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Aimee Stephens' Historic Transgender Rights Case Goes to Supreme Court

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6 COVER: FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE

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VOL. 2740 • OCT. 3 2019

ISSUE 1126

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Entertainment, Prizes, Services and Giveaways: The 2019 Ultimate LGBTQ Wedding, Home & Life Expo Oct. 13 Will Not Dissapoint

Whether planning a wedding, looking to renew vows, thinking about an engagement or seeking out services anywhere in between, the ninth annual Ultimate LGBTQ Wedding, Home & Life Expo has what you're looking for. Held at The Henry on Sunday, Oct. 13, from noon to 4 p.m., you're invited and encouraged to familiarize yourself with the 90-plus LGBTQ-affirming vendors to help plan your perfect event. And even if you're not getting married, event co-founder Susan Horowitz said that the Expo has what you're looking for when it comes to LGBTQ affirming services. BTL caught up with her in advance of the event to get a sense of some of this year's highlights.

This year the Expo is featuring some great prizes, could you walk me through some of the highlights?

First, our vendors, there are close to 90 this year, are to providing great door prizes. So, in your swag bag that we give you, you will be able to find a whole selection of discount coupons and all kinds of special deals. Vendors are going to be giving away stuff at their booths, as well. In addition, we have five great grand prizes that include a theater dinner package in two cases, an overnight stay at MotorCity Casino where you get to see Patti LaBelle and one is a trip to Traverse City. But you have sign up at the Expo to win.

The expo is also allowing guests to sample all kinds of food this year. What are some of those options?

There will be great pastries, there will be great desserts and there will be plenty of other food to taste so come hungry! This year we're adding back a pre-expo complimentary Broadway breakfast with renowned singer Eric Swanson. You will not be disappointed, it starts at 11 a.m. before the expo doors open at noon. So, come early.

This year we're adding back in the continental breakfast and it's going to be accompanied by a Broadway Brunch. We have Eric Swanson performing. You will not be disappointed. It starts at 11 a.m. and Expo doors open at noon.

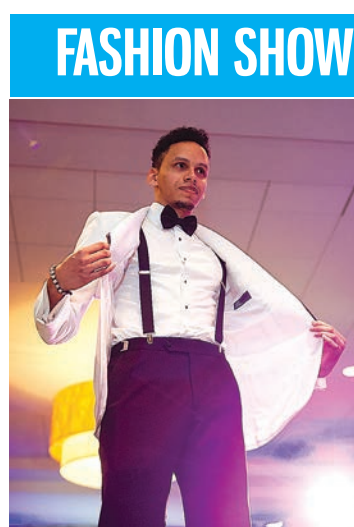
Who are some of the entertainers this year?

Eric Swanson will be performing Broadway tunes during our pre-Expo hour when we are serving a light breakfast. Bands will be playing and working with a dance company that's going to be giving dance lessons live on the spot. Jason Bowen, a member of the PRISM Men's Chorus, will be the emcee and he will perform several numbers throughout the show. We'll also have a fashion show of the latest bridal and tux fashions co-sponsored by B. Ella Bridal and The Tux Shop.

I know that there will be an expansion of services this year, too. What are they?

This year we expanded the Expo so if you're already married there's still good reasons to come down and try to win these prizes and thank these wonderful equality-minded businesses. We have adoption agencies participating, so people thinking about adoption and wanting to learn more about it can meet with LGBTQ-friendly agencies. Also, we'll have services for aging family members too. We'll also have some realtors, lawyers, home services – people who we need not only at weddings but for other gatherings, parties, celebrations and everyday home life.

The Henry is located at Fairlane Plaza in 300 Town Center Drive in Dearborn. The event has free parking, free brunch (11a.m.) The Expo starts at noon lasting through 4 p.m. To find out more visit milgbtwedding.com.





High Stakes Fight

BTL Photos: Andrew Potter

Aimee Stephens Reflects Before Historic Supreme Court Transgender Rights Case

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Standing on the precipice of the first ever transgender-specific case to face the Supreme Court of the United States, it'd be understandable if plaintiff Aimee Stephens, 58, seemed nervous or distraught ahead of the Oct. 8 date to hear arguments. But resolute is the best word to describe Stephens' demeanor when she met with *Between The Lines* to discuss her case — one that could change the fate of LGBTQ equality for better or worse.

"I take each day as it comes — especially now in light of present health conditions," she said. "... And we try to live each day as if there's not any more."

Today, despite undergoing dialysis and struggling with breathing problems, Stephens is unwavering in the now six-year battle with her former employer R.G. and G.R. Harris Funeral Homes in Garden City. The trouble

began when Stephens was fired after coming out as a woman to Thomas Rost, the funeral home's owner, after a six-year employment history.

Rost said that keeping Stephens on would run contrary to his religious beliefs and would hinder grieving families from "processing grief" because Stephens wouldn't be able to follow the "professional, sex-specific dress code," despite her promises to come in from then on in professional women's work attire. Rost also held concerns about her sharing the "single-sex restroom" with other women.

After her termination, Stephens filed a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and sued her former employer. Initially losing her case, Stephens' team appealed and eventually a federal judge at the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the funeral home engaged in sex discrimination against Stephens when they fired her. Now, after an appeal from the case's defendants, the American Civil Liberties Union is representing Stephens on her way to the Supreme Court. Should the court rule in her favor, Stephens' case could expand Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to definitively include protections for sexual orientation and gender identity. However, an opposing decision would mean far more rigid interpretations of the existing law that would exclude thousands in the LGBTQ community.

"I didn't give up."

Though it might have seemed like an overnight decision to her former employer, Stephens certainly didn't take coming out lightly. Since childhood she had struggled with

gender dysphoria and only as an adult did she start to embrace the fact that she might not identify with the gender assigned to her at birth. Roughly 10 years ago, she sought out a therapist who advised her to stop suppressing her feelings and to take steps to venture out in the world as her true identity. Even after coming out to her wife and receiving a positive reaction, Stephens was still conflicted: she was living a double life at home and at work and it was making life unbearable.

"In 2012 I came close to ending it all. I couldn't take it anymore. Living two lives was tearing me apart," Stephens said. "And if I couldn't go forward, and I definitely couldn't go backwards, then what was the point? So, I stood in the backyard with a gun to my chest for an hour, but I couldn't do it. I realized I liked living too much [and] who I could become. And in that moment I chose life."

Since then, Stephens said that she has two missions in life: to live both her own truth and to "make every moment count."

"It's important for people to know that about me, that I didn't give up," she said.

Shortly after choosing to live openly as a woman, at the advice of her therapist, Stephens began drafting an official coming out letter to distribute among friends, family and her boss.

"There were a lot of drafts of that letter, but the final letter came out and I thought that it pretty well explained what was going on and what I needed to do in order to keep my own sanity," she said.

Unfortunately, Rost's reaction was Stephens' worst-case scenario. He fired her and offered her a three-month severance package. Had she taken that offer, she also would have signed

away her right to sue Rost.

"And the offer he was making — once I read through it, talked to my wife, I really got angry. I felt I had been done wrong, but when you offer a severance package for something that they did, basically, deep down, that tells me he knew he was wrong," she said. "And then with what he was asking me to do, I couldn't go through with it. So, I did the only other thing I knew to do and that was contact an attorney."

Meeting Opposition

Rost is represented by the conservative Christian group Alliance Defending Freedom. Since 1994, the group has inserted itself into many cases involving LGBTQ people across the country and cited religious freedom as a defense against their inclusion. Regarding the transgender community, the group has often used transgender-affirming school bathrooms as a means to promote false ideas about the transgender community. In this case, it argues that Stephens is attempting to redefine the original meaning of sex in Title VII and that its repercussions will be a danger to the public.

"Federal courts should not usurp Congress's authority by judicially amending the word 'sex' in federal nondiscrimination law to include 'transgender status,'" ADF wrote in its legal brief. "Redefining sex discrimination will cause problems in employment law, reduce bodily-privacy protections for everyone and erode equal opportunities for women and girls, among many other consequences. Congress, not the courts, is the institution best positioned to balance those considerations."

However, American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan Staff Attorney Jay Kaplan said that he feels that this is a case of "gender stereotypes," and that even a conservative reading of the law's text should find that Stephens' termination fell within the parameters of sex discrimination.

"They're trying to argue in the legal briefs right now that it's all about dress code and there are many reasons that [Rost] indicated where he couldn't accept the fact that Aimee was a transgender woman. He cited his religious beliefs, he cited that he just felt that things are a certain way and those are gender stereotypes,"

Kaplan said. “Sex discrimination means because of sex. Aimee was fired because of sex. Being a transgender woman, that’s related: someone who identifies with a different sex than what was assigned at birth. It’s in the definition, and I do think we have a strong textualist argument.” Kaplan also pointed to the fact that federal courts have already expanded the meaning of sex since the original 1964 law was put in place.

“... And the court has interpreted Title XII, they’ve said it applies to gender stereotypes, they’ve said it applies to sexual harassment, even to same-sex employees,” he said. “So, they’ve [already] expanded in terms of what people might have thought it was in 1964.”

For her part, Stephens said that many of the arguments around the country surrounding transgender issues come from ignorance about transgender people.

“I think it’s hard to just make assumptions about how a person is or who they are. I think you need to sit down and talk with the person and find out what they’re about, why they believe the way they are. And it’s only then that you come to a better understanding,” she said. “In my interviews that I’ve done that’s a point I strive toward: to let people find out who I am, what I’ve been through and my choices in life.”

Hope Resonates

Perhaps it’s her positive attitude that’s helped Stephens’ case gain the attention of not only legal entities around the country but other public figures as well. Like last week at the Primetime Emmy Awards when openly transgender actress and activist Laverne Cox carried a rainbow clutch with the words “Oct 8, Title VII, Supreme Court” printed on it over a rainbow background. The ACLU also got the

support of actors like Jesse Tyler Ferguson, Alan Cumming, Peppermint and Mishel Prada to read Stephens’ coming out letter to Rost. Stephens said she is glad to share her story because it’s important for awareness of transgender issues to spread.

“I think it’s important that we as a society and as individuals need to share our story. We need to be willing to share it, be willing to talk about it. And I think that’s where a lot of our problems come in — especially in the LGBT community. When we make up our minds that we want to share the story, there always appears people on the horizon that don’t want to hear it,” she said. “And their only response that they know of is to tear you down and run away. But how do you get them to put the shoe on the other foot and put them in that situation? Because I think if you could do that, the explaining would be a lot easier.”

When asked if she has any advice for transgender people across the U.S. who are thinking of coming out at work she gave them a message of hope.

“I would certainly hope that they have better [results] than I did. I guess the question would be, ‘Would I encourage with them to go through with it or not go through with it?’ And even with what’s happened with me I’d go through it all over again. It was that important to me,” Stephens said. “So, I would say to that person, ‘Be prepared. You’re liable to lose a few things. You’re liable to lose some friends, some family — I know I did. I had an aunt who disowned me, but who has since come back and said she better understands now. So, do what you have to do to survive. Even if it means losing some things that you thought were really important. Your own sanity, your own life is what’s important.’”



American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan Staff Attorney Jay Kaplan said that he feels that this is a case of “gender stereotypes,” and that even a conservative reading of the law’s text should find that Stephens’ termination fell within the parameters of sex discrimination. BTL photo: Andrew Potter.

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Supreme Court Oct. 8 LGBTQ Preview: 'The Stakes Could Not Be Higher'

BY LISA KEEN

Here's the blunt reality: On Oct. 8 the U.S. Supreme Court's will hear arguments on three cases impacting LGBTQ people. Its rulings could have the most profound consequences yet on LGBTQ people.

Why?

The three cases ask whether an existing federal law that prohibits discrimination in employment "because of sex" applies where discrimination is motivated by an employee's sexual orientation or gender identity.

The existing law in question is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That law states: "It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer [of 15 or more people] to ... discriminate against any individual ... because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex or national origin."

LGBTQ legal activists say that discriminating against an employee because his or her spouse or sexual partner is of the same sex constitutes discrimination "because of such individual's ... sex." They say discrimination against an employee whose gender identity differs from the sex attributes ascribed to them at birth constitutes discrimination "because of such individual's ... sex."

Attorneys on the other side, including the Trump administration, say Congress did not intend to include sexual orientation and gender identity in the definition of sex, and sex discrimination is when "members of one sex are exposed to disadvantageous terms ... to which members of the other sex are not exposed."

Both sides believe a conservative reading of the law favors them.

"If the Court reads the Title VII statute

properly — and simply applies the literal words on the page — we will win," said Jenny Pizer, senior counsel to Lambda Legal, a pro-LGBTQ impact litigation firm, which has submitted friend-of-the-court briefs on behalf of the gay and transgender employees in the three cases. "Having the Supreme Court confirm that understanding ... will have enormous, powerful deterrent and remedial effects."

