

MICHIGAN'S LGBT NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993



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FULL STEAM AHEAD

State Rep. Candidate Brendan Johnson on Campaigning, Surviving COVID-19

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This is only a brief summary of important information about BIKTARVY and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your condition and your treatment.

(bik-TAR-vee)

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- ▶ **Severe liver problems,** which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
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Full Steam Ahead

State Rep. Candidate Brendan Johnson on Campaigning, Surviving COVID-19

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Change of Plans

Baking Irish soda bread in one's kitchen while answering questions from potential voters might seem like an unusual way to campaign for office, but Brendan Johnson is not a typical candidate and these are not ordinary times. Said bread baking occurred via Facebook Live on March 17, a week after the first cases of COVID-19 were diagnosed in Michigan and a week before Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order was issued.

"There are lots of different ways [COVID-19's] affected us," Johnson said. "The first is that for our campaign individually, it's completely upended any field opportunities. It's going to cost a lot more for what was going to be a field campaign to a mostly mail-based and digital campaign."

Johnson, who's running for Michigan's 45th State House District, which comprises Rochester and Rochester Hills, pointed out the added challenge presented by losing the ability to have those critical one-on-one conversations with voters in a traditionally conservative-leaning area.

"If we want to flip this seat come November, we were relying on me having a lot of persuasion conversations with Republicans," Johnson explained.

However, in the spirit of running a nimble campaign and adjusting to unexpected forces, Johnson and his 30-person-strong team have devised a robust schedule for all involved. For those who would otherwise canvass door-to-door, phone banking and postcard writing are possible. And from weekly "Coffee With Brendan" events via Zoom videoconference to virtual house parties and an April 30 "At Home Together" performance by Johnson, who is a professional pianist, perhaps the only thing that could truly slow down this campaign would be for Johnson himself to contract the virus. Regrettably, that's exactly what happened; Johnson began exhibiting symptoms the day after this interview. (See accompanying story.)

Sense of Urgency

Johnson, who is 26, said he imagined that one day he might run for office, but perhaps not this early in life. Like many others, he credits Donald Trump with the motivation to throw

his hat in the ring.

"It was really the election in 2016 that I was like, 'Oh no,' — and I probably used a more creative word than 'oh no' — but, 'I've got to do something right now.'"

Johnson studied international relations at Michigan State University's James Madison College — he's a diplomat by training — and he said he recognized the danger of the president's isolationist approach to foreign policy.

"I was watching my beloved home state of Michigan — I was born and raised right here in the Rochester area — and I watched us be largely responsible for electing him into the White House. But we are also a type of demographic community that I know could be persuaded against voting for him again."

He cited U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin's and Whitmer's wins in the 2018 midterms as examples of what many see as a trend in Johnson's geographic area. Slotkin is one of Johnson's role models, and when he was earning a master of science in foreign service from Georgetown University, he had the opportunity to serve as senior intern for foreign affairs and national security in the congresswoman's office in Washington, D.C.

"After the 2018 election, and watching all of their work, I said I can do the same thing in 2020. That's sort of what prompted me to do this now," Johnson said. "I also think you need more young people at the table. There's something to be said for having young representatives."

On the Issues

Progressive candidates in Michigan often reference the state's abundance of fresh water and the responsibility elected officials have to protect and provide it safely to the citizens of the state. Johnson speaks perhaps more passionately than most about this particular issue.

"Aside from our current pandemic crisis, clean water is probably my number one motivating factor," Johnson said when asked where he'd personally like to invest his energy if elected. "We're surrounded by 21 percent of the entire planet's fresh water and yet we are not good enough custodians to give it safely to our own citizens. It's not just Flint, though that's our most infamous example."

Among other things, he named PFAS contamination and the ongoing environmental risk of Enbridge's Line 5 oil pipeline passing under the Straits of Mackinac. He added that



not only has lead been detected in the water in a number of area schools, mercury was found in the water of some schools in Rochester Hills in 2018.

"As a young person who is very cognizant of the impending crisis of climate change, I'm aware of our position in the future as probably the best place on the planet for climate refugees," Johnson said. "Be it from coastal flooding, or just desertification and lack of fresh water, we are probably going to need to bump up our infrastructure just for people who want fresh water."

Johnson also named infrastructure in general and education as high on his list of priorities.

"As a state, we've seen so much de-investment over the past two decades," Johnson said.

