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A close-up portrait of Meghan Trainor. She has long, wavy blonde hair and is wearing several large, ornate diamond hair clips. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

# Meghan Trainor Is Living Her Best 'Yaaas, B\*tch' Life

Pop Star on Her Generous Lesbian Fans and Tipping Drag Queens with Sam Smith's Money

Photo: Hanna Hillier

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VOL. 2808/09 • FEBRUARY 20, 2020

ISSUE 1141

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## Michigan Attorney General Hits Back After Rush Limbaugh Mocks Buttigieg for Being Gay

BY BTL STAFF

Conservative radio personality and recent Presidential Medal of Freedom winner Rush Limbaugh recently suggested that presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg doesn't have a chance to be elected president because he is a gay man who will take fire from Donald Trump.

"And they got to be looking at that, and they've got to be saying, that despite all the great progress and despite all the great wokeness, and despite all the great ground that's been covered, America's still not ready to elect a gay guy kissing his husband on the debate stage president. They have to be saying this, don't they? Now, there may be some Democrats who think that is the ticket. There may be some Democrats who think that's exactly what we need to do, Rush. Get a gay guy kissing his husband on stage, ram it down Trump's throat, and beat him in the general election. Really. Having fun envisioning that."

Buttigieg responded to the remarks on CNN's "State of the Union" from Limbaugh.

"Well, I love my husband. I'm faithful to my husband. On stage we usually just go for a hug. But I love him very much, and I'm not going take lectures on family values from the likes of Rush Limbaugh," he said.

He received public support from Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel via Twitter on Valentine's Day, too.

"In honor of Valentines Day, here is an awkward picture of me making out with my super hot wife on election night. @PeteButtigieg is not going back in the closet, and neither am I," the tweet read. "Happy VD to you too, Rush Limbaugh. #Loveislove"

# Man Charged With Murder of Hairstylist Bashar Kallabat in Detroit Motel

EVE KUCHARSKI

Shortly after the body of a nationally recognized hairstylist Bashar Kallabat was found at the Detroit JZ Motel and Suites last week, a 24-year-old Detroit man named Jimmy Jermaine Pickett was charged with first-degree felony murder. The penalty for this charge is life in prison without parole. Kallabat, 56, died from blunt force trauma he sustained to the head.

Pickett was on probation for unarmed robbery and has a previous charge for resisting/obstructing/assaulting a police officer. He will remain in police custody as he awaits trial. Detroit Police believe that the two men met on a dating app.

Detroit Police Chief James Craig said at a press conference that it was a Project Green Light Business that helped identify the suspect.

"Based on the Green Light footage that our detectives immediately acquired, we could see the suspect. He was wearing a very distinctive security guard uniform or jacket. That suspect ... we were able to track back to the rideshare company," Craig said. "And a 12-hour investigation led us to where the suspect was located within 12 hours of this heinous crime."

Project Green Light provides real-time camera connections with Detroit businesses and police headquarters. Craig added that because of the limited information about the crime, it might have been a "whodunit" without the

Project's help.

"What we know is that the victim proceeded to the JZ Motel on the east side of Detroit. We believe, we're not certain, that he made contact with the suspect possibly through a dating app. We're not certain on that, but just based on what we know about this case. We also know that the suspect traveled by rideshare company, and that rideshare was paid for by the victim in this case," Craig said. "... Once at the location, we believe the suspect stayed for several hours, and it was hotel staff that checked the room and learned and found the deceased — Mr. Kallabat."

Kallabat was a hairstylist who was renowned for his work not only locally but nationally.

"In fact, he's revered by many, loved by many, and so, again, our hearts and prayers go out to the family of this victim," Craig said. "... He was written up in Vogue Magazine, Allure and Harper's [Bazaar]."

Craig also urged the public to use care when meeting people from dating apps.

"... In this instance, as you can see, if the victim is requesting and paying for the rideshare, there's no way for us to know in the case of a crime, who the suspect is. So what we're suggesting is: don't do it. Certainly, if you are meeting someone through a dating app — as was reported in an FBI story — one, you meet in public. Secondly, you let someone know where you're going," he said. "There have been too many cases



Bashar Kallabat



Jimmy Jermaine Pickett at his arraignment.

recently, locally and across this country, where there's been very violent crimes associated with the use of dating apps. Again, we're not saying in this case, but we have a strong belief that that happened."

### KEY FINDINGS OF ANTI-LGBTQ HOMICIDES IN 2017

In 2017, NCAVP recorded reports of 52 hate violence related homicides of LGBTQ people, the highest number ever recorded by NCAVP. This number represents an 86% increase in single incident reports from 2016.

In 2017, there was the equivalent of one homicide of an LGBTQ person in the U.S. each week.

#### ANTI-LGBTQ HOMICIDES SINCE 2012



\*In 2016, the total number of reports of anti-LGBTQ homicides was 77, including the 49 lives taken during the shooting at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida. The second highest number of reports of individual homicides was 30 in 2011.



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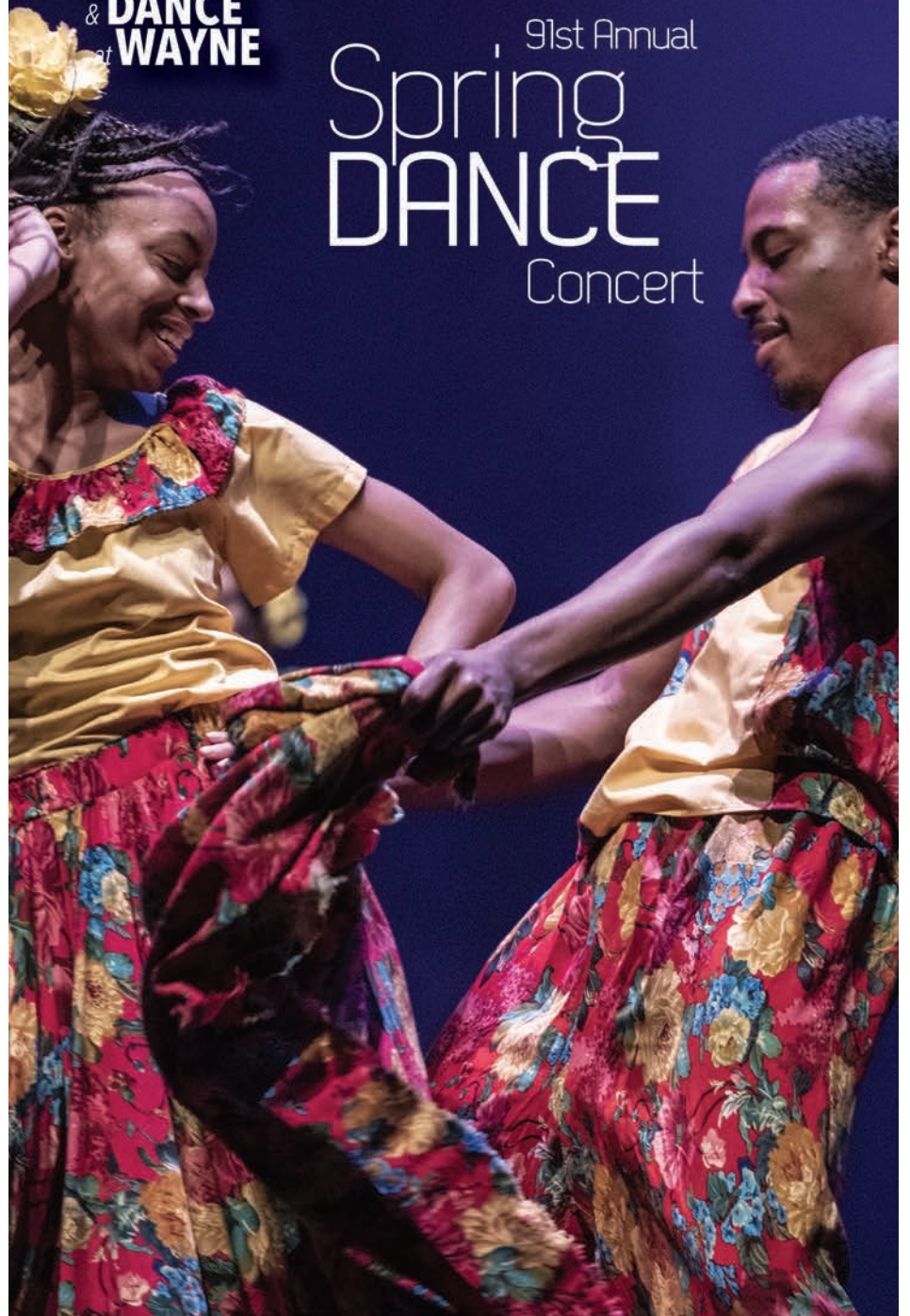
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# Right to Wed, No Right to Work

## Man who helped win marriage equality fights for full equity in employment for LGBTQ people

BY DANIEL A. GWINN

Every year, my associate, Laura Bradshaw-Tucker, and I attend the mid-winter meeting of the Labor and Employment Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan. The educational event features updates on case law and discussions on legal trends and it ends with a dinner that features a speech from a legal professional – a lawyer, judge or legal scholar.

This year was different. The dinner speaker, Jim Obergefell, experienced the legal system as a client fighting for his rights, and those of thousands of couples across the U.S. Obergefell was the lead plaintiff in the 2015 Supreme Court case establishing that same-sex couples have a Constitutional right to marry. Obergefell's speech, detailing his fight to legally marry his long-term partner, had some of the lawyers in the audience near tears.

### The Fight for Love

Obergefell met and fell in love with his future husband, John Arthur, more than 20 years before the Supreme Court's decision. They became partners, committed to each other. Then, in 2011, Arthur was diagnosed with ALS. The couple resolved that while Arthur was alive, they would demonstrate their commitment and be recognized as the "old married couple" they considered themselves to be. However, they lived in Ohio, where same-sex marriage was illegal.

Friends and neighbors pitched in so Arthur and Obergefell could charter a medical transport plane, at a cost of \$14,000, to fly the ailing Arthur to Maryland, where they could legally tie the knot. And there, with Arthur too ill to be moved, they were wed — inside the plane, parked on the tarmac in Baltimore. When they returned to Ohio, the state refused to recognize their marriage. The couple learned Obergefell could not even be listed as a "surviving spouse" when Arthur died.

Obergefell said that it was this indignity that moved the couple to action. With the aid of counsel, they sued, asking that the Ohio Registrar be ordered to recognize Obergefell as the surviving spouse on the death certificate when Arthur died. His attorney, under pressure from attorneys



Daniel Gwinn (left) with James Obergefell.

in other jurisdictions involved in the same fight to make a broad case, stuck to his guns and kept his argument narrowly focused. Ohio's refusal to recognize a marriage performed in another jurisdiction, even on the death certificate, inflicted substantial and continuing harm on Obergefell. Obergefell attributed the lawsuit's early success to the manner in which his counsel framed the argument.

Initially, they prevailed. In July 2013, the District Judge for the Southern District of Ohio granted a temporary order, restraining the registrar from accepting a death certificate unless it recorded Arthur's status at death as "married" and listed Obergefell as his surviving spouse. In October 2013, before the injunction could become permanent, Arthur died. In December that year, over objections from the state that Arthur's death rendered the question moot, the District Court Judge ruled that Ohio's refusal to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states was discriminatory.

Any satisfaction the now-widowed Obergefell felt at this legal victory was short-lived. The State of Ohio appealed the decision to the 6th Circuit Court and it won. Obergefell described the loss as devastating, but the negative ruling proved to be a blessing. The 6th Circuit's decision created a split in the Circuits, which allowed the case – consolidated with several others, including the Michigan case of *DeBoer v. Snyder* – to move to the Supreme Court of the United States.

There, Obergefell not only won

the right to be listed as his husband's "surviving spouse" but helped win the right for all same-sex couples to become legally married.

### The Fight is Not Over

But, he told the audience, the right to marry, while significant, is not full equality: LGBTQ people can be fired from or refused a job simply because of their gender identity or orientation. He reminded the audience that the Supreme Court heard oral arguments Oct. 8, 2019, on a group of cases challenging the exclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories in employment under Title VII's prohibition against discrimination "because of sex." A decision in those cases could establish equal opportunity in employment for LGBTQ people, or provide a stronger legal basis for denying equal access to the workforce. The fight for equal rights is not over.

As Obergefell finished his speech, the audience of attorneys honored him with a standing ovation.

His warning that the fight for equal opportunity in employment persists holds true in Michigan, one of 30 states that permit such discrimination against LGBTQ people. Although Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act protects an unusually broad group from employment and housing discrimination – barring discrimination on the basis of age, sex, race, color, national origin, weight, height,

See **No Right to Work**, continued on p. 18



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## REC to Build 43-Unit Detroit Housing Project to Combat LGBTQ Homelessness

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

The Ruth Ellis Center is planning to build a 43-unit mixed-use housing development on Clairmount Street just west of Woodward Avenue in Detroit's Piety Hill neighborhood. The project is expected to take 18 months to build, and once completed, the building will be known as the Ruth Ellis Clairmount Center. The goal of the program is to provide long-term housing stability to individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, in a setting that is intentionally inclusive of LGBTQ identities.

The RECC, for which there will be a groundbreaking this spring, will be the site of the center's permanent supportive housing program. The new building is a collaboration between REC and Full Circle Communities, a nonprofit developer out of Chicago.

While organizers have said there will be certain emphasis on housing transgender women of color, they are quick to clarify that housing will be open to anyone 18-25 regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

"While the Ruth Ellis Center specializes in providing trauma-informed services for LGBTQ youth and young adults, the PSH program will serve any individual referred through the Detroit Continuum of Care," read a statement. "The Ruth Ellis Clairmount Center will serve as an example of how programs can meet the needs of a community, while also honoring the diverse experiences and identities of each individual it serves."

Ruth Ellis Center Executive Director Jerry Peterson explained further.

"The core point is that the PSH project resident selection process will be governed by federal fair housing laws. All residents selected for 34 of the 43 units must come from the City of Detroit Continuum of Care for Homelessness Coordinated Access Model based on an assessment that permanent supportive housing is the most appropriate housing option for that person. The CAM is working in partnership with REC case managers to make the most appropriate referrals to the REC Center once the lease up period opens in Fall 2020."

This will allow for the Center to route more trans women of color into the pipeline – and possibly the eight remaining units – and that's good news to Lilianna Reyes, director of REC's Second Stories program and executive director of the Trans Sistās of Color Project.

"I'm so excited that Ruth Ellis Center is building this housing program," she said. "For so long our agency worked to help people find the best space for urgent and long-term housing. Evolving into an agency that centers the most marginalized is beautiful. Since the thought of this program, we wanted to make sure many LGBTQ young people have had input and helped shape the space."

"Through these conversations we wanted to make sure to have some focus on trans young women of color who seek services at the Ruth Ellis Center," Reyes continued. "These voices are the most violently impacted and often need multiple support services. Their voices and support, along with other LGBTQ youth, helped to really build and change the structure into a truly youth envisioned space."

In addition to housing, a range of resources will be offered including a health and wellness center, integrated primary and behavioral health care, career training programs focusing on food service and cosmetology, a resource library and technology center.

Housing was always the primary goal of the Ruth Ellis Center from the time the idea for the center was first conceived by a group of local activists in June of 1999.

"We are very excited that this project brings the original mission to fruition 20 years after the organization was established," Peterson said. "Ruth Ellis Clairmount Center will be a unique, state-of-the-art complex serving vulnerable populations that has the potential to become a national model."

Learn about REC and its services online at [ruthelliscenter.org](http://ruthelliscenter.org).



## Nationally Recognized SaveArtSpace Hosts Open Call for Queer Artists Across Detroit

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Seeing art hang in a museum or even displayed as a public piece in the community is the way most Americans consume art. Over the last few years, the New York-based nonprofit SaveArtSpace has been working to expand that by purchasing advertising space like billboards to create huge public exhibitions across the country. This year, Detroit will host its own public gallery with five billboards that will be presented on April 6. The theme this year is "We Exist - The Future is Fluid," focusing on the work of LGBTQ artists. The works will also become viewable up close in a yet-to-be-determined Detroit gallery from April 17 through May 2, with an opening reception on April 17.

For those interested in submitting works, SaveArtSpace is still accepting pieces through Feb. 24. The curators of this exhibit are artists Cyrah Dardas, Noura Ballout and Bakpak Durden.

"Around summertime last year I reached out to Cyrah, our curator, and I wanted to get her involved in some way. And she wanted to do this kind of show. We had a show in New York called 'The Future is Female' and we had female artists and then here in Detroit we wanted to go broader," said Co-Founder and Executive Director Travis Rix. "So Cyrah, Bakpak and Noura all came up with the name and the greater idea of it."

Rix said that SaveArtSpace was eager to focus LGBTQ works specifically

because it was a natural transition from previous shows the organization had put on.

"We always want to push the boundaries of what's available in the public space, and in the past we've had specific shows that weren't as broad," Rix said. "... And it seems like more and more, as SaveArtSpace has evolved, we've had plenty of LGBT artists involved and female artists as well — they make up the majority of our artists — and we like to get everyone as involved as possible."