And because similar language is used in federal laws covering housing, education, credit and health care," Pizer added. "A win in these Title VII cases will be tremendous precedents for future litigation in those areas."

Jon Davidson is chief counsel to Freedom for All Americans and former national legal director for Lambda Legal. He agreed with Pizer.

"The stakes for our community could not be higher," he said. "[These are] the most consequential cases for LGBTQ people since the Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality and the most important cases about transgender people ever heard by the high court."

Conversely, The Alliance Defending Freedom — a group that has spearheaded numerous lawsuits to diminish equal protection for LGBTQ people — has been sending out emails telling its supporters that the decisions will have enormous consequences, too. ADF says that, if the court allows "sex" to include "gender identity" the result could "undermine equal opportunities for women and girls" in athletics, force women's shelters to accept men and force schools to "open locker rooms, restrooms and showers to men who claim a female identity."

Many Supreme Court observers expect the trio of Title VII cases to be the most-watched

cases of the 2019-20 term, which begins Oct. 7. That's why below are some of the most important things LGBTQ people need to know about these upcoming cases:

When this will happen and how to watch it.

The arguments will begin at 10 a.m. EST on Tuesday, Oct. 8, at the U.S. Supreme Court. The first hour will be spent on two cases involving sexual orientation discrimination, and the second hour will be spent on transgender discrimination. People who live in the Washington, D.C., area can spend many hours waiting in line and maybe get into the court chambers to see and hear a few minutes of the proceedings — seats reserved for visitors are rotated. The proceedings are not televised, so the next best bet is to read a transcript of the arguments, which will be made available at supremecourt.gov later in the day. And audio recordings are available at the same site later in the week.

The three cases and their basic facts.

Each case involves Title VII. Two ask whether Title VII covers sexual orientation discrimination. They are *Altitude Express, Inc. v. Zarda* from New York and the 2nd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, and *Bostock v. Clayton County* from Georgia and the 11th Circuit. Arguments in these two cases have been consolidated and will be discussed in the first hour.

The Zarda lawsuit began in 2010, when a Long Island skydiving company called Altitude Express fired one of its instructors, Daniel Zarda. The company said it fired Zarda over a customer service problem; Zarda said it fired him because he disclosed to a jumper that he was gay. Zarda filed a lawsuit and, though he died in a skydiving accident in 2014, his estate carried on the litigation with the help of Lambda Legal. They won at the 2nd Circuit, but his former employer has appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Bostock lawsuit began in 2013 when the Clayton County Juvenile System in Georgia fired a longtime employee, Gerald Bostock, after he openly acknowledged joining a gay softball team. The county said it fired him for "conduct unbecoming a county employee;" Bostock said it fired him because he is gay. The 11th Circuit dismissed his lawsuit, noting it had previously ruled sexual orientation is not covered until Title VII. Bostock appealed to the Supreme Court.

The third case, which will be argued in the second hour, involves discrimination based on transgender status:

Harris Funeral v. EEOC originated in 2014 when funeral home director and embalmer Aimee Stephens filed a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Stephens said the Harris Funeral home fired her after six years on the job two weeks after she informed her employer that she would be transitioning from male to female. The funeral home said it fired Stephens because Stephens

refused to abide by the company's dress code, requiring that male employees wear a company-furnished men's business suit. The EEOC found Harris Funeral in violation of Title VII, and the 6th Circuit agreed. Harris Funeral appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Prospects for Victory or Defeat

To win a case at the Supreme Court one must have the support of at least five justices. In the past, LGBTQ people could rely on getting that majority from the court's four generally liberal justices — Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan and the moderate Justice Anthony Kennedy. Kennedy, in fact, became legendary for providing the critical fifth vote on marriage equality and striking down the Defense of Marriage Act. He also led 6-3 majorities in striking down sodomy laws and laws seeking to gut nondiscrimination ordinances.

But Kennedy retired last year and, with the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, the new court has a solid five-person majority of very conservative justices. Among the new justices is Brett Kavanaugh, whose answers around LGBTQ issues during his confirmation hearing were evasive to LGBTQ activists. The new majority also includes Neil Gorsuch, who wrote an article criticizing "liberals" for filing lawsuits on "everything from gay marriage to assisted suicide" to achieve their "social agenda."

Hence, the prospects for victory have diminished in the past year.

Precedent Favors a Pro-LGBTQ Outcome

One thing leaning in favor of the LGBTQ parties in these cases is precedent — previous Supreme Court rulings — in two cases.

In one case, decided in 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that discrimination based on sex included discrimination based on gender-based stereotypes. The case was *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins*, in which a female employee at the accounting giant Price Waterhouse was rejected for partnership because some of the top officials at the firm considered her too masculine. The Supreme Court plurality said the employer's refusal to promote the woman was "motivated by stereotypical notions about women's proper deportment" and that it constituted a violation of Title VII unless the employer could prove "by clear and convincing evidence" that it would have refused the promotion regardless of the employee's gender.

In the second case, decided in 1998, the Supreme Court, led by conservative Justice Antonin Scalia, said Title VII's prohibition against sex discrimination, including a prohibition against sexual harassment, could be used to protect an employee from sexual harassment by an employee of the same sex. The case was *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore*

Services.

The caveat: while lower courts must abide by U.S. Supreme Court precedent, the Supreme Court itself does not. The court has famously reversed precedent in cases involving segregation, interracial marriage and corporate financing in elections. Most relevant here, of course, is that the Supreme Court, in 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas*, reversed its 1986 ruling in *Bowers v. Hardwick* that had upheld state bans on same-sex sexual relations.

Complications and Consequences Abound

Relatively speaking, the Supreme Court moves slowly and prefers to leave the driving to Congress. It took 17 years for the Supreme Court to acknowledge that *Hardwick* was "not correct" and strike down sodomy laws with *Lawrence*. It took 17 years for the court to strike down the federal Defense of Marriage Act after it was enacted. And it took 43 years for the high court to rectify its dismissal of a marriage equality case in 1972 by striking down state bans on same-sex marriage in 2015.

But while this very large and slow-moving judiciary seemed to complete a full turn toward LGBTQ equality in 2015's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, a headwind seemed to develop last year with the Masterpiece Cakeshop decision. The majority sent the case back to Colorado, saying the state's human rights commission had expressed "hostility" toward the religious beliefs expressed by a wedding cake baker who refused to make a wedding cake for a gay couple.

Some LGBTQ activists felt that decision gave "dangerous encouragement" to business owners who might want to circumvent laws prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination simply by claiming religious motivation. Similar cases have since multiplied and will, no doubt, be before the Supreme Court soon.

But the consequences of a ruling about Title VII and sexual orientation and transgender status are even greater. Currently, only 21 states and the District of Columbia prohibit both sexual orientation and transgender discrimination in the workplace.

"If we win," explained Davidson, "all LGBTQ people will be protected no matter where they live."

A victory would "also be [a] resounding confirmatory statement that anti-LGBTQ discrimination is wrong," Pizer added. "It's impossible to overstate the ameliorative influence of such statements [and] witness the profound changes in social attitudes post-marriage equality."

But there's an equally enormous consequence and message if the LGBTQ community loses.

"If we lose either the sexual orientation cases or the gender identity/transgender status case," Pizer said, "the consequences will be intensely dire in multiple ways. There will be a message that it's perfectly legal to fire or refuse to hire [or] otherwise to abuse LGBTQ people at work."

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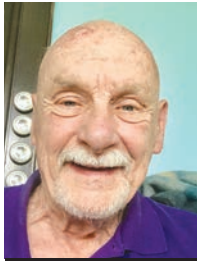
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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Ah! Those Days Long Gone

Editor's note: This originally appeared on Oct. 15, 2015.

I went to my first gay bar, the Silver Slipper, a dyke bar on Grand River near downtown Detroit. Just 19, I used borrowed ID, escorted authoritatively by two "stone butches": Speedy and Draino.

Lesbians sat in an upstairs balcony. Gays and "tourists," downstairs. (Tourists came to gawk at us queers.)

Entertainer was porkulent Chi Chi LaTrine, aka Benjamin Ernest Franklin. He wore wide, be-ribboned picture hats, sang songs with lyrics of questionable OB-GYN soundness. ("Douche yourself with kerosene. Light it with a match. You will be the only queen with a blow torch for a snatch.")

Chi Chi's comedy routines closed with his trademark insertion of a champagne glass into his ample facial cheeks and mouth. (Sidebar: Franklin had a sociology M.A., and in the early '60s was the first openly gay person to speak to Wayne State University psych classes.)

With teenage friends Gary and Richard, we hit the Scenic Bar in Toledo, Ohio. Soon our little circle - "Claudia," (Richard) "Margo" (Gary), and (groan) "Crystal" - took our sing-along road show to Cleveland, staying at the Y-M-C-A!

I met Marcus, who took me home, played Maria Callas arias from Verdi's "La Traviata," and fed me a wonderful breakfast. It was magic, until I learned to my over-stuffed chagrin that my gourmet cook was yet another crossdresser. Two that summer!

Next came Big Apple week. Our threesome took the New York Central train - playing gin rummy for 13 hours - and booked into the notorious Sloan House Y. It was mid-July. No air conditioning. Heat 90-plus. Sweat soaked outdoors in minutes. So, we slept at day; partied at night.

I had no sooner unpacked my things when the phone rang. "Hi! I'm Jerry. I saw you in the lobby. Can I take you to dinner?" He left two days later. Ever faithful at 19, I thought of Jerry for 36.5 hours, 36 seconds. (Jerry, who?)

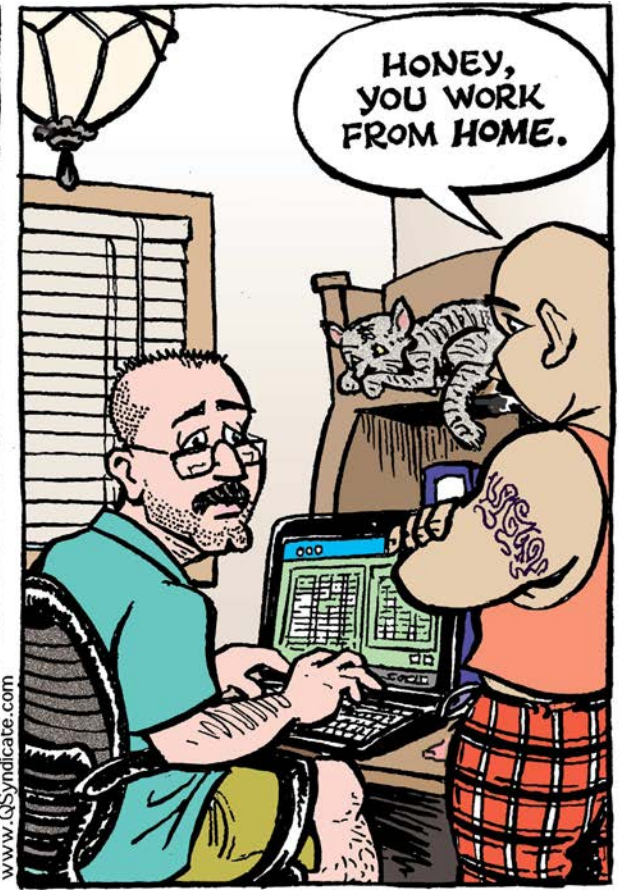
Our trio went to a Greenwich Village downstairs bar, the Sans Souci. "Cry Me a River," sung by Roberta Sherwood, was the jukebox hit. Bar ambiance was intimate and discreet. I met a bona fide actor: Gunther Wilde. (Gunther, who?)

Richard reeled in two mid-30s Italians who invited us to Fire Island. We took the train to Babylon - three hour ride - and a ferry boat to Cherry Grove. "Truman Capote's there," they told us. (Truman, who?) I experienced a toothache, a sunburn, no sleep, a sore back. (It was worth it.)

In the mid-50s we had no role models. We suspected certain movie stars. (Tab Hunter, Barbara Stanwyck, newcomer James Dean). All wishful thinking. These Sen. McCarthy witch-hunting years were terror for "known homosexuals." We had no choice but the closet.

For those who could pass for straight, problems were few. Vice cops. Crabs. VD. Job firing. Shock therapy. Excommunication.

See next page



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

The Time for Trans Pitches Is Now

Every week, in my email, I receive dozens of story pitches. Some are quite good, connecting me with engaging people and interesting stories that I might otherwise have missed. Most, however, are pretty useless to me in the overall scheme of things. A lot only tangentially veer into any topic I write about, or are blatant product pitches or just an overall bad fit.

