednesday, May 1

Affirmations Senior Koffee Clatch! 1 p.m. A discussion and networking group for people 45 and older. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org.

Thursday, May 2

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, May 5

Stand with Trans Wyandotte Support Group for Trans Youth and Parents of Trans Individuals 4 p.m. Free. For Parent Support Group information, contact facilitator Kim Tooley, 734-747-4363. St. Stephens Episcopal Church, 2803 1st St., Wyandotte. standwithtrans.org.

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Adrian-Lenawee County 6:30 p.m. 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.

Tuesday, May 7

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Lake Orion / Oakland County 7 p.m. Parent Support Group Facilitated by Lisa Goyette, ally, activist. St. Mary's In The Hills Episcopal Church, 2512 Joslyn Court, Lake Orion. 248-391-0663. stmarysinthehills.org. standwithtrans.org.

Wednesday, May 8

Stand with Trans Youth Support Group – Flint – Genesee 6:30 p.m. Free. Facilitator Sara Griffin, MA, LPC is a psychotherapist and a parent of a transgender son, eiregriff@aol.com. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Flint, 2474 S. Ballenger Hwy, Flint. 810-232-4023. uufint.org. standwithtrans.org.

Thursday, May 9

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

Toastmasters International SpeakOUT! LGBTQ Meeting 7 p.m. Professional & personal communication skills development. Jim Toy Community Center,

319 Braun Court, Ann Arbor. 734-995-9867. lawrencemoeb@gmail.com. speakout.toastmastersclubs.org.

Friday, May 10

Cinetopia Film Festival 8 a.m. The eighth annual CFF kicks off a month earlier this year starting on Friday, May 10, and concludes on Sunday, May 19. Spanning 10 days, Cinetopia brings films to local theaters and venues. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. info@cinetopiasfestival.org. cinetopiasfestival.org.

Monday, May 13

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Macomb County 6:30 p.m. Free. 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. chippewavalleyschools.org.

Wednesday, May 15

30 by Jim Luckey – VIP Reception 6 p.m. A fundraiser for the Ruth Ellis Center, a VIP ticket includes complimentary valet, hors d'oeuvres, sparkling wine, runway show and an opportunity to win a bespoke pair of Jim Luckey pants! Planterra Conservatory, 7315 Drake Road, West Bloomfield Township. 248-661-1591. planterraevents.com. ruthelliscenter.org.

Stand with Trans Support Groups – Livonia – Wayne County 6:30 p.m. Free. Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 34567 7 Mile Road, Livonia. standwithtrans.org.

MUSIC & MORE

Broadway Brunch Sing-a-long! April 28, 1 p.m. Come enjoy FIVE15's famous Trailer Trash Brunch and Sing-A-Long to your favorite Show-tunes with Eric & Gerianne, Metro Detroit's 'Dynamic Duo.' Must make reservations in advance. FIVE15, 600 S. Washington, Royal Oak. 248-515-2551. FIVE15.net.

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.

Flint Symphony Orchestra Presents 'Mahler's Resurrection' May 11, 7:30 p.m. FSO bringing you yet another Classical Concert featuring Enrique Diemecke, conductor with the Flint Symphony Orchestra. Flint Institute of Music, 1025 E. Kearsley St., Flint. 810-238-1350. thesfo.org.

Cabaret 313 Presents Kate Baldwin May 18, 6:30 p.m. Kate Baldwin makes her Cabaret 313 debut in "How Did You Get This Number?" a new stage show

Editor's Pick

Chelsea Handler at The Fillmore April 27

Comedian, author and activist Chelsea Handler shot to fame when hosting "Chelsea Lately," a talk show that ran from 2007 through 2014. Since then, she's teamed up with Netflix to produce documentaries and a talk show. She recently released her latest book, "Life Will Be the Death of Me: ... and You Too!" She's now touring across the country with her "sit-down" comedy tour where she'll talk about her book and bring up personal stories that led to its creation as well as offer insights about her own life. Find out more information about the show online at detroittheater.org.