The show also intentionally deals with the concept of postgenderism that Durden defined as "a wide-spanning concept that intersects in every part of sociopolitical and cultural oppression and asks the 'binary roles of sex and gender' to be erased in every culture so that everyone lives a more equitable life."

"That being said, it is an admittedly difficult way of thinking because you're essentially asked to unlearn and rebuild everything you've ever known," they said. "There is gender disparity everywhere, not to mention for those that don't identify as part of the binary or have been subject to sex and gender stereotyping. [It's] taking people on what skills and talents they have to offer as opposed to what they look like or present as, an actual freedom of expression."

To that end, Dardas said she will be looking for representations of "authentic, queer representation" like "queer joy and queer love" and "gender

variance."

"... I would really like to see artwork bring that conversation to the forefront. I want people who don't identify as queer to be able to feel like it's acceptable for them to explore their gender, and not feel like they need to uphold the gender binary," Dardas said. "... I am interested in seeing these [binary] constraints be removed so that people are able to ask themselves, 'Who am I? How do I want to show up in the world? What am I good at?'"

And for those connoisseurs interested in works that extend beyond two-dimensional art, Rix said that there will be a visual performance element in the show's gallery portion.

When asked why this exhibit was a valuable one to them, both Durden and Dardas agreed that its promotion of LGBTQ visibility is important.

"Growing up I wasn't exposed to queer icons or role models that looked like me; and if there were they were way off base and not generally depicted in a positive way. [And] I didn't see how I could be myself within my own family, let alone ever have one of my own. This lack of positive representation deeply affected me and limited my reality," Dardas said. "I hope that this project can create some positive visibility by brandishing Detroit billboards with queer art that hopefully leads to conversation and joy."

*Artists of all ages and talents are invited to submit their art at [saveartspace.org/we-exist](http://saveartspace.org/we-exist) by Feb. 24.*





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# 2020 Initiative to Amend Elliott-Larsen: Key

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

## Recent History

Five years ago, a ballot committee named Fair Michigan and headed by then-attorney Dana Nessel sought to amend Michigan's Constitution to ensure the equal rights of LGBTQ people and women. Then, just as now, there was wide agreement among members of the LGBTQ community, their allies and a large segment of the voting public that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression is wrong. Disagreement arose around how to achieve equality.

A number of editorials addressing the issue appeared in *Between The Lines* at the time, including one by publisher Susan Horowitz that sounded the alarm regarding the feasibility of such a ballot initiative, as well as the potential harm to the community that the process itself could incur. That the input of local LGBTQ leaders and organizations had not been solicited was a sticking point for many, too.

In the end, the initiative lacked sufficient support of the business community to bring the proposed amendment to the ballot, though some believed it had to do with the “infighting” of the LGBTQ community as well.

Launched in January, Fair and Equal Michigan has a similar name and goal to Fair Michigan; however, there are key differences. This time, the ballot initiative seeks to amend the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity or expression as protected classes.

The organization boasts an impressive roster of LGBTQ leaders and activists, not to mention the support of several major businesses and more than a few notable Republicans.

But has the appetite of the LGBTQ community at large changed to support a potential vote on civil rights at the ballot box, or do the same arguments made in 2015 still hold true? And are there new reasons for caution? After another five years of logjam in the state Legislature as it relates to amending ELCRA, BTL found the opinions of local LGBTQ leaders vary widely on the subject. In six interviews presented in two articles, one thing's for certain: passions flare on both sides.

BTL also spoke with Fair and Equal Michigan founder Trevor Thomas. See page 14.

## ‘What Do We Have to Lose?’

### A Winning Strategy

Michelle Fox-Phillips, the executive director of Gender-identity Network Alliance, is an enthusiastic supporter of the Fair and Equal Michigan ballot initiative. And she's the first to acknowledge her views have changed since extending civil rights to LGBTQ Michiganders via citizens' initiative was first proposed in 2015. At the time, Fox-Phillips and activist and politician Char Davenport wrote an impassioned letter on behalf of the transgender community which was published in *Between The Lines* that was ostensibly a message to Dana Nessel, who, much to their chagrin, had not sought the input of trans Michiganders. In the letter, they expressed the belief that the ballot initiative should not go forward because of the very real danger that anti-trans backlash might arise, the feeling that civil rights should not be “subject to the capriciousness of a largely uninformed or worse, misinformed public,” and other reasons.

“To really be honest, I think the time is right,” Fox-Phillips said recently, when asked how she felt about Fair and Equal Michigan's efforts. “It's an important election. If you remember when [George W.] Bush was up for reelection, part of the Republican strategy was to get these [anti-] marriage amendments in different states on the ballot and that'll get the Republicans to come out, or the Evangelicals to come out and vote for him. And I think they might be using the same strategy this year,” she said, suggesting that strong anti-Trump sentiment might drive Democrats and other pro-equality voters to the polls who would favor the ballot initiative.

In terms of the backlash against the LGBTQ community that could arise as a result of this campaign, Fox-Phillips rightly pointed out that harassment and violence against trans people in particular has increased in recent years anyway.

“The trans community's gonna be the target during this campaign,” Fox-Phillips said plainly. “And it's gonna be fear-based. Pretty much the gay community is more accepted



Jey'nce Poindexter



Michelle Fox-Phillips

in the wider, cisgender community. Trans community — we're getting there. One day at a time.”

Fox-Phillips expressed interest in being part of Fair and Equal Michigan's honorary leadership committee and said she's impressed with the business coalition, which she expects will be a significant source of the necessary funding. She said she plans to help in any way she can, including going door-to-door.

“I think this is the time,” she said hopefully. “I think we can do it. I think we can push it through.”

### Lived Experience

Jey'nce Poindexter is the transgender victims advocate for Equality Michigan and vice president of the Trans Sistas of Color Project, so she knows a thing or two about threats to the trans community; but, as she says, “I don't cower easily.” She said she's tired of people who suggest she should wait for a more favorable Legislature to amend the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act or any other reason not to move forward with a bold approach.

Poindexter is also one of four co-chairs of Fair and Equal Michigan. In response to an argument made at a strategy meeting for waiting on the state Legislature, Poindexter recounted her frustration.

“I was blown away by it,” she recalled. “And my response to it was, what are we waiting for? What exactly are we waiting on? If it has been 40 years and there has been no more movement than the initial kind of presentation, then why aren't we figuring out

other ways to push? Why aren't we bringing new, fresh energy and vantage points and ideas to help push it now and not wait another 40 years?”

Poindexter acknowledged the possibility of a harsh, negative campaign, one that would likely target the trans community, as Fox-Phillips said.

“There might be some harsh comments,” she said. “There might be whatever reaction. But what do we have to lose, besides our lives, which we're already losing? Especially black trans women. What do we have to lose? So it's much like the question that Trump presented to the American people when he was running for office: ‘Hey look, vote for me. What do you have to lose, when you already have it that bad?’” she said.

Instead of concern over the general public voting on the civil rights of a minority group, Poindexter welcomes it.

“I think that civil rights should be on the ballot because it really is a civil rights problem. I work every single day and contribute to this society,” she said. “I pay taxes. In my sense, how do I pay into a system that doesn't protect me, and that I'm supposed to believe that has no interest in protecting me, ever?”

But Poindexter isn't just putting forth arguments in favor. Like Fox-Phillips, she plans to take action. For Poindexter, education and activism are woven into the fabric of who she is.

“Every part of my work, every part of my advocacy and rendering service, and traveling even nationally, is to push, is to transform ... through education and shared experience that touches the heart and soul and that makes it



# Community Members Weigh Challenges



Roz Keith



Tim Retzloff



Amy Hunter



Steph White

human,” she said.

Because the Trans Sistas of Color Project as a collective knows from experience the reality of violence and murder of trans women of color — and the reality that those crimes are underreported.

“That is why we support it,” Poindexter said. “It’s like I said earlier, what are we waiting for? Are we waiting for someone to be more mutilated, or more evicted, or more fired illegally, or picked on, or harassed to the point where they commit suicide? What are we waiting for?”

## The Long View

Historian Tim Retzloff said he won’t advise either way on amending ELCRA via ballot initiative. However, in 2016 he did pen an article to refute claims that pro-LGBTQ efforts always lose at the ballot box. In it, he called the history of past referendum battles “complicated, and perhaps promising,” then enumerated the “mixed success” of such campaigns in Michigan. Retzloff concluded with the following: “History shows that LGBT rights do not always lose at the ballot box. History also shows that any push forward — win or lose — is never wasted.”

Today, asked whether a push forward is “never wasted” if it results in negative backlash toward an already vulnerable population, Retzloff pointed to examples in the past in which that same argument was made. His message was that fear alone shouldn’t hold us back.

“That was the argument against pushing for marriage,” Retzloff said. “Most of the leading national and state organizations in the early

2000s — and certainly in 2006 when DOMA was enacted, and then in 2004 when Michigan passed its own ‘mini DOMA’ — there was a lot of anxiety and concern about, “This is the wrong time to push this issue,” he said, referring to the Defense of Marriage Act.

Retzloff talked about other changes over the past five years that might make the environment more or less favorable to the success of a ballot initiative, and how an argument could be made either way for the kind of voters it would draw to the polls.

“One of the things we know, one the things that’s changing over time, is the more non-LGBTQ people know someone who is LGBTQ, the more favorable they are, and the more understanding they are, to our concerns and issues,” he said.

Finally, Retzloff suggested that with the Legislature stalled for the past 40 years, it may be time for citizens to take action. He sounded impressed with what he called the grassroots push and strong coalition he sees in Fair and Equal Michigan.

“My perspective is that it has been 30-some years since House Bill 5000 was at the top of the agenda, and it makes sense to push this,” Retzloff said. “When people are losing their jobs and losing their homes and losing their lives because people don’t have their equal protections, then it’s time to change the law. Hopefully, people have learned what works and what doesn’t work and how to get something passed. If the majority of Michiganders [favor this] — and I understand the majority of Michiganders favor this — and yet the Legislature isn’t enacting it, then that’s why we have the ballot initiative process.”

## ‘There’s a Tremendous Amount to Lose’

### Effect on the Trans Community

Amy Hunter is not one to mince words. When asked for her reaction upon hearing of Fair and Equal Michigan’s ballot initiative, she replied, “To be brutally honest, it was like, ‘Oh no, not again’ — and you can quote that.”

Hunter was referring to the short-lived attempt to secure LGBTQ rights in Michigan via a citizen-led initiative made five years ago. To be clear, while Hunter is interim executive director of the LGBTQ community center OutFront Kalamazoo, her opinions are hers alone.

“That doesn’t mean our members shouldn’t be well-informed,” she said.

Five years ago, Hunter was developing the transgender advocacy project for the ACLU of Michigan, which she later scaled up to the national level.

“My opinion is well-considered on this,” she stated. “It’s not something that I just arrived at because I don’t like civil rights being done as ballot initiatives.”

She criticized what appear to be highly favorable polling numbers, but that she considers deceptive. This very issue — polling

versus modeling — arose in 2015, when Freedom for All Americans conducted a modeling analysis on the public’s view of that initiative, which had sought to ensure LGBTQ rights by amending the state Constitution. Among other things, modeling requires delivering the opposition’s message to those being questioned in the way it is expected to be delivered — like TV ads featuring men in dresses entering women’s bathrooms for anti-transgender equality bathroom bills.

At the time, Freedom for All American’s findings were explained in a *Between The Lines* article by publisher Jan Stevenson. Support plummeted when the opposing message was introduced. Glengariff Group was the polling firm responsible for the first round of highly favorable polls cited by the committees of both the earlier and current initiatives.

“One of the deep concerns that came out of what I was doing, both as a transgender person and a person that was developing an advocacy program with the ACLU, was the amount of vitriol that gets spewed all over the trans community by the opposition and, frankly, by some of the folks who should be our allies,” Hunter said.

She spoke of the PTSD and the stigma that transgender people normally experience, and she added that “throwing the trans community into the cauldron of a political campaign” makes the community even more susceptible, “because the opposition will stop at nothing.”

Hunter said she’s old enough to withstand the negativity, but she’s concerned about young people who are more vulnerable.

See **Ballot Initiative**, continued on p. 12



## FOR

*“It’s like I said earlier, what are we waiting for? Are we waiting for someone to be more mutilated, or more evicted, or more fired illegally, or picked on, or harassed to the point where they commit suicide? What are we waiting for?”*

- Jey'nce Poindexter

## AGAINST

*“We shouldn’t ask the public to vote on whether we’re full humans or not. That’s not proper – there’s a reason why everybody in the [LGBTQ] movement is pretty much universally against proactively putting civil rights on the ballot.”*

- Steph White

### ► Ballot Initiative

Continued from p. 11

“A well-intentioned but ill-conceived effort is put out there that literally paints a target on their back, and the chances of them surviving that political discourse unscathed is literally nonexistent,” she said. “There’s a tremendous amount to lose.”

### History and Context

Steph White, a former executive director of Equality Michigan, is of similar mind to Hunter. For context, White was hired by EQMI shortly before the first ballot committee came together five years ago. She expressed her opposition in an editorial in which she states, “there are no quick and easy paths, only long, hard work.” Four years later, effective January 2019, the organization’s boards unanimously decided not to renew White’s contract. Erin Knott, the organization’s political director at that time, stepped into the role of executive director.

White doesn’t think the chances of a ballot initiative’s success are any better today. In fact, she feels the outlook is worse.

First, she cited the national environment and mentioned the number of anti-trans bills that have been introduced in state Houses. Second, the Michigan Court of Appeals recently ruled that LGBTQ people are not protected under the state’s hate crime law. Then there is the pending litigation in the U.S. Supreme Court involving Aimee Stephens and the definition of “sex,” which goes to the heart of Fair and Equal Michigan’s initiative.

“That is most likely to be a loss for our community as well,” White predicts. “I don’t think anybody who’s seriously looked at the court and listened to the arguments has any real hope that we will prevail in that case.”

Taken together, White sees the potential for even more negative publicity and negative outcomes.

White said that many fail to realize that the Michigan Civil Rights Commission is currently investigating cases of discrimination brought by LGBTQ people based on the Commission’s interpretative definition of “sex.” Hunter mentioned this, too, and both agree upon what’s at stake.

“If we put this up to a popular referendum, we risk losing all of that, essentially,” Hunter said.

White, like Hunter, also takes issue with the voting public making decisions on civil rights.

“We shouldn’t ask the public to vote on whether we’re full humans or not,” she said. “That’s not proper ... There’s a reason why everybody in the [LGBTQ] movement is pretty much universally

against proactively putting civil rights on the ballot. None of the national groups are coming out to support this; they know it’s a bad decision. And I think it’s unfair for Michigan to back our allies like HRC and other national groups into a corner. This is not what leadership is.”

Another deeply concerned leader is Roz Keith. The mother of a transgender son, Keith is the founder and executive director of Stand with Trans, a support and advocacy organization for families with transgender kids.

“I don’t think that anyone’s rights, let alone my son’s rights, should be voted on by my neighbors,” Keith said. “I think we have elected officials in place for a reason.”

### Lobbying and Education

Keith, Hunter and White all emphasize lobbying and education as their preferred method of effecting change in terms of securing equal rights for LGBTQ Michiganders.

“Most folks don’t know the difference between sex and gender,” Keith said, something she knows from years of experience interacting with parents whose kids are coming out. “I don’t think that buckets of money should be spent to gather signatures to get [the initiative] on the ballot when those resources perhaps could be spent to lobby and have conversations with elected officials and talk about why this is important.”

What both Hunter and White have learned from past campaigns is that victory requires vastly outspending the opposition, due to the power of negative messaging. Both cited a figure of \$12 to every \$1 of opposition. And even then, success is not assured. Instead, White laid out a plan for amending ELCRA via the state Legislature, which might only require securing a Democratic majority in one of the Houses, assuming there is a pro-equality governor.

There’s no guarantee. However, House Speaker Lee Chatfield and Senate Leader Mike Shirkey, both of whom have expressed no interest in extending LGBTQ rights — or perhaps only if a religious exemption is on the table, which is a nonstarter for those who believe in full equality — are term-limited in 2020 and 2022, respectively. Redistricting holds promise for Democrats, too. White forecasts that “there are Republicans who would not fight against this going to a floor vote as much as the leaders are currently fighting against this.”

“I hear a lot of people say, ‘We can’t sit back and be passive and wait,’” White said. “But passive and waiting is not the only option to shooting ourselves in the foot by trying to go to the ballot.”

When asked who should take up the mantle of lobbying, White replied, “It would be, presumably, Equality Michigan’s job to do this, to lead this. Their political arm.”

As stated earlier, EQMI currently lacks a dedicated political director. When it was suggested that the organization hasn’t had the funds for such a wide-scale lobbying effort, White was blunt.

“Trevor Thomas is the chair of the C4 of the Equality Michigan Action Network, and to be able to pull together the political clout of the businesses in our state — then he could do it that way,” she said. “The resources are obviously available, [it’s] just how they choose to do it.”