I know that I'm just one writer out there, and that all of these pitches are being sent to outlets big and small in an attempt to get a moment to tell their story. I'm sure that there are also hundreds, perhaps thousands, of pitches hitting other writer's emails on any number of other topics even further outside my wheelhouse.

There's one thing I note about the majority of the ones I see, however, and that is pitches for or about transgender people.

I'll let you in on another secret about the world of journalism today: There are several stations working to fill 24 hours of news in the day, and each needs experts who are willing to appear with an interesting angle on today's big story. These

outlets, too, are getting pitches similar to mine.

By the same token, many newspapers, suffering massive cutbacks of staff in this modern world, have begun to rely on similar pitches and press releases, including complete, ghost-written stories.

The important thing to know here is that it isn't always us providing these stories. And when these outlets need someone to talk on transgender issues, there are plenty of people lining up and few have our best interests at heart. Sure, some might just want to pitch their book or something along those lines, but a large number are right-wing talking heads who offer up their own spin on trans issues - even if they know little or nothing about trans issues to begin with.

Right now is a precarious time for transgender rights. The Supreme Court could devastate our rights next week, even as the rest of this administration does all they can to chip away at them regardless of what the judiciary decides. States,

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

► Transmissions

Continued from p. 10

even with the defeat of so many bathroom bills, are surely going to try once more to curtail our rights in the 2020 legislative session, if only to provide fresh ammo for Republicans running for office next year. The stakes are as high as they've ever been.

With this in mind, we need a team of trans people of all stripes, and someone who can help pitch us to the press to comment on, well, everything. We need to be ready to be a talking head on the news, to pitch stories to the papers and generally press our visibility as hard as those who might stand against us.

We need to stand ready to offer ourselves up to discuss every little trans thing that might even tangentially be of interest to the press, if only to get our faces and our stories out there. Indeed, it is even important that we approach stories that are not exclusively related to trans and non-binary issues, just to get our own spin on the issues of the day.

Consider the recent Emmy Awards and Billy Porter's win for his work on "Pose," not to mention the other members of the cast in attendance or Patricia Arquette's speech on trans rights.

Not every outlet would have the ability to reach out to one of the celebs in question, but imagine if we could let dozens, hundreds, of outlets get stories from us into their hands. And people who can speak through our own experience adding color and nuance that might otherwise miss.

This would help to show who we are and tell more stories than just those shared at this year's Emmys. We could use it to pitch human interest pieces on how "Pose" affects trans and non-binary people today, and make it a springboard into pieces about resources our lives and so on. There are just so many possibilities.

A couple of months back, there was an

update for the emoji on our phones which included non-binary couples as well as gay and straight couples. But there also still isn't a trans flag available.

To me, this is an utter non-story, but it did get some headlines from news outlets in need of content. Now we should get some non-binary speakers on to tell why having this as an option is important, or people on to speak about the need for trans, genderfluid, non-binary and other flags at our fingertips.

A school in East Texas recently told a young black boy that he would need to have his hair cut, pinned up or wear a dress to school. This isn't a story about a transgender child, but it is one that has a lot to say about identity, about school dress codes and other issues of importance to trans and non-binary people. We could speak to it.

Of course, the biggest story I already teased above: trans issues are a big story for the 2020 elections. We need to start pressing for panels of transgender and non-binary people to discuss what are their key election issues today. Get us out and on America's TV screens, and at outlets large and small.

The point of all this is simple: people who know transgender people are more likely to be sympathetic to transgender people. As long as we let others frame who we are in everyone's minds, we will continue to be painted in the worst possible light.

We can't wait for them to come to us for comment, because that's not going to happen. We need to put ourselves out there and be seen.

Gwen Smith once was interviewed by Bill O'Reilly on a trans story. You can find her at www.gwensmith.com

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 11

Incarceration. Media exposes. You kept your "she this" and "she that" to yourself.

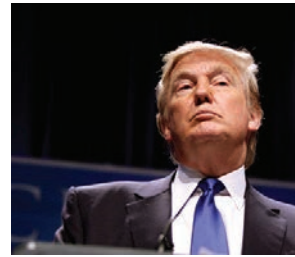
Travel was a revelation. We realized we weren't alone. We were everywhere: doctors, stevedores, actors, professors, cops, nurses, American Indian chiefs, average Joes, exceptional Jill. Gaydar was a godsend. Question: Who needs gaydar these days?

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

Donald Trump

If you've been following the news at all you may have noticed that there are huge protests against the political failure to address climate change across the globe led by young people. You



may have also noticed that impeachment proceedings have begun against Donald Trump prompting him to retweet threats about

Civil War, showing once again that comparing Trump to a child is an unfair smear of children.

Robert Jeffress, a Baptist minister and Fox News contributor, said, "The only impeachable offense President Trump has committed was beating Hillary Clinton in 2016. That's the unpardonable sin for which the Democrats will never forgive him. And I do want to make this prediction this morning: If the Democrats are successful in removing the president from office, I'm afraid it will cause a Civil War-like fracture in this nation from which this country will never heal."

And Trump, who literally does nothing but watch TV all day, couldn't tweet these words out fast enough.

Now, I'm no history major, but I seem to remember the Civil War being a BFD in this country. Maybe, just maybe, it's not a threat the goddamn president should be gleefully repeating.

But repeat it he did, and folks who were spared having to know who Jeffress is or hear his name are spared no more. And guess what? He has a long history of being super anti-LGBTQ.

In 2013 he said that God "thought [sex] up for our enjoyment" and "gave us the equipment to enjoy it with."

To show why gay sex was wrong, he used an analogy about plugging in a TV.

"In the instruction manual it said, 'Now plug this into a 120 outlet.' Suppose I said, 'Oh, I'm not going to follow those instructions, those are antiquated instructions. I'm going to plug it into a 220 outlet. It's my TV and I can do whatever I want to with it.' Well, it is my TV to do what I want to with it, but I'm going to blow that TV into smithereens if I put it in a 220 outlet."

Just in case you aren't following, in this analogy the TV plug is a penis, a 120 outlet is a vagina and a 220 outlet is a butt. Also, in case you weren't aware, anal sex does not typically result in a penis being blown into smithereens. I think that's probably oral sex, but I'm a lesbian not a Baptist preacher, so what do I know?

He's also said that gays and lesbians are "abnormal," live "a miserable lifestyle," and that they "brainwash ... the public to feel guilty of their bigotry toward homosexuals" through shows

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

I don't even know what to say anymore. This is not normal. And, honestly, I don't know if anything will ever be normal again. We have an entire political party aiding and abetting the most corrupt and incompetent president this nation has ever seen.

such as "Will & Grace." He called sex between same-sex partners "a filthy practice" and in 2011 he said, "It's a fact that [AIDS] is a gay disease" and used this "fact" to support keeping gays out of the military.

Jeffress has also said really hateful and ignorant things about Jews and Muslims. Surprise, surprise.

And this is who the president is turning to during this time of crisis. This hateful man's words are the words the president amplifies as the impeachment inquiry begins. This man who believes that Jews are going to hell, that Islam is a religion of pedophilia, that Mormons are cult members but thanks God for Trump.

While there are observers who seem surprised that Trump is wildly spinning out of control, I am not one of them. This is a man who has never been held accountable for anything in his life. Then millions of idiots handed this guy an entire nation. And now that he's messed it up with his hubris and incompetence, he's flailing. Looking for somebody to blame. Because it couldn't possibly be him that's the problem. It must be literally everyone else.

There's no telling what will be happening by the time you read this column as the news cycle is more like a news cyclone tearing through the U.S. and leaving everything in its wake in shambles. And still, Republicans call both the news and climate change fake.

I don't even know what to say anymore. This is not normal. And, honestly, I don't know if anything will ever be normal again. We have an entire political party aiding and abetting the most corrupt and incompetent president this nation has ever seen.

I was driving behind a pickup truck recently with a bumper sticker that read, "Trump 2020: Make Liberals Cry Again." I suspect he placed that sticker before the impeachment story broke. And I suspect that nothing will happen to make him remove that sticker.

There are bad people in this world. The president is one of them. Things are going to get worse before they get better.

Hundreds Showed Support at 20th Annual REC VOICES Gala

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Detroit's Ruth Ellis Center celebrated its 20th anniversary in style as a crowd of nearly 400 turned out for the Thursday, Sept. 26, VOICES Gala at Detroit's historical Gem Theatre. During this milestone birthday, REC made sure to commemorate awardees who exemplify the spirit of the Center's namesake, Ruth Ellis. The Legacy Award was given to openly lesbian comedian and actress Wanda Sykes, and two Youth Impact Awards were given to "RuPaul's Drag Race" alumni Shangela and vocalist and trans rights activist Shea Diamond.

Sykes' history with REC goes back to 2010, when she was approached by then executive director Laura Hughes.

"She reached out to my assistant and saw that I was performing here at the Fox and told us a little bit about the center and the work that they were doing," Sykes recalled. "She asked if I would find it in my schedule to pass by and say hello and I said, 'Absolutely.' And we took it from there."

When asked why she chose to take time out of her schedule to visit the Ruth Ellis Center and not another nonprofit doing work of another kind, Sykes said she had seen the benefits of aiding LGBTQ youth firsthand.

"The work they do is very important, and this is the only place these kids have and it gets cold here," she said. "In LA we have the largest center in the country. I knew how important this center was and the support they were giving to the kids here. I wanted them to know, 'Hey, we see you.' And not only the people who work there but the kids and let them know we love them."

On stage, accepting the award, Sykes recalled the rejection she faced when she came out to her parents and why that gave her a unique empathy for the children being helped by the Ruth Ellis Center today.

"When I came out I was in my 40s, living in LA. ... When I came out to my parents it wasn't well-received at all," Sykes said. "We basically stopped talking. And it was immediate. And at 40 years old I felt abandoned. These are the people who brought me into the world."

"The thing is though, I'm 40, living in my home," Sykes continued. "So even though it did hurt and I felt alone, I had the luxury of just going outside and having a good cry next to my heated swimming pool."

I wasn't out here in these streets worrying about where I was going to sleep, or where my next meal was going to come from or who was going to pay for my schooling, my education. I had everything. But it hurt. So, I can't imagine what these kids go through."

Shangela, aka D.J. Pierce, spoke to Between The Lines about receiving her honor, too. She echoed some of Sykes' sentiments and said she was "thrilled" to have been thought of for a Youth Impact Award recipient.

"I always think of the impact they made on me," she said. "I just finished a 184-city tour around the world last year, and the crazy thing is I get so many amazing people in really special moments, at a meet-and-greet after the show or even in a message online that says, 'This is how you've changed my life,' or, 'This is how you've impacted me.' That inspires me in those times when I go, 'Do I want to keep going?' And yes, I do, and I'm invigorated to do even more."

The event's second Youth Impact Award winner, Shea Diamond, is a transgender woman who spent 10 years in a men's prison for armed robbery. While incarcerated, Diamond wrote a song called "I Am Her," which has become an anthem for many trans women. She spoke of how being incarcerated as a trans woman who was moved from facility to facility mirrored the difficulties of going through the foster care system.

"It was the same thing as being a product of the foster care system," Diamond said. "I was shuffled from one foster home to the next because of being trans. So, with 'I Am Her' I was able to express all these emotions, all these feelings I couldn't say to people face-to-face."

Diamond said she was humbled by the award.

"I literally thought I had seen it all," she said. "That life had dealt me my cards and that's all there would be. Incarceration, I knew what that looked like. Foster homes, I've been a product of every system already. So, I just thought that's what my life would be. I thought I would probably die in prison. But I made it out of there and now I'm a signed artist."

Additional awards were given out to the Detroit City Football Club and the Northern Guard Supporters — who received the Ruth's Angel Award — and to Cassidy "CC" Alvaro — who won a Youth Leadership Award.

Reflecting on the center's exponential growth over the past 20 years, Executive Director Jerry Peterson said it all began with Ellis herself. He recounted the time when, on Sept. 19, 2000, a 101-year-old Ellis cut the ribbon on the first-ever youth drop-in center.

"I just imagine that she breathed something into the universe that still is with us," Peterson said. "She breathed life into the young people she cared about. She would breathe life into this organization and she herself passed from this life to the next just two weeks later."

"That breath of life has moved this organization from a 500-square-foot space above an adult bookstore at Six Mile and Woodward to what is now four facilities, 26,000 square feet," Peterson continued. "And we're about to be onboarding staff members 57 and 58 and we have an aspirational budget for 2020 of \$3.5 million. None of that could be done without that breath of Ruth inspiring people throughout these entire 20 years."