He added that he knows several education students who left the state upon graduation because the wages are so low. Equity in per-pupil funding and a focus on both skilled trades and STEAM education are other changes he'd like to see.

In addition to specific issues, Johnson said something he'd personally implement in his district is "good governance." All too often, legislators in "safe seats," be they red or blue, are lazy when it comes to constituent relations. He said it's been like that in the Rochester area "probably always." However, he's hopeful that this trend is shifting based on the engagement he currently sees among his competitors.

"I'm energized by looking at what the 2020 election looks like so far," Johnson said. "I know that on the Dem side — I'm biased — I think that I'm doing the best job at reenergizing my community — but I know all three of us, two Dems and one Republican, are on the doors ... right now, and I think that's something to be said for March in a traditionally very safe seat."

Representation

As an openly LGBTQ candidate, Johnson echoed what many of his LGBTQ peers running for office have said regarding the importance of representation in elective office and the support he's received from others whose footsteps he's following.

"Seeing other people who are in the LGBTQ community in elective office has been an inordinate source of support for me being able to do this as authentically as possible," Johnson said. "I cannot emphasize that enough: on the person level, me being able to engage with other LGBTQ electeds; on the national level, me seeing other people who are going about their lives in very similar situations."

Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Eliz Markowitz, a candidate for state House in Texas, were named as sources of inspiration. Johnson also said he chats regularly with a couple of the other local LGBTQ candidates running for state House in Michigan.

"I am energized and immensely helped by that representation from other people and I am ever aware of that," Johnson added. "And I am also aware of the power of that, separate from me. There have been several events that I've been to where people have come up to me afterward and told me that I was an inspiration to them and I helped them, and that's a weird experience, but it's so amazing ... that one person can have that much of an impact. And I'm aware of it because that's been the case for me."

Fun Fact

If elected, Johnson may be the first Michigan

See **Full Steam**, continued on p. 7

'I Don't Think I've Ever Been Sicker in My Life'

How House Candidate Brendan Johnson Survived COVID-19

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPOFF

"I don't think I've ever been sicker in my life." Those words were spoken by Brendan Johnson, candidate for Michigan's 45th State House District, in a video message posted on his campaign Facebook page shortly before Easter. He was referring to his experience with COVID-19. Between The Lines followed up with Johnson on April 23 — a month following our initial candidate interview — to hear him recount the story of his "mild-to-moderate" case of the illness.

March 19:

Interview with Between The Lines (See accompanying story).

March 20:

"Literally, the day after [the interview] I think I had a fever for the first time. I probably started developing mild coughs around March 3. I wasn't really concerned about it; I knew allergy season was coming. So whether or not that was part of it, I don't know, but I will say I started being chilled and wearing a blanket ... starting around March 20. That was probably an indicator I started to have a fever."

Johnson speculated where he contracted the virus.

"I honestly think it was from [canvassing]. I was on doors up until March 13. ... I don't know. There are so many asymptomatic carriers."

March 21 - March 26:

Johnson recalled that things took a turn for the worse days later, marked while participating in an online candidate event.

"I know that something 'broke,' because ... while I was doing the interview, I started sweating like it was nobody's

business."

"The next day, maybe, I started feeling really lethargic, and I started taking baths instead of showers because I didn't have the strength to stand up in a shower. And at that point it wasn't really like muscular strength. I didn't care; It was kind of an apathy."

Muscle soreness began soon after, which Johnson said lasted through April 3.

"My mom is a registered nurse; she works for the Oakland County Health Department, and she was doing a lot of casework on COVID, so we were talking this entire time. She convinced me to not live alone in my apartment but instead to come back to their house, which is three miles away."

Johnson would stay at his mother's place until April 3, which is when he said he finally felt better.

"The first time I had my temperature taken was [then]. It was between 100 and 104 for 14 days. I completely lost my senses of taste and smell," he said. "I couldn't make it up a flight of stairs. I would get very winded just walking to the bathroom. And my day-to-day existence was basically, go from your bed in your bedroom to a couch in the living room and back again."

But despite "tons of sleeping" and his general inability to do anything other than rest, he was still unable to get tested.

"My mom took me to Troy Beaumont, because they had drive-up screening," Johnson said. "So we went to Beaumont and I was flat-out denied a test because I still looked OK."