What White seemed to imply is that Thomas could better serve the LGBTQ community by using his talents to benefit Equality Michigan’s advocacy nonprofit rather than focusing on the new ballot committee, of which he is president.

### To Sign or Not to Sign

Neither Hunter nor White plan to sign the petition. When BTL spoke with Hunter, she had already passed up an opportunity to do so. Then she went a step further, musing about a “decline to sign” campaign.

“Decline to sign campaigns happen all the time,” Hunter said. “It is a tried-and-true tactic. It takes energizing people; it takes money to get the word out.”

She said she doesn’t yet know if the organizational, institutional or personal capacity to mount a decline-to-sign campaign exists, “but if there were, I personally would put my effort into it.”

In this way, White and Hunter both feel that it’s not as if “the train has left the station.” They feel that declining to sign the petition and thereby avoiding a campaign and vote is a matter of protecting the LGBTQ community from harm, not being disloyal.

“If the LGBTQ community has any hope or promise for the rest of humanity, [it’s] that we teach people to love yourself and be yourself, [and that] includes when I disagree on a political decision,” White concluded. “I love my community so much I’m willing to say, ‘Let’s not do this thing that everyone’s getting excited about, because it’s hurtful.’”

Lastly, when was asked if Keith planned to sign the petition she sighed.

“I don’t know,” she said. “Yes, people are dying, the suicide rate is sky high, the murder of trans women of color is unacceptable — [yet] I don’t think that signing a petition and getting this on the ballot is going to change those things. I just hope that one way or another, changes can be made so that everyone here can have the protections that they need. And we can just go about our business.”



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# A Talk With Fair and Equal Michigan Founder Trevor Thomas

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

## By the Numbers

Currently, the ballot language to expand the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity has been approved, and launches in Grand Rapids and East Lansing have already taken place. Fair and Equal Michigan — the organization leading the initiative — is well underway in its effort to collect the necessary 340,047 valid voter signatures to push the initiative forward. Trevor Thomas, the group's president, said the group plans to go further, and turn in 500,000 signatures in all, which will cost the campaign between \$3 and \$3.5 million. As for the predicted cost of the campaign from start to finish, "That changes based on how much TV time people other than ourselves are buying. The ad market will be significantly more expensive this year than normal due to the presidential [election]," said Josh Hovey, communications director and vice president of the Martin Waymire public relations firm.

At the Grand Rapids kickoff, Thomas reported a crowd of 100-plus, with 79 people being trained to collect signatures and leaving with clipboards in-hand. In the first week, 8,000 signatures were collected, but he said they were not yet fully staffed and plan to scale up to 104 individuals working on behalf of the ballot committee. Their optimistic outlook is to have, all told, 10,000 volunteers as well.

Another significant figure is \$632,776.91, the amount Fair and Equal Michigan confirmed in their first finance report, covering roughly the first month of the campaign. However, those dollars, cleared and in the bank, are separate from the "roughly \$1.5 million in pledged funding for the effort" that organizers have secured, as reported in some media outlets initially.

When asked to clarify Fair and Equal Michigan's financials, Thomas responded that the \$1.5 million was "committed." Asked whether the commitment was verbal or in writing, Thomas responded, "Our donors are listed in the campaign finance filings with the state and, as you know, that occurs on a rolling basis for all campaigns."

Of the nearly \$633,000, \$100,000 was donated by Rock Holdings, the parent company for Detroit business leader Dan Gilbert's family of companies. A less well-known donor — and one responsible for nearly 3/4 of the total sum — was Bipartisan Solutions, which donated \$453,000 to the campaign and currently lists an East Lansing UPS store as its address. As a 501(C)(4) nonprofit, Bipartisan Solutions is not required to disclose its donors. Questioned about this lack of transparency at a time when Democrats increasingly criticize dark money in politics, Hovey indicated that Bipartisan

Solutions is "led by" Richard Czuba, whose research firm, Glengariff Group, did polling on behalf of the ballot committee. Czuba did not return calls for comment regarding Bipartisan Solutions. As a private citizen, Czuba donated \$25,000 to the campaign.



Trevor Thomas

## Optimistic Outlook

Thomas sounded confident that once the signatures are collected, the state Legislature may simply adopt the legislation outright, and thus avoid a costly campaign.

"It would be wrong for people to say we're going to the ballot," Thomas stated. "I just constantly remind folks that we are initiating law with our signatures. We are so fortunate that the Michigan Constitution affords for citizens to introduce a citizens' bill into the state House and state Senate, where they can adopt the law or choose to send the question to voters."

Thomas also cited the Michigan Chamber of Commerce's recent statement reported by Michigan Information & Research Service Inc. that every employee deserves equal opportunity and equal protection under the law, regardless of various characteristics including sexual orientation and gender identity. Further, the president of the organization, Rich Studley, would prefer to see lawmakers "be proactive and resolve this issue in a fair and balanced manner instead of waiting to react to a statutory initiative."

"There's not a person in Michigan that doesn't realize that leadership, no matter the party, has been significantly swayed by the Michigan Chamber of Commerce," Thomas said.

Still, when it comes to the leadership of the Legislature it's clear that House Speaker Lee Chatfield and Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey have a history of resistance to pro-equality initiatives — a potential roadblock. Thomas is undeterred.

He compared Chatfield's oft-repeated remark

on the "Off the Record" radio program last year, that if discrimination were occurring in Michigan "it would be statewide news" to a more recent statement by Chatfield in which he acknowledged the existence of discrimination. Also reported by MIRS, the House Speaker was asked if the LGBTQ community has seen discrimination in housing and employment.

Chatfield replied, "discrimination happens, I'm sure across the country, on a daily basis against people for multiple reasons." Thomas called that a "small step."

It's worth noting that the rest of Chatfield's statement went on to mention religious protections.

"... We need to make sure religious freedoms are protected. In states where there were good motivations and intentions (it) has cost them their religious freedoms," Chatfield said.

Thomas added that Chatfield and Shirkey agreed to speak with organizers of the ballot committee. That is positive news for the campaign, but LGBTQ activists not supportive of the initiative are taking that with a grain of salt as Chatfield's statement goes on to list religious freedom as "a priority."

## Naysayers

When asked about division within the LGBTQ community over the ballot initiative, Thomas cited the eagerness of supporters and the campaign's focus on diversity.

"We are so excited about our broad coalition, and we are understanding that LGBTQ people — myself included — have been in the bunker for decades, fighting the fight, and on the front lines facing discrimination. And that is why it was so important to us to have a diverse coalition including four co-chairs where two identify as trans Michiganders. And we have worked hard to have a united LGBTQ community in Michigan, and it's on us to walk people through the process that I've walked you through when it comes to initiating law. In my

remarks in Grand Rapids, my final sentence was, 'Stand tall. Because Michigan is ready.'

Regarding an inquiry over concerns about civil rights being up for popular vote, Thomas didn't have an immediate response, only his own question regarding the names behind those concerns.

"There's a vote either way, and we're excited to finally have a vote for the first time in history, which we've never been afforded," he said.

Later, Hovey addressed the issue of voting on civil rights.

"I think it's only fair to point out a vote of the legislature is a vote of the people. And the state Constitution allows for citizen-initiated law when times like these when the politicians aren't as caught up with where the public stand on an issue," Hovey said. "I can think of no better reason to have this way of making law than for a civil rights issue like this."

Because the prospect of a potentially brutal campaign that would impact the trans community had been a topic of conversation with interviewees on all sides of the argument, BTL asked Thomas if Fair and Equal Michigan was prepared for this eventuality. He then cited differences between Michigan's situation and that of Houston in 2014, which is often used as a benchmark for ballot campaigns involving LGBTQ rights.

"I just want to make sure people aren't misleading you," Thomas said. "I understand why Houston is mentioned. We can certainly say on the record Houston was a poorly managed campaign — that's pretty widely known at this point."

He warned against comparing state and municipal elections because they vary in terms of turnout and strategy.

"We also recognize that we have been the first to substantially announce with broad bipartisan and nonpartisan support that cannot be said for other campaigns that screwed up their politics," he said.

Like others, Thomas is tired of being told that Michiganders should continue to wait on the Legislature to advance LGBTQ rights. He called it a "substantial risk" to assume, even with redistricting, that Michigan will see a Democratic majority in both chambers any time soon, plus a pro-equality governor and attorney general all at the same time.

"Michiganders will have their rights through an initiated law process in 2020," Thomas said. "And I'm going to say something super clear: Anyone that has another idea, where was your plan the last 37 years? We should hold each other accountable. We have a plan. We're moving forward with the plan. We're growing by thousands, the number of people that support us ... it's exciting."

*To find out more about the ballot initiative, visit [fairandequalmichigan.com](http://fairandequalmichigan.com).*



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## Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

### A CT Black History Remembrance

As an emerging gay teenager, I attended Cass Technical High School where I was fortunate to soon discover there were others like myself in the process of coming out. Although back then there was no such thing as coming out, there was, however signaling — by dropping verbal hairpins — and exhibiting tell-tale touches of creative flamboyance.

On the sixth floor of the Old CT building, razed about 10 years ago, there was much mingling of student art and music majors. Both categories of which were allowed eccentricities of behavior in conversation, dress and expression.

By the time of my senior year, I had made friends with six or seven emerging gay classmates with whom I was comfortable sharing my sexual inclination, discussing what movie stars might be gay, which art teachers just might be too, and having coffee at a nearby donut shop.

Among my black gay CT friends, two went on to make it big time in their illustrious careers: Harvi Alonzo Griffin (1936 - 2005) and Bernard Johnson (1937 - 1997). Harvi was a harpist music major; Johnson, a fashion fashion design student and dancer

Back in the late 1950s if you as a male played harp or designed high-fashion women's clothes you were suspect of being "that way": a queer, or a fairy. (I hated being called fruit, fag or fairy.) I myself played cello, and for one semester played in the CT string class.

Johnson, small of stature, once performed as a dancer for about 500 students assembled in the CT auditorium. He startled the audience by appearing in bathing trunks, his diminutive body enhanced in gold body paint.

He moved stage center, blue the bedazzled students a kiss and danced to Les Baxter's "Le Sacre du Sauvage." His performance brought the audience to its collective feet.

I was in a design class with Bernard a day or two later when some straight, no-talent guy who made the mistake of calling Bernard "miss thing" got his "beads read" — to use an expression of the time — by Bernard. Poor guy. He blushed the full color spectrum.

When Bernard Johnson died in 1997, the New York Times carried a quarter-page obituary listing his many costume designs for Broadway musicals, his friendships with Josephine Baker (he danced in her troupe a year or two), Judy Garland, Lena Horne, Harry Belafonte, Aretha Franklin and a command performance for Morocco's King Hassan II.

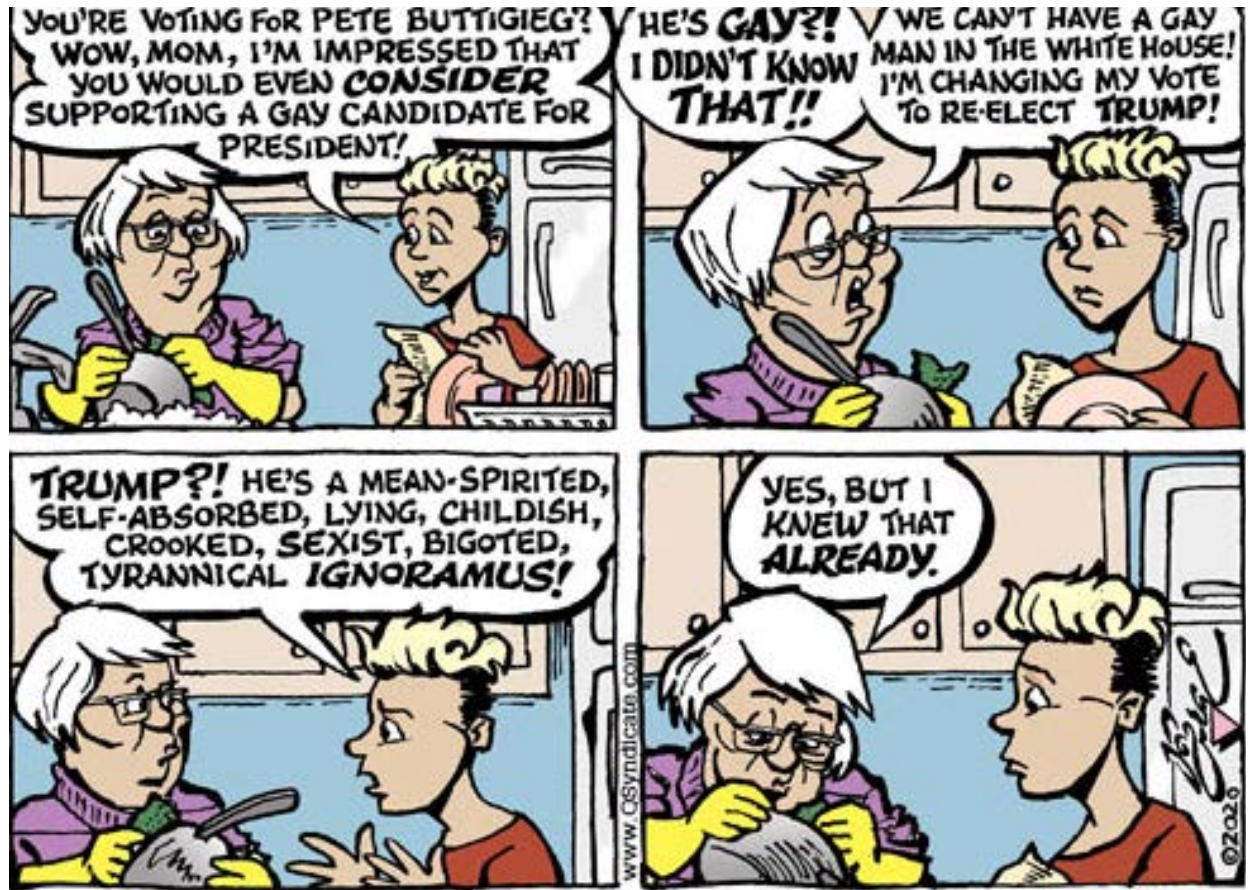
Harvi from the start insisted his first name ended in an "i" and not in a "y." He wanted his musical talent, his mastery of the harp, to be signaled as something special.

"I am special," he told his CT close acquaintances. "And you all better believe it. The harp is unique, and so am I."

Harvi went on to play for the U.S. Army Band and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. His Arizona Times obituary praised "his skill at performing every type of music from classical to country and western."

"Anyone who knew or studied with him soon learned that in his mind there was no excuse for anything other than your

Continued on next page



## Positive Thoughts



BY PORCHIA DEES

### I'm a Beautiful Black Queen Living With HIV, Not Stigma

I am a Beautiful Black Queen Living with HIV. It has taken a long time for me to come to terms with that statement, because the concepts of beauty and HIV don't usually go together. Growing up poz and trying to cope with the stigma surrounding my experience has been challenging, to say the least. I am a part of the first generation of children who were born positive. I was born Dec. 5, 1986. At the time, my biological mother was using drugs and heavy in her addiction. If it weren't for my aunt, who I call mom and who took legal guardianship of me, I don't think I would be here today.

My pediatrician told my parents that he didn't think I'd live to see my 5th birthday, but clearly God had other plans. As a kid living with HIV, I was assigned a social worker who kept me involved in lots of events for children battling different life-threatening diseases. I attended camp every summer, which gave me the chance to be around other kids who understood what I was going through. We all had our camp "crushes." But I would soon find out that dating at camp was a lot different from dating in the real world, and that the dating and hook-up guidelines we follow as a society are not inclusive of someone living with HIV — someone like me.

My parents are old-school, African-American, super-religious types, so I never had the sex talk. My social worker at the hospital didn't say this to me directly, but in her attempt to educate me on HIV transmission, without realizing it, she led me to believe that I would never be able to have sex

or have babies. And there was one huge thing she forgot to prepare me for: stigma.

The next time I learned about HIV, I was a seventh grader in sex ed. It terrified me. I remember sitting in a classroom of about 30 kids with the health educator showing us all these disgusting pictures of sexually transmitted diseases, and listening to how grossed out everybody was. When she started talking about my experience, I got really quiet. The pictures she showed didn't look anything like me. Instead, they were pictures of middle-aged, white, gay men or Africans wasting away. They were all pictures of people who were really sick or dying; there were no pictures of people who were healthy and living. Everyone left class believing that if you have sex, you could get HIV. And that if you get HIV, you are going to die. It made me even more afraid to have sex, and it further deepened the notion in my mind that someone with HIV wouldn't be able to have a normal, healthy sex life.

### The Power of Stigma

Throughout the years, I had to learn how to navigate dating and sex with HIV on my own. The only thing I ever learned about disclosure was from my mom, who told me to be careful who I shared my business with because people

See **Positive Thoughts**, continued on next page



## ► Positive Thoughts

Continued from p. 14

in this world could be cruel.

Although my mother didn't mean to, her advice, along with the isolation I was already feeling, further perpetuated stigma. She made me feel like I had something to hide, which in turn created more feelings of fear and shame. I struggled the hardest with stigma in my adolescent years. When I was younger and trying to fit in with the rest of society, it was hard for me to accept my HIV status, because it came with so many different misconceptions.

