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‘Continued, Slow and Steady Growth’

The Affirmations LGBTQ Community Center was dangerously close to closing in 2018, now the center is on track to break \$750K in its 2020 budget.

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Walk into Affirmations in Ferndale today and it’s easy to find it bustling with community members. Simply standing in the lobby as a meeting finishes up or as the building begins to fill with people for an event that can be as varied as an art opening or health fair, it’s clear that the LGBTQ community center is once again functioning as it should. That becomes surprising, however, when one considers the fact that less than a year ago last November Affirmations was on the verge of shutting down entirely. Today, Mike Flores is the nonprofit’s board president. He took on that role initially in 2018 when it became clear that the center was losing money and resources far faster than it was able to replenish them. He said that at that critical stage there were only three goals.

“[One was to] restructure to maintain the center open and provide the most critical services. Number two was basically to increase funding, and number three was to get stable leadership,” Flores said.

By the time Affirmations made it into the first quarter of 2019, the center was operating on limited hours, beginning the process of rebuilding its longstanding donor base via an extended community appeal and hosting regular community chats to weigh in on what the Southeast Michigan community wanted to see changed going forward with its 30-year-old landmark. Perhaps most importantly, they emphasized the qualities they wanted in their next executive director as leadership was still undefined.

“They wanted somebody who had strong ties to Michigan and they wanted somebody who was going to be committed long-term. So that’s exactly what we did when we did [our] search,” Flores said. “We finally selected Dave Garcia, we knew that he had very strong ties to Affirmations because of his previous role at Affirmations, and we also came to a

commitment to each other that this was going to be a long-term role for him. ... So we signed an agreement where we secured leadership stability for the next couple of years and what that did was allow us to focus on a strategy that we can begin to develop between the board, the executive director, staff and the community that we will be able to execute over the long-term.”

Already having served in this role once before, Dave Garcia returned from a stint at the Los Angeles LGBT Center and began his new term on May 1. However, before he set to work officially he re-introduced himself to the community with remarks at the 2019 Spring Bash, Affirmations’ annual black-tie fundraiser. Now, nearing the Fall Fling on Oct. 26, a more casual fundraising event held inside the building that invites guests to mingle with its staff and regulars, and almost a year since the center first dipped into crisis, it was the perfect opportunity to take stock of progress made. Between The Lines met with Garcia and Affirmations’ current staff to get a sense of achievements, current projects and future goals.

Financial Prospects Then and Now

When asked what his biggest surprise was returning to the organization after a five-year period away, Garcia’s answer was quick: “The lack of grants.”

“I agreed to come back when I looked at the numbers, what we had in the bank, and believed that that would give me enough runway to turn things around,” Garcia said. “I did not expect that we would be so anemic when it came to the grants.”

However, it might be argued that institutional knowledge was Garcia’s secret weapon.

“Many of our grant partners have been with us for a decade. And so, I had already been working closely with them for years, so unlike somebody new that they might have recruited



Left to right. Top row: Development Director John Joannette, Development & Community Relations Manager Kyle Taylor, Youth & Education Manager Ian Unger, Affirmations Intern MiShay Jefferson. Bottom row: Executive Director Dave Garcia, Finance Director Audrey Wojtkowiak.

from New York or something, I knew who to go talk to,” Garcia said. “So it was easier in a way to be the one to sit down in front of them and say, ‘Look, I’m back, I’m not going anywhere, I signed a contract. I know you care about Affirmations, you’ve invested so much. You can’t stop now.’ And without exception, we are

batting a thousand on grants [we’ve asked for].”

Garcia said that realistically, that trend won’t be able to continue, but he’s heartened by the fact that the center has raised \$210,000 since he started in May and he’s eager to raise more. That’s in part because he’s been focused on rekindling and fostering relationships with

groups who have historically donated to the center and are invested in its success, too.

John Joannette is a former volunteer and Affirmations' newly hired development director. Having worked as both an executive director and consultant for nonprofits in the past, he said he's seen a trend of those community partners reacting well to that approach.

"We want to be a part of the solution," said the good folks at The Community Foundation, which run our Hope Fund grant that we haven't been a recipient of since Dave was here last time. Basically, the program manager said, "We're willing to help open doors, we want you to be successful." And I think it was just [that at] different times different leadership didn't really take advantage of the good will that people had for this place that I think we're harvesting now."

The Hope Fund endowment is a \$625,000 fund that doesn't get touched unless Affirmations gets at least \$33,000 a year in "investments that come back," Joannette said.

To compare numbers between the crisis and today, at the end of 2018 Garcia said Affirmations had \$45,000 in the bank that was mostly pulled from the center's reserve fund to keep doors open. That compared to the \$533,000 that makes up the center's 2019 budget in revenue, gives Garcia hope for "continued, slow and steady growth."

"We are in a much stronger financial position right now, but now we need a 2020 budget. We need to get back on a normal [path]. Our 2020 budget should be approved by December for the next following year and we will do that. John and I and really the whole staff have worked on that budget, it will be presented to the finance committee in the next couple of weeks. The Finance Committee will recommend it to the Executive Committee who will then recommend it to the full board for a vote in December," Garcia said. "That budget will be approximately \$750,000 in revenue for 2020. So, we are going from basically zero, to \$533,000 at the end of this year, to \$750,000 at the end of next year."

In addition, Affirmations' cash position will be \$150,000 in its checking account by the end of this year, another \$133,000 in a separate account restricted for building maintenance issues only and \$65,000 in a Fidelity investment account.

Current Projects and Long-Term Goals

As critical as revitalizing reliable revenue sources has been for the center's success, Garcia made sure to emphasize that Affirmations' functionality has always rested on its volunteer base.

"For as important as the finance piece was, the reality was our volunteer base was hurting. And Ian Unger and Kyle Taylor, just in the last three months, have recruited almost 100 new volunteers. And we launched a lead volunteer program, which has about 10 volunteers, and they're specially trained to open and close the building, to have a key to the building and in

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large part, because of them. And because of the work they're doing with volunteers that's one of the biggest reasons we've been able to expand the hours Monday through Saturday 10 to 10," Garcia said. "Because when I got here they weren't even open on Mondays and they were closing at 8."

Unger serves as Affirmations' youth and education manager and Taylor is the Center's development and community relations manager. Both were staff members during Affirmations' financial crisis and have since changed their roles, gearing their efforts toward volunteer retention and skills-building among LGBTQ youth.

"Since evolving into my new role that includes being in charge of the volunteer corps, but basically working to improve that. So that is maintaining the trainings, constantly updating them when that needs to be, making sure that we're out at these community events, telling people about the volunteer opportunities," Taylor said. "Making sure we're visible in the community in actually recruiting volunteers who will come back."

At the same time, Unger has been working within the center to develop youth programming, especially related to giving real-world work experience to Southeast Michigan LGBTQ youth. Before restructuring happened, Unger focused on two separate curriculum-based programs: Youth Leadership and Youth Workforce.

"They both covered very similar topics but at different paces, so during the restructuring I actually ended up combining them a lot because of budget and finance and things, but it actually started to grow the program because they were learning both self-advocacy and workforce development skills," Unger said. "And as we looked at it, they were working at the Recess Café downstairs a couple days a week selling concessions, but they weren't getting a whole lot of hands-on experience because it wasn't open all the time so people didn't know to come in. So, we looked at that and started thinking about how they could better get those skills, which is now moving them into the more volunteer base for the hands-on skills where they are at the community resource desk."

Since Affirmations' youth programs allow for young people aged 13 to 22 to participate, Unger has also been working to develop summer internships with fulltime staff at the Center

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

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Larkin Neely Pleads Guilty With Mental Illness to Murder of Gay Man Kevin Wirth

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

LANSING — After two years of uncertainty, last week Larkin Neely reached a plea agreement with the Ingham County Prosecutor's Office for the 2017 murder of Kevin Wirth, an openly gay man, who was stabbed 26 times in his Lansing home. Neely pled guilty but mentally ill to second-degree murder and armed robbery with an agreed-upon sentence of 30 to 60 years. Neely's sentencing hearing is scheduled for Dec. 2.

The incident happened on May 21, 2017, when Neely was visiting Lansing and met Wirth at a local bar. The two went home together, and shortly before 7 a.m. the next morning Wirth's body was found. Hours later Neely was arrested in Detroit. Police found blood on some of Wirth's clothing that was disposed of outside of Neely's Detroit home, as well as DNA evidence inside Neely's Lansing hotel room. Because of Wirth's sexual orientation and the short period of time the two men knew each other, some in the LGBTQ community have suspected that the crime was motivated by anti-LGBTQ bias, which has stirred controversy.

Determining Bias

Emily Dievendorf is an independent political and nonprofit consultant who advocates on behalf of the LGBTQ community. The former executive director of Equality Michigan and president of the Lansing Association for Human Rights, she now serves as treasurer on LAHR's board. She worked directly with the Lansing

two years ago when this case first came to light. She agreed that it has the signs of being a bias crime that might not be first evident to the untrained eye.

"Indicators that are more obvious to those that are trained on recognizing bias that aren't necessarily things like hate symbols or repetitive use of hate slurs [they can be] things like the number of times that somebody has been assaulted. Because one of the things that we do see in hate crime cases against marginalized communities is that unlike other assaults, the assault does not stop when the person has been successfully harmed, it just continues. They are harmed over and over again," Dievendorf said. "So that regardless of the length of the relationship, regardless of whether there is depth of connection or actual intimacy there, it ends up looking and feeling like a crime of passion."

She said that the fact that Wirth's body was both beaten and stabbed more than 20 times suggests that hate was Neely's motivating factor. What also stands out, she said, is that Neely didn't leave the crime scene once he had killed Wirth, he waited until morning.

John Dewane is the deputy chief assistant prosecutor in Ingham County and worked directly on this case. He said that although hate may have been Neely's motive it isn't something that is provable.

"I don't know the motive behind Larkin Neely — Larkin said some things in his forensic interview at the forensic center and with other experts that, obviously, he had some mental illness going on and he was somewhat

delusional. Kevin told him when they left [that he] was homosexual — I think Larkin wanted to go find some ladies and Kevin said, 'Well, I think I can help you do that. There's a different bar.' And, eventually, I think Kevin got him back to the house probably with the intention of hooking up with him," Dewane said. "And I don't know if, Larkin, his motivation to going back was to kill him because he was homosexual — I can't prove that. ... Or maybe Kevin said something to him of a sexual nature and maybe at that point Larkin said, 'You know what? I'm gonna kill him.'"

Initially, after an evaluation by a psychologist, Dewane said, Neely was found to be unfit to stand trial due to mental illness because "the psychologist there opined that he did suffer a mental illness and a thought disorder and then she said, basically, [it] really comes down to whether the jury believes that whether Kevin Wirth came on sexually to Larkin."