The Legacy Award was given to openly lesbian comedian and actress Wanda Sykes, and two Youth Impact Awards were given to "RuPaul's Drag Race" alumni Shangela (left) and vocalist and trans rights activist Shea Diamond. Below Ruth Ellis Center Executive Director Jerry Peterson with REC supporters. Photos: Justin McAfee



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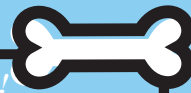


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LGBTQ Substance Abuse Peer Support Group at Lansing's Salus Center

BY BTL STAFF

On Wednesday, Oct. 16, the Salus Center's Substance Abuse Peer Support Group will meet for the second time this month to talk about substance abuse. The group meets on the first and third Wednesday of every month and invites everyone who feels that they may need help tackling their or a friend or family member's substance abuse problems.

"It's for anyone struggling with substance abuse in their life whether that be: someone who is, or they think they are, in active addiction, the family member or loved one in active addiction or maybe someone just looking for validation/comfort as to how their lives have been affected by substance abuse," write event organizers. "Our goal is to create a network of people who affirm/validate one another while also connecting each other with information/resources. We strive to maintain a comfortable environment for LGBTQ people (especially POC) to have a protected space to speak about their experiences. Meetings are confidential; what is shared remains in the room. The guest list for this event is also hidden to preserve confidentiality."

The group meets in an a wheelchair-accessible space with an all-gender bathroom. Any questions about the meetings should be posed to Julia Rodriguez who responds to direct messages via the Salus Center's Facebook page: [gaybe.am/25](https://www.facebook.com/gaybe.am/25). The Salus Center is located at 408 S. Washington Square in Lansing.

HIV Exposure Charges Dropped Against 'Undetectable' Transgender Woman for Second Time

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Charges against a transgender woman named Keisha in Grand Rapids who police say had sex with a man without revealing her HIV-positive status have been dismissed for the second time. The charge, which stems from an incident that allegedly took place in 2015, carried a prison sentence of up to four years.

Police said that Keisha had engaged in survival sex work with a man when the car she was riding in was pulled over. The driver allegedly told police he had just had sex with her for \$25 and some food and cigarettes. A search of Keisha's purse revealed HIV medication that the police used as evidence to charge her.

Michigan's 1989 HIV Disclosure Law states that people who are HIV-positive or have AIDS must inform any sexual partners in advance of intercourse — Michigan is one of 26 states with similar laws. However, that law was amended last year and now decriminalizes the act if the HIV-positive individual is on medication that has suppressed the virus making it impossible to transmit. In Keisha's case, her viral load is undetectable thanks to the very medication police confiscated. She is adamant that she does not and has never had AIDS.

"They were steady putting AIDS out there when I'm undetectable, so that should have never been out there in

the first place," Keisha told Between The Lines. "I thought of filing a lawsuit, but I don't even want to deal with Grand Rapids. I just want to count it over with.

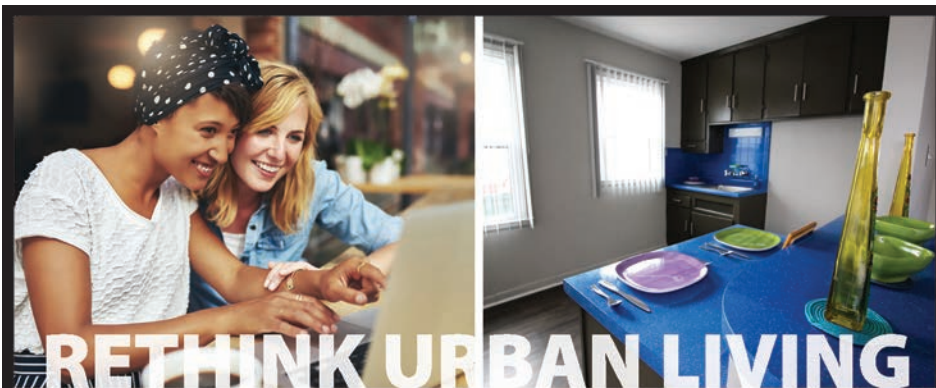
The case was originally brought against her in 2016, though it was initially dismissed. Soon after that dismissal, three weeks, an amended charge was refiled against her. By then, however, Keisha was no longer living in the Grand Rapids area and police were unable to serve her.

Four years after the incident, Keisha said she thought the charges were behind her until she was re-arrested for the charge. She was subsequently misgendered in a news report done by WZZM Channel 13 that repeatedly referred to her as a man and used her birth name. Also, because the case was originally filed before the law was changed, officials initially decided to base the charges on the law that was in place at the time the incident.

After the man who said he had had sex with her was a no-show in court, the charges were dropped.

"We had a preliminary exam scheduled for today, but the victim failed to appear so we dismissed the case," Kent County Prosecutor Christopher Becker told Between The Lines Monday.

Now, with the case resolved, Keisha is back in Detroit where she lives and is currently attending cosmetology school. "I'm happily married," she said. "My husband knows my status and I've left that whole lifestyle alone."



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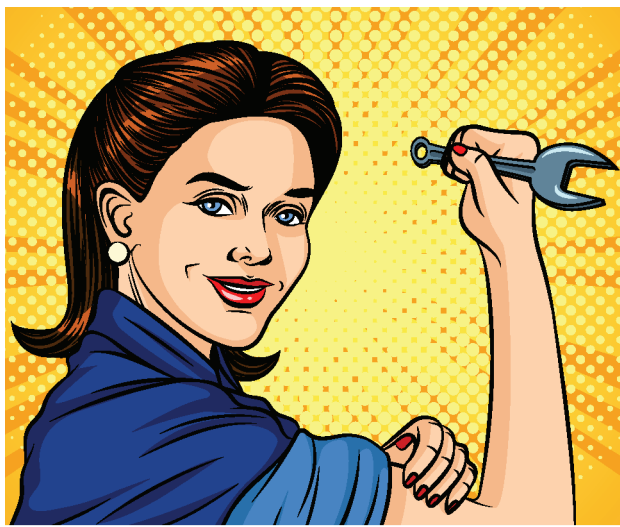
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Several thousand participated in the first ever National Transgender Visibility March on Washington Sept. 28. Photo: Washington Blade Michael Key.

Trans March on DC Called 'First Major Step' in Visibility Campaign

BY LOU CHIBBARO JR.

Organizers and observers said between 1,500 and 3,000 people turned out on Saturday for the first ever National Transgender Visibility March on Washington in which scores of participants held signs proudly declaring their status as transgender or gender nonconforming Americans.

The march kicked off at 11:35 a.m. on Sept. 28 from Freedom Plaza in downtown D.C. following the completion of a two-and-a-half hour rally. It traveled along Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., from 13th to 4th Streets, where the march ended four blocks from the U.S. Capitol.

Among the speakers at the rally was trans actress of "Pose" and "American Horror Story" fame Angelica Ross, who made an impassioned call for unity, inclusiveness and compassion within the transgender and overall LGBT rights movements and those movements' allies.

Also expressing strong support at the rally for the march and trans rights were D.C. Congressional Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton and Sheila Alexander-Reid, director of D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser's Office of LGBTQ Affairs.

Reid read an official proclamation issued by the mayor declaring Sept. 28,

2019, Trans Visibility Day in D.C.

Many of the marchers carried signs saying, "Trans Lives Matter." Several told the Washington Blade they were moved and inspired as they walked past the buildings along Pennsylvania Avenue that they said symbolize the people and the institutions they are calling on to change to ensure their equal rights and dignity.

Among the buildings the marchers walked past were the FBI Headquarters, the Trump International Hotel and the Justice Department, which, under the administration of President Trump, has taken positions against trans rights in pending federal court cases.

"This is amazing," said trans activist Maggie Downs, who said she traveled from Florida to attend the march. "I'm here for black trans lives and trans children's lives, and then my own rights," she said as she walked past the Trump hotel.

"We're here not to be invisible, which is what this administration is trying to do to us," she told the Blade.

Marty Drake, an official with the Montgomery County Pride Center who marched with the group Maryland Trans Unity, said this was not the first time he has walked past the Trump hotel in a protest march.

"It's always a treat going by the Trump hotel in any march," he said. "This group was very polite. The shouts of 'shame, shame, shame,' were a lot politer than some of the other marches I've been at," he said. "It was remarkable that a lot of people simply waved at the Trump Hotel."

Several speakers at the rally, including Rodrigo Heng-Lehtinen, deputy executive director at the D.C.-based National Center for Transgender Equality, said an important objective of the trans rights movement is securing passage by Congress of the Equality Act, an LGBTQ civil rights bill that includes strong protections for trans people.

"Today's march is about the power and visibility to get us equality," he said. "At a lightning pace, Americans have seen our power at work as transgender people have moved from a side issue that our neighbors didn't even know a lot about to a priority in the halls of power and the presidential campaign," he told the rally.

"A community long forced into the darkness is now finally stepping into the daylight," Heng-Lehtinen said. "But what the grassroots organizers of this march and what you know is that progress for any of us is not enough unless it is progress for all of us."

Alphonso David, president of the

Human Rights Campaign, one of the nation's largest LGBTQ civil rights groups, described as a crisis the large number of murders of mostly black trans women over the past several years in the U.S.

"As we gather here in the capital of the greatest country on earth there is a crisis raging across our country," David, a longtime civil rights attorney, told the rally. "There is a crisis that is shattering dreams and shattering lives. There is a crisis that has been largely overlooked by the media," he said.

"It is a crisis that has taken the lives of more than 150 transgender people in the past five years, most of them black transgender women," he continued. "It is a crisis that none of us can ignore anymore. We have to stand up. We have to speak out."

"For those of us who are gay or are lesbian or bisexual or queer or who are straight, we have to stand up for the transgender community, said David. "We have to stand up for the transgender community and stand up for them as if they are our family because you are our families."

As in all protest marches in the nation's capital, D.C. police have a policy of not releasing estimates of the number of people who turn out for such events. In the case of Saturday's Trans Visibility March, although no official crowd estimate was released, it was clear to observers that the march was about 3 1/2 blocks long as it traveled along Pennsylvania Avenue in the east bound lanes, which make up half the width of the famous street.

D.C. police closed the entire section of Pennsylvania Avenue between 13 and 4th Streets, where the march ended and many marches gathered at John Marshall Park, a small park located at 4th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue between the Canadian Embassy and the U.S. District Courthouse.

Among those walking in the rear of the march were members of the D.C. Police LGBT Liaison Unit. Also helping to oversee the police escort of the march and the closing of nearby streets was Lt. Brett Parson, who oversees the police liaison units.

"It was a sizable crowd," Parson told the Blade. "And it was cooperative and it was well organized and we were proud to be there to provide safety and security."

He noted that the entire march and rally

went off without incident or any safety related problems.

Among the buildings the march passed near the end of its route on Pennsylvania Avenue were the Newseum, which currently includes an LGBTQ exhibit on the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots. People standing in front both buildings waved at and cheered marchers as they passed in front of the two buildings.

"I think it was fantastic," said Lucky Alexander, the assistant national strategy director for the National Trans Visibility March, as he stood in John Marshall Park following the march. "We got a lot of diversity in the crowd. We didn't have any hiccups as far as any counter-protesters. I think we did a fantastic job."

Added Alexander, who traveled to D.C. from Los Angeles: "I would estimate 3,000 people at least and give or take maybe more than that" attended the march and rally.

(Washington Blade photo by Michael Key)

Longtime D.C. trans activist Dee Curry called the march a highly successful "first step" in what she noted are plans for an annual trans march on Washington, including one next year in the midst of the 2020 presidential election campaign.

"This is an amazing start to a movement," Curry said, standing at John Marshall Park, named after the first U.S. Supreme Court chief justice, where the march ended. "I think that the numbers reflect that there is a consensus that we need to step up and do some things. And I think this will be a catalyst so this will be much bigger next year."

Other speakers at the rally included trans activist Bamby Salcedo, president and CEO of the Trans Latin@ Coalition; Jodie Patterson, chair of the HRC board of directors; Justin Nelson, president of the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce; Carter Brown, founder and executive director of Black Trans Men, Inc.; and trans activists Apyphanie Dawn and Lynn Morrison.

D.C. transgender activist Earline Budd, who was scheduled to speak, had to cancel due to illness, according to Alexander-Reid.