Dating and maintaining a social life became difficult for me, because of all the ignorance surrounding my experience. I dealt with many fake friends and lovers who would gossip about me and disclose my status to people with the intent of making me look less attractive. I started to internalize all of the negative things that were being said.

I never thought I'd be able to have kids; I didn't know what I could do sexually; I didn't think I would be able to find someone open-minded enough to want to date me. I watched my mom pass away from AIDS-related illnesses during my junior year of high school, so I never really planned for a future, because I didn't think I'd live to be the age I am today (33 years strong). I went through this really dark stage in my early 20s, and I almost died from rebelling and not adhering to my medication.

Stigma is killing people more than the actual disease now. Treatment adherence is greatly affected by the stigma. Treatment has come such a long way, and people are able to live long and healthy lives with HIV – if they can get connected to care and stay adherent to HIV medication. It is no longer a death sentence. It is a chronic, manageable illness.

I see it happen often. When someone is newly diagnosed, they internalize that stigma, which can lead to deep depression. They believe their lives are over and they will never be able to lead a normal, healthy life or find love. In my opinion, it's because they struggle with this sort of pre- and post-diagnosis identity crisis, and being positive becomes hard to accept. I don't have a pre-diagnosis identity to refer to, but I do know what it's like to internalize the stigma that has

been programmed into our minds.

The stigma has never sat well with me. Living with HIV is my normal, and I didn't die. I am still thriving. I had to grow to understand that the insults, judgments and shade that people attempted to throw were actually projections of their own fear, misconceptions, pain and insecurities, and that it had absolutely nothing to do with me.

For so long, I just let people gossip about their perceptions of my reality. Even today, every time I get up and share my story, I am extremely nervous, and my anxiety starts to kick in. I think it's because I am experiencing PTSD from all of the stuff that I went through growing up, and remembering all the things people said about me. But then, as I push through that fear, I experience this sort of liberating sensation. I get to portray my experience in the way that I want to, and I get to change the narrative.

In hindsight, I can't believe I let stigma keep me silent for so long. Now that I have embarked on this advocacy journey, it is like I am seeing things through a new lens. I have discovered this new world full of people who can either relate to living with HIV, or with other parts of my story. By remaining silent, I was unconsciously allowing that stigma to thrive in the silence.

Disclosure has been one of the scariest, most difficult things to deal with in my experience. Yes, I have encountered a lot of ignorance and hate, but I have also found a lot of people who understand me, like me and love me regardless. Contrary to what people believe about my experience, it has been a blessing in disguise, and I know now that this is a gift. I believe God created me specifically for this purpose: to change people's perspective on what it means to live with HIV. To know me is to love me, and the beauty in that lies in the fact that my whole being dispels the stigma.

I am a Beautiful Black Queen, and my status doesn't change that.

*Porchia Dees was born HIV-positive in 1986 and is from San Bernardino, California. This column is a project of TheBody, Plus, Positively Aware, POZ and Q Syndicate, the LGBT wire service. Visit their websites – thebody.com, hivplusmag.com, positivelyaware.com and poz.com – for the latest updates on HIV/AIDS.*

questioned the spelling of his name or the masculinity of his harp or performance.

*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.*

## ► Parting Glances

Continued from p. 16

personal best," it went on.

Harvi Griffin's career include tours of the U.S., Asia and Europe. And, a PG readership round of applause: 25 White House appearances for presidents, statesmen and foreign dignitaries — none of whom I'm sure

# Creep Of The Week

## Iowa House Republicans

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

When I was in elementary school I was taught that the Mayflower landed at Cape Cod and that's how the pilgrims (aka the puritans) arrived in America. After this lesson I did not become, nor was I tempted to become 1.) A pilgrim, 2.) A deckhand, 3.) A cod.

But had that lesson included information about gay pilgrims I very well could have become gay just by hearing about it — although not hearing about it certainly didn't stop me.

That is the logic behind a bill introduced by 13 Republican House members in Iowa that would make schools "notify parents when curriculum or classroom activities include content that relates to sexual orientation or gender identity," according to the Des Moines Register.

"Not all students, parents or families agree with the viewpoint held by many schools regarding sexual orientation or gender identity issues," Rep. Sandy Salmon, one of the bill's sponsors, told the Register. "And they should be allowed to opt out of instruction that contains that."

Iowa already has a law allowing parents to opt their children out of instruction about the birds and the bees. Because knowledge is power and for some truly stupid reason we have decided that most of this nation's kids should be completely powerless when it comes to sexual health and development. It's going GREAT.

But opting out of one specific lesson is a lot different than opting out of every lesson that contains references to sexuality or gender identity. As people have already pointed out, does this mean that a teacher would have to notify parents if they want to name the candidates running for the Democratic presidential nomination because one of those candidates happens to be Pete Buttigieg, a gay? He also won the Iowa Caucus, but, hey, no need to mention him to Iowa's students.

According to Salmon, talking about Buttigieg is no big deal, but mentioning that he's gay is an issue for her.

This is, of course, not the first or the only piece of legislation that seeks to shut LGBTQ people and history out of public schools. And it's fitting that there's pretty much 100 percent overlap with the people who demand that if sex ed is taught at all, it must be abstinence only. Because everyone knows that if you teach kids about sex then they're going to go out and have sex. Better to just ignore it all and trust that they will just wait until they're married. So if you teach kids about gays?

"It assumes children can turn gay by

**The Des Moines Register quoted a Baptist preacher who supports the measure who said that "there is something very definitely wrong" with LGBTQ people. But don't worry. He says he "has no hatred" in his heart and that his beliefs are "sincere."**

suggestion," Lorilei Baker, a clinical social worker, told WHO-HD Channel 13 News.

Which is, spoiler alert, not how it works.

According to One Iowa, this is only one of many anti-LGBTQ bills introduced by Iowa legislators, saying that five anti-LGBTQ bills were introduced in a 24-hour time span.

"[This makes] Iowa a front-runner in anti-LGBTQ legislation at 13 bills this session alone," One Iowa said in a statement.

"We have to fight this discriminatory agenda to the very end," the statement continued. "Instead of ensuring Iowans have accessible health care, world class educational opportunities and high-quality jobs, legislators are stripping protections from marginalized communities. LGBTQ communities and allies have to stand together and let our legislators know that we will not tolerate extreme and divisive legislation."

Mind you, there very well might be some House Republicans who oppose these bills, but the fact is the extreme right has taken over this party. If you're a House Republican in Iowa then you're guilty by association.

The Des Moines Register quoted a Baptist preacher who supports the measure who said that "there is something very definitely wrong" with LGBTQ people. But don't worry. He says he "has no hatred" in his heart and that his beliefs are "sincere."

"A parent who is responsible for a child has every right to know exactly what the public school," he said, "which they are paying for with their tax dollars, is teaching their kids."

But nobody is arguing that parents don't or shouldn't have that right. Nor is there any huge underground network holding secret LGBTQ teach-ins.

Rep. Art Staed, D-Cedar Rapids, told the Register that he opposes the bill and called the idea that there isn't parent input in what children learn "ridiculous."

"I just retired from teaching two years ago. I can tell you, parent input is always part of the process of everything that we do," he said.

And that, my friends, is why we need more teachers, and more Democrats for that matter, holding office.

# OBITUARY

## Nancy Ann Unwin

Feb. 15, 1934 – Jan. 27, 2020

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Nancy Ann Unwin, the founder of such groups as OUTskirts and Women OUT & About, was a revered member of and activist for the Southeast Michigan

LGBTQ community. She died Jan. 27. She was 85.

Unwin graduated from the University of Detroit with a master's degree in clinical psychology. She went on to work as a school psychologist for the next 25 years with the Detroit, Clawson and Lapeer school districts.

Unwin never married and had no children. She had 11 nieces and nephews, 26 great nieces and nephews and seven great-great nieces and nephews. Friends say she adored them all.

Nancy came to accept her sexual orientation after retiring, though she is not known to have ever come out to any of her biological family.

"Once she was willing to allow herself to be who she had always been, she dove headfirst into working in and for her newfound community," said longtime friend Marguerite Walker. "She worked tirelessly on projects that supported and benefitted the LGBT community with great enthusiasm and inventiveness and saw the isolation of women from one another as a primary problem.

"The number of hours she spent weekly in pursuit of LGBT interests would overwhelm most people," Walker continued. "However, Nancy never appeared publicly in a manner that might get back to her family. They were, to the best of my recollection, religious folk with a conservative bent."

Still, her contributions to Metro Detroit's LGBTQ community are inarguable. She started OUTskirts, a potluck/discussion group modeled on Women Together with outreach aimed at the older adult lesbian community, in 2001.

The group was "especially for those like Nancy who had not been part of the LGBT community in their younger days," said friend Alice McKeage. "Nancy and Paula Knight met with Affirmations and as a result, OUTskirts was affiliated with Affirmations. OUTskirts met on Sunday afternoons for a potluck and discussion. The group lasted 10 years and eventually when Nancy retired, was merged into Women Together."

Unwin also started the group Women OUT & About, which was a group oriented toward social activities for lesbians.

"Through WOA, Nancy and others sponsored picnics, dances and other social activities," McKeage said. "WOA was turned over to Linda Brincat and is included in her GOAL activities to this day."



Unwin was a card player and loved bridge, achieving the level of bronze life master. She was also known as a lover of animals and a genealogy buff.

"She had a quiet, sly sense of humor and loved any music with a serious thumping beat," Walker said. "This would come as a surprise to many of her acquaintances."

According to Walker, "Nancy did not have a wife or partner at the time of her death and had not had either for many years. She did have very private relationships in the past, but those women have all passed on. She and I were very close for several years up until the early 2000s. After turning over control of her groups to others, she slowly withdrew from the LGBT community."

*A Memorial Mass for Unwin will take place March 28 at 11 a.m. at Catholic Church of the Holy Family, located at 24505 Meadowbrook Road in Novi with a reception following at Fox Run Retirement Community.*



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### ► No Right to Work

Continued from p. 7

familial status and marital status – efforts to extend those protections to LGBTQ people routinely fail.

For more than 30 years, bills have been introduced to include sexual orientation and gender identity in ELCRA's protected classes; and for over 30 years, the bills have failed. As recently as June 2019, a bill to expand ELCRA, sponsored by Rep. Jon Hoadley, with more than 50 co-sponsors, was introduced with much hoopla. That same day, it was referred to the Committee on Government Operations. There has been no action since.

Michigan is not without some protection from employment discrimination for LGBTQ people: 20 Michigan cities, including conservative Grand Rapids, middle-of-the-road Mt. Pleasant and largely Democratic

Detroit prohibit such discrimination. Last year, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed Executive Directive 2019-09, which protects LGBTQ people who work for the state from discrimination in employment.

On Jan. 7, a coalition of civil rights, business and political leaders launched a petition drive to amend ELCRA to include employment protections for LGBTQ people. If the group is able to collect more than 340,000 signatures by June, the proposal could appear on the ballot in November.

For a survey of legal developments in the law on employment rights for LGBTQ people, please refer to our article, "Free to Marry, Not Free to Work," which appeared in the Michigan Bar Journal in June 2017.

*Daniel A. Gwinn is an attorney in Troy. His practice includes employment and employment discrimination law, probate, trusts and estates.*



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*Billie Jean*

# Pontiac Audiences Invited to Spend 'An Evening With Miss Bouvee' March 6, 7

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Drag queens, parties and performances all converge in Eric Swanson's upcoming one-man show scheduled for March 6 and 7 called "An Evening With Miss Bouvee" held at Pontiac's Little Arts Theatre. He said the audience is meant to feel like they're "included in one of Minnie Bouvee's famous New Orleans backstage pre-show parties."

"[It's] an intimate gathering where Minnie shares her journey from awkward and lonely childhood to fabulous stage performer and celebrated drag queen, all the while transforming and dressing before our eyes for her opening number," said Swanson, who is the co-founder and executive director of The Detroit Actor's Theatre Company.

## A Bit of Backstory.

"An Evening with Miss Bouvee," is written by Robert Leleux and directed by Mindy Grissom with musical direction by Gerianne Ditto-Harvey. It follows 40-something Bouvee, who hails from New Orleans' Garden District.

"The runt of four boys, she grew up watching her family throw Mardi Gras parties, dance sing, etc. It took her a while to figure out her place; the problem was, she found it her mom's closet and clothes," Swanson said. "Dressing up made her feel

better, less alone. She started exploring the French Quarter a bit when she stumbled into her first drag club. There, she made life long friends and became a top-notch performer."

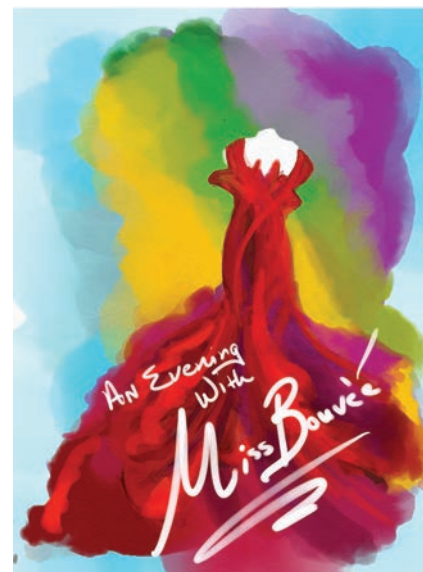
So top-notch that Bouvee was lured to New York by a flashy manager who promised to get her good parts. And he did. For nearly two decades, Bouvee played all kinds of roles and toured the world performing. However, by the time audiences meet Bouvee, she's come home to New Orleans and she's eager to reclaim the very stage on which she grew up.

## Swanson said he can relate.

"Minnie is an extension of me, that's how I see her," he said. "We both love to sing the classics, we love hosting parties, we both played dress up in our mother's closets as a kid. I think the way I most relate to her is that in finding Minnie, I have found my 'truest self,'" he said. "She makes me feel at ease on stage and when I speak. I guess I would say that she has given me more than I am giving her."

And as an unexpected blessing, Miss Bouvee has also helped Swanson trim down.

"Lord have mercy! It may be 90-minute show, but it's a marathon for me and my amazing music director. I am really taking care of my voice, resting when I can, warming up and stretching, then doing my warm downs as well," Swanson said. "After we run the show, it feels like I have just done a massive workout. All I want to do is eat chocolate and carbs afterwards. Put it this way: I have lost 10 pounds since we went into rehearsal. So, thanks, Minnie!"



## Swanson's Start

Long before Swanson could confidently play the lead in a one-man show however, he was testing his acting chops elsewhere. He said he was first bit by the acting bug all the way back in fifth grade when he starred in a school production called "Clowns."

"I had the power ballad solo in the show, and I remember liking having my moment on stage, singing to the audience and 100 percent having their

attention," Swanson said. "From then on, I never stopped. I did all the shows in middle school, high school, went on to college and did theater at the Crowell Opera House and Adrian College. And when I moved to the Detroit area, I quickly got involved in community theater around here. Theater has a way of making people think and come together."

Through the years, Swanson said he's helped many artists create their solo projects, too.

"I've helped recording artists write EPs, I've helped people write shows that address social justice issues, and I have helped several people write their own one-person show or cabaret," he said. "My husband said to me one night, 'When are you going to do it for yourself?' I paused for a moment and I said, 'Now, I guess.'"

Swanson was attracted to the Bouvee story as soon as he read it.

"She is honest to a fault, almost on the 'word vomit' level. She is the very definition of an open book. That's why she holds these pre-show parties in her dressing room. She loves talking with her friends and family about anything and everything. It's what calms her nerves before a performance."

"An Evening with Miss Bouvee" will take place at the Little Arts Theatre, which is located at 47 North Saginaw St. in Pontiac, at 8 p.m. March 6 and 7. Tickets are \$20. To buy tickets or for more information, visit [thedatc.org](http://thedatc.org).



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## Workplace Pets Create Relaxed Experience

### Billy Jean at Miner's Den

Miner's Den Designer Tilla Abel first started bringing in her French bulldog Billy Jean a few years ago. Immediately, it was a hit.

"Not only does she make it great for myself, but for the bossess and the staff in general. Before we open the store everyone has a cuddle and a pet and [she gives] a therapy dog feel. And the customers go crazy for her," Abel said. "I have customers that specifically come in just to see her and I go, 'Can I help?' And they go, 'No, I just stopped in to visit Billy Jean.'"

Come see Billy Jean at work every Saturday at Miner's Den, located at 3417 S Rochester Road in Royal Oak

*"I would say that the people that you'd think would maybe be offended by having a dog are always totally diffused by her mug, you know? So, it's worked in our benefit for the past couple of years that she's been here, and I wouldn't have it any other way."*

- Tilla Abel

Commonwealth University reported that for employees who were allowed to bring pets to work, levels of perceived job satisfaction increased and that there was significant stress reduction as workdays progressed compared with employees with no animals.

Beyond this, bringing a pet to work has demonstrated marked improvement in the health of employees, too. A 2017 study called "Dogs in the Workplace: A Review of the Benefits and Potential Challenges" found that pets can serve "as a source of social support, perhaps more effectively than a spouse or close friends."