March 27:

Johnson managed to do a Facebook Live children's book reading for March is Reading Month. "My theater days came in handy, because I was very much in the middle of being sick with COVID at the time. I think that I hid it well."

March 29:

Johnson posted a message to his supporters on his campaign Facebook page that he believed he had COVID-19. It read in part, "We are all in this together, and we will get through this stronger than ever before. While I am resting up, don't worry - Team Brendan is still here! You will continue to hear from my team, and as always, we'll keep you updated on everything happening with our campaign."

March 30 - April 3:

It was soon clear that Johnson should try and get tested

again.

"Four days after I went for my first Beaumont test, I had actually degenerated to a point where my mom was very worried about the oxygen level in my blood, so we went back to Beaumont."

Again, Johnson was refused a test.

But despite being laid low by his illness, Johnson was buoyed by the response of his campaign team, friends and family.

"My family was amazing. I wore a mask the entire time and they were extremely hygienic. And they have all now squeaked out of the window where they could have caught something from me."

Johnson said he was grateful for his campaign team, too.

"I am incredibly proud because my whole [campaign] team kept firing on all cylinders and they were determined to keep us going. For what it's worth, I'm not the only person on our staff to have gotten COVID. [There were two others.] They were awesome with letting me rest ... and giving me time," he said. "This has been an absolute exercise in creativity for everyone. And then thinking that you yourself might become very susceptible to an illness—you certainly don't plan for that."

April 4 - April 15:

"Last week when I still wanted the antibody test and closure, a friend sent me to a clinic in Birmingham."

Following a telemedicine appointment, Johnson received a prescription for the two antibody tests and the nasal swab test. A positive result on the antibody test indicates that an individual has developed antibodies in response to the virus.

"The bloodwork for the antibody test came back right away. She came back in like four minutes and was like, 'You're very positive for both IgG and IgM antibodies.' I am still waiting on the nasal test results — that was painful and I don't recommend it for anyone. I had a really bad headache for the rest of the day. So at least I have some closure that at some point I did actually have it."

"I felt 100 percent last Tuesday or Wednesday [April 14 or 15]. It was around 97 [percent] for a while. ... The cough just lingered and lingered. I attempted to go on a run two days ago [April 21] and I made it about a half mile before my body was like, 'No.' And the cough came back. I was right back into feeling winded and tired. We'll see how long this actually takes."

► Full Steam

Continued from p. 6

State Representative to have worked at a world-class zoo. In fact, Johnson worked at the Detroit Zoo prior to attending graduate school. That's not to say he took care of the animals — Johnson was an event planner, a job he said he loved.

"When I was applying to grad schools,

Georgetown told me they really liked one of my essays," Johnson recounted. "It started with, 'When I tell people I worked at the zoo they're confused because they know I have a BA in IR [international relations] and they tend to make a hesitant joke about it being like the UN but for animals.'"

Joking aside, what Johnson believes he learned from his experience at the zoo that prepares him for elective office is that it really is

a kind of public service. Interacting with people at events can be like dealing with constituents; vendors and colleagues can be compared to lobbyists in that each has an agenda, Johnson suggested.

"This is not unique to the zoo," Johnson said. "I was also a host at Olive Garden. Anyone working in the hospitality industry will tell you that customer service is an amazing skill that cannot be taught, but you have to hone it

through experience. It is grueling, often, but that is so much of what being a representative is: being able to talk to your constituents and solve their problems. That's just public service."

Find out more about Johnson's campaign online at brendanformichigan.com.

Unified Ramps Up HIV-Related Services as COVID-19 Increases Need

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

“Added Pressures”

As governors across the U.S. extend stay-at-home orders, millions of Americans are becoming accustomed to a temporarily altered, home-bound way of life. But for HIV-positive people, those concerns are compounded due to their immunocompromised status. Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report no specific link to COVID-19 and HIV, but they do make note that HIV-infected people, particularly those with underlying conditions, could have a higher chance of contracting the disease. Unified HIV Health and Beyond is an organization that works to aid HIV-positive clients through case management, testing, support groups and more across Michigan. Kevin Howley, its interim executive director, said that in addition to Unified’s existing clients relying on services more than before, the organization is experiencing spikes in need not seen before the pandemic.