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



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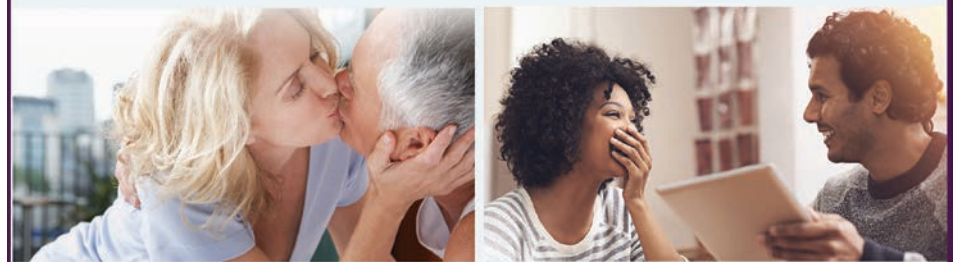
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THE UNICORN MAGIC OF *Kristin Chenoweth*

Gay Icon Talks New Tribute Album, LGBTQ Visibility & Gay Cruising

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Kristin Chenoweth likes to say that if it can't be explained, it must be the unicorns. Why does she have so many gay fans? Well, you're only partially right if you thought it was because she originated the role of a beguiling, bedazzled, not-wicked witch who belts in a cloud of bubbles while flailing a wand. Because it's also, obviously, a "unicorn thing."

And why, exactly, did our call abruptly drop mid conversation? Was the Broadway star in a deep canyon? Was it AT&T? An overloaded cell tower? A weak signal? "You know what," she squeaks when we reconnect, "it's unicorn

problems!"

Chenoweth's perpetually chirpy way of life is a mood that can also best be explained as being ... well, it's unicornian, of course. It just is, and we're all better for it. Ahead of the release of her latest album, "For the Girls," I caught up with the 51-year-old Broadway legend and gay cruiser to talk about not stalking Dolly Parton, new details on the "Death Becomes Her" musical she's set to star in, and why she thinks it's important to perform on Mike Huckabee's show – but especially in a rainbow dress.

**Before we get to the album, I have to know:
What was your favorite part of sailing on a cruise**

ship in August with so many gay men?
(Laughs.) It's my version of heaven!

**I haven't even gone on a gay cruise and I think
it's my version of heaven too.**

I can't say I blame you. I mean, first of all, all the love on the cruise ship, obviously, from audience to singer and singer to audience, but for each other.

So you'd recommend I go?

Yes! You know what it should be called? "Love Cruise," because everybody is just there to have fun. I just loved it. I wanted to actually

go on the thing, but it's kind of hard for me (laughs) to be on a cruise because it's pretty widely known I have Ménière's Disease, an inner ear vertigo thing. So it's hard for me to be on a boat ... for very long, anyway. So it always bums me out when I have to disembark. I'm like, "Man, I wanna be on this thing!" But you should go!

**You performed "For Good" with Katharine
McPhee on this gay cruise. Where does that rank
among the gayest moments in a career filled
with them?**

(Laughs.)

Photo: Gian Andrea di Stefano

It went viral.

I know, right? It was awesome. I've always been so moved when we've done it because her heart is so big and that's who needs to sing that song – somebody with a heart, really big and open. Never mind that voice. The voice is ridiculous, it's just wonderful. But I always look for the heart too. She's got it in spades. And it was just a pleasure for us to do, and it was also a pleasure for it to be received so well.

Whose idea was it to put you in a super cute Michael Kors rainbow dress?

Well, whose do you think? (Laughs.) It was mine! I called my publicist. I said, "Do you think Michael would make the dress?" Because it's so perfect. And he was kind enough to just gift me that dress. It's so funny: I'm gonna have to do "Huckabee" (former Arkansas governor and conservative commentator Mike Huckabee's weekly talk show) and Michael's like, "You're not gonna do Huckabee." I'm like, "I sure am! I'm gonna wear my rainbow dress. You know I'm gonna wear my Pride flag. You bet I am! Of course I am!" It's important for us to not only wear it with our people but with our *not* people.

Why is that true for you?

Because if we don't talk to each other, and if we don't talk to people who disagree with us or don't believe like us, then we will never move forward.

Shifting to your new album, I know this is called "For the Girls," but Babs, Judy, Dinah and Doris – some of these songs strike me as ones that maybe you listened to with gay friends growing up.

(Laughs.) You think? How did you guess? Of course! You know, I had such a blessing in high school: I did have a group of friends – some were in the closet and some weren't – and I feel like we did sit around and obviously we listened to Judy and we listened to Barbra, but I think I would've done that anyway because my parents, even though they're engineers, loved music. They would listen to everything – I mean everything, from Puccini, everything that was on PBS. And I introduced them to Madonna, which was shocking at first. But we kind of loved everything in our house, and I think that says a lot about the way I was raised and also just what my musical tastes are. I wouldn't say I've mastered them all but country music was a big part of me. I've wanted to do that Dolly song ("I Will Always Love You," which is featured on "For the Girls") since I can remember, with her, and I never thought she'd say yes and, man, she did. I can't believe she did.

But of course I'm gonna honor Judy on that record, of course I'm gonna honor Barbra. People forget about Eydie Gormé's "I Wanna Be Around"; I'm gonna sing Eydie Gormé. I'm going to honor Linda (Ronstadt), who was one of the most versatile singers we had. I was on the cheerleading squad and I remember we had

to make up a routine for halftime and mine was a lyrical dance to Linda's "Desperado." I remember the cheerleaders going, "I don't think so, I don't think that's gonna work out." That tells you where my brain and heart always was.

With the gay icons, of course.

Yeah, right.

How would you describe this album to a straight man?

My producer Steve Tyrell is as straight as they come, and he and I both wanted to honor the women. But I said to him in a recording session, "You know, this isn't just about the women, this isn't just about the renaissance that we are having now." My tribute to them is about the men who've loved them. Gay, straight, tall, short. It's really about the men who've been behind the women, like my dad. And so I think that's kind of where it's "for the girls," for sure, but I hope the men who love us love it too.

Which, of course, includes gay men. I know you know there's a special bond between gay men and straight women.

There is. I've been asked before to explain that and I say that's a unicorn thing. I don't know. It's just how it is. It started for me when I was a little girl; I've always just been drawn to that community. Especially when I went to college, my world was opened up to even more by some of my best friends, especially growing up in the Bible Belt and how interesting that's been, as well. But I say that it goes together for me, my faith and my love for not just gays but people. Listen, if you're a jerk, I'm probably not gonna like ya.

And listen, there are gay jerks.

(Laughs.) Just like there are straight jerks, so I get it, baby. I get it.

You are meticulous in your approach to the roles you play on TV, in film and on Broadway. Like for your part on NBC's "Trial & Error" you knew the slap gloves had to be leather and you knew why and you were very specific. How does your creative brain work when you're taking on a song that's been done to death like "Crazy" or "When I Fall In Love"?

(Laughs.) Yeah, thank you for saying that. I absolutely am. And I know that sometimes it makes other people bananas, but I have to say what I know, and one thing I've learned – and this is just what you call evolution in life – is if you do your truth and you have a reason for it, they might not all agree or like it but they can't get mad at you for it. I'm gonna say what I think because a) I've been doing it for a second and b) I've been trained and c) I care! If I didn't care I'd say, "OK, I'm just gonna release a record, who cares." I wouldn't have a thought about it, I wouldn't.

When we were recording "I'm a Woman" with Jennifer (Hudson) and Reba (McEntire), I said, "I have to have Aretha on this album, I don't know how to do that." Steve Tyrell was

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

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► Kristin

Continued from p. 19

like, “We’re gonna have her speak at the end.” Blew my mind. And that’s why I went to work with Steve, and that’s why I went to work with the people that I worked with on “Trial & Error,” because they think like me, I think like them. It’s kind of a unique club, and I’m not saying that we’re more precious or more special than others; I’m saying that being meticulous about your art is a gift. The day that I don’t care is the day I’ll quit.

How has “You Don’t Own Me,” which you’ve recorded as a duet with Ariana Grande, influenced you?

I remember the first time I heard it: I heard Lesley Gore’s version, because in my family we listened to Lesley Gore. Then I became a big fan of Dusty Springfield’s and over the years have kind of compared the two and I always, for me, love the original. I always go back to the original. It’s just kind of who I am. Which is interesting that I chose to do this record, because (laughs) I’m trying to put my stamp on original songs. But I went back to Lesley’s version, and I wanted Ariana because I feel like it’s kind of my version of old school and new school together. I just felt like the words and lyrics were us.

You’ve spoken a lot about Dolly over the years and her influence on your career. Now that you’ve recorded a song with her, how chummy are you and Dolly? Do you text each other?

Well, mainly what I do is video because these nails don’t really do well with texting. (Laughs.) And if I could just quit and go on tour with her, I would do it. I would do it! It’s not stalker-y, but it is a healthy obsession, and it started, again, when I was little and I thought, “I feel like her.” That was the feeling I got. Then a long time ago when we first met she was like, “You’re like me!” And I was like, “I know!” It’s been like that over the years. And do I wish I could see her more? Yeah. Do I wish I could be with her like on the bus watching her cook? Yes.

Hey, I bet you never thought that you would record a song with her, so you never know.

I never did. My next dream: I wanna go to Dollywood real bad.

With her?

Yeah, with her. But you know what, if it doesn’t happen soon, I’m just gonna go by myself and have my own party. Because I’ve got to go.

And you’ll FaceTime her when you’re riding the rides?

That’s exactly what I’ll do.

Have we gotten any closer to a “Pushing Daisies” musical or potential TV revival? I think Lee Pace and creator Bryan Fuller have been maybe trying to cook up something.

Well, I wish they’d hurry up because we didn’t

really get closure, which was, if you want to look at it this way, also a beautiful thing. But Bryan keeps talking about it, and I know nothing would make me happier. I just felt like we got the slow “no.” Networks and studios, I get it, it’s a business. It’s nothing against them. It’s just that we didn’t know that when we filmed our season finale that it was our series finale. I think we’ve all been kind of searching for (a revival) since.

Do you have a preference as to whether the show should return as a musical or TV revival?

Gosh, you know, I think it would be lovely to have a TV revival because it was so unique looking on camera. It was beautiful. And the music ended up being – well, anything Bryan does, music is a big part of it, whether there’s singing or not. I just would hate not to have that look again on film.

I feel like as a gay man I already know the answer to this, but what sold you on a musical version of “Death Becomes Her”?

Everything. At first, when they approached me, I thought it was obviously for the Goldie Hawn part. And they said, “No. The Meryl Streep part.” And I was like, “Really?” ‘Cause I love her, I love that role. I just knew I wanted to do it. I knew the story was funny. I know that it is going to be unique in the trickery that they are inventing. And I know it’s funny. That doesn’t always mean that the show will be funny, but I know the writer and I have read part of it – we have part of the show – and I have complete confidence in what we’re going to create and I can’t wait to show the world.

I can’t wait to see how they’re going to make your head turn.

I have a bad neck, so I’m like, “Good luck with that, people.” (Laughs.) But I think they’ve been talking with different kinds of illusionists and magicians and I think it might be kind of a – not kind of, I think it will be the first on Broadway of its kind and I just can’t wait. I cannot wait.

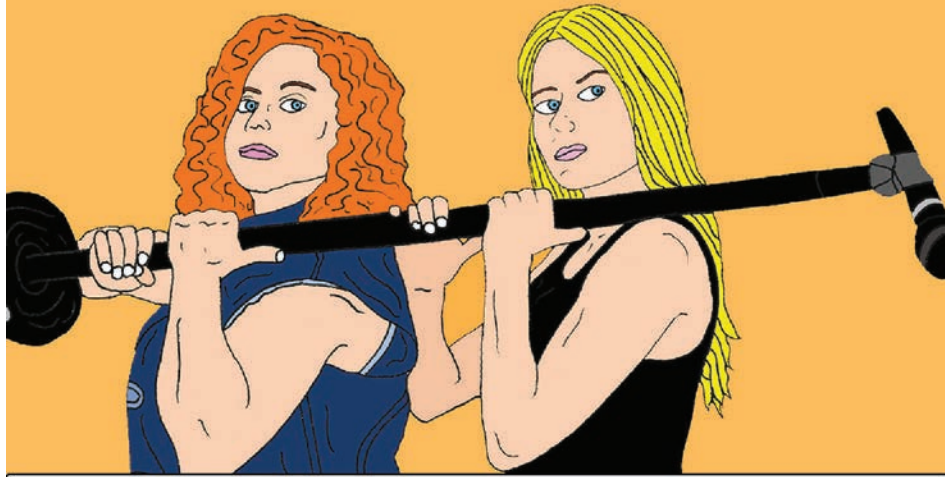
RuPaul gave you his blessing to play Christian singer and evangelist Tammy Faye Baker. Is a Ru seal of approval the ultimate seal of approval?

Yes! I’ve been waiting. I mean, I’m sitting here doing a time step. I’m waiting for the script. We just hired Robert Horn who just had great success with “Tootsie” on Broadway and David Yazbek, so you know, tick-tock, tick-tock. I’m waiting. I can’t wait to get the lashes going, but also, I just can’t wait to explore her spirit, which was very deep. A lot deeper than people understood. I don’t see it as a big Broadway musical, per se. I don’t think that’s what we’re looking at. I think it’s much more of a small – you know how Audra (McDonald) did “Lady Day”? More in that vein.