"I feel like we can all lose interest in the game — in whatever game that is, your daily hustle. I feel that bringing her brings that breath of fresh air to the staff and if maybe you're just going, 'Oh, it's the same old, same old,' and she comes rolling through like, 'Hey, let's have a break, let's have a pet.' It's definitely something everyone looks forward to," Abel said. "On Thursday, they'll go, 'Is Billy Jean coming in on Saturday?' Of course she is, that's her day to work. If we could have her here every day we would, and the only reason I don't is because I have another dog at home, and I think it's just mean to leave one at home all of the time. My spouse is home on Saturdays, so they go on big dog walks together."

### Balancing Employee (and Pet) Wants and Needs

Still, along with all the benefits pets can provide on the job, it's important for employers to ensure that there is a balance for those employees who would prefer to work without potential distractions like barking, greeting new customers and loud play. The "Dogs in the Workplace" study found that a healthy work-pet balance is struck only if employers take care to ensure that all employees are not being bothered by any pets present in the workplace.

"An employer's decision to accept a dog in the workplace ought to take into account the potential impacts to the health, safety and well-being of co-workers, regardless of whether the decision accommodates an employee with a disability or fulfills the employer's desire to create a pet-friendly workspace," the study said.

Some considerations for employers to consider are the allergies that current or future employees may have, the fall hazards an animal may pose, bites in the case of more

See **Workplace Pets**, continued on p. 24

### BY BTL STAFF

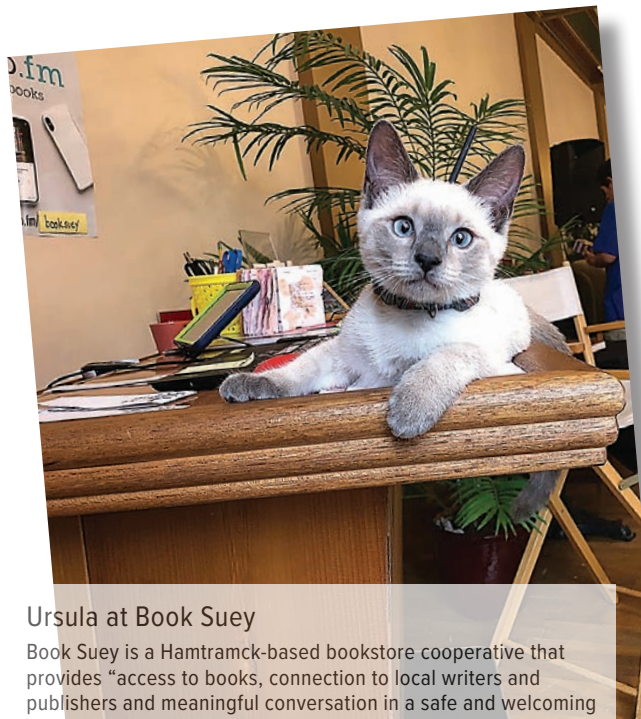
Between juggling customers's needs, offering in-store advice and working on orders of all kinds, Tilla Abel certainly has her work cut out for her as a designer at Miner's Den Jewelry. But as stressful as her work week can be, Abel knows that every Saturday she can count on her co-worker Billy Jean, a 4-year-old French bulldog, to balance even the busiest of days.

"Not only does she make it great for myself but for the bossess and the staff in general. Before we open the store everyone has a cuddle and a pet and [she gives] a therapy dog feel. And the customers go crazy for her," Abel said. "I have customers that specifically come in just to see her and I go, 'Can I help?' And they go, 'No, I just stopped in to visit Billy Jean.'"

And though it might seem unusual to some for a jewelry retailer to be a dog-friendly place, Miner's Den is certainly not alone in its pet-supportive work culture. Surveys of various employers report that between 2013 and 2015 the number of workplaces that permitted dogs has grown from 5 percent to 8 percent, with no signs of slowing down. In fact, an increase in the millennial cohort in workplaces suggests that this statistic will continue to rise, with industry leaders like Amazon and Google leading the charge.

### Long- and Short-Term Health Benefits

And with a considerable rise in "working pets" there have been visible benefits to employees, too. Studies show that companies with pro-pet policies have increased levels of employee satisfaction along with decreased stress levels. For instance, a 2012 study conducted by researchers at Virginia



### Ursula at Book Suey

Book Suey is a Hamtramck-based bookstore cooperative that provides "access to books, connection to local writers and publishers and meaningful conversation in a safe and welcoming environment." And according to Kristin Rose, a member of the co-op, part of what gives Book Suey its unique and inclusive environment is Ursula the cat.

"Ursula and Book Suey have grown up together — starting life as a kitten and a fledgling bookstore, both are a little over 2 years old and growing stronger every day," Rose said.

Book Suey is located at 10345 Joseph Campau Ave. in Hamtramck. Find out more about the store online at [booksuey.com](http://booksuey.com).

# Family Mew-Vie Nights at Tiny Lions Lounge and Adoption Center

BY BTL STAFF

Cats, movies and new friends merge at The Tiny Lions Lounge and Adoption Center's Family Mew-Vie Night on Saturday, March 7. Attendees can snuggle with cats, enjoy popcorn and watch a family friendly movie rated G or PG. "Guests are welcome to bring any pillows, sleeping bags or blankets that you may wish to use. Guests may also bring snacks or drinks of their choice. Popcorn and water will be included in the program," organizers said. "Additional concessions such as pop and candy will be available for \$1 each."

This \$10 program requires a 1-to-3 adult-to-child ratio and participants are encouraged to arrive at 7:20 p.m.

"All youth under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult age 21 or older. All fees for this program are non-refundable and are not able to be transferred to other program dates," organizers said. "Allergens such as wheat, dairy, soy, shellfish, peanuts and tree nuts will be present in the building, but not served."

*The Tiny Lions Lounge & Adoption Center is located at 5245 Jackson Road in Ann Arbor. Call 734-661-3530, email einylions@hshv.org or online at tinylions.org/events.*

## Upcoming Pet Events

### Michigan Reptile and Pet Expo - March 14

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Michigan Reptile and Pet Expo is the largest selection of reptiles, tarantulas and amphibians anywhere in Michigan. Breeders and dealers attend from all over the Midwest and cages and supplies can be found for almost any animal-carer's needs. Admission is \$6.

Taylor Town Trade Center  
22525 Ecorse Road in Taylor  
michiganreptileshow.com  
248-629-4304

### A Night Going to the Dogs - Feb. 29

8 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Hosted by Insanity Underground Photography, Hairy Queen and more bands, A Night That is Going to the Dogs is a musical fundraiser dedicated to raising money for the Detroit Dog Rescue and Friends of the River Rouge Animal Shelter. Cost of entry is a \$5 plus a can of dog food. The event will include a raffle and cash bar. Friends and family are invited.

Royal Oak Elks Club  
2401 E. 4th St., Royal Oak  
detroitdogrescue.com/events

See **Pet Events**, continued on p. 24

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Cleo at BTL

As readers know, Between The Lines has been providing Southeast Michigan with LGBTQ-specific news for close to 30 years. But it's the behind-the-scenes help it gets from its resident office dog and unofficial CEO Cleo that makes the place tick. News and Feature Editor Eve Kucharski is her owner, and she said that the 2-year-old lab mix makes even the busiest days great fun.

"Bringing Cleo to work is not only fun but it's a great way to see everyone smile," she said. "And during stressful or busy days, playing with her for a bit or giving her a treat is a great way to take a break for a moment and unwind."

► Workplace Pets

Continued from p. 22

aggressive or fearful pets, cultural sensitivities surrounding animals like dogs, and pre-existing fear and phobias that some employees may have. The study suggests regularly checking in with employees, either formally or informally, to ensure that whatever pets are present on the job aren't interfering. And finally, it's vital that if the decision is made to bring a pet into the workplace, that there is consideration for its well-being as well.

Ultimately, the only way to see if a pet's temperament and a work environment jell is by trying out the match. But if a potential pet is anything like Billy Jean, odds are that both customers and employees alike will find them a pleasure to be around.

"I would say that the people that you'd think would maybe be offended by having a dog are always totally diffused by her mug, you know?" Abel said. "So, it's worked in our benefit for the past couple of years that she's been here, and I wouldn't have it any other way."

## Eastpointe Enacts Stricter Animal Welfare Rules

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

In recent months the city of Eastpointe has made waves across the state with its unique revisions to its animal ordinance. Aimed at keeping both animals and owners in the city safer, Animal Control officers are cracking down on the length of time dogs can left outside, how dogs are tethered, the number of dogs per household and more. In a Facebook post last month they said that the changes are geared toward stopping cases like Penelope's — a 3-year-old emaciated and overbred mastiff who was found wandering the city's streets.

"She is now safe, and receiving the veterinary care that has been desperately needed. It is not likely that this dog has been missing, this is a dog that has been used and neglected," the post said. "I will express this one more time, we as a community are better than this. This is what our new animal ordinances will help us stop from happening. This is an example of what will NO (sic) longer be tolerated or accepted in the city of Eastpointe. If you see something, say something. If anyone has any information regarding who the owners of this girl are, please contact ACO Pylar, (586) 445-5100 ext. 1035."

Today, nearly a month after being found, Penelope has gained more than 40 pounds and become healthier. The search for her former owners continues. Listed below are some of the changes:

- Housing or leaving a dog of any breed or size unattended outside from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. is unlawful. Housing a dog inside a garage or shed is banned, as well.
- It is unlawful to leave dogs of any breed or size outside when the Michigan Weather Advisory predicts a temperature drop below 43 degrees or rise above 82 degrees.



Penelope

- Households may now have up to three dogs without a kennel permit.
- It is unlawful to tether a dog with a chain.
- It is unlawful to have more than one dog that is not spayed or neutered. Owners of two dogs of the opposite sex must have at least one of them spayed or neutered by 1 year of age to prevent breeding.

Andy Seltz is the vice president of field services for the Michigan Humane Society. He said in a Detroit Free Press article that the City of Eastpointe has "enacted some of the most progressive animal ordinances in the state of Michigan."

"These ordinances will not only improve the quality of life for the animals that call Eastpointe home but also result in a more humane community overall," Seltz said. "We're very excited to see if the momentum of these ordinances passing will carry over into other communities in Michigan and help all of us create a safe haven for the animals we share our lives with."

*Click this link to read all of the city's animal ordinances: [gaybe.am/DE](http://gaybe.am/DE).*

► Upcoming Pet Events

Continued from p. 24

### Pack Walk With Canine to Five - March 1

10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

This monthly pack walk brings pet owners and furry friends together. It lasts between 60 and 90 minutes depending on the weather. Organizers encourage participants to bring water, a leash and poop bags. Parking is free at Cullen Plaza where participants will meet for this free event.

Cullen Plaza  
1340 Atwater St., Detroit  
Find out more on [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com).

### St. Pawdy's Day Barkfest - March 17

7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Jameson, It's a Dog's Life Resort & Spa's resident Irish wolfhound, would like to invite all dog owners to stop by with a \$10 donation, and their furry friend to enter into a raffle for a daycare package, goodies, a photo shoot, green water, treats and much more.

It's a Dog's Life Resort & Spa  
46926 Mgellan Dr., Wixom  
Find out more on [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com).

### Paws for Reading - March 10

5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

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40255 Dodge Park Road, Sterling Heights  
586-446-2665

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# Meghan Trainor Is Living Her Best

# ‘Yaaas, B\*tch’

Life



Photo: Hanna Hillier

## Pop Star on Her Generous Lesbian Fans and Tipping Drag Queens with Sam Smith’s Money

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

It’s not necessarily all about that bass. It’s also all about that time Sam Smith – yes, that Sam Smith – slipped Meghan Trainor some singles so she could tip some Meghan Trainor drag queens.

Because even before Trainor captured adoration from the Grammy voting academy, who named her Best New Artist in 2016, the 26-year-old pop star had arguably already won an artist’s most valuable asset: the LGBTQ community’s enduring affection.

Before dropping her third full-length, “Treat Myself,” Trainor rang to talk about the LGBTQ community’s influence on her new body-positive mentality, lesbians who want to go down on her for a very specific amount of time, and finally being old enough to go to the gay bars that play her songs. In fact, she got so much off her chest during our phone calls that at the end of our second one she raved, “Such great therapy!”

**When were you first aware of your LGBTQ fanbase?**

Oh, early in the beginning. “Bass” had just come out. (That Pride) Atlanta show (in 2014), I’ll never forget it. I had no fans, I was so new,

and they made me feel like a superstar. It was, like, 9,000 people on this big lawn and just the coolest thing ever. I did that and a gay club in Florida, I think, in the early, early days and I remember that was the night this father yelled out, “You saved my daughter’s life,” and that has been with me ever since, because that’s not something you hear every day. I was so new and so not famous.

**Did you have this many queer fans as a kid growing up in Nantucket, Massachusetts?**

Not really, no. (Laughs.) A lot of people weren’t coming out in high school back in Nantucket that I knew of. I knew one friend that came out, but he came out when I moved away, so I never got to celebrate it with him. Now he dresses like a girl sometimes and he’s the prettiest woman ever. (The LGBTQ community) wasn’t as big as it is in Los Angeles, obviously. I love it though. I love being in a place where it’s fully accepted, and I keep saying this in every interview, but my entire team is gay.

**How did headlining L.A. Pride last year during the 50th anniversary of Stonewall stand out from other Prides you’ve performed at?**

This one was really special on many different levels. It felt like a birthday that I’ll never forget. It was just so magical because my setlist was one of the best I’ve ever had: I threw in “Dancing Queen” by ABBA, and that really got the crowd going, and I performed “Can’t Dance” for the first time and did this amazing dance with it (laughs).

And the big reveal was my booty! My butt was out and about, and the only audience I would be comfortable showing off my body and my ass for is my LGBTQ community because they accept and love me for who I am. I’ve never had more screams! It made me feel so confident, and like a queen. That opened up a whole world of: I’m gonna wear more form-fitting outfits because I do love myself and my body. And I have been. I don’t know if you got a chance to see me on “The Voice” but I’m feelin’ my legs, and my butt was out.

**But there are times when you’re not as confident as your music makes you seem?**

I mean, I’m way more confident than I was. This career has actually helped me so much in that way, like feeling beautiful and seeing pictures of myself that I actually like. Being on camera and being on TV, I’m like, “Wow, guys,

I’m pretty!” I say that way more. Everyone I think just works on it every day. But I definitely have learned a lot of lessons with this career; some good ones, like saying out loud how beautiful you are and saying you’re going to really believe it. If you just talk negative about yourself, that’s what your brain’s hearing and that’s what it’ll learn. So I try to stay positive.

**Did you ever struggle with seeing yourself on TV?**

I was worried with (hosting reality-TV music competition) “The Four” because I had never done a TV show before. But I can’t stop watching that show, man! (Laughs.) I watched it and everything that I did – I was a fan of myself watching myself. I’m so lame! I was just like, “Yaaas, bitch. Say what you feel.” And I was like, “Look how cute she is.” Just talkin’ as if I were a different person.

**I hope everybody can someday feel as confident as you do.**

I never thought I’d be there, so it’s great.

**How much has the LGBTQ community influenced the empowerment sensibility in your music?**

So much. I remember I had a show in Atlanta, a gay Pride event, in my early career and I never

had so many screams before. I've never had so many people just wanting to make love to me. These women were screaming at me: "I'll go down on you for 45 minutes!" And I was like, "Wow! That sounds like a treat." Nobody's ever said that to me, you know? I was like, "Wow, you'd do that for me?! You really love me!" That was just the best compliment I ever had.

**"Treat Myself" was originally supposed to be released in 2018, but then got shelved because you went back into the studio and basically gutted the album and restarted. Where was your headspace when you originally recorded the album versus when you re-recorded it?**

I think I was just like so in love. I mean, obviously: I was getting married. I'm still so in love. But I was just so live, breathe, sleep just Daryl (Sabara, Trainor's husband). Like, this is my world. So when I was doing the songwriting I was like, "Guys, I'm really boring. I'm just madly in love and everything's so great for me and I don't have anything fun to write about (laughs)."

Then I started writing songs with my older brother because he would just videotape every session, and from that he learned, "Oh, I could be a songwriter." He actually wrote on every single song pretty much, and his love life is way more interesting than mine, so I started asking him about his life (laughs) and we've been writing amazing songs together. I was like, "This is fun and relatable and not everyone is madly in love." I gotta write for my sweet single souls out there!

**Were you happy with the first recording of "Treat Myself"?**

Yeah, I love all my songs. It just feels I'm writing too much about one topic, and then pop music was drowning. It was fading away; it's because hip-hop and urban was having and is still having a moment, and I love that because I'm a fan and it's magical and so cool to watch. But it's like, where's pop? Where'd pop go?

We sent "Waves" to radio because I was like, "I'm putting my foot down; this is my favorite song I've ever written, and I think the production is powerful." It was my favorite music video I've ever done. This one I had no complaints about. And we heard, I guess, from radio, and they're like, "It's just so different; we're trying to wrap our heads around it." Like, what?