“Before, if you’ve just tested HIV-positive, you don’t have to worry about infecting anybody else or being infected. You still have a compromised immune system and you’re careful, but the risks are totally different. Now, it’s dramatically different for our current client base. And that kind of rolls into the fact that now we actually have more people coming into our system that weren’t really clients per se,” Howley said.

Howley said that many of the people who were able to “handle things on their own” or who lived with only occasional service needs have now begun to enter the system as registered clients.

“It’s interesting, just with the client base we already had before the crisis started, there’s so much that they depend upon us for help with in terms of getting access to bus passes, dealing

with landlord issues, dealing with their health insurance challenges,” he said. “And whether it be access to health insurance or sorting through the maze of services that are available ... all that’s really been heightened now. ... Their ability to get out and do some of these tasks becomes even more limited because they have this added risk.”

Howley said that other “added pressures” on Unified right now are early prison releases due to the pandemic.

“Regularly, we have a reentry service, because many people leave the prison system and they are HIV-positive. So they go from a prison system that provides them with all their cares and needs, to a system where, all of a sudden, they’re left on the street with no insurance, no access to services. So, as that population comes out of the prison system, they’re entering them as clients of our programming,” Howley said. “Right now we’re handling it, but in terms of evaluating the impact of what’s going on, it’s putting that pressure on our staff to try and meet the needs as quickly as possible.”

Still, despite the pull on Unified’s existing resources and staff, Howley is choosing to view

the influx of newly registered clients as a good thing.

“We want them to be a part of our network,” he said. “These clients that we’re working with, their anxiety levels have gone from zero to 10, and we want them to know that we’re here for them. It’s great for their own personal and mental health, but also their physical health, and generally for the community to know that Unified is out there supporting [them].”

Community Within Crisis

One of Unified’s most popular services for clients is The Conover Food Pantry at its Ypsilanti location. Here, active clients can pick up an array of canned, frozen and dried food products along with personal hygiene supplies. However, because of the pandemic, the Pantry’s regular hours have been significantly altered. Howley said that the Unified staff is developing workarounds to aid the clients who are most in need by delivering staples to their doors via care packages.

Caitlyn Clock is a Tobacco Treatment Specialist who works out of Unified’s Ypsilanti

office. She said that personalized services like the packages and reaching out to clients directly has been working well to foster a sense of comfort and community.

“[For one specific client,] I’ve been working with them for a few months now and ... we were working on this plan, they were in the middle of a quit attempt and, all of a sudden, they get slammed with [the stress of the pandemic]. And while it’s become a motivator for them, it’s also really scary. It can cause increased emotional triggers like stress, depression and anxiety, and all of those kinds of things could really contribute to them wanting to smoke again,” Clock said. “I think that them really feeling that continued support from me and from places like case management has really helped them navigate this and feel like they’re not alone in this.”

When asked if Unified is unveiling more social distancing-specific programming to combat isolation from services during the pandemic, Clock said that she’s excited about a telehealth program that’s “kicking off right now.”

“We also have another TTS in Detroit, her name is Amber, and she and I have been collaborating with marketing person to try and figure out other ways we can reach out to clients that aren’t meeting them in person. We can make calls and still do appointments over the phone or on a video chat service, but we’re trying to find other ways to reach out to them and offer them support and information,” Clock said. “We’re doing blogs right now, we’re working on Facebook Livestreams. [And case management is doing] everything via phone or video chat, trying to keep everyone as happy and healthy as they can.”

Visit the Unified website to learn more about its offered services, where and how to donate and more.

HELP, Corktown Health Center Celebrates 30 Years of Ryan White CARE Act

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Thirty years ago the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act, or CARE Act, was passed. Named for an Indiana teenager who contracted AIDS via a blood transfusion and was subsequently expelled from school because of his status, this became the largest federally funded program for the people in the U.S. living with HIV/AIDS. Its intent was to improve HIV/AIDS care, its availability and access for low-income people affected by the disease. And for the LGBTQ community, which to this day is disproportionately impacted by the disease, this act has been instrumental in creating care opportunities.

In Detroit, Health Emergency Lifeline

Programs, or HELP, benefits from Ryan White CARE Act funding. It is an organization that works to aid thousands of people affected by HIV/AIDS along with the Corktown Health Center, which focuses on LGBTQ health care. This is especially important because as of 2018, the city’s HIV/AIDS average was more than four times the state average. This month, the organizations are taking time to acknowledge Ryan White and the act itself, and HELP/Corktown Health Center Chief Operating Officer Teresa Roscoe said that there are many reasons to celebrate it 30 years later.