You didn’t exactly plan to become the belle of Broadway, and I’ve read that you even thought you’d just become a singer, but obviously your career took you in different directions. What is the most

See Kristin, continued on p. 25

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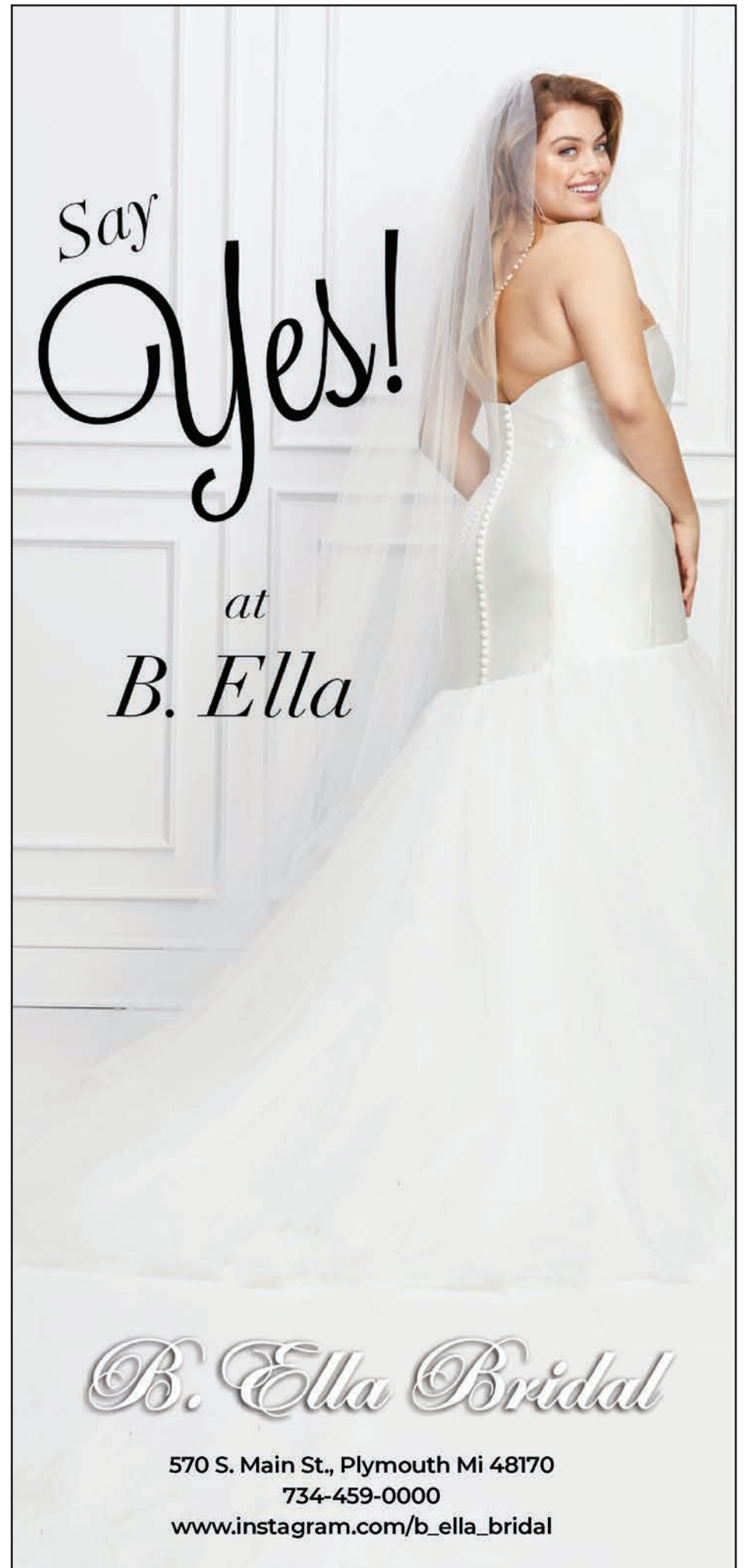
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‘Lesbian Content 3.0’

The ‘Two Dykes and a Mic’ Podcast Reimagines Queer Female Humor

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

The “Miss Congeniality” is your pageant dyke. A “Speed” dyke can effectively drive a 40-foot transit bus. And witchy lesbians can all see themselves represented in “Practical Magic.” Who knew that the best way for lesbians to categorize each other is based on the Sandra Bullock movie that they relate to most? Or that the easiest way to end a date with a perfectly timed first kiss is by ordering your love interest an Uber and using the app’s built-in timer? Thankfully, these secrets and more have been steadily cracked since 2017 for the benefit of all lesbiankind by the veritable gay gurus Rachel Scanlon and McKenzie Goodwin of the “Two Dykes and A Mic” podcast.

Normally based in Los Angeles, in addition to being a regular podcast, “Two Dykes and a Mic” is a standup show that showcases not only the comedy of hosts Scanlon and Goodwin but features brand-new and seasoned queer talent in an LGBTQ-affirming space. However, on Thursday, Oct. 10, Michigan fans can get their own taste of the live show experience when it visits The Magic Bag in Ferndale on tour. Ahead of their Michigan stopover, BTL caught up with the hosts to learn more about their comedic starts, parse out what being a lesbian in today’s society means and how the elements of a show come together.

May I just say that the Sandra Bullock lesbian movie meter is highly accurate? I’d like to think of myself — particularly during this time of year — as a “Practical Magic” lesbian.

McKenzie Goodwin and Rachel Scanlon: (Laughs)

Goodwin: Yes! Listen, I’m right there with you; ’tis the season! We love our witchy dykes.

So, how did you two meet?

Scanlon: I’m so glad you asked how we

met. I started doing an open mic and it was called “Two Dykes and a Mic.” And one day, McKenzie came in to watch this open mic. Little did she know, that that was the day that my girlfriend and I broke up on stage.

Sounds brutal!

Goodwin: Yeah, it was so funny. I was watching and I was like, “These girls are hilarious!” I thought it was a bit. I had no idea it was real.

Scanlon: It was very real. That’s why we do not date comics anymore (laughs). And then after she sat around for a while and realized it was happening she decided to send me a DM.

Goodwin: I slid in her DMs.

Scanlon: And said, “If you need another lesbian to host with you now that this girl is not dating you anymore, let me know.” And I got that DM and I was like, “Oh, this girl wants to sleep with me. Obviously.” Turns out, just business, no pleasure (laughs). And McKenzie and I started hosting that open mic together and we then turned it into a podcast. And, from there, it turned into a monthly live show in Los Angeles. And then, in this past year, we’ve been touring around the country with Two Dykes and a Mic live.

The content of your podcast is broken up by various categories like “Rachel’s Toolbox” and a gay news portion. Are those categories interchangeable? And how do you organize your episodes around them?

Goodwin: They do, yes. So, we kind of rotate them in and out depending on what’s going on in our lives. So, we also have another segment called “Bumble Bumbles,” which is because I date online a lot — Tinder and Bumble and Hinge. And I’m just really bad at it. So, I’ll do a segment every couple of weeks where I’ll talk about how bad my dating life is going.

Scanlon: And yeah, we make them so that we have so many segments that it is flexible to do. So, if we have week where Taylor Swift is on the VMAs riding a giant gay rainbow, we’re going to do heavy gay news and focus on that. And if we have a week where McKenzie, I don’t know, bites her tongue so bad that she’s gushing blood so hard five minutes before a date then we’re going to do more “Bumble Bumbles” stuff. And based on



Rachel Scanlon (left) and McKenzie Goodwin co-host “Two Dykes and a Mic.”

how we want the week to go, we’re able to talk about whatever’s relevant to us within those segments. And also, ones that are evergreen like “Rachel’s Toolbox.” I always will have more sex tools to review (laughs). And we review a lot of lesbian movies as well. And there are so many of them.

McKenzie: And they’re mostly really bad.

I’m definitely guilty of watching three seasons of terrible content just to get to a scene with some rumored lesbian subtext.

McKenzie: Yeah (laughs). Although we won’t watch three seasons just to get one gay scene, we’ll go straight to that scene and just watch it. Although, in my life personally, I’ve watched too much content for one lesbian kiss.

That would save me a lot of time, just going to the gay part, but I love a backstory!

Scanlon: Of course, lesbians love a backstory.

Goodwin: We love a backstory!

So what’s yours? How did you get your start in comedy?

Scanlon: So, I moved out here from Minnesota, started doing open mics. Once I started doing open mics, I was doing them every day. And then that turned into doing shows, and then that turned into doing your own shows, and then once I was able to — once McKenzie basically wedged her beautiful way into my path — then we were really able to take over. We basically built our own little comedy world for people like us

and for ourselves. So, we were able to make space for queer women in LA to have their own show that’s thriving and not just —

Goodwin: One comic on an all-male lineup.

Scanlon: Right. Or is an all-gay show that kind of has a following, but it kind of fizzles out. We have a consistent space that is a really well-run show that has really good comics on it that didn’t exist before. And even when the show was small and just open mics the reputation of our room was that it was a really supportive space to be able to try new stuff, run by two open lesbians doing material that, whether it’s queer or not, we try to just do that.

Goodwin: I’m from Arizona. I started standup and I wasn’t as into it as I am into writing, but once I met with Rachel I started doing it a lot more often. And we just had so much fun together onstage that it definitely pushed me to do standup more than I would have regardless. And I think that Rachel and I have so much fun together, and we just love to do comedy together.

Scanlon: Here’s the thing: we weirdly have a lot of similarities that we would be drawn together cosmologically. But comedically? We could not be more different.

Goodwin: I know. Truly.

Scanlon: McKenzie is like very written,

See **Podcast**, continued on p. 24

SAVE THE DATE

Two Dykes and a Mic

At The Magic Bag in Ferndale on Thursday, Oct. 10. Doors open at 7 p.m. and tickets are \$18 in advance. Find out more information about the show online at themagicbag.com and at twodykesandamic.com.



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**AFFIRMATIONS
THURSDAY, OCT 10TH
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VENUE PARTNER



MEDIA PARTNER



CATERING BY



► Podcast

Continued from p. 22

planned out, slow burn; Like a genius, a low-energy genius. Big punchlines coming at you that are just like daggers. And I am basically a —

Goodwin: A ginger clown.

Scanlon: A ginger clown! Very lewd, can do crowd work, can kind of get lost in my own high-energy machine gun. And also, dating-wise we're very different. So, when you put that together it's very fun to see two queer women that are platonic best friends with very different experiences and very different styles comedically.

That must be incredibly grounding, to have a comedy partner to bounce ideas off of regularly.

Goodwin: Totally, yeah. We pitch jokes to each other at all times.

Scanlon: At all times! Almost constantly. Whenever we're going to or from any type of show it's, "Do you like this? Is this a good idea? How do you like this?" And also like a hype man, too. We don't want to speak for all of the queer world, and we want to tell our specific stories in a way that includes everyone. So, to bounce ideas off of each other and to have a built-in hype man for you that understands comedy, understands you and is just like, "Let's do this together, have fun and you're so funny. Let's take over the world" [is great].

Since you've started the podcast and live show what have you learned about what it means to be a lesbian today? Has your perspective changed since starting the show?

Goodwin: Yeah, actually, it really has. Even if I listen to some of our older episodes, I feel like we've both grown so much in the queer community. And being able to both understand what everything means and being more aware and inclusive, So I know that I've definitely grown.

Scanlon: Comedy comes from your specific point of view, and then being able to be inclusive to an entire community I think has made us grow comedically to be able to reach a wider audience of the queer community that is not just white lesbians. You've got to keep in mind how to stay relevant for a community that is only expanding and becoming more inclusive to a wider group of people. It's easy to stay in a little hacky lesbian bubble of, "Lesbians be like this!" And, "Wear your Birkenstocks and go to Home Depot!" And we've heard that so many times it's tired. How can we make this — without pandering to a straight audience, without being the lesbian clown —

McKenzie: [Be] fresh and new and not a cliché.

Scanlon: And how can you do that in a way that makes people feel like, "Hey, I feel seen by that joke." Or, "I see myself in that story on the podcast." And without having to be serious totally, because a lot of lesbian material is pretty freaking somber stuff. And without doing it from yesterday? So now what? It's like basically, lesbian content 3.0. It's like now we're here in a world where it's post coming out, it's post everything's a problem. Now what? And we're funny, and so what? It makes you kind of grow up as a writer as well as a lesbian performer.

It does feel like today, compared to 10 or 15 years ago, LGBTQ comics are much less the butt of the joke now and more relatable to a wider audience.