**Growing up, who were the artists who instilled confidence in you?**

Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears, Pussycat Dolls and Rihanna. I love Pussycat Dolls!

**Why the Pussycat Dolls?**

Their lyrics – which is funny, 'cause they're like the best dancers ever. But their lyrics, "Don't cha wish your girlfriend was hot like me," like man, I used to roll around in middle school with that and high school and just be like, "This is my song!"

**Which song on "Treat Myself" are you most looking forward to your LGBTQ fans hearing?**

"Genetics." It was the first song I wrote with Mike Sabath and Justin Tranter, who are like gods at writing pop music. I went in, actually, with this chorus and I was like, "Everyone keeps wanting me to write another 'All About That Bass' and I wanna just flip 'em off (laughs)." So I found another way of saying I love myself and what I got is: My genetics are pretty dope, and I do have great genetics from my parents. Their skin and their body shapes are just spot on. Like, I was blessed with an hourglass body, which doesn't happen all the time, you know. So I was like, "Fine. Let's give them a genetics song."

So I thought it was sassy and sexy and fun, and something everyone could sing. I wanted grandparents to hear this and be like, "You're welcome, kids." And then when I heard it I was like, "This is so Pussycat Dolls," so then I called Nicole (Scherzinger). She was like, "We should have a sing-off." And I was like, "Excuuuse me?!" She was like, "We should have a battle moment where we both sing our hearts out." And I was like, "Da fuck – OK!" At the end, before the last chorus, you'll hear two vocalists just ripping, and it's me and her back and forth. And she wins.

**What was it like to have your manager, Tommy Bruce, who's gay, officiate your wedding?**

It was everything because he knows me better than anyone. He delivered the opening words, and I always joke that I want them to let me have my Britney Spears microphone, like attached to my ear, and my team is like, "No, they're gonna hear how winded you get sometimes." And I understand that. But he showed up to my wedding with one of those, and he also knows how much I love T-Pain music, so he had it on full Auto-Tune and was like, "We're all gathered here todaaaa-yyy-yyy." It was so everything. It was the best.

**What is the most impressive drag performance you've seen of a Meghan Trainor song?**

Oh, man, I went to The Abbey in L.A. and I was there with Sam Smith and it was one of the cool points in my life. (Sam) gave me dollar bills because it was my second drag show ever and I was like, "I don't have the dollar bills! I didn't bring 'em!" And (Sam) handed me a stack. They did a few of my songs and it was just the best time of my life being like, "Sam, that's my song!" and throwing all the money on them!

**What's the story behind you wearing a unicorn onesie when you guest judged "RuPaul's Drag Race" in 2017?**

(Laughs.) Well, I was in the middle of a tour and had that onesie because I was wearing onesies for our meet-and-greets. Instead of doing what everyone does when they dress up fully and do the glam, I was like, "Let me show my unicorn pride, let me show what I

See **Meghan**, continued on p. 28

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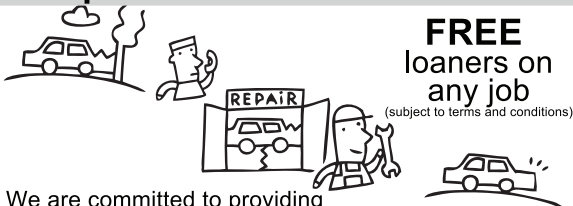
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# 'Queer & Trans Artists of Color' Book Read and Talk

BY BTL STAFF

Artist, activist and author Nia King is a journalist and media-maker based in Philadelphia. She's inviting the public to a talk at the Ann Arbor District Downtown Library on Saturday, March 14, from 2 to 3 p.m. about her three-volume book series "Queer & Trans Artists of Color."

"In the books, King interviews fellow queer and trans artists of color about their work, their lives, and "making it - both in terms of success and in terms of survival," write event organizers. "Each event features a guest artist who will speak about their own practice and lead a group discussion on a topic from the book. Everyone is welcome to attend."

King's writing and comics have been featured in a variety of publications including [colorlines.com](http://colorlines.com), the East Bay Express and Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory. In addition, King has spoken at conferences and colleges around North America including Stanford University, Swarthmore College and more.



"She has been hosting and producing 'We Want the Airwaves' podcast, on which she interviews queer and trans artists of color about their lives and work since 2013," organizers said.

To find out more about King, her books and how to register for this free event, visit [eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com).

## ► Meghan

Continued from p. 28

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bring around my tour." I thought it'd be cute. Now when I watch it I'm like, "Oh, why *didn't* you dress up?"

**What was your first time at a gay club like?**

Well, I remember the gay club called Play (in Nashville) was playing "All About That Bass" and I was 19 or 20. I was like, "Let me in, you're playin' my song!" And they denied me. I was like, "Man!" I couldn't show proof. It was just released and I was like, "You (put) my song on but you don't know my face." Later, I went back and I was like, "Now I'm back *and* in the VIP"

**And surely you've sung that song at Play by now.**

No! But I did dance to "Lips Are Movin'" with a drag queen! And I remember they had a razor and they made me shave this guy's hair off. Do you remember that, mom? That was the craziest time in my life. I was like, "Um, are you sure?"

**Hi mom!**

She says hi!

*This interview has been edited and condensed from two conversations.*

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



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**Between THE Lines**

# Queer Kinship and Family Change in Taiwan

BY BTL STAFF

In a discussion called Queer Kinship and Family Change in Taiwan, Amy Brainer — the assistant professor of women’s and gender studies and sociology at UM Dearborn — assesses clues about how larger social, cultural and political shifts have altered the experiences of LGBTQ people in various age groups. This event will be on Friday, Feb. 21, and hosted by the University of Michigan’s Institute for Research on Women and Gender.

“Interweaving the narratives of multiple family members, including parents and siblings of her queer and trans informants, Amy Brainer analyzes the strategies that families use to navigate their internal differences,” write event organizers. “... Her findings bring light to new parenting and family discourses and enduring inequalities that shape the experiences of queer and heterosexual kin alike.”

Brainer’s research has taken her from analyzing political marches, support group meetings and family dinner tables in cities and small towns across Taiwan.

“She speaks with parents and siblings who vary in whether and to what extent they have



made peace with having a queer or transgender family member, and queer and trans people who vary in what they hope for and expect from their families of origin,” organizers say. “Across these diverse life stories, Brainer uses a feminist materialist framework to illuminate struggles for personal and sexual autonomy in the intimate context of family and home.”

*The Institute for Research on Women and Gender is located at 204 S State St., in Ann Arbor. This event will be from 2 to 3:30 p.m. There will be an instant-win raffle at the beginning of the event for five copies of the book. Find out more online at the group’s Facebook page.*

# LezRead: ‘Cantoras’ and ‘Are You Listening?’

BY BTL STAFF

LezRead is a monthly book club hosted by the Jim Toy Community Center in Ann Arbor that is dedicated to connecting queer women over conversation and LGBTQ-focused books. The next scheduled meeting is Sunday, Feb. 23, from 4 to 6 p.m. where this time attendees will discuss not one but two books.



“By popular demand, we’re continuing this discussion into February! #lezread and #leztoast in the new year with two new novels! Tillie Walden’s ‘Are You Listening’ and ‘Cantoras’ by Carolina De Robertis are both critically acclaimed, highly recommended and custom-picked to help you cleanse, rebuild and move forward,” wrote event organizers.

“Cantoras” is the story of five different women in the midst of the Uruguayan dictatorship in 1977 who find each other as lovers, friends and family.

“Cantoras’ is a stunning lullaby to revolution — and each woman in this novel sings it with a deep ferocity. Again and again, I was lifted, then gently set down again — either through tears, rage or laughter. Days later, I am still inside this song of a story,” said Jacqueline Woodson, National Book Award-winning author.

“Are You Listening” takes readers into West

Texas, where characters Bea and Lou run into each other during a chance encounter.

“The landscape morphs into an unsettling world, a mysterious cat joins them and they are haunted by a group of threatening men. To stay safe, Bea and Lou must trust each other as they are driven to confront buried truths. The two women share their stories of loss and heartbreak — and a startling revelation about sexual assault — culminating in an exquisite example of human connection,” organizers said. “This magical realistic adventure from the celebrated comics creator of ‘Spinning’ and ‘On a Sunbeam’ will stay with readers long after the final gorgeously illustrated page.”

*To learn more about the LezRead book club visit its Facebook page.*

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# 'Pray the Gay Away' Live: Zakar Twins Invite Audiences to Their LGBTQ Comedy Play

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Michael and Zach Zakar are identical twins. In typical twin fashion, they finish each other's sentences, and during press interviews — like their latest with *Between The Lines* for their autobiographical play "Pray the Gay Away" — nothing is different. Endearingly, follow-up emails are closed with the phrase, "Double Love, Michael and Zach," and one certainly feels like they're seeing double when meeting them. Thankfully, once we got talking in person, differentiating between the two became much easier. What did stay the same, however, was their take on their brand-new play.

Based on a book of the same name that will make its Michigan debut at The Baldwin Theatre in Royal Oak on March 5, the twins caught BTL up on their coming out story, the inspiration for the book and the show, and their lives as YouTubers and performers.

## Getting to Know Each Other

The twins grew up in Troy, graduating from Troy Athens High School. It was while they attended school that they came out to each other.

"I didn't think Michael was gay at all. I came out to myself at about 16 or 17 and then to people at 18," Zach Zakar said.

"I was more private about coming out than Zach was. As soon as Zach came out he had a freak flag, he had a rainbow flag," Michael Zakar said.

Zach Zakar jokingly said that instead of coming out he "fell out of the closet," while his brother took a little more time. In the end, a little risky business in a school bathroom made the decision for Michael Zakar.

"I was in there fooling around with a classmate," Michael Zakar said. "Two of Zach's teammates from rugby saw me getting freaky and there and they were like, 'Oh my God! Zach Zakar is in the bathroom getting down.'"

"I played rugby so they assumed it was me," Zach Zakar said. "So Michael had to come out to me."

Of course, Zach Zakar accepted his brother.

"Long story short, I fooled around with the same kid two days later," Zach Zakar said with a laugh.

## Finding a Voice in Print and Onstage

Following high school, the Zakars were a little unsure of their calling. Attending community college several times, the duo changed majors frequently, jumping from topics like social work, writing and environmental science. Eventually, after a stint at Wayne State University, the twins decided to drop out

and put effort into their 2017 autobiography, "Pray the Gay Away."

"'Pray the Gay Away' was inspired after me and my twin brother came out and my mom threw holy water on us," Zach Zakar said. "It's our coming out tale that follows Michael and my coming out experiences individually and together with our very religious Iraqi mom."

"We also wanted to touch base on more than just being gay, so the book follows a lot of our experiences in life with being the outsiders along with our mom on this journey," Michael Zakar said.

And the story, both in print and on stage, contains many juicy tidbits, like Michael Zakar's arrest on their mothers' birthday, how Zach Zakar had an edible and called the police on himself and much more. Still, despite all of the ups and downs the Zakar twins had in their relationship with their mother, the two enjoy a strong bond today. Though the two admit that when the play was first performed live in Minnesota, they "forced her to come to the show."

"She wasn't a fan of it in Act 1, because Act 1 kind of villainizes her," Zach Zakar said.

"Act 2 makes her look like an angel," Michael Zakar added.

In the show, mother Zakar is played by female impersonator Vince Kelly.

"He's originally from Michigan and now lives in Minnesota," Zach Zakar said. "He's brilliant. He's been doing this for 10 years. Murray [Hodgson], our producer, asked my mom how accurate his performance was and she said 100 percent. I think the character portrayed her inner thoughts."

## Future Projects

After the play finishes its Michigan run, Michael and Zach said their futures are undetermined — but they are always motivated.

"Michael and I are kind of creatively confused," Zach Zakar said. "We kind of have about 11 projects in our files right now. We have another book or some TV things. Right now, we're in the process of talking to TV producers, but we kind of need a resume and currently our resume is 'Pray the Gay Away,' the book and play.

"We're seeing what happens after this current production to see if we should step up and do different productions or continue with 'Pray the Gay Away,'" Michael Zakar said. "There's always hopes to stay with 'Pray the Gay Away' for 10,000 years, but if other opportunities arise then other opportunities arise."

Zach Zakar said that he's eager to take on future creative challenges and that "closing the chapter" on the story might be a great avenue to do that. In fact, it might open the door for another book in the same series but with a different focus.

"I love the story and the storyline, and I love that it helps people," he said. "But we don't want to be trapped as always being known as gay. Right now, we're known as the gay twins and we



“'Pray the Gay Away' was inspired after me and my twin brother came out and my mom threw holy water on us.”

— Zach Zakar

want to be known as the twins. Obviously, our market right now is being gay. So our second book is more funny and sexual based, though obviously it's gay sex."

"We started in this industry writing TV and film scripts, but fortunately, our book was the first to be produced," Michael Zakar said. "We want to go back in film. We love that our real life is relatable to people and they laugh at it. But we want to show people our creative brains."

But don't be fooled, Michael and Zach are mighty proud of "Pray the Gay Away" and are eager to present it to live audiences.

"It's a play but it's a very interactive show," Michael Zakar said. "It's fun and funny the whole way through. We want you to be laughing the whole time."

## PERFORMING

### Pray the Gay Away

Runs March 5 - 8 at the Baldwin Theatre in Royal Oak  
415 S. Lafayette Ave. .  
Tickets are \$35-45

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# Theatre Nova's 'Apple Season' is a Bountiful Harvest of Emotions

BY KYM REINSTADLER

**A**NN ARBOR – There's child abuse at the core of Oregon playwright E.M. Lewis's "Apple Season" that's buried so deep it's never spoken. It's through the intimately drawn character portraits of a brother and sister returning for the first time in 20 years to the hometown — and, more specifically, the home life they fled as high school students — that the audience can connect the dots that reveal their trauma.

The event that calls them back to the family farm is the death of their alcoholic father. The older brother, Roger (Matthew Swift), who orchestrated the siblings' escape, has long pretended to be dead to stop the night terrors that his abusive father will hunt him down like an animal and kill him.

Roger, an itinerant ranch hand, survives without close human attachments. He returns for his father's funeral only for proof that the tyrant is at last dead. Roger is not open to the possibility of healing childhood wounds. He leaves town directly from the service and won't accompany his sister Lissie back to the family farm where there is much work to be done because it's apple season.

Lissie (Alysia Kolascz), who has inherited the homestead, spends the afternoon following the funeral picking

apples and remembering, through dramatic flashbacks, the traumatic events that caused her brother to steal a car and drive 400 miles to a small town where they could live in hiding.

Lissie grew up, got an education and now teaches fourth-graders in her sanctuary town. It becomes clear when neighbor Will Rizzell (Jeremy Kucharek), a farmer by choice, drops by the orchard to ask if she'll sell him the farm, that Lissie is still carrying the heavy emotional baggage of her childhood.

Neither Lissie nor Will (known as Billy as a boy) has ever married. The two have chemistry, and shared a single kiss before Roger and Lissie fled as teens. As the two chat in the orchard, the audience feels an unspoken promise that Lissie could create a bright new future on the family farm with this long-left first-love Will, if only she could unburden herself.

The pain and shame of child abuse are deeply woven into her middle-aged identity. Casting off such chains will require both superhuman

fortitude and emotional support. The one-hour-and-15-minute play's dramatic conclusion leaves the audience hopeful that Lissie has found both.

"Apple Season" debuted in 2019 with performances in New Jersey, Iowa and Los Angeles. Theatre Nova's production is its Michigan premier. The show pivots on a very tough topic, but handles it in a contemplatively paced, gentle, talk-around-it way that is, I believe, no less powerful. It leaves audiences to ponder the courage required to confront a troubled past. If such wounds can be healed, how does one begin?

I was part of an audience that loved the show. People stood and applauded enthusiastically afterward.

To be sure, director David Wolber gives us an expert staging of the script, Monica Spencer's set design of an apple orchard at harvest time and stone barn with antique apple press is exquisite. Lighting director Daniel C. Walker's lighting



design illuminates the flashbacks, where the three characters play younger versions of themselves. The acting ensemble is terrific, especially Kucharek.

Nevertheless, I found myself wishing that Lewis had added more flesh to this skeleton of a script. What happened to the unseen father in the 20 years between his kids running away and his own death? If he looked for Roger and Lissie, why couldn't he find them? Audiences can't assume much about the abusive father other than he kept the orchard going.

More perplexing is why Roger and Lissie, who share knowledge of the family secret and made the harrowing escape, don't remain close geographically or emotionally as adults. The script is good. With a little more detail, it could be even better.

*"Apple Season" will continue running through Feb. 23. Tickets are available online at theatrenova.org.*

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# The Naked Magicians to Bare it All in Detroit

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Magicians Christopher Wayne and Mike Tyler threw the “something up his sleeve” gimmick right out the window the moment they got on stage — naked. Literally baring it all, the two Aussies have toured around the world as The Naked Magicians, providing a blend of what the LA Times has called “an orgy of magic, comedy and nudity.”