"And then Larkin, if he responded by acting in self-defense, then he wasn't legally insane because he was doing what a rational person would do and [that would be to] defend themselves. But she also flipped around and said, 'However, if Larkin Neely was delusional at the time — meaning that Kevin never came onto him — then he was insane because he wasn't in reality,'" Dewane said. "I didn't agree with that opinion, so we went and hired our own independent expert and he opined that, conservatively, he thought that Larkin had a mental illness — I think it was schizophrenia, bipolar disorder — but that he was not legally insane. But he also opined that he was

criminally responsible."

Antiquated Defense

Neely's intention before his plea deal was to claim that he killed Wirth in self-defense that action could be interpreted as an attempt to use the "gay panic defense."

The initial psychological evaluation as recounted by Dewane, seemed to support his actions as "sane."

"The LGBTQ+ panic defense strategy (also called the 'gay panic defense' or 'trans panic defense') is a legal strategy that asks a jury to find that a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity/expression is to blame for a defendant's violent reaction, including murder," says The National LGBT Bar Association. "It is not a free-standing defense to criminal liability, but rather a legal tactic used to bolster other defenses. When a perpetrator uses an LGBTQ+ panic defense, they are claiming that a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity not only explains — but excuses — a loss of self-control and the subsequent assault. By fully or partially acquitting the perpetrators of crimes against LGBTQ+ victims, this defense implies that LGBTQ+ lives are worth less than others."

When asked if he thought this was the intention of the defendant, Dewane said that he had not heard of the defense before but after looking it up he found that several states have banned its use — not Michigan, however. He said that what was more likely was that Neely's attorneys would attempt to argue that Neely had "diminished capacity" — an argument that

says the mental capacity of the accused was diminished to the point that they did not have the intent required to commit the crime.

“In Michigan, we don’t have diminished capacity, so that defense wouldn’t slide anyway,” Dewane said. “He could possibly argue manslaughter that in the heat of the passion of the moment made him react the way he did, and in law school the basic example is that you come home and you find your significant other — your partner, your wife, whatnot — in bed with somebody else and you just flip out and murder somebody. That’s the classic law school example for manslaughter, but that defense was never mentioned by the defendant’s attorney. And I Googled it and was looking at it in case I had to do a motion limiting to strike that defense, but his defense was always going to be either insanity or self-defense or both.”

Dewane went on to add that had Neely’s legal team attempted to argue self-defense that he would have fought against that claim as well.

“My position was Kevin Wirth never sexually came on to Larkin Neely,” Dewane said. “That’s my position, because Kevin Wirth sent text messages to his neighbor and three of his friends indicating that he was scared to death that he was going to be murdered and he was scared that he needed to find a weapon to protect himself, that he was going to set his alarm, that he had never felt so endangered. And, to me, you’re not going to hit on another person or come on to another person if you’re fearful of being killed by that person. It just doesn’t make sense.”

American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan LGBT Staff Attorney Jay Kaplan offered insight onto the case as well. He said that because Michigan does not have a specific bar on the gay panic defense coupled with the fact that Neely pleaded guilty makes it difficult to say whether or not that was the intention of Neely’s attorneys. Still, because it’s not explicitly banned in Michigan, it could have been a possibility.

Learning From Tragedy

Dievendorf said that despite the difficulty of proving whether this case was a hate crime and that Neely intended to present a biased form of defense, this case is a learning opportunity. She said it provides an example of what to look for in cases that might not outwardly appear as a hate crime and to make more law enforcement officials aware of the antiquated gay panic defense.

“We can always do better in the way that we respond to possible bias incidents. And really, every community should have a possible bias incident response plan where the law enforcement community is working with the community that is potentially impacted by the incident. And I was working with the chief on this, that is how I was involved at all, so there was communication happening,” she said. “But, unfortunately, we didn’t have that

“We can always do better in the way that we respond to possible bias incidents. And really, every community should have a possible bias incident response plan where the law enforcement community is working with the community that is potentially impacted by the incident.”

- Emily Dievendorf

same communication happening with the prosecutor. So there wasn’t that help in looking for indicators; there wasn’t that training to make sure that the prosecutors knew of the things to look for.”

Dievendorf went on to explain that she became well-versed in identifying hate crimes when she was in her role as executive director of Equality Michigan. In particular, she dealt with identifying the signs of a hate crime for transgender women of color.

“When hate crimes happen to marginalized people they are especially ugly, especially cruel,” she said. “Because, so often, when a trans woman of color is finally found they’ve not just been murdered they’ve been burned, they’ve been dismembered, and we don’t like to talk about it because it’s triggering, because it reminds us of how the world sees the LGBTQ community, but that’s also the truth of it. And it’s also so clearly illustrative of a hate crime and what makes a hate crime different, because that is truly the message to a larger community.”

Dievendorf said that communities across Michigan looking to make a difference in future cases should develop a potential bias incident response plan, which she hopes to one day implement in Lansing and “would love to do an inventory of any and all forms related to investigations and what our prosecutors ought to be doing.” She also said that she’s heartened by the fact that Fair Michigan, a nonprofit that works to prosecute hate crimes in the State of Michigan, just recently expanded its services to Ingham County.

“I really think that the work that Fair Michigan is doing, if we can try to expand that to as many counties as possible just to make sure that we can get as many cases that come up going through the system in a more effective and efficient way, that will have people at least taking these cases more seriously so that we can start trying to reform the system,” she said.

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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Bases Loaded for Prophet Jones

Editor's note: This was originally published in October 2011.

On several sporty occasions I've dined at Angelina's Restaurant in Downtown Detroit with BTL co-publishers Jan and Susan, loyal Tigers baseball fans.

From our window-side table, the Comerica Park pre-game fireworks are spectacular to watch (as are many of the attendee pinch hitters parading by in cutoffs for my "out" fielder benefit).

Grrrrrr! The Tigers got close this year, but not close enough. (I was downtown when the team won the '68 World Series. The celebration was wild; pitcher Denny McLain a hero, whose future seemed bright, promising, a natural for the Baseball Hall of Fame.)

On our last visit I cashed a twenty at the bar and recalled that Angelina's was once the Madison Theater. Where I stood was its lobby, and there, years ago in my late teens, I got a special "blessing" from the Rev. James Francis Jones. Prophet Jones (1908 - 1971).

When I approached Prophet Jones he was alone. I hadn't a clue why he was unescorted, but I recognized him from TV and newspaper pictures. "Aren't you Prophet Jones?" I boldly asked. He was cordial, gracious, conservatively dressed. Soft-spoken in voice, cultured in diction.

As a lark I asked for a blessing. He gave me a who-is-this-presumptive-white-kid look, and said, "Thirty years fallow, twenty years a harvest of your good." He also invited me to call his secretary and make an appointment to visit his fabulous 54-room Arden Park mansion. I never did.

Jones's flamboyant lifestyle as a preacher was both praised and damned in Time, Newsweek, Saturday Evening Post, Ebony, Pittsburgh Courier, Detroit mainstream and African-American newspapers. He was controversial. Flamboyant! Possibly, well, you know ...

Although he received birthday greetings from Michigan Gov. G. Mennen Williams and was an invited guest at Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1952 presidential inauguration, many African-American civil and religious leaders called him a con artist.

Jones wore one gold earring (God whispered into his right ear), ruled from an ornate \$5300 throne, wore a full-length mink coat - price tag \$13,500 - a gift from Chicago schoolteacher sisters whose mother he had healed before coming to Detroit in 1938.

He held court at the Universal Triumph, the Dominion of God, Inc., with his flock of lords, ladies, princesses and princes (and presumably queens) at the Oriole Theater, a renovated movie house. Doors were locked to keep drowsy royalty and commoners from sneaking away during the three-hours-long midnight telecast services. He preached that Mary was black, that she was turned away from the inn because of racial discrimination, and that Jesus was not crucified but lynched.

Jones's followers couldn't join social clubs, drink coffee or alcohol, or bear children out of wedlock. They could, however, be patriotic. (They purchased over \$12,000 in Victory Bonds during World War II.) The Prophet was suspected of dealing in the numbers racket, and an undercover cop was assigned to

See next page



Transmissions

On Being Trans at Halloween



BY GWENDOLYN ANN SMITH

Halloween is a time of magic and mystery. Traditionally, it once served as the end of the year, where autumn — and the abundance of the harvest — gave way to the dark and dim days of winter. In that liminal space between the seasons, one could get a moment to pierce the veil between other states, even between life and death itself.

It was a time for communing with spirits, and finding out great secrets from the great beyond. In short, this was when what may be hidden could be revealed.

The holiday today is largely one for adult pursuits, as fears of drug, poison or sharp items in Halloween candy — coupled with the crippling fears of "the other" that seem to pervade our ill society — have led us to all-but-bar children from enjoying this annual ritual beyond carefully supervised events.

Meanwhile, adults take to wearing costumes throughout their day. A entire industry is focused on providing "sexy" version of just about any pop culture noun in existence, and parties allow adults to hit their favorite alcohol rather than trading "fun size" candies.

When I was a child, more decades ago than I wish to consider, Halloween was a somewhat different affair. The idea of it as an adult affair was largely foreign, as kids dominated the holiday.

In my neighborhood, we'd eagerly await dusk, when we'd have full reign of the semi-suburban streets I called home. We'd hit all the homes we could, bringing home buckets chock-full of candy.

My parents would usually make my costume. It was usually delegated to my mom to do the sewing, while my dad would sometimes be drafted to work up something special, like securing fake blood and painting a widow's peak on me for a vampire look one year, or wiring up some tiny light bulbs for the time I hit the streets as a Star Wars "Jawa" character.

As much attention as my parents put into these costumes, of course, I really wanted one of the cheap mask-and-smock costumes available at the local five-and-dime, displaying whatever character was hot that year.

Then, one year, my mom made a costume suggestion that shook me to the core: she suggested she could dress me up like a girl.

As much as you might think otherwise, this suggestion terrified me.

By this point in my young trans life, I'd already tried my hand in my mom's makeup drawer, as well as a stash of old 1960s-era party dresses. I was a "latchkey" kid, and had many

See Transmissions, continued on p. 9

Creep Of The Week

Mitch McConnell

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is a very busy man. Granted, it might not seem that way on the surface. After all, the Senate hasn't passed shit when it comes to legislation lately, despite the fact that the U.S. House, controlled by Democrats, has been busy passing laws.

In fact, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer called McConnell the "grim reaper" overseeing the "legislative graveyard" that is the Senate.

While it's true that McConnell could be spending his days sending legislation to the Senate floor for a vote, he isn't.

McConnell doesn't GAF about legislation because he's focused on one thing only: the courts. And he's been very busy speeding Trump's judicial nominees through the confirmation process.

Let me back up for a moment and remind you that we are living through a true Constitutional crisis. The Trump presidency is a fucking nightmare we cannot wake up from and even some Republicans are now saying, "Huh, maybe having a crimey crime crimer for president is actually bad." Some brave souls have even taken to calling out Trump on secret Twitter accounts (hi Mitt).

Though McConnell isn't exactly smack talking Trump (except when it comes to Syria), there is absolutely no way he thinks that this president is sane or that this presidency is sustainable.