“The Ryan White CARE Act is the single largest source of federal funding for HIV medical care and support services. The lives of people living with HIV have been made profoundly better by these resources, and we



have seen the effectiveness of reducing HIV transmission by helping individuals achieve viral suppression,” Roscoe said. “At HELP and Corktown Health Center, we are proud to support our community and address social determinants of health through the Ryan White CARE Act and other funds. We will continue to work with policymakers to express the importance of continued funding for Michigan.”

However, as valuable as the Act has been to HIV/AIDS services both locally and nationally, Roscoe made sure to express how other systemic flaws impacting vulnerable communities are emphasized because to its necessity.

“As we celebrate 30 years of Ryan White’s courage and legacy, we continue to witness how health disparities, food insecurity, housing insecurity, lack of behavioral health services and discrimination affect vulnerable communities,” she said. “Today, the COVID-19 pandemic further highlights the impact of these health disparities here in Michigan and across the nation.”

To learn more about the act visit the Health Resources & Services Administration website.

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Campaign to Amend ELCRA Announces E-Signature Strategy

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Change of Course

As every aspect of the 2020 election cycle adapts to the constraints of social distancing, a campaign in Michigan that seeks to secure equal rights for LGBTQ people has found a novel method to overcome a seemingly insurmountable hurdle. That campaign, Fair and Equal Michigan, recently announced that it would implement electronic signature collection to gather the target 340,000-plus valid voter signatures required to put their initiative before the voters in November if the state Legislature does not adopt the measure once the signatures are turned in and verified. Thus far, the campaign reports having collected 150,000.

“We have always had a pretty strong risk mitigation plan,” said Fair and Equal Michigan co-chair Trevor Thomas. “We always had an internal target of 542,000 signatures in the event of the unexpected. Obviously, COVID-19 has changed operations in a number of ways in communities, and so we have changed with it.”

Prior to launching this effort, Fair and Equal Michigan has been able to collect more than 700 signatures using a petition-by-mail system over the past several weeks, Thomas said. That simply requires filling out a paper ballot and sending it back, postage paid.

“We wanted to make sure that we reached everyone possible during this extraordinary time,” Thomas said. “And that’s where discussions started on the ability to do e-signatures.”

To keep the campaign moving forward while adhering to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s “stay home, stay safe” order, registered Michigan voters who support amending the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include protections for sexual orientation and gender identity and expression may go the Fair and Equal Michigan website fairandequalmichigan.com/sign to request an electronic form and follow the steps. Organizers estimate this will take about three minutes. Requiring two-factor authentication, the process requires users to enter a valid driver’s license or state identification number; information will be cross-referenced with Michigan’s list of registered voters.

The company contracted to process the signatures, DocuSign, is “the most trusted and widely used in this environment,” according to Thomas.

Used by more than 800 agencies at all levels of government, the company meets or exceeds the highest global security standards and meets the Uniform Electronic Transaction Act as adopted in Michigan.



Is This Legal?

No ballot initiative in Michigan has tested the use of electronic signature collection for their campaign before. For that reason, Between The Lines posed a number of questions to Fair and Equal Michigan’s legal counsel, attorney Steve Liedel of the Dykema law firm. He maintains that it is not only legal under the UETA but it is also strengthened by Executive Order 2020-41. That order, effective April 9, is for the purpose of “[e]ncouraging the use of electronic signatures and remote notarization, witnessing and visitation during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The executive order explicitly states the use of electronic signatures is permissible “unless the law specifically mandates a physical signature.” As Liedel points out, nowhere in Michigan election law does it specify that a signature on a ballot petition requires pen and paper.

“Unlike some other laws in Michigan, and election laws in other states relating to petitions that might require such a thing ... requiring blue or black ink, or to manually affix their signature to a paper petition document, the election law in Michigan just requires the petitions to be signed ... by a certain number of registered voters,” Liedel said. “The only legal issue that Fair and Equal Michigan confronts with this process under the Michigan elections law is the requirement that for a signature to be valid and counted, it has to be ... signed in the presence of a circulator. And that’s a hurdle that Fair and Equal Michigan dealt with when they launched their mail campaign.”