Ahead of the Wayne and Tyler’s upcoming March 6 and 7 performance at The Detroit Music Hall, BTL connected with the magical duo. The two talked about relearning classic tricks, adjusting to nudity on stage and being an affirming show.

**You both got your start in magic long before The Naked Magicians act took off. Did you have to relearn tricks to accommodate for not having any clothes on?**

**Mike Tyler:** In 2013 we came up with this idea and premiered it in 2014. This idea of us taking magic to a place that it’s never been before, and literally stripping away the magic stereotypes: the top hats, the cape, the magic wand. And we designed this show, The Naked Magicians, to do magic without our clothes on. And yeah, we had to relearn a lot of the tricks that we were doing in our own shows and we invented some new ones together. But we realized that getting naked was a little harder to do the magic, because you have no pockets, no sleeves, no pants. It also added that element of misdirection.

**I’m sure it must have been terrifying when you first stepped on stage with nothing on.**

**Christopher Wayne:** It was terrifying. Mike and I weren’t the guys that went streaking or anything like that — we weren’t those dudes at the party. So we’re just magicians, and especially myself, I was in a different physical shape. When we first started this show I was a



bit heavier, we were terrified.

**MT:** You were 90 pounds heavier.

**CW:** I was 90 pounds heavier. The hardest part was losing all that weight but not losing any from my penis (laughs) — those are some of the jokes we make in the show. It was terrifying. And we both shared a memory of our first show backstage. I was like, “Dude, my heart’s beating out of my chest.” I felt like I was gonna throw up, and I remember Mike was like, “You’re sweating!”

**MT:** Sweating profusely, yeah. It really wasn’t attractive. But what we realized when we got on stage, Chris—

**CW:** We realized that interrupting one another is something we’ll be doing for years to come (laughs). You might as well finish, Mike.

**MT:** We realized in that moment where we got our clothes off on stage — because we start clothed and end up naked by the end — and we realized that there was so much clapping, applause, pealing laughter, it was so liberating to be standing on stage in front of

a packed theater wearing nothing but our top hats and our smiles. And it got so much easier after that, and it’s become our favorite part of the night.

**It’s amazing to think that your day job is many people’s biggest fear: showing up naked to work.**

**MT:** Being naked is one of the biggest fears, showing up to work naked, and the other one is public speaking or performing in front of an audience. So, we combine the two.

**CW:** Yeah, we really just took all of the biggest human fears and just turned them into a show. All we need is a great white shark (laughs). It’s a combination of several phobias almost. It makes you feel confident in a way that I know I hadn’t before and I know that Mike hadn’t before. I think when it comes to magic, it’s kind of hard when we stop doing the show and go and do our own solo stuff, which isn’t that often, but there’s such a safety now. We know that when we do The Naked Magicians, the audience are going to have the best time ever. We chose to be vulnerable in

## PERFORMING

### The Naked Magicians

March 6, 7  
Friday at 7 p.m.  
Saturday at 7 and 10 p.m.  
Detroit Music Hall  
250 Madison Ave., Detroit  
broadwayindetroit.com

the most embarrassing way, but it paid off in amazing dividends for us when we made a show that’s really special.

**And your show isn’t just for the ladies, it’s unique because it’s LGBTQ-affirming, too.**

**MT:** The show really is for anyone who is over 18. It’s not just a male revue show that’s just for the ladies, it’s definitely for the guys as well. And we get a huge following from the gay audience out there. And we have some tricks as well in the show that are designed more for the guys than the ladies, and we have a special shout-out to the guys during the show. So, it’s not just a girl’s night out.

**CW:** One thing that I was really proud of was — we just spent six months over in Vegas and we went and saw a lot of shows. We saw nearly every show on the strip in that time when we were performing and we saw all the male revue shows as well, and something that I noticed was that even though they’re “gay-friendly” it’s more that it’s a show for women and you won’t get bullied if you’re a gay guy there. What I love about our show is that the guys have as much fun as the women. I love looking into the crowd and seeing all these girls’ nights out and then seeing the groups of gay boys having the time of their life and then you see couples and then the husband is laughing as much as his wife.

*To learn more about the show visit [broadwayindetroit.com](http://broadwayindetroit.com) or [nakedmagicians.com](http://nakedmagicians.com). To learn more about the show visit [broadwayindetroit.com](http://broadwayindetroit.com) or [nakedmagicians.com](http://nakedmagicians.com).*

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Puzzle on page 37



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Photo: Vance Aung

# Happenings

## 'FIDDLER ON THE ROOF' AT THE FISHER THEATRE STARTS MARCH 10

Tony Award-winning director Barlett Sher and the team behind "South Pacific," "The King and I" and "Oslo" are bringing a "fresh and authentic vision" to this classic musical. The original production of "Fiddler on the Roof" won 10 Tony Awards and follows the story of Tevye, the father of five daughters, their desires to marry for love and his struggles with identity. Find out more about the show online at [broadwayindetroit.com](http://broadwayindetroit.com).

## OUTINGS

### Friday, February 21

**Dorrance Dance: Myelination** 8 p.m. Founded in 2011 by MacArthur "Genius" Award-recipient Michelle Dorrance, Dorrance Dance honors tap dance's uniquely beautiful history in a new and dynamically compelling context. Power Center, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. 734-647-3327. [smt.d.umich.edu](mailto:smt.d.umich.edu). [ums.org](http://ums.org).

### Saturday, February 22

**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. Come join us every Saturday. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-398-7105. [redbellysenegal90@gmail.com](mailto:redbellysenegal90@gmail.com).

### Tuesday, February 25

**Strand with Trans Support Groups - Ann Arbor - Washtenaw** 6:30 p.m. Trans Support Group meeting the fourth Tuesday of each month. Parent Support Group Facilitator - Yma Johnson, [ymaj1968@gmail.com](mailto:ymaj1968@gmail.com) or 734-780-4092. Journey of Faith Christian Church,

1900 Manchester Road, Ann Arbor. [standwithtrans.org](http://standwithtrans.org).

### Sunday, March 1

**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](http://standwithtrans.org).

### Friday, March 6

**Michigan Tobacco-free Coalition for People Living with HIV (MITCH+)** 10 a.m. A new community-led organization comprising community stakeholders, including People Living With HIV (PLWH) and people who use tobacco products. Forest Community Health Center, 2316 S Cedar, Lansing. 517-887-4597. [cwheeler@ingham.org](http://cwheeler@ingham.org).

**The Naked Magicians** 7 p.m. Seen on London's West End, the Las Vegas strip, in 250+ cities around the world, and by over 50 million on TV (NBC, ABC, FOX, iTV) - The Naked Magicians is undoubtedly the world's funniest show. Detroit Music Hall, 350 Madison St., Detroit. 313-887-8501.

[musichall.org](http://musichall.org). [broadwayindetroit.com](http://broadwayindetroit.com).

## MUSIC & MORE

**HD Broadcast: Bolshoi Ballet Giselle** February 23, 7 p.m. In this brand new production by the Bolshoi Ballet, renowned choreographer Alexei Ratmansky brings a fresh perspective to one of the oldest and most iconic ballets. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. [ums.org](http://ums.org).

**West-Eastern Divan Ensemble with Michael Barenboim** February 26, 7:30 p.m. Twenty years ago, the famous Israeli conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim and the Palestinian-American writer and academic Edward Said organized an orchestra that brought together aspiring Israeli and Arab musicians who otherwise wouldn't have met. Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor. (734) 764-8572. [rackham.umich.edu](http://rackham.umich.edu). [ums.org](http://ums.org).

**Emanuel Ax, piano, Leonidas Kavakos, violin and Yo-Yo Ma, cello** March 3, 7:30 p.m. World-renowned musicians Emanuel Ax, Leonidas Kavakos, and Yo-Yo Ma unite to perform an evening of trios

by Beethoven. Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-3464. [ums.org](http://ums.org).

**Midwest RAD Fest** March 6, The 11th Annual Midwest RAD Fest is a juried contemporary dance festival that will feature over 200 professional dance artists from all over the world performing in 5 different concerts, presenting site-specific works. South Kalamazoo Mall, 359 S Kalamazoo Mall Suite 204, Kalamazoo. [midwestradfest.org](http://midwestradfest.org).

**Tarek Yamani Trio** March 13, 8 p.m. Born and raised in Beirut and now living in Harlem, Tarek Yamani taught himself jazz at the age of 19 and has dedicated himself to exploring relationships between African American jazz and classical Arabic music. Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, 911 North University, Ann Arbor. 734-763-3333. [ums.org](http://ums.org).

**Helene Grimaud** March 14, 8 p.m. French pianist Hélène Grimaud explores the universal nature of memory and its place in the lives of all of us through this recital program, which comes from her most recent recording, Memory. Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. 734-764-3464. [ums.org](http://ums.org).

## Editor's Pick

### YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AT AFFIRMATIONS

On Wednesday, March 4, Affirmations is hosting a youth leadership and development program. This 16-week program is a chance for LGBTQ youth aged 13-22 to expand their career development skills. Find out more online at [goaffirmations.org](http://goaffirmations.org).



**Anthem, a dance for four women by Milka Djordjevic** March 18, 7:30 p.m. Questioning contemporary dance's predisposition towards neutrality, and the de-sexualization of the female body, Anthem embraces theatricality, virtuosity, and sass. Jam Handy, 2900 E. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-451-0806. [ums.org](http://ums.org).

**New York Philharmonic String Quartet with Ann-Marie McDermott piano** March 22, 4 p.m. Formed two years ago during the New York Philharmonic's 175th season by four of the orchestra's principal musicians. Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington st., Ann Arbor. 734-764-8572. [rackham.umich.edu](http://rackham.umich.edu). [ums.org](http://ums.org).

## THEATER

**Robert Dahl's Charlie and the Chocolate Factory** February 18, 8 p.m. Roald Dahl's amazing tale is now Detroit's golden ticket! Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway st., Detroit. 313-237-SING. [broadwayindetroit.com](http://broadwayindetroit.com).

**HD Broadcast: Bolshoi Ballet Giselle** February 23, 7 p.m. In this brand new production by the Bolshoi Ballet, renowned choreographer Alexei Ratmansky brings a fresh perspective to one of the oldest and most iconic ballets. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty st., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397. [ums.org](http://ums.org).

**Fiddler on the Roof** March 10, 8 p.m. Tony®-winning director Bartlett Sher and the tea.m. behind South Pacific, The King

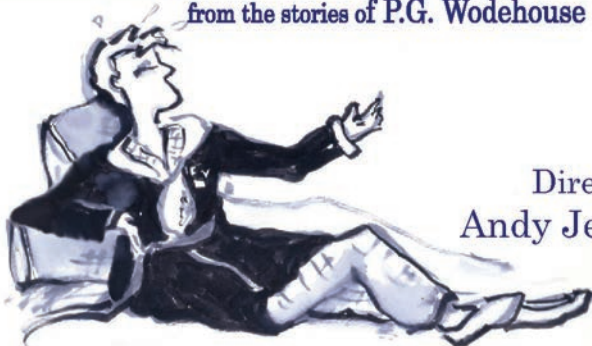
and I and 2017 Tony-winning Best Play Oslo, bring a fresh and authentic vision to this beloved theatrical masterpiece from Tony winner Joseph Stein. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. 313-872-1000. [broadwayindetroit.com](http://broadwayindetroit.com).

**National Theatre Live in HD: Present Laughter** March 22, 7 p.m. This giddy and surprisingly modern reflection on fame, desire, and loneliness stars Andrew Scott (BBC's Sherlock, Fleabag) as Garry. As he prepares to embark on an overseas tour, star actor Garry Essendine's colorful life is in danger Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty st., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397 [ums.org](http://ums.org).

# JEEVES INTERVENES

A Comedy adapted by  
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from the stories of P.G. Wodehouse



Directed by  
**Andy Jentzen**

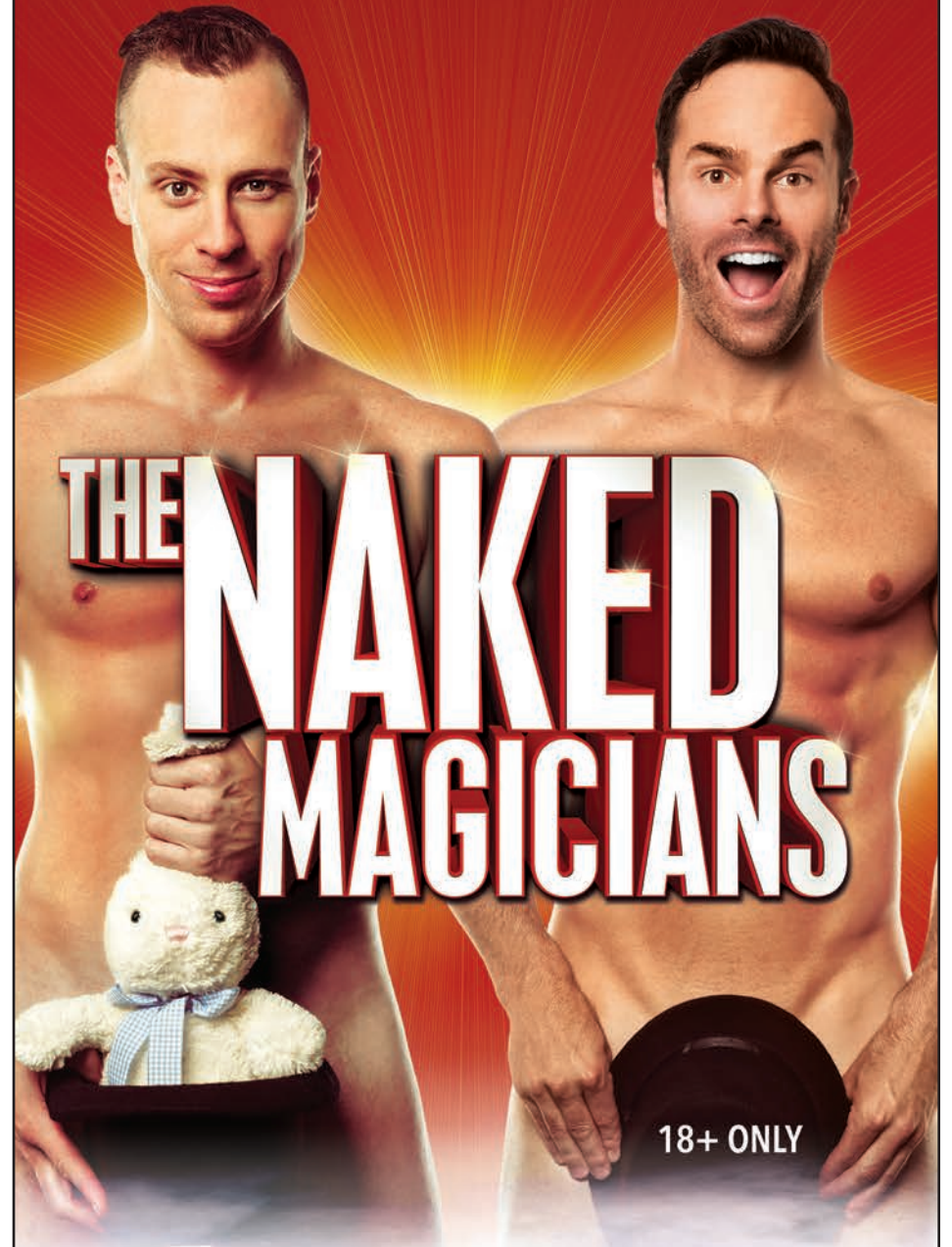


**March 12th-15th**

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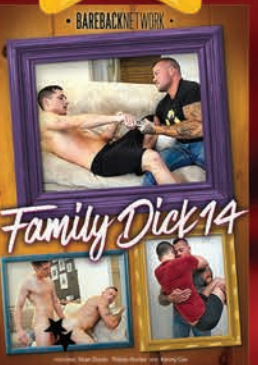
BroadwayInDetroit.com, ticketmaster.com, 800-982-2787 & box office  
Info: 313-872-1000, Groups (10+) [Groups@BroadwayInDetroit.com](mailto:Groups@BroadwayInDetroit.com) (subject: The Naked Magicians)

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# Deep Inside Hollywood

BY ROMEO SAN VICENTE

## Beanie Feldstein and other 'Humans'

Beanie Feldstein, star of "Booksmart" and the super ambitious 20-year-long Richard Linklater-meets-Stephen Sondheim project "Merrily We Roll Along," and who is also recently casually public about being queer, has another movie rolling our way. It's called "The Humans," and for all you non-theater people, here are the facts: it's the Tony Award-winning play from Stephen Karam, a comedy about some decidedly non-comedic subjects – depression, dementia, dysfunction – and all of it takes place at a Thanksgiving family dinner. Karam has adapted his stage production for the screen and is also directing a cast that includes Feldstein, Amy Schumer, Steven Yeun ("Burning"), Richard Jenkins, June Squibb and theater vet Jayne Houdyshell ("Little Women"). A24 will release it, and we assume it'll come along this fall, which is conveniently the time of families with problems (aka all of them) celebrating Thanksgiving and of awards-sounding films about families with problems hitting theaters.