But Republicans have been very clear for decades that they aren't interested in governing. They run on the platform that government is never the solution and always the problem, and they have been very determined on proving that through their sheer incompetence and corruption.

Running the country doesn't interest them, but having power? That's their bag. And after the Republican party implodes with the eventual fall of Trump the only way to prevent progressive policies that Democrats will enact once in power is through the courts. Remember how McConnell stole a Supreme Court seat from President Obama? It was the most brazen heist in modern political history, and McConnell pulled it off, leaving the door open for Trump to nominate a conservative justice. And then another one. Both were confirmed.

As Paul Waldman wrote in the Washington Post on Oct. 14, "No matter what policy issue you think is most important — health care, climate change, reproductive rights, gun violence, immigration, workers' rights or anything else — its fate will be determined by the Supreme Court."

The LGBTQ community knows this all too well. We have seen great gains through Supreme Court rulings in recent years. And the issues of trans rights and employment rights are before the court right now.

And while the Supreme Court is, of course, the Golden Goose, all of those lower courts are important, too. And the Republicans have been

... where the ABA saw unqualified candidates, Republicans saw people who were qualified in fighting against LGBTQ people, abortion and immigrants. They want judges who will uphold the status quo, judges who will side with corporations, judges who will help cement the wealth hoarding of the 1 percent ...

rubber stamping any and all nominees Trump puts forth. They know that the presidency is on fire but they are going to confirm justices until they are overcome by flames, and then they'll keep on doing it from hell.

The latest is Justin Walker who Republicans are very keen on giving a lifetime seat on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Kentucky, even though the American Bar Association rated him as "not qualified."

According to Jennifer Bendery, HuffPost's Senior Politics Reporter, such a rating is "rare and embarrassing."

Walker is 37. Which means he could serve for 30 or 40 or even 50 or more years.

The nonpartisan ABA cited Walker's lack of trial and courtroom experience as reasons for their rating issuing this third-degree burn: "Based on review of his biographical information and conversations with Mr. Walker, it was challenging to determine how much of his 10 years since graduation from law school has been spent in the practice of law."

So who in the hell recommend this guy?

As Bendery reports, one day after the ABA rating came out, Mitch McConnell tweeted: "This is unquestionably the most outstanding nomination that I've ever recommended to Presidents to serve on the bench in Kentucky."

Yep, that's right. This guy who caused the the ABA to ask, "Uh, do you even law, bro?" is the "most outstanding" guy McConnell could think of.

According to Bendery, "Since Trump became president, Senate Republicans have confirmed at least four lifetime federal judges who earned 'not qualified' ratings from the ABA."

This is not normal. But where the ABA saw unqualified candidates, Republicans saw people who were qualified in fighting against LGBTQ people, abortion and immigrants. They want judges who will uphold the status quo, judges who will side with corporations, judges who will help cement the wealth hoarding of the 1 percent, judges who do everything they can to keep our government from working for the people.

So, yeah, McConnell may be a grim reaper, but it isn't due to inaction on his part. Killing Democracy is his business, and business is good.

► Transmissions

Continued from p. 8

hours at my disposal. I had also become an expert at removing makeup within mere seconds, saving myself from any awkward questions that might come my way.

This suggestion made me question just how well I had done, and if this was some test my mother was putting forth. I could not help but assume there was an ulterior motive in play, and I feared what it all meant.

What's more, if I were to show up, dressed as a girl for Halloween, the bullies who had by even this time labeled me the school queer, would have had a field day. I knew the taunts would be louder and the punches harder.

There was, of course, a third option, and one that frightened me the most: I already know how I felt and had already heard of transgender people. I feared I may likely be trans. I knew that once I experienced this, even just that one night of being out in the open, my life might never be the same.

I knew that Halloween was a time of magic and mystery, and I feared just what may be revealed about me.

It would be another decade-and-a-half before I would work up the courage to have that experience, wearing a hand-made "Belle" costume to an event at a local trans support group, then later at the nearest trans-friendly nightclub.

I am somewhat disappointed to admit that no incredible transformations took, as I remained — physically, at least — the

same person I was. Also, by that point, the genie was already out of the bottle, and my trans self was no longer a dark secret.

A decade or two later, this experience is old hat for me. The magic and mystery may remain, but I find myself with precious few secrets to reveal on Oct. 31.

Yet I know that for a great many more, this may be that year when they first end up experiencing a possibility they may have only dreamed of, something they never thought possible, revealed under the light of a Halloween moon.

Maybe they too have experienced the fear of revealing themselves in a city not ready for them, or to parents who would not be ready to accept if their child's costume was something more, some outward sign of who they truly were within.

If this Halloween will be the first time you've been able to reveal your truth, I wish you nothing but success, and I hope the mystery of Halloween carries you to a place of happiness.

If you don't yet feel you can reveal yourself this year, understand, too, that this is OK. In these times, being safe and well is an important thing. Halloween will come again, and one day you may be ready for it.

Finally, if a friend or family member of yours decides that this year is a time to share a part of themselves they've long since kept hidden, show your support and your love. In short: be a part of the magic.

Gwen Smith has no costume plans for 2019. You'll find her at gwensmith.com.

► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 8

gather details.

The novice vice cop, John Henry, a butch 24, uncovered little evidence of numbers involvement by Jones, other than giving out three-digit Bible verses for donations of \$5, \$10 and \$20. Unfortunately, Jones blessed Henry's exposed ripcord when they were alone during a private healing service, or so the paratrooper-turned-vice-cop alleged.

"Prophet Jones Jailed on Morals Charge" blared the Feb. 21, 1956, banner Free Press headline, with other papers gleefully tooting in. Thanks to a smart lawyer, the jury found Prophet Jones not guilty. It was a case of entrapment, pure (but not so simple).

As Jones left the courtroom in dark glasses his followers chanted, "All is well, prophet." But they were wrong. No matter who you bail out with, you can't walk on water without sinking. (Especially in high heels.) Oh, yes! The Prophet's late-'60s church venue is the Fine Arts building, currently housing the Detroit ACLU office. (Glory Be!)

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.

Transgender Actress Sophie White Talks Acting Origins, Upcoming Projects

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Before Sophie White began professionally telling stories as an actress and filmmaker she had a career as varied as the characters she portrays on screen. At one point racing motorcycles and doing boxing promotion, White has also worked as a first responder and started her own chiropractic practice. But even though White's film and TV career spans 20 years it's not likely she's immediately recognizable to the average viewer. That's because she not only got her start behind the camera but because she recently started transitioning from male to female, too.

But if it seems that being openly transgender would limit White from landing parts, her fall schedule is proof that she's keeping busy. This month alone the Louisiana-based actress is set to debut as a guest star on NBC's "Chicago Med" and appear on TNT's "Tell me Your Secrets," while in November fans can see her live in the New Orleans play "Transcripts." BTL caught up with White to learn more about her acting style and how she got her start.

Creative Beginnings

Twenty years ago, although White was a creative person, making content for film and TV was not something she had considered. It was her brother who first came to her with the idea.

"He was starting a TV station and he wanted me to help with equipment. Me and a cousin of mine bought a whole bunch of equipment and we helped start a TV station and, basically, the business didn't do well and we wound up going bankrupt. And we had a whole bunch of equipment and it was either fire selling it or learning how to use it," White said. "So, we started learning how to use it and I did TV for a little while and I wound up transferring over to movies."

That decision turned out to be a match made in heaven and soon White was working on a variety of projects, including eight movies

with actor John Schneider, in various roles behind the camera. In 2017 that hard work paid off and she won the Writer of the Year at a New Orleans film festival. That ended up being a catalyst for one of White's most life-changing projects.

"When I was at the film festival a friend of mine was there and we were talking and I pitched him an idea called 'Hummingbird,' and 'Hummingbird' is loosely based on my story," White said.

At the time, although White knew she was a transgender woman, she had been battling with telling her friends and family and had been closeted. Her struggle even got her to the point of suicidal ideation, but at that point she wasn't even out to the friend to whom she pitched the idea.

"He loved the script and said, 'Let's see if we can get this thing made,' and he said, 'Let's make a proof of concept' — about 10 minutes of the movie just so you can find people to invest in it. And he said he could find half the money if I could find the other half."

But two weeks before the project was set to shoot, half of the money fell through. White suggested that they continue as far as possible without the other half in the bank. To save costs, White decided to play the lead and before she knew it, she was auditioning for various other parts. She had kick-started her acting career. Unfortunately, "Hummingbird" never saw full production despite White's well-received acting because a transgender consultant on the film died by suicide.

"Two weeks after we finished shooting, she committed suicide. This ripped the heart out of the project. And now it lingers in a box waiting on completion of post-production. I wish I would have picked up on the clues that she was that bad off," White said in an interview with Big Easy Magazine. "However, 'Hummingbird' has sent me on a journey of a lifetime and for that I am grateful. I have only been really acting since last year."



Flooded With Opportunities

White is the first to recognize that recently she's been experiencing quite the influx of roles.

"I'm getting stuff from all over the place, it seems like the universe has kind of opened up to me and I guess embracing who I am has been really good for me. I've had a very easy transition compared to a lot of people that I know," she said.

She said that she feels grateful that she hasn't lost any family or friends after coming out as transgender officially in January. Having taken hormones sporadically for years, it's only been a few months that White has felt comfortable enough to be open about regularly taking them and been able to dress as authentically herself. She said that when she first got interested in acting it served as an avenue to explore her true identity.

"I actually started trying to do it about 10 years ago and I wasn't really able to because I wasn't ready to. I auditioned one time, and

my first audition was an eight-page part. We shot the movie and it was a reason for me to dress as female — that's what I used it as. But after that movie I just wasn't ready," she said. "I was still really, really in the closet at that point and nobody really knew anything. And so, that's kind of where I started with that and then I kind of just stepped back into the closet."

It was last year, after dealing with some family issues, that White said she began to reflect on being unable to come out to members of her family who had died. She said that reflection served as a wake-up call to come out and start following her passions.

When asked how she approaches screen time, White said that her journey has made a wide range of emotions easy to access for her. In a way, it's a double-edged sword, she said.

"That's been my biggest issue, because one thing about suppressing emotions for 20 or 30 years when you do let them out, they tend to sit on your shoulders," she said. "They're very accessible to me because I held them for so long and when they came out, they came out with a vengeance."

Despite that struggle, however White said she's pleasantly surprised at the fact that she's not only working, but able to reach so many audiences. She said she hopes her work will help broader audiences understand more about transgender people in general.

"I just hope people can understand who we are and just see us as somebody who wants the best for our families and ourselves and being who we are without people going crazy on us. There are still transgender people who are killed every year just because they're trans, you know? And I think that's going to be around a while," she said. "Forty-six percent of us attempt suicide and that's basically one in two. And that's attempt, not think about it — I think 100 percent think about suicide. But 46 percent actually attempt suicide, which is a crazy number. And being trans is not that big of a deal, and it's just something I want to focus on and try to get a handle on to where we can reduce that number to, hopefully, nothing."