In order to overcome that challenge for the petition-by-mail campaign, each signer of the petition also serves as the circulator and it is thus signed twice, once for each role. It’s how the electronic signature method works, too, and has always been permitted within Michigan’s election law: when collecting signatures in person, the circulator, who signs the petition as such, may also sign the petition if qualified. Liedel clarified that this shouldn’t be thought of as “witnessing” one’s own signature, as for a will.

“You’re just certifying that the petition was signed in your presence and, to your belief, the person is a registered voter. It’s always been

permitted. There’s no requirement that it be a second person,” he said.

Because the signatures are not collected in person, that does open up the possibility for fraud. While Liedel acknowledged this, he explained how there may be a lesser likelihood of fraud with electronic signatures than with the traditional method of collection.

“If you consider regular petition-gathering in a public space, you wouldn’t even have to have your roommate’s ID or birthdate,” Liedel said. “You could take her name or any other name, sign it and sign the petition in the name of another person. It has occurred in the past, and [it] could occur, and there’s no mechanism to check, ‘Well, who signed that petition?’ How do I know?”

He pointed out that there have been efforts in the past by some groups to invalidate ballot petitions by using “bad” signatures in this way.

“With electronic signatures, in addition to everything you are required to provide under physical signature gathering, you’ve got to provide identification number, date of birth,” Liedel said. “There is the ability to compare the signature vs. the signature that’s in the voting records in the same way with a paper signature because ... it’s going to be required to sign either using a stylus, a finger on a phone or tablet, or a mouse on a PC.”

In addition, signing up to use the system requires an email address, so using someone else’s identity would require access to their email or using or creating another one. With the electronic record of the digital signature — when it was signed, which address was used, etc. — one might say there is more of a paper trail than there is when using actual pen and paper to sign a petition.

Because using this technology requires a driver’s license or state ID, it excludes those voters who lack such documentation. Voters in Michigan who don’t have that documentation are a small but no less important minority. They may still participate in the campaign by using the petition-by-mail system, as paper petitions don’t require ID.

Liedel addressed the question of whether other strategies were considered, such as lowering the threshold for signature collection

— as the governor of New York did by executive order — or extending the deadline.

As it happens, the number of signatures required is set in state Constitution, and Liedel said he’s not aware of a way the governor could waive a constitutional provision like that.

“My advice to Fair and Equal Michigan was focused on allowing them to use a mechanism that did not require the suspension of a state law,” Liedel said. “It’s narrowly focused; it’s additionally supported by the governor’s executive order.”

Finally, there is precedent for Fair and Equal Michigan’s actions outside of the state. For example, Arizona and Boulder, Colorado, permit digital signatures for ballot petitions. In Utah, the state Supreme Court ruled that it was legal, then the state Legislature later enacted a law that prohibited it. Likewise, Tennessee is one state whose election law explicitly states that one must “manually affix” a signature.

Next Steps

Fair and Equal Michigan informed the state of their plans and are moving forward. A spokesperson from the office of the Secretary of State said they have yet to conduct a “full legal analysis.”

Liedel said the Bureau of Elections may decide to consult with the office of the attorney general or the governor regarding whether what they are doing follows her executive order.

At this point, with 150,000 signatures collected, 340,000-plus valid signatures required and 542,000 signatures set as a goal, Fair and Equal Michigan has a steep hill to climb by May 27 — assuming they succeed in any legal challenge over the use of electronic signatures.

Thomas is resolute.

“We currently have plans in place to test ROI return in the digital space, automated call space, texting space, email space,” Thomas said, referring to return on investment. “And where the bulk of assistance will come from — in the spirit of getting it right the first time — in January when we announced, we did it where we didn’t stand alone. We had more than 50 organizations and individuals that have followings [who] stand with us, and their numbers have increased over the past six months or so. And then we have leaned on our corporate partners to notify their employees.”

Thomas mentioned “exciting announcements” that would be coming soon — one being the recent news that the campaign has the support of Michigan’s Big Three automakers.

“We’re all in this together,” Thomas said. “And we encourage anyone with a social space or private friend group to notify them and to leverage all communications channels for the good of equality and trying to get this done.”