## Jodie Foster meets the Mona Lisa

History lesson time: In 1911, an Italian employee of the Louvre in Paris stole Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" in order to repatriate the work back to its original Italian home. This was before security cameras were everywhere, so he just walked out of the building with the painting hidden under his coat. The sensational crime helped make the painting the most famous art object in the world, a reputation that continues over 100 years later. And now there'll be a movie about it. Based on the Seymour Reit book "The Day They Stole the Mona Lisa," the currently untitled drama is set to be directed by Jodie Foster. Producers are already saying the script – still being written by Bill Wheeler ("Ray Donovan") – will fictionalize the moment somewhat, because if there's one thing Hollywood is great at doing it's making history into something that will cause you to fail the midterm because you watched the film version instead of reading the assigned homework. This news is Sundance fresh, so the finished product might hit screens at any random moment in the near or not-so-near future. Patience, art lovers.



Beanie Feldstein. Photo: KathClic

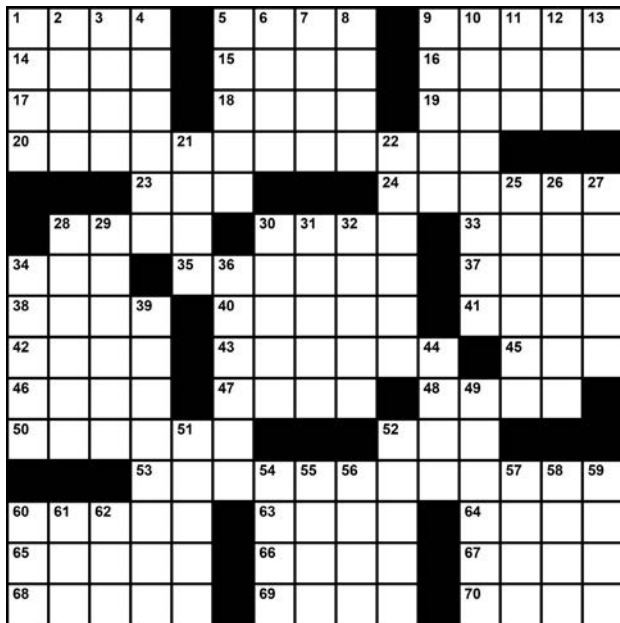
## 'Little Shop of Horrors' remake rumors

"The Little Shop of Horrors" movie remake grinds through the development process and casting possibilities float through the air like alien spores. For a while there all anyone talked about were the boys: Will it star Harry Styles? Zac Efron? And then came the "will Lady Gaga be Audrey?" moment happened. And was Billy Porter available for something? Well, now the Greg Berlanti ("Love, Simon") project seems to have landed on some new names: Taron Egerton as Seymour, and Scarlett Johansson as Audrey, and then still maybe Billy Porter as the voice of carnivorous outer space flower Audrey II. We're waiting anxiously for official news here, and all three of these choices seem fine to us – especially Billy Porter – but we'd be lying if we said we were hoping to hear another name from "Pose," MJ Rodriguez, being discussed for the lead non-plant Audrey role. Her gorgeous singing voice captured our hearts in that very part in a recent Los Angeles stage production. And another thing: We won't rest until we hear three good names stepping into the Ronette, Crystal and Chiffon chorus. Get back to work, casting people!

## Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan's 'Ammonite' finds a Neon home

The gorgeous, moving and very gay indie feature "God's Own Country" continues to find fans beyond the queer film festival circuit, but its writer-director Francis Lee has already moved on to tell another same-sex love story. The new film "Ammonite," starring Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan, set in 19th-century England, is about an archeologist (Winslet) who finds herself taking care of a rich man's wife (Ronan) to help make ends meet. And then the pair fall in love, which is only appropriate when oppressive heterosexuality of the 1800s is afoot. And while we reported on this project's existence not so long ago, it was unclear what sort of future awaited it. But now American distributor Neon – the people who successfully pushed the amazing "Parasite" in the United States – has picked it up for release, most likely arriving in time for award season. How's that for a vote of confidence for a movie about a lesbian fossil collector starring women we adore? Bring on the sensual, extinct, marine mollusks!

Romeo San Vicente remains sensual, defies extinction.



- 40 Lorre in "The Maltese Falcon"  
 41 Jerusalem server  
 42 Reverb  
 43 Where the action is  
 45 Jarreau and Jolson  
 46 Barely gets, with "out"  
 47 Opposite of erect  
 48 Enclosure with a ms.  
 50 Cut  
 52 Crew tool  
 53 Lesbian romance set in the Orthodox Jewish community  
 60 Flynn of "Captain Blood"  
 63 Nike's swoosh, e.g.  
 64 Coward of "Private Lives"  
 65 "My Fair Lady" composer  
 66 Gunfighter's cry  
 67 Shakespeare title starter  
 68 Lake ballet dancers  
 69 Enrapture, in slang  
 70 Foot bottom

- 12 \_\_\_-Z  
 13 Cut  
 21 Length b width  
 22 The Abbey in West Hollywood, e.g.  
 25 Diva Maria  
 26 Marked down  
 27 Board in a rooming house  
 28 "Growing Pains" dad Alan  
 29 First name of 31-Down, or her costar McAdams in 53-Across  
 30 Writer Dykewomon  
 31 Straight lesbian icon who starred in 20-Across and 53-Across  
 32 Frightfully strange  
 34 "Gay is good," for example  
 36 Ballpark figures  
 39 One way to wear stockings?  
 44 Morales of movies  
 49 "Spartacus" venues  
 51 Scrabble pieces  
 52 Family name of Boy George  
 54 Cutlass or 98, for short  
 55 Brought forth fruit  
 56 Richard of "Pollyanna"  
 57 Brief plea  
 58 "Oz" setting  
 59 In addition to that  
 60 Trains at a higher level  
 61 Straight line  
 62 "Breakfast on Pluto" actor Stephen

## Straight Lesbian Icon

## Q Puzzle

## Down

### Across

- 1 Stroke the ball gently  
 5 Have an opening for  
 9 Artificial sweetener brand  
 14 Cincinnati's river  
 15 Art Deco design name  
 16 The Bee Gees' "\_\_\_ Me"  
 17 Foam at Sitges  
 18 Unthinking repetition  
 19 Fable fellow

- 20 Lesbian romance set in Queen Anne's court  
 23 Trick ending  
 24 Corporal or sergeant  
 28 Word after family or fruit  
 30 Some of Mary's lambs  
 33 Curse  
 34 Half a Latin dance  
 35 Enjoying REM without Stipe?  
 37 "Frozen" queen  
 38 Poet Adrienne

- 1 Military station  
 2 "I don't think so"  
 3 Rubber on a rim  
 4 Something hard in your mouth  
 5 Showing some cojones  
 6 Slangy suffix  
 7 Rebuke from Caesar  
 8 Bambi, e.g.  
 9 Millay's muse  
 10 Drag spelling contest?  
 11 Us, in Ulm

Find solution on page 32 and at [www.pridesource.com](http://www.pridesource.com)

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MetroCareNetwork.org

# Find over 300 Non-Profit Listings Serving Michigan's LGBTQ Online @ pridesource.com

## AIDS/HIV

There are dozens of AIDS/HIV organizations and resources listed at [www.PrideSource.com](http://www.PrideSource.com). Here are just some of them:

### Metro Care Coordination Network

Free, comprehensive services for those living with HIV/AIDS.  
877-931-3248  
248-266-5545  
[Metrocarenetwork.org](http://Metrocarenetwork.org)

### UNIFIED - HIV Health & Beyond

3968 Mt. Elliott St.  
Detroit MI 48207-1841  
313-446-9800  
[www.miunified.org](http://www.miunified.org)  
Michigan HIV/STED Hotline  
800-872-2437

### Matrix MAC Health

429 Livernois St.  
Ferndale, MI 48220  
888-226-6366  
248-545-1435  
<http://www.matrixhumanservices.org/programs/matrix-mac-health/>

### Macomb County STD Clinic

27690 Van Dyke  
Warren, MI 48093  
586-465-8440  
<http://health.macombgov.org/Health-Programs-HPDC-HIVAIDSCounselingTesting>

### Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (OLSHA)

196 Cesar E. Chavez Ave.  
Pontiac, MI 48343  
248-209-2647  
[www.olhsa.org](http://www.olhsa.org)

### Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Service (ACCESS)

Sterling Heights Center  
4301 East 14 Mile Rd.  
Sterling Hts., MI 48310  
586-722-6036  
[www.accesscommunity.org](http://www.accesscommunity.org)

## Advocacy

### Equality Michigan

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

## Campus

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

### U-M Ann Arbor

Spectrum Center  
[Spectrumcenter@umich.edu](mailto:Spectrumcenter@umich.edu)  
<http://spectrumcenter.umich.edu>  
734-763-4186

### Oakland University Gender & Sexuality Center

[gsc@oakland.edu](mailto:gsc@oakland.edu)  
[www.oakland.edu/gsc](http://www.oakland.edu/gsc)  
248-370-4336

### Eastern Michigan University

LGBT Resource Center  
[emich.edu/lgbtrc](mailto:emich.edu/lgbtrc)  
734-487-4149

### The Lawrence Tech LGBT Resource Center

[ltu.edu/student\\_affairs/lgbt.asp](http://ltu.edu/student_affairs/lgbt.asp)  
**Wayne State JIGSAW**  
[Facebook.com/groups/WayneStateJIGSAW](https://www.facebook.com/groups/WayneStateJIGSAW)  
[wsujigsaw@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://www.jimtoycenter.org)  
[www.facebook.com/jimtoycenter](https://www.facebook.com/jimtoycenter)  
or follow them on Twitter @JimToyCenter.  
319 Braun Court  
Ann Arbor, MI  
734-995-9867

### LGBT Detroit

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

### Affirmations

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

## Legal

### American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan

Jay Kaplan, Staff Attorney, LGBT Project  
2966 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI  
[www.aclumich.org](http://www.aclumich.org)  
313-578-6800

### Fair Michigan

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

### Know Your Rights Project

Outlaws U-M student group  
[outlawslegal@gmail.com](mailto:outlawslegal@gmail.com)  
734-995-9867

## Older Adults

### SAGE Metro Detroit

290 W. Nine Mile Rd. Ferndale, MI  
313-578-6812  
[sagemetrodetroit.org](http://sagemetrodetroit.org)  
Facebook: SAGE Metro Detroit

## Political

### The LGBT and Allies Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party

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

## Professional Groups

### Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce

P.O. Box 32446  
Detroit, MI 48232  
[detroitlgbtchamber.com](http://detroitlgbtchamber.com)  
1-800-DET-LGBT

### Ties Like Me

Professional networking events  
third Weds. 5:30 - 8 p.m.  
[TiesLikeMe.org](http://TiesLikeMe.org)  
Suits And The City  
Lansing, MI  
[suitsandthecity@gmail.com](mailto:suitsandthecity@gmail.com)  
[www.suitsandthecity.org](http://www.suitsandthecity.org)

## Transgender

### FtM Detroit

<https://www.facebook.com/FtMDetroit/>  
[ftmdetroit@gmail.com](mailto:ftmdetroit@gmail.com).

## Get Listed, Promote Your Events

You can add or update any listing by going to [www.PrideSource.com](http://www.PrideSource.com) and clicking on Yellow Pages. Once you submit your listing, our staff will contact you to confirm your information.

You can add your event to the Pride Source Calendar online and in print by going to [www.PrideSource.com](http://www.PrideSource.com) and clicking on Calendar, then "Add Event." Send any press releases and announcements to [editor@pridesource.com](mailto:editor@pridesource.com)



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

### FtM A2 Ypsi

[ftmannarborypsilanti@gmail.com](mailto:ftmannarborypsilanti@gmail.com)  
<https://www.facebook.com/ftma2ypsi/>

### Transgender Michigan

23211 Woodward Ave.  
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[info@transgendermichigan.org](mailto:info@transgendermichigan.org)  
[www.transgendermichigan.org](http://www.transgendermichigan.org)  
800-842-2954

### Trans Sistas of Color Project

19641 W. 7 Mile Rd. in Detroit  
313-537-7000 Ext 107  
[info@tscopdetroit.org](mailto:info@tscopdetroit.org)  
[www.facebook.com/TSCOPD/](https://www.facebook.com/TSCOPD/)

## Youth

### Ruth Ellis Center

77 Victor Street, Highland Park, MI 48203  
[info@ruthelliscenter.org](mailto:info@ruthelliscenter.org)  
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](http://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

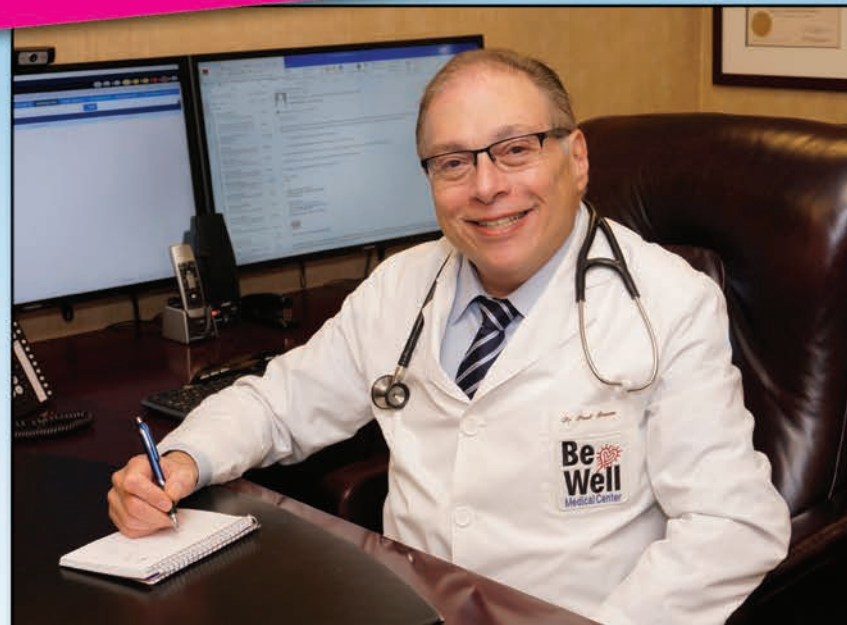
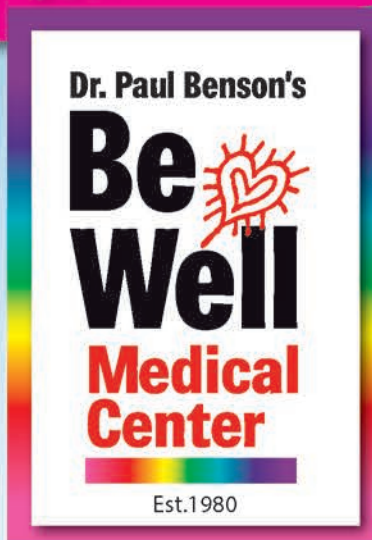
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**1 Why We Sleep?** (Dr. Benson) Release: **1/2/2020**

Sleep is one of the most important, but least understood aspects of our lives and wellness.

**2 Living with HIV in the 21st Century** (Dr. Benson & Caleb Youngblood) Release: **1/16/2020**

HIV is a chronic manageable disorder, perhaps easier to live with than Heart Disease or Diabetes. Learn the latest about the HIV virus, new therapies, and the lessons learned from our history of dealing with HIV and its social stigma.

**3 On the Edge: Transcending the Standard of Care**

(Dr. Paul Benson, Dorea Shoemaker & Gretchen Haughton) Release: **1/30/2020**

Take matters into your own hands and become an active participant in your health. We'll discuss Cannabidiol (CBD) and its properties to improve and manage health with an expert, Dorea Shoemaker. CBD may be a new and safer alternative for pain instead of Tylenol or ibuprofen. We'll also discover benefits of whole food supplements to keep us healthy.

**4 The Transgender Population – Understanding and Embracing this Population** (Leon Bullough) Release: **2/13/2020**

A report from the World Professional Association on Transgender Health's (WPATH) Annual Conference. Hormone Replacement therapy is only a part of the transitioning process. Community and mental health support is essential for success. Individualized care plans based on evidence based

medicine and created to match each individual's desires and pace is essential to make the transition process a safe and healthy journey.

**5 Sexual Health and HIV Prevention**

(Dr. Paul Benson & Mark Rosen) Release: **2/27/2020**

We'll discuss sexually transmitted infections and their prevention. Many healthcare providers sweep this topic under the rug, but outcomes improve when we talk about how to stay healthy and infection free. Sexual health is not simply the absence of disease. It's living comfortably without fear or stigma; and embracing your sexuality while living day to day in your comfort zone.

**6 Living Well Over the Age of 50**

(Dr. Benson and Colin Colter) Release: **3/12/2020**

We'll discuss simple steps you, with the assistance of your doctor, can implement to live longer and healthier. Proper health maintenance makes a big difference at any age, but becomes even more important as the decades pass. We'll talk about prevention and aggressive strategies to manage co-morbidities sometimes encountered as we age. We can't turn back the clock, but you *can* improve your heart, liver, brain function, kidneys, and virtually every organ system.



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