ACLU of Michigan Our Movement, Our Moment 2019 Dinner

BTL STAFF

Transgender people belong. Abortion is health care. No human is illegal. Everyone deserves a second chance. These are the values that the American Civil Liberties Union fights for and rights that it serves to protect. On Friday, Nov. 1, at The Henry Ford Museum, the ACLU of Michigan will host its annual 2019 dinner.

The event's keynote speaker is the Rev. Dr.

William J. Barber II.

"A riveting warrior for social justice, Rev. Dr. Barber calls on all of us to be the 'moral defibrillators of our time.' His Poor People's Campaign has inspired thousands across the U.S. to come together in support of the rights of immigrants, LGBTQ people and women; against mass incarceration and for voting rights; and for a 'revolution of values,' in which no one is left behind," write ALCU organizers. "Rev. Dr. Barber is also a contributing op-ed writer

for the New York Times and the Washington Post and is a 2018 MacArthur Fellow."

The 2019 honorees include Lamonte Card who was released from prison after 25 years and now fights for voting reform in the Promote the Vote Campaign.

"Lamonte's extraordinary commitment to civic engagement is a model for us all," organizers said.

Vicki Moore is also an honoree. She has been a champion for abortion access since before

Roe v. Wade.

"She is a courageous fighter for reproductive freedom in Michigan," the ACLU wrote. "Providing advocacy and abortion care for women in mid-Michigan for decades despite relentless attacks."

The event will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a cocktail reception with the full program beginning at 7:30 p.m. Find out more about The ACLU and its event online at aclumich.org.

► Affirmations

Continued from p. 5

for the especially dedicated and “outstanding” youth who have shown a passion for their work. Available internships provide real-world experience with existing Affirmations staff, so youth can get experience in fields like programming, development, facilities, marketing and communications.

“And not only that, they have the staff’s supervisor who can be a reference for them, who can write a letter of recommendation for them. We can do mock interviews for them. We’re already talking to folks like Quicken Loans and Flagstar Bank that are willing to give internships to them when they’re done with the program,” Garcia said.

And beyond current programming changes, Garcia said he’s excited to debut the Affirmations Angels or the Aff-Angels. He said that this would be a specially trained volunteer group dedicated to aiding elderly members of the Affirmations community.

“Our largest group that meets here right now is the Senior Koffee Klatch, and our senior community is growing exponentially and getting older and they need help. And while Los Angeles had 200 affordable housing apartments and 15,000 people in their senior program, just because we can’t go to that scale doesn’t mean we can’t help our seniors,” he said. “[They] would help sick people with small chores like laundry and groceries and picking up medication and taking them to the doctors and light food prep and things like that. Only this would be trained volunteers, paid stipend volunteers.”

Currently, SAGE Metro Detroit has agreed to aid in the training of the volunteers alongside American Indian Health and Family Services. This dual method would allow the volunteers to be well-versed in crisis training so that not only could LGBTQ seniors be helped, but Affirmations’ crisis line be reopened.

“Affirmations, for many, many years had a help line. I understand that people with good intentions [decided to remove it] but I don’t think it should have gone away. I think it should evolve to the sign of the times,” Garcia said. “So, those volunteers will also be trained, so if a call comes in to an Aff-Angels call to be set up with a chore for a senior like picking up groceries. But if a crisis call comes in, they’ll also be able to take that call.”

As of right now, Garcia said that funding is being allocated toward that new volunteer branch and he hopes to debut it as early as January of 2020.

Solidifying Institutional Memory

Though for right now Affirmations seems to be demonstrating forward progress, it has suffered in the past from a lack of institutional memory. When asked what processes are being put in place to guarantee Affirmations can

“The budget will be approximately \$750,000 in revenue for 2020. So, we are going from basically zero, to \$533,000 at the end of this year, to \$750,000 at the end of next year.”

- Affirmations Executive Director, Dave Garcia

continue to thrive long after the current staff and board members have left their positions, Joannette said it’s all about implementing effective systems and methods, whether old or new, and developing processes of maintaining them.

“What we’re all trying to work for in our own realms is to have that longevity in those systems in place,” he said.

He gave an example of the donor database as something being worked on to ensure its effectivity for years to come.

“What Kyle’s doing with me and Dave is to make sure that for our top 100 prospects, plus a little bit of a deeper dive, we have a history of contacts we made. We know where we left off with our major donors, what the next touchpoint is, that detail stuff that hasn’t been done in a while, and that’s something that moves forward regardless of the personnel. It’s that living, breathing document and system that moves forward that helps us to not be in the position ever again,” Joannette said. “And that takes time to do that, but we’re getting there. And it has already been proven that I can’t remember every last detail about a donor, but collectively, because we’ve been capturing this stuff, we’ve been able to do a much more thorough job.”

Beyond those efforts, former staff and volunteers like Cass Varner and Kat LaTosch have been reinstated in various roles to ensure that the center follows its former course. But perhaps getting back to the origins of the Fall Fling is the first Center-wide step to getting back some of Affirmations’ old traditions. The upcoming Oct. 26 Wizard of Wine event for which admission costs only two bottles of wine might sound like a new event, but Garcia said “it’s actually an old thing” to encourage people to discover the new center.

“I started the Fall Fling my last time here and it was really in response to the Spring Bash, which can be expensive for people. So, to have another event that people could afford, no matter who you are, we started the Fall Fling,” Garcia said. “And last year we sold tickets, but that kind of gets away from the spirit of why we started it in the first place for anybody to come. And you don’t have to bring two bottles of wine if you’re in recovery, you can bring two bottles of grape juice or whatever you want. That’s Oct. 26. It’s going to be packed; it’s going to be a huge party. We’ll have entertainment and food and, of course, wine.”

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Costa Rica Campaign Seeks to Bolster Marriage Equality Support

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

More than 30 groups have joined a campaign designed to increase support for marriage rights for same-sex couples in Costa Rica.

Sí, Acepto (“Yes I accept” in Spanish) formally launched in August and includes ads that feature LGBTI Costa Ricans’ relatives, friends and teammates. The campaign also includes workshops on the issue that will take place across the country.

“This first phase is real stories that talk about (people)’s experience as a dad, as a mom, as an uncle, as a brother, etc., when they realized someone in their family was gay or lesbian,” Sí, Acepto Project Manager Gia Miranda told the Washington Blade last month during a WhatsApp interview from Costa Rica.

Miranda added those featured in the ads also talk about how they “now understand” their loved one’s sexual orientation or gender identity “doesn’t change their love for that person one bit.”

Freedom to Marry Global has also provided support to the campaign.

“Advocates in Costa Rica have built a powerful campaign rooted in conversation as the engine of change,” Evan Wolfson, founder of Freedom to Marry, told the Blade in a statement. “It’s been proven time and time again — in the U.S. and across many countries in Latin America — that when people hear why marriage matters to their gay and lesbian neighbors, as it does to them, and talk about personal stories and shared values, support for the freedom to marry grows.”



More than 30 groups have joined a campaign in support of marriage rights for same-sex couples in Costa Rica. (Photo courtesy of Gia Miranda/Sí, Acepto)

Costa Rica lawmakers face 2020 marriage deadline

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which is based in the Costa Rican capital of San José, in January 2018 issued a landmark ruling that recognized same-sex marriage and transgender rights.

Then-Costa Rican Vice President Ana Helena Chacón announced her government was going to comply with the ruling, which the court announced weeks before the first round of the country’s presidential election.

Carlos Alvarado, who publicly supports marriage rights for same-sex couples, was elected president of Costa Rica in April 2018. His opponent in the election’s second round, Fabricio Alvarado, made his opposition to the issue a centerpiece of his campaign.

The country’s Supreme Court last November gave members of the Costa Rica National Assembly a deadline of May 26, 2020, to extend marriage rights to same-sex couples before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights’ decision takes effect.

Opposition to marriage rights for same-sex couples remains high in Costa Rica, even though the country is seen as a champion of human rights in the region.

Costa Rica this month challenged Venezuela’s campaign for a seat on the U.N. Human Rights Council. The Washington Post on Thursday reported Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza said his embattled government “faced a ferocious campaign” after the country won with the support of Cuba and other allies.

Protests against the government of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, began in April 2018. Nicaraguan LGBTI rights advocates are among those who have fled to Costa Rica since the protests and the crackdown against them began.

“Costa Rica is a very important pillar for all of us in Central America,” Miranda told the Blade, while adding that conservative and anti-LGBTI attitudes persist. “Costa Rica is a pillar for human rights.”

Wolfson said he remains confident the campaign will pave the way for same-sex couples to legally marry in the country.

“As Costa Rica prepares to usher in a new era of recognition and respect for all families, the Sí, Acepto campaign will ensure that this landmark marriage victory will unite the country under the shared values of the Costa Rican people,” he told the Blade.

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



Northern Ireland Marriage Equality Law Takes Effect

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

A law that extends marriage rights to same-sex couples in Northern Ireland took effect on Tuesday.

Northern Ireland’s Stormont Parliament has not met since the country’s coalition government collapsed in 2017. The British Parliament in July voted to force Northern Ireland to allow gays and lesbians to tie the knot and to decriminalize abortion.

Same-sex couples have been able to legally marry in England, Wales and Scotland since 2014.

Ireland in 2015 became the first country in the world to extend marriage rights to same-sex couples through a popular vote. The BBC reported the first same-sex

weddings in Northern Ireland are expected to take place early next year.

“Change has finally come today and we are on the way to being equal with our fellow citizens,” tweeted Belfast Pride on Tuesday. “It has taken many years of work to get this far.”

Paul Twocock, chief executive of Stonewall, a British LGBTQ advocacy group, also applauded the law.

“LGBT people in Northern Ireland have waited for too long for marriage equality and we can’t wait to see same-sex couples across Northern Ireland marrying the person they love,” said Twocock in a statement.

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

SAGE, AARP Michigan Co-Hosted '50 Years After Stonewall' Symposium

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

SAGE Metro Detroit, the agency for LGBTQ older adults, and AARP Michigan co-hosted a symposium titled "50 Years After Stonewall" on Saturday, Oct. 19. The symposium took place at Wayne State University's Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences building in the Detroit Medical Center area. Dozens showed up for the afternoon panel discussion. The subject: Where Do We Go From Here?

Moderated by SAGE Metro Detroit Executive Director Angie Perone, panelists for the discussion included Cassandra Cantave from AARP, Kai Daniels from GM Ventures, SAGE Metro Detroit Training and Education Manager Judy Lewis, Jey'nce Poindexter Mizrahi from Equality Michigan, community activist Austin Williams and SAGE Metro Detroit Board Treasurer Cornelius Wilson.

Perone started the discussion off by asking the panel what they saw as the biggest obstacles for the LGBT community moving forward and how panelists would recommend overcoming them.

"One of the biggest issues is the lack of data – quality data – on LGBT folks and their experiences" Cantave said. "We really don't have any good federal data. At the organization where I work, AARP, we definitely try to do a lot of research so that way we can be a credible source."

What makes the LGBTQ community unique, said Daniels, is its intersectionality.