Scanlon: Right, the comedy is less about, "Oh my gosh, you're gay!?" It's specifically: What is a McKenzie Goodwin point of view? What is a Rachel Scanlon point of view in its whole? It's specific to how we see things, and part of our lens is that — and I hate to say that it's that we're gay, but it's a part of the story as opposed to the butt of the joke that you're gay. It's that these are our point of views and stories and perspectives and are told through women in that we are gay women and what else can we say.

So for those fans who have only listened to your podcast and haven't been able to make it to a live show, what can they expect that will be different when it comes to The Magic Bag?

Goodwin: So, at our live show we have a host who comes out and performs and they're always going to be either a female or LGBTQ. And then each of us do about 20 to 30 minutes of standup. You get a little bit more of our perspective and our individual sets. And then we come together and at the end we do the podcast, which is a lot of like "Ask the Dykes" so the audience can participate and ask any questions they want to know about either us, or our views on things or certain things like that.

Scanlon: Yeah, and we can talk about specific things that have happened in that day, too.

Goodwin: It's very tailored to the particular audience that day.

Scanlon: It gets intimate! And it's super fun doing the podcast live. And it's such a treat, because when we perform standup live this is us. We have put years into the material and we're doing it. And when you see the podcast live we get two stools, we're sitting, we're really enjoying the moment that we create onstage. And those are personally lived by the people who show up in that moment. And they're kind of magic.

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► **Kristin**

Continued from p. 20

pleasantly unexpected detour your career has taken up to this point?

Aww, what a great question. Seriously. I guess when I think about the work I've done, I would say having the opportunity to do all kinds of music. I didn't think I'd have the opportunity to do a country record. I didn't think I'd have an opportunity to make an inspirational Christian record. I didn't think I'd get the opportunity to put my stamp on Gershwin and Cole Porter last time. I didn't know that I'd get to do a live record with film at a theater. And now this one. My label has given me great opportunities to do all of the kinds of music I like, and that was a big surprise to me because so many times labels get a bad rap, like, "I'm gonna be handcuffed to doing just one thing." I have been able and allowed to do several things; that's been a big surprise.

The personal thing that's been a surprise with my career has been getting to talk about my faith and my beliefs behind that, and my love for our community that we're talking about right now. I didn't know that that was going to become so important, shall I say. I didn't know, much like Tammy Faye was a trailblazer, that I was going to be ... I just always was who I was. I have lost fans because of it; I have gained fans because of it. But the most important part of that for me,



personally, is knowing in my heart that one of my purposes in life is being fulfilled: getting to say what I think and what I believe.

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 The New York Times, Vanity Fair, GQ and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.

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LOVE Wins **Between the Lines**



Solution to Q Puzzle p. 29

Happenings

KALEIDOSCOPE OF EXPRESSION

An Exhibition of LGBTQA Artists & Designers

KALEIDOSCOPE OF EXPRESSION

Hosted by the Pontiac Creative Arts Center and the Oakland University Gender & Sexuality Center, Kaleidoscope of Expression is a celebration of LGBTQ artistry. LGBTQ artists from across Michigan and beyond have submitted art of all varieties for the juried show. Find out more information by looking at the event's Facebook page or by going to pontiacarts.org.

Groups – Macomb County 7:30 p.m. Macomb Teen/Youth Support Group: All youth are welcome to attend this FREE group. Come and meet other trans* youth and teens and support each other through your journeys. Dakota High School, 21051 21 Mile Road, Macomb. 586-723-2700. chippewavalley.schools.org.

Saturday, October 19
50 Years After Stonewall Symposium 9:30 a.m. Join AARP and SAGE Metro Detroit in celebration and reflection of the 50th anniversary of Stonewall at the 50 Years After Stonewall Symposium. WSU Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, 259 Mack Ave., Detroit. info@sagemetrodetroit.org.

OUTINGS

Saturday, October 5

Grupo Corpo 8 p.m. The phenomenal Brazilian dance company Grupo Corpo makes its third UMS appearance with a double bill of "Bach" and "Gira," two wildly different works that showcase the 21-member group's extraordinary range. Power Center, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. 734-647-3327. smt.d.umich.edu. ums.org.

Sunday, October 6

Stand with Trans Wyandotte Support Group for Trans Youth and Parents of Trans Individuals 5 p.m. Free. Parent Support Group information, contact facilitator Kim Tooley, 734-747-4363. St. Stephens Episcopal Church, 2803 1st St., Wyandotte. standwithtrans.org.

Monday, October 7

LGBT Game Night 6 p.m. LGBT Game Night is an opportunity for all LGBT people and allies to come play a board game, drink coffee, bring your own drinks and socialize with other LGBTQ individuals. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Wednesday, October 9

Stand with Trans Youth Support Group – Flint – Genesee 7:30 p.m. Free to all. Trans. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Flint, 2474 S. Ballenger Hwy, Flint. 810-232-4023. uuf Flint.org. standwithtrans.org.

Thursday, October 10

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups – Farmington Hills – Oakland County 8 p.m. All youth are welcome to attend. Oakland United Methodist Church, 30450 Farmington Road, Farmington. 248-626-3620. oaklandumc.org. standwithtrans.org.

Friday, October 11

Freedom House's Voices of Freedom 6 p.m. Freedom House celebrates 36 years at its Voice of Freedom reception. MotorCity Casino Grand Ballroom, 2901

Grand River Ave., Detroit. 248-803-0645. freedomhousedetroit.org.

Sunday, October 13

BTL's Ultimate Wedding & Anniversary Expo 12 p.m. Between The Lines once again presents the Ultimate Wedding & Anniversary Expo. The Henry, Fairlane Plaza, 300 Town Center Drive, Dearborn. 313-441-2000 jan@pridesource.com. behenny.com. <http://MiLGBTWedding.com>

Monday, October 14

Stand with Trans 2018 Support

Editor's Pick

DRAG QUEEN GAME NIGHT

On Friday, Oct. 11, at the One Night Stans Comedy Club, fans of games and drag queens alike can come together for a night of fun. The event is hosted by Kara Coraci and will feature Crystal. Drink specials will be available, too. Find out more on the event's Facebook page at gaybe.am/3A.



Editor's Pick



DETROIT HALLOWEEN BAR CRAWL

From 3 to 11 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 26, Detroiters can get in their favorite scary, silly, sexy or downright spooky costumes and join their friends on a bar crawl through Greektown. Early bird pricing starts at \$19.99. Go online to gaybe.am/pM to learn more and buy tickets.

MUSIC & MORE

Sara Bareilles October 5, 8 p.m. Sara Bareilles is a Grammy, Tony and Emmy Award-nominated singer, songwriter, actress and author. On Saturday, Oct. 5, she'll be visiting Detroit's Fox Theatre with Emily King. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-471-6611. gaybe.am/ls.

Dionne Warwick October 6, 7:30 p.m. On Sunday, Oct. 6, Dionne Warwick will come to the Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel. Motor City Casino Sound Board, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313-309-4700. motorcitycasino.com. gaybe.am/TM

Robyn October 8, 6:30 p.m. The Swedish pop singer will perform at Detroit's Masonic Temple as part of her Honey Tour with special guests ESG. Detroit Masonic Temple, 3011 W. Grand Blvd, Detroit. 800-854-2196. templodetroit.com. aegworldwide.com

Toastmasters International SpeakOUT! LGBTQ Meeting October 10, 7 p.m. LGBTQ Toastmaster Club focusing on Professional and personal communication skills development. Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Court, Ann Arbor. 734-995-9867. lawrencemoebbs@gmail.com. speakout.toastmastersclubs.org.

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center October 11, 8 p.m. This concert celebrates the intrepid American spirit by featuring two pairs of composers that shaped the course of American music. Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor. 734-764-8572. rackham.umich.edu. ums.org.

National Theatre Live in HD: The Lehman Trilogy October 13, 7 p.m. Academy Award-winner Sam Mendes directs Simon Russell Beale, Adam Godley and Ben Miles, who play the Lehman Brothers, their sons and their grandsons. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. ums.org.

Isango Ensemble – The Magic Flute October 16, 7:30 p.m. Isango Ensemble is a South African theater company that draws its artists from the townships surrounding Cape Town. Power Center, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. (734) 647-3327. smt.umich.edu. ums.org.

Isango Ensemble – A Man of Good Hope October 18, 8 p.m. Experience the riveting true story of a Somali refugee with a painful past, miraculous good luck and a brilliant head for business, told through roof-lifting songs and dance accompanied on marimbas. Power Center, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. 734-647-3327. smt.umich.edu.

Dennis Matsev October 18, 8 p.m. After his triumph at the 11th International Tchaikovsky Competition in 1998, Denis Matsev has become a virtuoso in the grandest of Russian pianistic traditions and has established himself as one of the most prominent pianists Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-3464. ums.org.

50 Years After Stonewall Symposium October 19, 9:30 a.m. Join AARP and SAGE Metro Detroit in celebration and reflection of the 50th anniversary of Stonewall at the 50 Years After Stonewall Symposium. For free lunch reception, registration is required. WSU Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, 259 Mack Ave., Detroit. info@sagemetrodetroit.org.

Chick Corea Trio with Christian McBride and Brian Blade October 19, 8 p.m. American jazz legend Chick Corea brings together bass powerhouse Christian McBride and drum master Brian Blade for this special concert. Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-3464. ums.org.

Patti LaBelle October 20, 7:30 p.m. Singer, actress and entrepreneur Patti LaBelle is making her way to Detroit this October for a live performance at the MotorCity Casino Sound Board stage. 21+. Tickets start at \$80. gaybe.am/ne Motor City Casino Sound Board, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313-309-4700.

Ray Lamontagne October 23, 7:30 p.m. Ray Lamontagne will be "Just Passing Through" the Fox Theatre on his tour of the same name on Oct. 23. Joined by Canadian folk duo Kacy & Clayton, Lamontagne will perform acoustics "filled with raw Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-471-6611. gaybe.am/PG.

Carrie Underwood October 31, 7 p.m. Seven-time Grammy Award-winner Carrie Underwood is coming to Little Caesars Arena this Halloween on her new "Cry Pretty Tour 360." She'll be joined by Maddie & Tae and Runaway Jane. Little Caesar's Arena, 2645 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-349-5777. gaybe.am/Km.

yMusic November 1, 8 p.m. Founded in New York City in 2008, yMusic uses its unique configuration (string trio, flute, clarinet and trumpet) to "playfully overstep the boundaries of musical genres." Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor. 734-764-8572. rackham.umich.edu. ums.org.

John Cameron Mitchell November 2, 8 p.m. John Cameron Mitchell performs songs and stories from two groundbreaking decades of post-punk,

neo-glam rock – a collective quest for love, hope and identity. Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-3464. ums.org.

Celine Dion November 5, 7:30 p.m. One of the most celebrated pop stars in history, Celine Dion announced that her "Courage World Tour" will bring her talents to Detroit's Little Caesars Arena. Find out more information online at gaybe.am/CP.

THEATER

Come From Away is a Best Musical winner all across North America! Written by Tony® nominees Irene Sankoff and David Hein, and helmed by this year's Tony-winning Best Director, Christopher Ashley. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000

Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Fallen Souffle. A world premier by David MacGregor and directed by Michelle Mountain, it's Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Fallen Souffle. Purple Rose Theater, 137 Park St., Chelsea. 734-433-7673

Blithe Spirit. Wayne State University presents Noel Coward's hauntingly hilarious comedy. Hillbery Theatre, 4743 Cass Ave., Detroit. <http://theatreanddancewayne.com/blithespirit/>

Relive 20th Anniversary Tour The Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning musical "Rent" will play at the Fox Theatre on Friday, Oct. 11, and Saturday, Oct. 12. Relive the 1996 classic production by Jonathan Larson. Tickets start at \$35.

National Theatre Live in HD: The Lehman Trilogy Academy Award-winner Sam Mendes directs Simon Russell Beale, Adam Godley, and Ben Miles, who play the Lehman Brothers, their sons, and their grandsons. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor.

Isango Ensemble – A Man of Good Hope October 18, 8 p.m. Experience the riveting true story of a Somali refugee with a painful past, miraculous good luck, and a brilliant head for business, told through roof-lifting songs and dance accompanied on marimbas. One event on October 20 at 4:00pm Power Center, 121 Fletcher Street, Ann Arbor. (734) 647-3327 http://smt.umich.edu/about/facilities/central_campus/power/index.htm <http://ums.org/performance/isango-ensemble-a-man-of-good-hope/>

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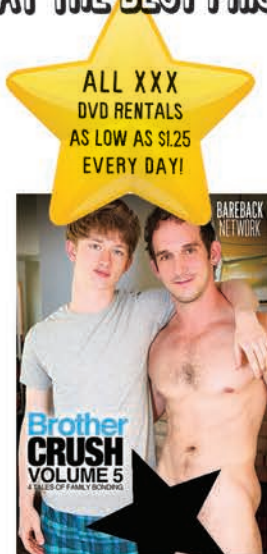
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The Frivolist: 5 Tech-Savvy Ways to Stack Your Savings at Target

BY MIKEY ROX

Fact: You can't go to Target without spending a hundred bucks.