OUTINGS

Friday, April 26

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

Saturday, April 27

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. Java Hut Ferndale Michigan, 165 w 9 mile, Ferndale. 248-632-8274. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Monday, April 29

LGBT Game Night 7 p.m. LGBT Game

Editor's Pick

30 by Jim Luckey

This auction of 30 bespoke pants by Jim Luckey is a fundraiser to benefit the Ruth Ellis Center, a Detroit LGBTQ resource center that aids run-away, homeless and at-risk LGBTQ youths. The auction will include a VIP Reception that includes complimentary valet, hors d'oeuvres, sparkling wine, a runway show and an opportunity to win a bespoke pair of Jim Luckey pants. The main event includes complimentary valet, wine, delectable food stations and silent auction. Find out more about the event online at ruthelliscenter.org.



featuring signature songs from her acclaimed performances in "Finian's Rainbow," "Giant," "Big Fish" and "Hello Dolly!" The Marlene Boll Theatre, 1401 Broadway, Detroit. cabaret313.org.

Relapse Prevention May 21, 7:30 p.m. Erik Anderson, LMSW, CAADC, will discuss the dynamics of relapse from substance use disorder recovery, how to develop a relapse prevention plan and creative, effective strategies to handle both every-day and high-risk situations. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725. dawnfarm.org.

Co-Occurring Disorders: Understanding Self-Medication and Complex Recovery May 28, 7:30 p.m. Jeremy Suttles, MSE, LMSW; will provide an overview of what co-occurring disorders are, how they are identified, their prevalence, and a comprehensive model of recovery that

provides for emotional and physical health recovery. St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti. 734-485-8725. dawnfarm.org.

THEATER

Angels in America – Parts I and II April 26, In this two-part epic, Prior Walter, a young man living in NYC in 1985, is diagnosed with AIDS. His boyfriend, Louis, struggling to cope with the disease and his own fears, abandons him. Hillberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. theatreanddance.wayne.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. Hillbery

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.

Ann Arbor Civic Theatre Presents "Fahrenheit 451" April 26, 8 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.umich.edu.

Detroit Repertory Theatre Presents "Aubrey" April 26, 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.

Angels in America: Part One – Millennium Approaches May 5, 3 p.m. In Part I of this two part epic, Prior Walter, a young man living in NYC in 1985, is diagnosed with AIDS. His boyfriend, Louis, struggling to cope with the disease and his own fears. Hillberry Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. 313-577-2972. wsushows.com.

Stagecrafters Baldwin Theatre Presents "Oklahoma!" May 17, 8 p.m. Oklahoma! is classic Broadway at its best. Baldwin Theatre, 415 South Lafayette, Royal Oak. 248-541-8027. stagecrafters.org.

Jersey Boys at Music Hall! May 17, 8 p.m. They were just four guys from Jersey, until they sang their very first note. They had a sound nobody had ever heard. Detroit Music Hall, 350 Madison St., Detroit. 313-887-8501. musichall.org. broadwayindetroit.com.

Cabaret 313 Presents Kate Baldwin May 18, 6:30 p.m. Kate Baldwin makes her Cabaret 313 debut in How Did You Get This Number? a new stage show. The Marlene Boll Theatre, 1401 Broadway, Detroit. cabaret313.org.

Detroit Repertory Theatre Presents "Williston" May 30, 8:30 p.m. Three energy reps travel to Williston, ND to get mineral rights to the last big piece of undeveloped land. A scintillating exploration of how business corrupts people and the fine line between commerce and conscience. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. 313-868-1347 DetRepTh@aol.com www.detroitreptheatre.com/williston/