"It's so much of everything coming into one place and we make a united community able to love and care for each other," she said. "That's something that we have to continue to build on as we're moving into this fourth industrial age. There's so much changing, from a technology standpoint, from a social standpoint and we're bringing the rich history of knowledge of our elders in the community that have an understanding, a real life experience in practical applications, to how to really make it as an LGBT American or how to live open or out.

"As we start to move forward and we start to think about how we can learn from both sides of the table, how we can learn from all generations and all sides of the intersectionality that makes the LGBT so beautiful," Daniels continued.

The challenge, said Lewis, is getting young and older adults talking to each other, and in getting older LGBTQ adults to become active members of the LGBT community in general.

"If there are 65,000 older LGBT adults in Southeast Michigan and we get 35-40 at the Senior Koffee Klatch, where are the other 65,965, because I need a date for New Year's Eve," she said with a laugh. "I've been alone for 10 years and the time is now."

Once the laughter died down, Lewis turned serious.

"Talk to your friends and involve them," she said. "Have house parties and talk about how you can get involved with an agency that is working 110 percent to better your lives."

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Photo: Matthew Placek

'Hedwig' Creator John Cameron Mitchell Brings 'Origin of Love' Show to Ann Arbor, Plus Live Penny Stamps Interview

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

You very well may have uncovered a truer you thanks to John Cameron Mitchell. Maybe it happened while you were experiencing some kind of divine queer intervention through soul-searching heroine Hedwig Robinson, who comes into herself after making the most of a botched sex change in one of cinema's greatest slow burns, "Hedwig and the Angry Inch." (The project only became lucrative for Mitchell as a Broadway smash 13 years after his indie cult film premiered in 2001.) Or maybe the real queer sex in 2006's "Shortbus," which took shame out of human sexuality, stimulated your own queer sexual awakening.

Mitchell's career has also included directing Nicole Kidman in 2010's "Rabbit Hole" and

co-writing, co-producing and directing the 2017 sci-fi punk rom-com "How to Talk to Girls at Parties." His TV credits include "The Good Fight," HBO's "Girls" and Hulu's "Shrill."

But "Anthem: Homunculus" is another animal altogether. Mitchell styled the project as a radio play, engaging the imagination while relying only on voice and music to tell his emotional story. Available via the Luminary podcast app, the darkly humorous 10-part series presents a richly poignant, autobiographical narrative that touches on themes of loss and religion as it imagines Mitchell's life if he'd never left his small-town of Junction City, Kansas. His broke, uninsured and struggling artist alter ego, Ceann Mackay (voiced by Mitchell), suffers from a brain tumor, the result, he says, of growing up plagued by Catholic guilt. To help pay for his surgery, he launches an app-based "tumor telethon" to crowdfund

his survival. In confronting his own mortality, he reflects profoundly on his past, including his brother's death (Mitchell was 14 when his 4-year-old brother died from a heart condition) and a cast of Broadway icons – including Patti LuPone as his Aunt Ida, and Glenn Close as his mother – inhabit versions of friends and family members from Mitchell's life. For his "Origin of Love Tour," he's been performing songs from the podcast as well as sharing the backstory of how Hedwig became Hedwig.

Mitchell will bring the show to Ann Arbor's Hill Auditorium at 8 p.m. Nov. 2, and I'll be interviewing Mitchell for a live Penny Stamps Distinguished Speaker Series talk at Bethlehem United Church of Christ in Ann Arbor the night before, at 7 p.m. on Nov. 1. (Attendees are encouraged to dress up for the Halloween weekend event.) Before one of cinema's most

emboldened and emboldening queer voices shares more stories from his life and career, I caught up with Mitchell while he was on a train en route to Boston.

You go deep into some of your own heavy life experiences during "Anthem: Homunculus." How emotional was the process of creating it?

When you do something like this you don't get an opening night, you don't get an audience, so you don't get the whole arrival that an opening night of a play or a movie or even a concert has with an audience, which kind of seals it in a way. So it still feels unfelt. Making it was very intense and emotional, but it was spread out over a year-and-a-half. But we just scheduled a marathon listening session in a movie theater, so we're going to have food and breaks and live music and listening to the

INFO

John Cameron Mitchell

The Origin of Love Tour
8 p.m. Nov. 2

Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor
BTL's Chris Azzopardi will interview Mitchell at 7 p.m. Nov. 1 at Bethlehem United Church of Christ in Ann Arbor

whole thing with 200 people. We're going to do a special cinema mix for it so that'll be, I think, our beginning of letting go, which is good because that's what an opening should be: graduation for your child.

So far, how has "Anthem" resonated with listeners? What are you hearing?

The thing is, it's not as many people as we'd hoped and we knew the risk of a paywall was a part of it. Some people are just subscription fatigued, so a lot of people haven't really listened to it. Those who do, generally when they've heard it, they're very into it. There's also not a thing like it you can compare it to. As with most of my work, it's kind of different, so it's hard to market, which means the initial run of the play, movie, podcast does not smash or knock it out of the park; it tends to be something that's passed on ... like a disease. (Laughs.) No - like an heirloom! So it becomes more special that way. But it does take time to do that, and it's still in the filtering stage.

That really is just the John Cameron Mitchell way.

Yeah. It means less money and less of the usual definition of heat and buzz and all of that. But a little over a long period of time is always my way of working. It's "love me little, love me long."

It must be encouraging, at least, knowing that a project can have its moment much later, which was the case for "Hedwig and the Angry Inch."

This is pushing the envelope and people have to catch up with it. Same thing happened with "Shortbus" and "Hedwig," and even, I suspect, my last film "How to Talk to Girls at Parties" will be something that will come around later.

Why did you want to tell your story at this point in your life?

It's just when people do.

You're 56. Is that the age people tell the story of their life?

It can be. It's usually the time when your parents go and that can embolden some people. Kids are out of the house, if you have kids. And it's kind of a mid-career thing to do. I like the idea of auto-fiction, where you're still making things up and telling stories that are true but rearranging them. So autobiographical fiction is my favorite kind of fiction.

Well, you did tell me the last time we spoke that

reality bores you.

Yeah. I mean, I'm not completely bored with realism, and I love artists that work in supernaturalistic ways, but my take just tends to be more fairytale and a little bit of comic book.

Tell me about this incredibly dramatic, geometric dress you've been wearing during the "Origin of Love Tour." I think it's called the "transformer."

(Laughs.) It's not called anything.

That's the name that's floating around. So you didn't name it, but somebody did.

The "transformer" dress, I'll take it. It's Erik Bergrin, someone I have known for a very long time and always admired. But there's a lot of talented people, and when I was first thinking about the tour I knew I couldn't bring much of the sets, so I knew the costumes should be a kind of set and I wanted it to break into multiple costumes. I first spoke to Thom Brown, the fashion designer, about it and he was really into it, but designers can rarely do plays. Fashion designers don't have time for other projects unless it's a video or something already existing.

A lot of my collaborators are people who are brilliant but coming up, that people don't know. I get great pleasure introducing people's work to the world, and plus they work their ass off when they're hungry and have something to prove. And Erik is such a genius that I expect to work with him on a stage version of "Anthem" and other projects, and he did exactly what I wanted: a six-costume "transformer" dress (laughs) inspired by the cubists, and he exceeded my dreams. We've got a light-up removable heart. The costume has been around the world and is very sturdy and industrial and lights up and so I'm thrilled with that.

Also, as we go along it's kind of like (the fable) "Stone Soup": we add elements. In Korea, they added a live projection design with an overhead projector and someone manipulating color forms with their hands live. We adopted that. I think we're gonna do it in Ann Arbor too. And then we often sing a song from that town or in the language of the country we're in, so I sing Korean songs or Spanish songs in Mexico, and in Boston we sang "More Than a Feeling." In Ann Arbor it'll probably have to be something from Detroit.

Something Motown?

Maybe.

Maybe some Aretha?

Yes. But it's also the birthplace of punk.

Punk Aretha?

(Laughs.) We'll find the right one.

At this point, I imagine "The Origin of Love," the song from "Hedwig," carries a lot of weight because there are so many personal stories

See John, continued on p. 16

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NOV 2



Photo by Michael Muser

ums
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► **John**

Continued from p. 15

wrapped up in it from you hearing fan stories over the years. Where do you go in your head now when you're singing that song? Does it take on new life depending on where you perform it?

It does. As an actor I often just see the images I'm singing about and that comes out in different ways. It shouldn't be too rigid. Doing it for various shows, we do "The Origin of Love" and then we do "The End of Love,"

which we also will do in Ann Arbor. We'll do some songs from "Anthem" and from "How to Talk to Girls." Amber Martin is my special guest and she backs me up and does her own songs. She's a brilliant talent.

What else are you working on right now? I heard there's something happening with you and Hulu.

I am developing a television show with them that I can't really talk about right now because they have to decide this month whether it's going to go forward. They go through all the projects and decide, but I'm very excited about

it. I'm still determined to get "Anthem" on stage.

I do love "Anthem" in the audio format. I love that my imagination gets to take me places.

Yes, that's what a book does too. And people aren't used to it so much in the audio form – there are some fictional things, but they seem to be a little more stylized. It's great to work in that form. I'd like to see what the Broadway version would be like. And I also did a little benefit 12-inch LP of Lou Reed songs that will be coming out for the holiday called "Turning Time Around," produced by Peter Buck of R.E.M.

Jumping back to "Origin of Love": I'm so moved by the fact that the tour really came out of needing to financially assist your mother, who is living with Alzheimer's. How is she doing and has this tour accomplished what you set out to accomplish when it comes to helping her?

Well, it helped. And it continues to help. The amount of money is so large, and "Shrill" is my real big money job. "The Origin of Love" brings in some, but I didn't want to do it alone to track, so I get to bring a lot of people around and that makes it less lucrative but more fun. It's turned out to be something I'm really proud of and that will continue for years, off and on, because it's just an easy show to do without doing a whole musical, which I'm kind of tired of.

You're tired of the "Hedwig" musical?

Yeah. So this can still touch on the themes and touch on other themes that deal with today: growing up and my boyfriend and the motivation for a lot of things, and it's just a lot more fun. On "Broadway" they didn't let me crowd surf for insurance purposes, so this is a corrective.

Right, you crowd-surfed at the Sydney Opera House in Australia.

I do it every night.

So this is something to look forward to in Ann Arbor.

Yes!

What does it feel like to be carried by humans you don't know? That's a lot of trust you're putting into complete strangers.

Yeah, but they trust me. It's a direct metaphor for the work and the person receiving it, and it's being held up in a very gentle way. Sometimes it's the story, or I am too heavy, and someone else steps in to help. I believe in audiences and being in the same space.