You know how it goes: You enter the store armed with a list that you plan to stick to, yet this, that and the other thing (thanks, Hunter for Target!) ends up in your cart because you have to have it.

There's nothing wrong with treating yourself every now and then, but this habit can seriously affect your financial well-being and put a sizeable dent in your budget if you're not careful.

There's hope, however – in the form of savings that are hiding right on your phone and computer. All you have to do is harness the power of these money-saving tactics to keep more cash in your pocket.

1. Target Mobile App

On the Target mobile app, which is available for free download on iPhone, iPad and Android devices, there's a section labeled Mobile Coupons within the Deals & Coupons menu that features select items available for discounts. Some items are reduced by varying dollar amounts while others qualify for a percentage off. Typical sale items include kitchenware, apparel and Target-brand foods. Consult the Mobile Coupons section before you shop to see what you have on your list that matches the available deals. At checkout pull up the app so the cashier can scan the preset barcode, and watch the savings subtract.

Another tip I've learned over the years is to always scan your items via the mobile app as you're shopping. You wouldn't believe the amount of price discrepancies I've uncovered between what's listed on the tag versus the online price. Target will honor whichever is lower. I've cashed in like this dozen of times, which made me realize that most shoppers are probably overpaying on multiple items per trip on a regular basis. Put in the extra bit of time and reap the savings.

2. Target Cartwheel App

Target's Cartwheel feature in its mobile app provides a more comprehensive listing of items that are available for discounts. This section provides deals on more of the everyday items you need, like groceries and cleaning supplies, at savings ranging from 5% to 50% off. To qualify for the deals, you have to manually add them to your list before checkout; it also auto-adds in store as soon as you scan a qualifying item with the app. This app is heavy on discounts for Target-brand goods, but there

are plenty of name brand items available as well. Like the Mobile Coupons on the Target mobile app, just present the app's barcode to the cashier to save.

3. Target RedCard

By signing up for the Target RedCard credit card, you'll save 5% on all your purchases. But buyer beware: This may not be in your best interest if you're not the kind of credit-card user who pays the full balance before it's due. Pay your bill past its due date and you could be slapped with a late fee that will not only negate the 5% savings but cost you more money in interest in the long run. Another perk of RedCard is free shipping on all Target.com purchases, which can save avid Internet shoppers a substantial amount of dough given the high price of shipping fees these days.

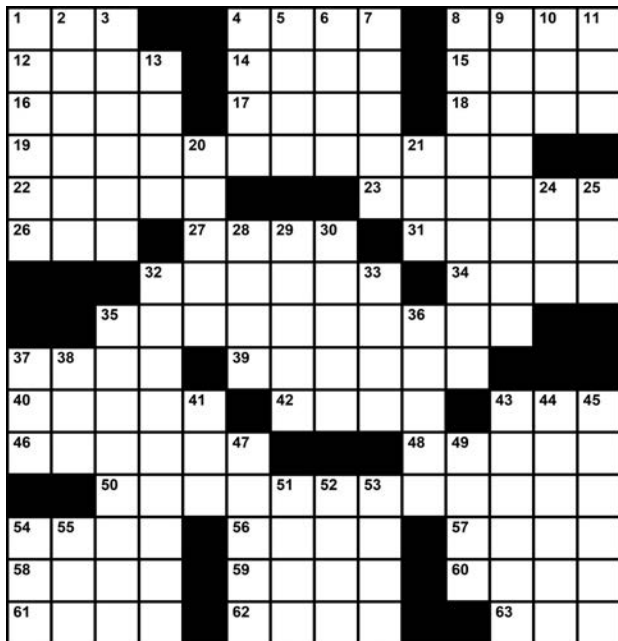
4. Printable Target Coupons

In addition to the generous in-app savings that Target offers, it also includes a section on its website that allows shoppers to print coupons in advance of their visit. To find these coupons, go to Target.com and enter "Target Coupons" in the search bar. Once there, you'll find printable savings on more than 100 items in all categories, from baby and beauty to personal care and pets. Select the deals you'd like then choose whether you'd like to have your order shipped or same-day pickup at your nearest Target.

5. Ibotta App

If you haven't yet discovered Ibotta, it's time you did. This mobile app, compatible with Apple and Android devices, isn't a direct descendant of Target, but it does have a partnership with the company (as well as many other popular shopping, travel and dining brands). Instead of instant savings, however, Ibotta pays you in real cash for redeeming the offers it has available. Ibotta also often has sweepstakes and add-on rebates to up the ante, and those are generally attached to everyday items you need, like bread and milk. Definitely worth the free download if you enjoy getting paid to shop. I've personally received about \$800 cash back in the past five years I've been using it.

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



Mary and Rhoda

QPuzzle

Across

- 1 Facial application
- 4 B in Leviticus
- 8 Mark through
- 12 Straddling
- 14 Toledo's lake
- 15 Big name in pumps
- 16 Hard to come by

- 17 "No" voter
- 18 Trojans' org.
- 19 With 35-Across, Mary Richards, or with 50-Across, Rhoda Morgenstern
- 22 Actress Veronica
- 23 Put your sandwich meat in this
- 26 Princess Leia's dad, as a boy
- 27 Salty white stuff from the Greeks
- 31 Drag queen ___ Hapi

Down

- 1 Style expert Stewart
- 2 Affirmation member, for one
- 3 Maria's scale song
- 4 Hairy one in the den
- 5 Marine birds
- 6 Brother of Janet Jackson
- 7 Condiment company
- 8 One who fears people at Uranus
- 9 Touch lips
- 10 Home o' the brave
- 11 Ode opener
- 13 Cartoon skunk Le Pew
- 20 Fairylike
- 21 Puppy's squeak
- 24 Gay history mo.
- 25 Capt. of industry
- 28 Goes down on
- 29 Bald tire's lack
- 30 Make muddled
- 32 Keener of "Capote"
- 33 "You know how ___"
- 35 Sex toy for a glory hole?
- 36 Like Bernstein, regarding pitches
- 37 Banned bug killer
- 38 Classic auto
- 41 Popular words in Provincetown
- 43 Louise's partner
- 44 "Rhoda" star Valerie
- 45 "Keep your pants on!"
- 47 Most recent legitimately elected president
- 49 Christmas poem opener
- 51 Doug Mattis leap
- 52 Use your mouth unfaithfully
- 53 Musical Horne
- 54 High-speed connection
- 55 "The Simpsons" storekeeper

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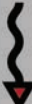
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Walk-in or by Appointment

Affirmations
FERNDALE
5:30PM-8:30PM
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Affirmations
Matrix MAC Health
FERNDALE
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Walk-in or by Appointment

Matrix MAC Health
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Community Connections

Hundreds Flood Affirmations' Pitmann-Puckett Gallery to Celebrate the Life and Works of Gay Artist Charles Alexander

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

An overflowing crowd of hundreds filled the Pitmann-Puckett Gallery at the Affirmations LGBTQ center in Ferndale on Sunday. The occasion: a celebration of the life and work of artist and longtime Between The Lines columnist Charles Alexander. Titled "A Life Well Lived," the show was also held to bring awareness to that fact that Alexander suffered a stroke on Memorial Day, which left him with some residual visual and mobility issues. All proceeds from the event went into the Charles Alexander Health Trust to assist with his recovery and ongoing health issues. Curated by Trenea Flannery Ericson of the Scarab Club, of which Alexander has been a longtime board member, she said that it was a pleasure to put on the show.

"For decades Charles has been a generous artist, mentor and friend, sharing his time, talent and work in support of the organizations and individuals he values," Ericson said. "It did my heart good to see the gallery packed with people in such an outpouring of love and respect for all that he means to this community."

Since his stroke, Alexander has relocated from the Wayne State University area, where he was a fixture for decades, to Henry Ford Village in Dearborn where he continues to recover. However, at the show Alexander appeared to be in good health and spirits sitting at the end of a sort of receiving line to speak to his many friends and fans who visited his side throughout the evening.

Affirmations Executive Director Dave Garcia took to the microphone to thank Charles for his lifetime worth of contributions to Metro Detroit's LGBTQ community.

"Charles, I want to personally thank you for everything you have done for Affirmations and the greater LGBTQ community," he said. "I especially want to thank you for taking me under your wing and always being willing to talk with me and for your advice and counsel throughout the years. You have been a friend and a role

"Charles, I want to personally thank you for everything you have done for Affirmations and the greater LGBTQ community. I especially want to thank you for taking me under your wing and always being willing to talk with me and for your advice and counsel throughout the years. You have been a friend and a role model and everyone in this room today is a better person for having known you."

Affirmations Executive Director Dave Garcia

model and everyone in this room today is a better person for having known you."

Garcia then introduced BTL Co-Publisher and Affirmations founding executive director Jan Stevenson, who was largely responsible for the show.

"The reason we started the center 30 years ago, and the reason it exists today, is because we need each other," Stevenson said. "And now Charles needs us."

In his speech, the 83-year-old Alexander, who came out in the 1950s, spoke of how far the LGBTQ community had come in his lifetime.

"If you had told me then that one day we would have a center, we would have marriage, we would have a church, I'd have said you were crazy," Alexander said.

Over half of the 80 pieces in the gallery that night were sold. The show will remain up for the next two weeks.

To see the show visit Affirmations located at 290 W. Nine Mile Road in Ferndale. Find out more about the Pitmann-Puckett gallery at goaffirmations.org.



Artist Charles Alexander talking with the people who turned out in the hundreds to thank and support him as he recovers from a stroke and heart attack.



Charles Alexander's exhibit will continue for a few weeks at Affirmations Community Center in Ferndale.



Photos Courtesy of Sanda Cook.

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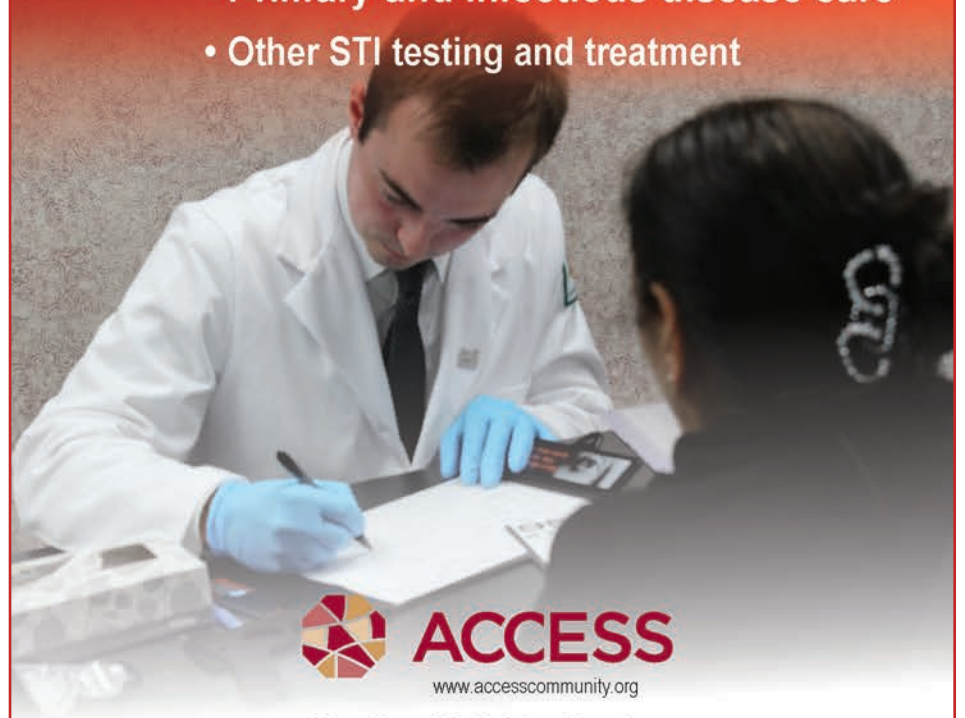


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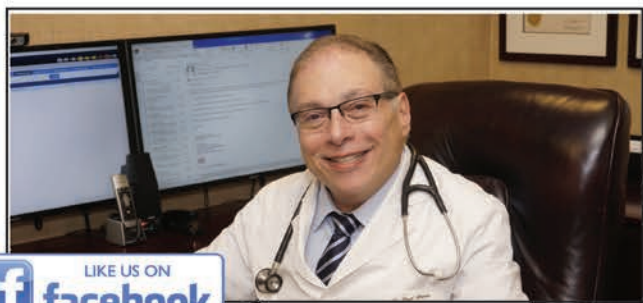
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