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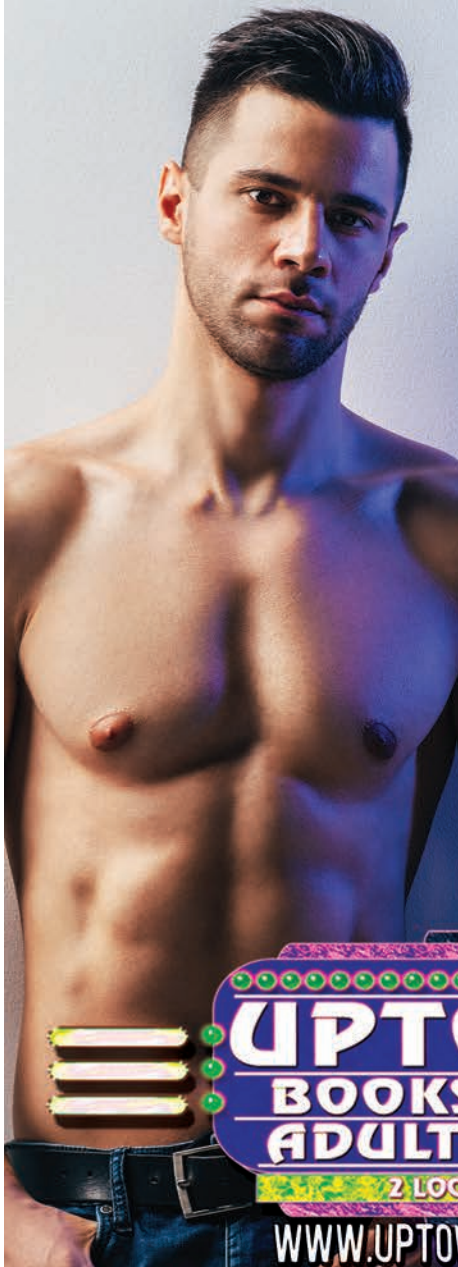
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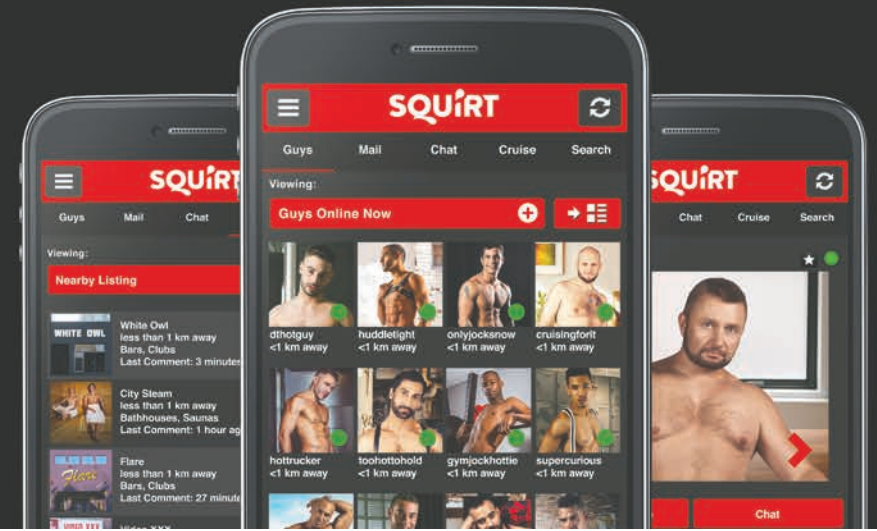
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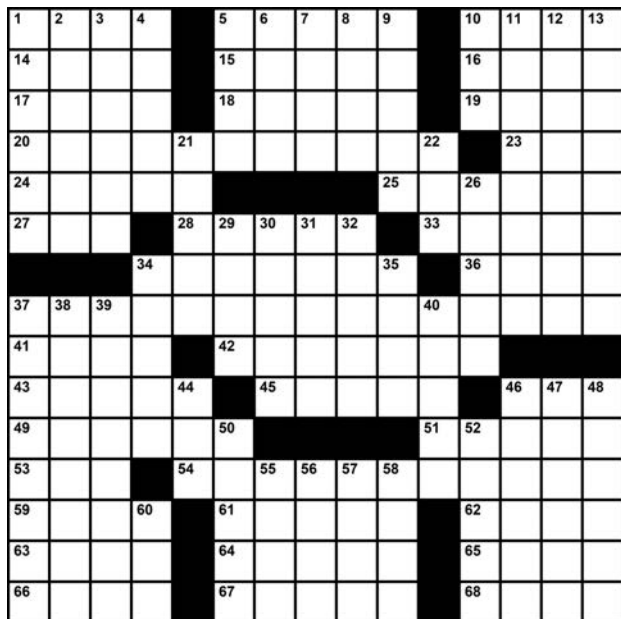
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- 33 Sound of three men in a tub
 34 _La Dolce Vita_ director
 36 Bride and bride's vehicle
 37 Song from 20-Across reimagined for two men in _R&H Goes Pop_
 41 Fingered
 42 Ask on bended knee
 43 "Lesbians ignitel" for example
 45 Phallic fish hunter
 46 Opposite of neg.
 49 Gabe of "Welcome Back, Kotter"
 51 Rosie's ex
 53 Episodes with Dr. Kerry Weaver
 54 The H of R&H
 59 _Mrs. Doubtfire_ attire
 61 Bea Arthur's Findlay
 62 Wealthy one
 63 Have a thing for
 64 Popular hero of Lorca's land
 65 "... against ___ of troubles" (Shakespeare)
 66 Belgian river
 67 Barriers that sound like lesbians?
 68 Overly brainy sort
- 11 Rock in a very large belt
 12 Amelie of tennis
 13 Russell/Kreiger musical
 21 Screws around
 22 Tag antagonists
 26 ___ once (like simultaneous orgasm)
 29 If that fails
 30 Dress with a flared bottom
 31 _Roots_ family head
 32 Wolf's warning
 34 Castro not of Castro Street
 35 Frasier's response to a client
 37 How to do a musical about the Witches of Oz?
 38 Oscar nominee for _The Hours_
 39 Old playbill from a Broadway show, e.g.
 40 Lends an ear
 44 "Yay!"
 46 Tickle pink
 47 Dickens-based Broadway musical
 48 Singer O'Connor
 50 _A Streetcar ___ Desire_
 52 Hawke of _Hamlet_
 55 Bamako's country
 56 What you rake in a smear campaign
 57 Warhol pal ___ Sedgwick
 58 Cincinnati team
 60 Lang. of the von Trapps