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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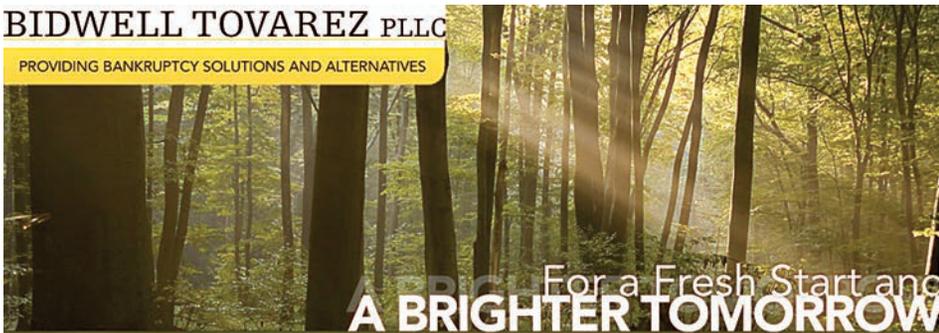
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Mombian

The Scary and the Sweet: A Halloween Roundup for LGBTQ Families

BY DANA RUDOLPH

It's almost Halloween, so let's look at some of the scary things happening to LGBTQ parents lately, and then at some treats that just might help us be brave.

First, the scary.

A married, same-sex couple, both U.S. citizens, in mid-September sued the U.S. State Department for refusing to recognize the U.S. citizenship of their child. Roe and Adiel Kiviti married in California in 2013 and had their daughter Kessem via surrogacy in Canada in 2019. Because only Adiel has a biological connection to Kessem, the State Department is treating Kessem as “born out of wedlock” and will not grant her citizenship unless she has a biological relationship to a U.S. citizen parent who has resided in the U.S. for five years. Adiel, who was born in Israel, falls one year short of the residency requirement. This requirement, however, is not meant to apply to the children of married U.S. citizens, Lambda Legal said in a statement. The Kivitis are at least the fourth same-sex couple to sue the State Department for similar reasons.

Michigan

In another frightening move, a federal judge ruled at the end of September that taxpayer-funded adoption and foster care agencies in Michigan may use their religious beliefs as a reason to discriminate against same-sex and unmarried couples, overturning a settlement that had been reached earlier this year. Even though District Court Judge Robert J. Jonker said in his ruling that same-sex couples can be “great parents,” he felt that the plaintiff, St. Vincent Catholic Charities, had the right to cite its beliefs as a reason not to certify same-sex and unmarried couples as adoptive parents.

This ruling, from the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan, is a preliminary injunction allowing St. Vincent to maintain its state contract and continue discriminating while the case is fully litigated. The case could ultimately make its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, along with a contrasting case from Pennsylvania in which a three-judge panel of the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals earlier this year refused a similar injunction to a Catholic child service agency in Philadelphia.

The political and legal arena these days is indeed scary, but I take heart from the increasingly positive representation of LGBTQ families and people in books, films and even children's toys.

Toy giant Mattel, for example, has just launched a new line of “Creatable World” dolls that do not have pre-assigned genders. Each doll comes with long and short hairstyle options and a variety of wardrobe pieces including pants, skirts and more.

To help them shape the toys, Mattel brought in experts, parents, physicians and kids, including transgender and



Gender-Inclusive dolls

non-binary children. Kim Culmone, senior vice president of Mattel Fashion Doll Design, explained in a statement, “Through research, we heard that kids don't want their toys dictated by gender norms. This line allows all kids to express themselves freely, which is why it resonates so strongly with them.”

Additionally, several new films on the film festival circuit right now have queer family themes. “Just Another Beautiful Family,” by Nick and Katherine North, is the couple's own story of how they fell in love, became a blended family with five kids and navigated Nick's gender transition from female to male. The film won the Audience Choice Award at the Calgary International Film Festival in September. The film can be viewed at the 20-minute film free online at nicknorth.co/bfp.

In “Seahorse: The Dad Who Gave Birth,” filmmaker Jeanie Finlay, who is cisgender, worked with single transgender dad Freddy McConnell to show McConnell's journey to parenthood through pregnancy. McConnell recently lost a court case in the U.K. to be legally named his child's “father” or “parent” instead of “mother.” The film, however, came before the court case and is simply a thoughtful, lovely look at McConnell's experience of pregnancy and early parenthood. While currently only available for online streaming or downloading outside the U.S., the producer tells me it will be will soon be released here as well.

“My Dads, My Moms and Me,” by Julia Ivanova, follows three sets of queer parents and their teenage children more than a decade after she first profiled them for a 2007 film, “Fatherhood Dreams.” Randy and Drew have an adopted son; Scott had twins through a surrogate; and Steve is co-parenting two daughters with lesbian moms Wendy and Cory.

“La Serenata” (The Serenade), directed by Adelina Anthony, is the film adaptation of “When We Love Someone We Sing to Them/Cuando Amamos Cantamos,” by Ernesto Javier Martínez (Reflection Press), one of my favorite LGBTQ-inclusive children's books of 2018. In it, a father tells his son about the Mexican serenata tradition of serenading a beloved. When the boy falls in love with another boy, the father helps his son create and perform a new song for the person in his heart. “La Serenata” won Best Short Film at the prestigious Imagen Awards (sometimes called the Latino Golden Globes), and its young star, Malik Quetzalcoatl Cano, won the Silver Award for Best Child/Young Actor at the Independent Shorts Awards.

True, toys and films can't directly change political and legal matters. Perhaps, though, they can shine a little light into the darkness. Increased representation and awareness may help sway hearts and minds in the long run and may offer those of us in marginalized communities a sense of community and connection. May the rest of the year be less spooky for us all.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBTQ parents.



Detroit Zoo Boo

Families interested in a “merry-not-scary” Halloween event that will engage attendees of all ages are invited to the Detroit Zoo on the weekend of Oct. 25 to enjoy rides, attractions and, of course, animals.

“Family-friendly crowd favorites from past Zoo Boo events will return, including dazzling and daring aerialists, mesmerizing mimes, superhero re-enactments, a joking juggler and height-defying stilt-walkers,” write event organizers. “Take a trip through the never-ending corn maze, check out the pumpkin smasher and make friends with haunted creatures while enjoying the fabulous pumpkin displays. A festively decorated treat trail, photo opportunities and educational activities will be located throughout the Zoo, ensuring your entire experience is filled with merry memories for adults and kids alike.”

New this year are extended operating hours until dark as well as the ability to purchase tickets to a 15-minute “The Wizard of Oz 4-D Experience” at The Wild Adventure Zone. There are also tickets available to take a ride on the Tauber Family Railroad.

Advance tickets are \$10 per person aged 2 and older. To purchase tickets and find out more about the Zoo Boo featured events and attractions visit zoo.boo.detroitzoo.org.



Royal Oak Spooktacular Oct. 27

BY BTL STAFF

Fans of fall activities and all things Halloween can gear up for Sunday, Oct. 27, when Royal Oak is set to host its 36th annual Spooktacular event. Starting at noon and lasting until 6 p.m., there is a free trick-or-treating portion and sections that will require a Spooky Pass for participants 12 years old and younger. Accompanying parents do not have to purchase a pass.

“Spooky Pass Holders will receive at check-in [a] trick to treat bag, map, clues to the Community Choice Credit Union Treasure Hunt, Spooky Pass that will grant you access to the bounce houses, Blake's Cider Mill cider & donut, pick a pie pumpkin out of the Blake's pumpkin patch, photo at the photo booth and games,” write event organizers.

The free trick-or-treating event will take place between 1 and 4 p.m. in Downtown Royal Oak. The nearly 40 participating businesses will have numbers on their windows and “directional signage” letting parents and kids know where to go next.

To find out more about the event and purchase tickets in advance visit gaybe.am/or.



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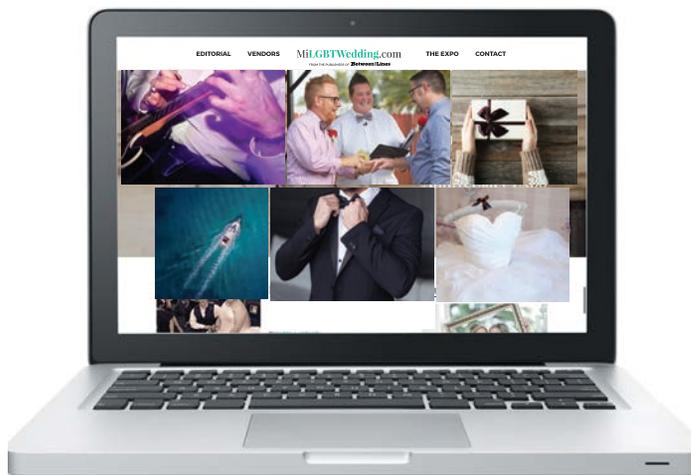
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Happenings



JONATHAN VAN NESS

Jonathan Van Ness first garnered public attention when he starred in the Emmy Award-nominated series “Gay of Thrones” and the Emmy Award-winning show “Queer Eye.” Now, he’s bringing his trademark charm and energy to the stand-up stage with his live show “Road to Beijing.” Heading to Detroit on Thursday, Nov. 7, Van Ness will be appearing live at The Fillmore Detroit. Go online to thefillmoredetroit.com for more information.

OUTINGS

Friday, October 25

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

CUBE Poetry Slam – UNPLUGGED

8 p.m. Spoken word artist La Shaun Phoenix Moore hosts an evening featuring Detroit’s finest poets and DJ Stacy J, plus an acoustic set by R&B singer and WDET’s Tiny Desk Fan Favorite Johnyce. The Cube, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. dso.org.

Saturday, October 26

Queer Conversations 11 a.m. Saturday LGBT Chat is an on going social discussion group meets every week to discuss issues LGBT people face. Coming out, dating and much more. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105 redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Affirmations Fall Fling 2019 7 p.m. Affirmations presents their annual fundraising event Fall Fling. Themed the Wizard of Wine Part, come enjoy food, drink, wine, entertainment and a 50/50 raffle. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. goaffirmations.org.

Monday, October 28

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 LGBT individuals. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine

Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. redbellysenegal90@gmail.com.

Wednesday, October 30

‘A Fun Conversation With Jane Fonda & Lily Tomlin’ Moderated by Mitch Albom 7:30 p.m. Lily Tomlin and Jane Fonda are stopping by the Fox Theatre to share their insights on life, politics, feminism, their friendship and much more. The event will be moderated by Mitch Albom. Tickets start at Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-471-6611. gaybe.am/OT.

Sunday, November 3

Stand with Trans Wyandotte Support Group for Trans Youth and Parents of Trans Individuals 4 p.m. There is no fee to attend the groups. For Parent Support Group information, contact facilitator Kim Tooley, 734-747-4363. St.

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

Thursday, November 7

Pride Night at Thunderbowl! 7 p.m. Meet & Greet unlimited bowling, shoe rental, private room, private bar area, drink specials, billiard room, video wall. Come as you are! Thunderbowl Arena, 4200 Allen Road, Allen Park. 313-928-4688.

Sunday, November 24

National Theatre Live in HD: A Midsummer Night’s Dream 7 p.m. Shakespeare’s most famous romantic comedy, produced by the Bridge Theatre in London, features Gwendoline Christie (Game of Thrones), Oliver Chris, David Moorst, and Hammed Animashaun as Titania, Oberon, Puck and Bottom.

Nicholas Hytner’s immersive staging Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. ums.org.

Tuesday, November 26

Strand with Trans Support Groups – Ann Arbor – Washtenaw 6:30 p.m. Trans Support Group. Parent Support Group Facilitator – Yma Johnson, yماج1968@gmail.com or 734-780-4092. Journey of Faith Christian Church, 1900 Manchester Road, Ann Arbor. standwithtrans.org.

MUSIC & MORE

ZauberLand (Music Land) – An Encounter with Schumann’s Dichterliebe October 25, 8 p.m. A quintessential work of European Romanticism, Schumann’s Dichterliebe is infused with yearning for love and landscapes that no longer exist. Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, 911 North University, Ann Arbor. 734-763-3333. ums.org.

Sankai Juku – Meguri: Teeming Sea, Tranquil Land October 25, 8 p.m. Over the course of the past 40 years, the work of Ushio Amagatsu and Sankai Juku has become known worldwide for its elegance, refinement, technical precision, and emotional depth. Power Center, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. 734-647-3327 smt.d.umich.edu.

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. gaybe.am/Km. 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, Music uses its unique configuration (string trio, flute, clarinet and trumpet) to “playfully overstep the boundaries of musical genres.” (New Yorker) 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.

Laura Mendoza Live in Concert November 5, 7 p.m. Detroit musician Laura Mendoza live in a 2 hour concert at SpreadArt Gallery. Art show and flea market onsite. 5141 Rosa Parks Blvd., Detroit. 586-806-9343.

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 to Detroit’s Little Caesars Arena. Find out more information online at gaybe.am/CP.

Alec Baldwin: A Hilarious Uncensored Conversation November 14, 7 p.m. Alec Baldwin brings his show A Hilarious Uncensored Conversation to the fabulous Fox Theatre in downtown Detroit Thursday, Nov. 14. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313-471-6611.

Teac Damsa – Loch na hEala (Swan Lake) November 15, 8 p.m. Rooted in a place where ancient Irish mythology and modern Ireland meet, Loch na hEala (Swan Lake) is a Swan Lake for our time. Power Center, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. 734-647-3327. smt.d.umich.edu.

Vivaldi’s Four Seasons – Max Richter’s

Editor’s Pick



HALLOWEEN FAMILY FUN DAY

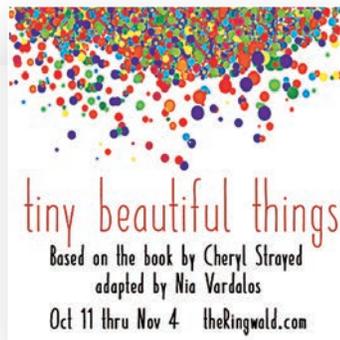
On Saturday, Oct. 26, from 1 to 5 p.m. families interested in a “SPOOK-tacular!” family friendly Halloween event are invited to Detroit’s Beacon Park. “Little monsters” in costume are especially welcome to enjoy the featured activities, hayrides

and costume parade. Admission is free and food and drinks will be available for purchase. Find out more information online at gaybe.am/6o.

Editor's Pick

'TINY BEAUTIFUL THINGS' OCT. 11

Based on the book by Cheryl Strayed, "Tiny Beautiful Things" is now playing at The Ringwald Theatre through Nov. 4. It follows anonymous online columnist Sugar, who receives thousands of advice letters and does her best to guide askers. The Ringwald says that "'Things' is a luminous play that personifies the unfathomable questions that are at the heart of being human." Find out more about the play and buy tickets online at theringwald.com.



Vivaldi Recomposed November 16, 8 p.m. Experience back-to-back versions of Vivaldi's timelessly thrilling masterpiece, The Four Seasons, including Max Richter's modern "recomposition" that topped classical album charts in 22 countries. Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor. 734-764-8572. rackham.umich.edu.

Orchestre Metropolitain de Montreal with Yannick Nezet-Seguin and Joyce DiDonato November 20, 7:30 p.m. After last season's stunning performance of Schubert's Winterreise, Joyce DiDonato and Yannick Nézet-Séguin join forces once again. Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-3464. ums.org.

Stew & the Negro Problem – Notes of a Native Song November 22, 8 p.m. "A celebration of Baldwin's legacy as an inspiration for artists to create their own work that, like his, defies genres and expectations." (New York Times) Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, 911 North University, Ann Arbor. 734-763-3333. ums.org.

The Michigan Playwrights Festival October 25, 8 p.m. Four new plays by Michigan playwrights will be given readings. Theatre NOVA, 410 W. Huron, Ann Arbor. 734-635-8450. A2TheatreNOVA@gmail.com.

FOLLIES IN CONCERT by Stephen Sondheim and James Goldman November 7, 8 p.m. A fundraiser for Theatre NOVA and presented in concert, Follies is a glamorous and fascinating peek into a bygone era, and a clear-eyed look at the transformation of relationships over time, with countless songs. Theatre NOVA, 410 W. Huron, Ann Arbor. 734-635-8450. A2TheatreNOVA@gmail.com.

August Wilson's Jitney November 12, 8 p.m. Winner of the 2017 Tony Award for Best Revival of Play, August Wilson's Jitney is directed by one of Wilson's foremost interpreters, Ruben Santiago-Hudson. Detroit Music Hall, 350 Madison St., Detroit. 313-887-8501. musicall.org. broadwayindetroit.com.

Teac Damsa – Loch na hEala (Swan Lake) November 15, 8 p.m. Rooted in

a place where ancient Irish mythology and modern Ireland meet, Loch na hEala (Swan Lake) is a Swan Lake for our time. Power Center, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. 734-647-3327. smt.d.umich.edu. ums.org.

Hello, Dolly! November 19, 8 p.m. Winner of four Tony Awards including Best Musical Revival, HELLO, DOLLY! is the universally acclaimed smash that NPR calls "the best show of the year!" and the Los Angeles Times says "distills the mood-elevating properties of the American musical. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000. broadwayindetroit.com.

National Theatre Live in HD: A Midsummer Night's Dream November 24, 7 p.m. Shakespeare's most famous romantic comedy, produced by the Bridge Theatre in London, features Gwendoline Christie (Game of Thrones), Oliver Chris, David Moorst, and Hammed Animashaun as Titania, Oberon, Puck and Bottom. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. ums.org.

THEATER

Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Fallen Souffle October 25, 7 p.m. 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. purplerosetheatre.org.

Sankai Juku – Meguri: Teeming Sea, Tranquil Land October 25, 8 p.m. Over the course of the past 40 years, the work of Ushio Amagatsu and Sankai Juku has become known worldwide for its elegance, refinement, technical precision, and emotional depth. Power Center, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. 734-647-3327. smt.d.umich.edu. ums.org.



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Solution to Q Puzzle p. 25

SAME SAME DIFFERENT

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Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE



Billy Porter joins Camila Cabello for new 'Cinderella'

If this bit of news were a ballroom walk-off, the category would probably be "Fairy Godmother Realness," and Billy Porter would take home the trophy. His character Pray Tell, a ballroom competition MC who spends his non-shade hours tending and dispensing wisdom to a variety of queer street kids on FX's "Pose," just earned the Grammy and Tony-winning actor an Emmy Award. And now he'll become a different sort of caretaker when he steps into the role of – we'll call it legendary – Fairy Godmother in Sony's new update of Cinderella. Sure, Disney did their own live-action remake a few years back, but now it's Sony's turn at the intellectual property, with pop star Camila Cabello (who recently performed on "SNL" in full Marie Antoinette-style ballgown) as the title princess wannabe. This modern version from writer-director Kay Cannon is scheduled to roll in early 2020, so casting is still ongoing – the rumor is that "Wicked" star Idina Menzel is circling the role of the Evil Stepmother – but we have a feeling that this one, if executed with style, could be the fiercest, most diva-packed one of all.

Laverne Cox joins 'Promising Young Woman'

The cast alone here: Laverne Cox, Carey Mulligan... OK, we're getting ahead of ourselves. Do you know Emerald Fennell? It seems like you're about to. The actor is already known for her role of Camilla Parker Bowles on Netflix's "The Crown," but it's her work behind the camera that could break the British creator's name in that Phoebe Waller-Bridge way. Fennell already writes for Waller-Bridge's awesome "Killing Eve," and now she's got her own first feature film lined up. "Promising Young Woman," to be written and directed by Fennell, will tell the story of a woman on a mission of vengeance against men due to a

traumatic event in her past. And it stars – take a deep breath if reading this aloud – Carey Mulligan, Laverne Cox, Bo Burnham ("Eighth Grade"), Jennifer Coolidge, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, Molly Shannon, Alison Brie, Clancy Brown ("Billions," sure, but let's never forget that he's always and forever the voice of Mr. Krabs on "Spongebob Squarepants"), Adam Brody and Connie Britton. We don't know what the traumatic event is, nor do we know what sort of vengeance this character will enact, but we're already here for it.

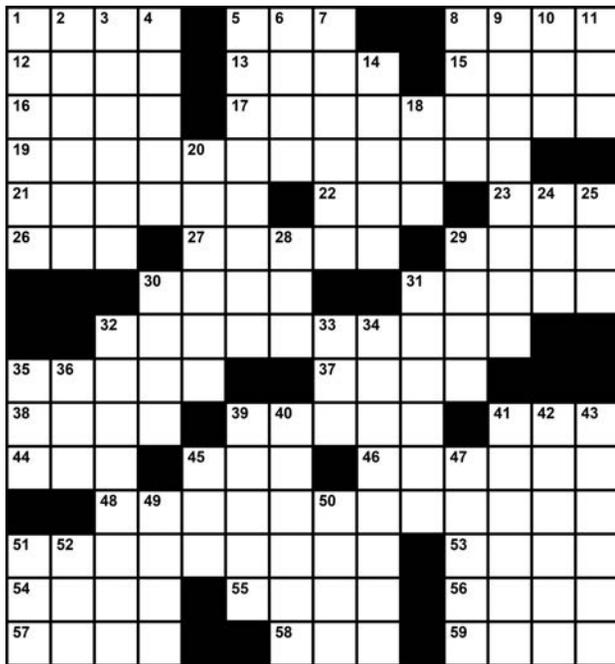
Janelle Monae has a name but no title

Janelle Monae plays "Veronica" in an upcoming... something. Yes, that's not a lot to go on, but this is early days on an endeavor that is currently known only as "Untitled Bush + Renz Project." We know that whatever it is, she's in it and that it's a drama written by the team of Gerard Bush and Christopher Renz, who'll also direct. We know that Bush and Renz are respected music video directors who've worked alongside Jay-Z, Khalid and Normani, so whatever develops is going to have that visual pop. And we know that there are other people in the cast besides Monae: Jena Malone ("The Hunger Games"), Jack Huston (Martin Scorsese's "The Irishman"), Gabourey Sidibe, "Dear White People's" Marque Richardson, and up-and-coming queer presence Kiersey Clemons (Disney's remake of "Lady and the Tramp"). Now if we only knew what it was about. We'll wait.