Down

- 1 First name in mysteries
 2 Campbell's Soup can painter
 3 _The Importance of Being ___
 4 Used tongues
 5 _American Beauty_ screenwriter
 6 Mild oath
 7 Jodie in a remake of 20-Across
 8 Big name in shoes
 9 Turns on
 10 "Let's do it!"

R&H Goes Pop QPuzzle

Across

- 1 Blows away
 5 Affleck's _Chasing Amy_ crush
 10 Potatoes high in sugar
 14 Robin Williams title role
 15 What a knight sticks in his enemy
 16 Morales of _Resurrection Blvd._
 17 Cartoonist Peter
- 18 Kofi once of the UN
 19 Hottie in a bar
 20 R&H classic of 1951
 23 Early preposition
 24 Cheated, slangily
 25 Ogles a package, perhaps
 27 A. Earhart concern
 28 Dam problems

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Backstreet LGBTQ Bar and Nightclub to Reopen in Early May

BY MICHAEL FOSSBAKK

On Saturday, March 23, LGBTQ bar and nightclub Backstreet, a staple in the Metro Detroit queer community with a history that dates back to 1979, held a soft opening despite still being under construction.

“We actually had a little surprise and we gave the liquor away,” managing owner Doug Keller says of the soft opening. “It was our way of trying to give back to the community and say, ‘Hey, we want you to have a fun time, enjoy yourself.’”

Keller, who says he “grew up as gay” at Backstreet, acquired the establishment when he was approached by former owner Dr. Thomas Moses. Moses knew the club held sentimental value to Keller and asked if he would like to buy it. Keller and his business partner, Stephan Richardson, agreed to buy Backstreet and officially acquired it earlier this year.

Currently under renovation, Keller and Richardson found a new space

on Livernois Avenue for Backstreet’s revival. Renovations are scheduled to be done by the end of April and it will officially open the second week of May under a new name: Backstreet at Large Multiplex.