Friendsgiving gets queer guidance

First-time filmmaker Nicol Paone has a comedy feature in development called "Friendsgiving," due in 2020 (we assume a rough year-from-now release to coincide with Thanksgiving, but who knows), and it's about an eclectic group of close friends who gather together for what turns out to be a chaotic Thanksgiving dinner at the home of two women, Molly (Malin Akerman) and Abbey (Kat Dennings). The project co-stars Aisha Tyler, "Brooklyn Nine-Nine's" Chelsea Peretti, Christine Taylor ("The Brady Bunch Movie"), glamour veteran Jane Seymour and – in an unusual thematic twist – a trio of "Fairy Gay Mothers" played by the queer power team of Wanda Sykes, Fortune Feimster, and Margaret Cho. We don't know what this infusion of the supernatural will mean for a Thanksgiving-themed enterprise, but we'll happily watch with a mouthful of pie because we love those three woman and, more to the point, there just aren't enough Thanksgiving movies and we're tired of watching that Jodie Foster one over and over.

Romeo San Vicente is pro-marshmallow on top of sweet potatoes because it's the law.



- 27 Uses hands instead of mouth
 29 Burl of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof"
 30 Like three men that visited Mary
 31 Swell place
 32 See 19-Across
 35 Napped leather
 37 Bird feeder food
 38 Rubberneck
 39 Comes over
 41 Chow down
 44 Jim Kolbe, e.g.
 45 When repeated, a dance
 46 Ang Lee and others
 48 Jesse Tyler Ferguson series entering its final season
 51 Amy Grant's "Every ___"
 53 Trump portrayer Baldwin
 54 Cincinnati team
 55 A girl named Frank
 56 "Fancy that!"
 57 Antony's partner, briefly
 58 It gets laid in some streets
 59 Highland dialect
- 9 Spend the night
 10 Karen Walker, perhaps
 11 Threesome for Da Vinci
 14 With 40-Down, Jill Soloway series entering its final season
 18 WWII battle site, for short
 20 Where it's at
 24 "Once Upon a Mattress" legume
 25 Taxpayer's ID
 28 One of the precious stones
 29 Thespian rapper
 30 Like some bad shots by Mauresmo
 31 Black Sea city
 32 Soundly constructed
 33 Network of 48-Across
 34 Chase
 35 Pacifier
 36 Tognazzi of "La Cage aux Folles"
 39 "Come Back, Little ___"
 40 See 14-Down
 41 Jack-tar
 42 Word of qualification
 43 Love of Eros
 45 Summer hrs. in Jim Nabors home state
 47 PR concern
 49 Italian bear
 50 Children's caretaker
 51 Chelsea's mom, initially
 52 Sushi selection

The Last TV Show

Q Puzzle

Across

- 1 "The Primrose ___" (Ginger Rogers flick)
 5 Chem. pollutant
 8 Oral attention getter
 12 Blade brand
 13 Give a good beating to
 15 "Like ___ not"
 16 "Jabberwocky" starter
 17 Complex, like a Samuel Barber piece
 19 With 32-Across, Viola Davis series entering its final season
 21 Tea or glory hole cry?
 22 Yoko of "Double Fantasy"
 23 Army missions
 26 Old protest org.

Down

- 1 Sympathetic sorrow
 2 "The Handmaid's Tale" author
 3 Drags the bottom for fish
 4 Can't help but
 5 Like a nice-nelly
 6 Part of an old Madonna bra
 7 Skater Dick
 8 Not elite

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Community Connections

Pontiac Arts Center Celebrates LGBTQ 'Kaleidoscope of Expression'

BY CRYSTAL A. PROXMIRE

PONTIAC — Like the various shapes, colors and patterns that are part of a kaleidoscope, the artwork created and inspired by the LGBTQ community doesn't just form a rainbow but an ever-changing mosaic.

This was celebrated Oct. 12 at the Pontiac Creative Arts Center with its first "Kaleidoscope of Expression" art show opening reception.

Poet Michelle Brown of Southfield shared that this year is the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, as well as many events that revealed an opening up of humanity and change.

"There have been artists, writers and thinkers who kept their work silenced before stonewall," she said. "There was something in the air in 1969. If you were black you were saying, 'I'm black and I'm proud.' If you were a woman you said, 'I am woman, hear me roar.' And if you were part of this community you said, 'We're here. We're queer. Get used to it.'"

She explained that through history art has helped society deal with change. The show featured works in different media, by artists across ages, genders, races and orientations.

Cai Steen of Rochester is a recent College for Creative Studies graduate who submitted a series of necklaces created as part of a senior thesis project. Each one was different, but had the theme worked in: the shape of a home.

"I talked to people about the homes where they grew up," Steen said. "And I designed based on the stories they told me."

Each piece is named after the street on which the interviewee grew up. "Glenway Drive," which won first place in the show, came about after talking with a friend about her childhood home.

"She grew up on the outskirts of the city, in a house surrounded by trees," Steen said. "And she felt very safe and comforted by the trees."

The project helped Steen grow beyond the exclusive use of metal, now incorporating other textures and materials into her jewelry design.

Nick Szydlo of Studiowerq in Hazel Park was one of the jurors for the show.

"We were definitely looking for work that is technically good and innovative," Szydlo said. "I really wanted to look for work that is expressive of the LGBTQ experience, but not in a way that's obvious. ... I like art that is layered. All of the ones we picked we talked about for a long time."

As far as Steen's "Glenway Drive," it resonated with Szydlo because issues of housing and complications of home life are prevalent in the LGBTQ community where people are often kicked out by their parents and face housing



Artist Cai Steen. Photos Crystal Proxmire

discrimination and instability. There are also those who can only be their true selves within the walls of their own home, and beyond that, people who have to hide even inside the place they live.

"A lot of people create their own families and their own homes in a really conscious way," Szydlo said.

Robert Craner of Pontiac grew up in a supportive home, with a father who nurtured his creative spirit and didn't mind if he played with dolls. Now, decades later, making them is both a passion and a profession.

"They've always fascinated me. There's something magic about them," Craner said.

Several of his dolls, posed in scenes, graced the "Kaleidoscope of Expression," donning wide eyes and intricate costumes. Craner worked as an art teacher while also selling his dolls at galleries.

Roger Meeker of Rochester Hills has also focused on humans as inspiration. His bronze casting of a female torso and a gender-neutral sculpture of a torso carved in with intricate spalting was on display. Spalting occurs when a tree becomes infected with mold and begins to decay. At the earliest onset, it leaves thin black lines like lace through the wood.

Meeker said lately he's been taking different classes to learn new techniques.



"The more you keep involved and keep learning, the more you enjoy it," he said.

The exhibition was put together with support from Oakland University and the city of Pontiac.

Derek Queen of Troy lent his graphic design expertise to the effort. Queen created a logo with seven varied shapes and colors close to those of the rainbow, but not in traditional ROYGBIV order.

"The colors are still there, but it's this idea that the pieces aren't all the same, and they aren't all in perfect lines," Queen said. "A

kaleidoscope is a mix."

The second place award went to Andrew Lathrup whose thoughtful tables give the eyes unusual details on which to dwell.

Third place was a trio of paintings by Janice McCoy that featured a mouth and stereotypically unpleasant creatures such as hornets, flies and scorpions.

The exhibit runs until Oct. 26 at the Pontiac Creative Arts Center located at 47 Williams St. in Pontiac. Find out more about the organization and find upcoming events online at pontiacarts.org.

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www.miunified.org
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248-545-1435
<http://www.matrixhumanservices.org/programs/matrix-mac-health/>

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Warren, MI 48093
586-465-8440
<http://health.macombgov.org/Health-Programs-HPDC-HIVAIDSCounselingTesting>

Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (OLSHA)

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Pontiac, MI 48343
248-209-2647
www.olhsa.org

Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Service (ACCESS)

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Sterling Hts., MI 48310
586-722-6036
www.accesscommunity.org

Advocacy

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equalitymi.org
[Facebook.com/equalitymichigan](https://www.facebook.com/equalitymichigan)

Campus

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

U-M Ann Arbor

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

Oakland University Gender & Sexuality Center

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

Eastern Michigan University

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

The Lawrence Tech LGBT Resource Center

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

Community Centers

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

Jim Toy Community Center

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

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www.aclumich.org
313-578-6800

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Know Your Rights Project

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

Older Adults

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sagemetrodetroit.org
Facebook: SAGE Metro Detroit

Political

The LGBT and Allies Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party

[Facebook.com/TheLGBTACaucusoftheMDP](https://www.facebook.com/TheLGBTACaucusoftheMDP)
CaucusoftheMDP
Stonewall for Revolution
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www.transgendermichigan.org
800-842-2954

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19641 W. 7 Mile Rd. in Detroit
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Facebook: Ruth Ellis Center
313-252-1950

Ozone House

102 N. Hamilton Street
Ypsilanti, MI
734-662-2265
734-662-2222

Stand With Trans

Farmington, MI
www.standwithtrans.org
248-739-9254

Find these resources online

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



Dr. Paul Benson's



We are committed to provide quality health care and to serve our patients without regard to race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, political preferences, or sexual orientation.

It is our intention not to discriminate, be judgmental, or have bias towards anyone. These are not simply published words, but are practices we strive and train for to do our best each and every day. We must all be respectful and put our commonalities first. Our priority is your good health.

We are here to help you and want each and every one of our patrons to feel comfortable in our patient-centered medical home. It is the essence of equality that defines who we are. Please join us in this endeavor.

1964 Eleven Mile Rd, Berkley, MI 40872
(248) 544-9300
doctorbewell.com

Primary Care • HIV Rapid initiation of Therapy • PrEP • Hormone Affirming Therapy

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Board Certified in Family Practice & Designated Patient-Centered Medical Home

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We're a Recipient of the Peter M. Fox Excellence in HIV Credentialing Award from the American Academy of HIV Medicine. Also, Dr. Benson was one of the first physicians credentialed and has maintained the AAHIV-S specialist designation since.

Certified Clinical Research Professional by the Society of Clinical Research Associates. A Principle Investigator in Clinical Trials since 1989 providing early access to life-saving HIV Medications.

Extensive Network of Sensitive Specialists

with an ongoing relationship to refer as necessary.

There is a difference. We're a patient-friendly Private Practice small enough to individualize care by a staff that knows you and large enough to manage all of your Primary Care Needs.

- HIV Prevention (PrEP), Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), STI testing & treatment
- **Hormone Affirming Therapy** for HIV positive and negative transgender individuals
- Evening Clinic Hours Monday-Thursday, most Saturdays, and Same Day Appointments
- Full-time Patient Navigator/Advocate Social Worker on site
- Most Insurances accepted
- Ryan White Provider
- Medcart Pharmacy on Premises
- Group Medical Appointments (available soon!)
- Tele-Medical Visits (available soon!)

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

He leads our team of professional and talented Providers:



Dr. Paul Benson, D.O.



Caleb Youngblood, PA-C, AAHIV-S



Mark Rosen, PA-C



Leon Bullough, NP-F



Keyuna Nance, MSW