Keller has big plans for the space, including a restaurant, a second bar rail, a dance floor, a stage for performances, drag queen brunches, LGBTQ fundraisers and more. More than anything, though, Keller just wants people to feel at home at Backstreet.

“I want to keep a part of the gay bars where you walked in the door and no matter how your day was or what front you had to put up in front of somebody ... I want them to be able to walk in the door and be whoever they wanna be and be how they wanna be,” he said.

Local History

After buying Escape Bar in 1979, original owners Carl Rippberger and Joel Yoder spent about \$100,000 renovating the space that would

become Backstreet, named so because, originally, the club was only accessible from the back of the building. Keller attributes this to the fact that being openly gay/queer wasn’t widely accepted to the degree that it is today.

The bar/club was a quick success among Detroit’s gay community and was even open seven nights a week at one point.

After buying Yoder out of the business, Rippberger continued as the sole owner of Backstreet. Influenced by the nightlife of New York City at the time, Rippberger sought to bring the popularity of disco to Backstreet. During the 1980s, Backstreet brought in disco artists, such as Sylvester, Lime, Patrick Cowley, Paul Parker, Miquel Brown and many more.

Reviving Tradition

After more than a decade of owning and operating Backstreet, Rippberger passed away in the mid-’90s due to AIDS. Since then, the establishment has had multiple



owners, but Keller says that the rise of gay dating websites and, today, phone apps has led to a downturn in club and bar attendance.

“I think the younger generation ... they have Grindr and stuff and that’s all they know,” Keller said. “They don’t understand, as older guys, when we went to a gay bar ... that’s how you met people or if you wanted to date somebody or if you wanted to hook up [laughs] or meet a friend ... that’s what you had to do.

However, Keller said that despite the overall decline in attendance, he’s observed that the younger LGBTQ community in Metro Detroit has expressed interest in making use of

spaces like Backstreet.

“I’ve talked to a lot of 25- to 35-year-old, even maybe 40-year-old, guys. They are on Grindr and everything else, but they said they would love to go to a bar, sit down and talk to a guy because talking on the internet and talking in person is a whole lot different,” he said. “You get to see the person. You get to feel the vibe. You get to maybe laugh with each other and that’s a connection you can’t get over the internet at all.”

Backstreet at Large Multiplex opens mid-May. Stay tuned to their Facebook page for updates.

A vibrant, colorful promotional poster for an event. On the left, a drag queen with a black wig, white glasses, and a green patterned top is smiling broadly. She is holding three white mugs on a white tray. The mugs are labeled "HE", "SHE", and "THEY". The background is a bright pink and blue sunburst pattern. Large, stylized text reads "MISS RICHFIELD 1981" in red and blue. To the right, "Sunday May 5th" is written in red. Below that, "Gender Fluids" is written in large, bold, blue and red letters. At the bottom, it says "A non binary approach to happiness!" and "Tickets at: 12Drags.com". In the bottom left corner, there is a logo for "FIVE15" and the address "600 S. Washington, Downtown Royal Oak. 248-515-2551 FIVE15.net".



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We will be announcing plans for "Group Medical Appointments" for those over the age of 50. These visits will provide an opportunity



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to hear from different specialists about combating the issues getting older with HIV. At these visits you can have discussion with your peers and can get your HIV tests completed as well.

This meeting is complimentary and open only to our Be Well patients until April 23, 2019. After that, we will open registration to others as space is limited.

RSVP! It is essential that our patients RSVP by April 23, 2019.
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Sincerely,
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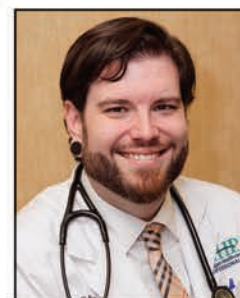
Dr. Benson is an Associate Professor at Michigan State University providing training to our next generation of physicians. **He leads our team of professional and talented providers at the Be Well Medical Center**, 1964 Eleven Mile Rd, Berkley, MI 40872.



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