Big Three Automakers Announce Joint Support for Banning LGBTQ Discrimination in Michigan

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT – Michigan’s “Big Three” automakers announced today their joint support for Fair and Equal Michigan, joining other business leaders, LGBTQ groups and leaders from both sides of the political aisle to add LGBTQ protections to the state’s current civil rights law. The initiative, launched on Jan. 7, seeks to introduce a citizens’ bill in the State Legislature after advocates collect 340,047 citizen signatures. The Legislature will have 40 days to adopt it. This marks the first time Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, Ford and General Motors have issued a joint statement in favor of amending the state’s landmark civil rights law to protect LGBTQ

“At FCA, we are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive working environment that enables us to exceed the expectations of our diverse customer base,” said Chief Operating Officer of FCA – North America Mark Stewart. “In that spirit, we believe that amending the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include protections for LGBTQ individuals is an important step towards achieving full equality and respect for all people.”

“At Ford, we welcome and value everyone’s unique contributions by fostering a safe and inclusive work environment. In order to continue to compete and win globally, we must be able to recruit and retain the talented people from all backgrounds,” said Chief Diversity Officer at Ford Motor Company Lori Costew. “In supporting these efforts to expand the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, Ford Motor Company affirms our belief that inclusion of everyone makes us stronger, drives more innovation and, in turn, is best for customers and other stakeholders.”

“As a proud member of the Human Rights Campaign’s Business Coalition, General Motors stands with our LGBTQ employees and their families in support of the Fair and Equal Michigan campaign to amend the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act in Michigan,” said General Motors Company Global Chief Diversity Officer Ken Barrett. “At GM, promoting a culture that is inclusive and free of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, affords all our employees to proudly be who they are at work ... an environment that is open, supportive and empowering ... where

everyone is valued and belongs.”

The campaign recently announced that it has made Michigan history by shifting to an online signature collection strategy to comply with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s stay-at-home order. Other previously announced companies supporting Fair and Equal Michigan include DTE Energy, Consumers Energy, Apple, Dow, Rock Holdings and Herman Miller. It has also been endorsed by the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Chamber, Michigan Dental Association, League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women and State Employees Retiree Association.

“The ‘Big Three’ auto companies understand that every Michigander deserves a fair and equal chance to succeed. FCA, Ford and GM know first-hand this is about attracting and retaining the best talent to Michigan in support of economy. Their support is a significant milestone in this campaign and we look forward to carrying this momentum forward to ensure we collect the signatures needed to place the issue in front of the Legislature,” said Fair and Equal Michigan Co-Chair Trevor Thomas.

Fair and Equal Michigan is seeking to

amend the state Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include protections for LGBTQ individuals. The Act already protects individuals against discrimination in employment, public accommodation and housing based on 10 factors, including age, race, sex and religion. The Fair and Equal Michigan initiative would amend the current law by defining “sex” as including “gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression.”

“Michigan auto manufacturers understand that being welcoming and accepting of LGBTQ individuals is good for business. They recognize that, even though their own internal policies have protected LGBTQ employees from discrimination for years, banning discrimination statewide will make Michigan a more attractive place to live and work. With today’s announcement, the Big Three are making clear that being a welcoming state is about talent attraction as much as it is fairness and equality,” Thomas said.

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Parting Glances

BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

Hugs 6 Feet Away

When's the last time I was hugged? I can't remember. It's been so long it seems. A month ago? Two months ago? Social distancing has all but rendered the time-honored practice obsolete.

I do remember that I always found hugging to be pleasurable, uplifting to my inner being and imagined self worth, and, however brief in duration, gratifying and reassuring that I was welcome in the improbable scheme of things in this crazy world.

I fully expected to do my share of hugging to my many LGBTQ friends and associates during Ferndale June Pride 2020, but this ever-exciting and powerful rainbow event has been postponed to a future time.

During the past 10 years I've attended Ferndale and Chicago Pride Parades. Chicago's 2019 event drew over 1 million celebrants and spectators.

As for hugging, I've been tempted to emulate a young gay guy I saw at Chicago water tower. He held up a sign that boasted, "I give gay hugs for free!"

As far as hugging goes, in spite of the fact that I'm somewhat over the hill, I can match hugs with guys much, much younger than me. Clothes on. Clothes off. (Any takers?)

The noun "hug," by the way, is derived from old Nordic word hugga. It means to comfort. It's a Germanic word and antecedents mean 'to capture', 'to enclose'.

According to a YouTube video worth googling, there are 15 different kinds of hugs, each indicating a different meaning to this physical bonding, from amorous intimacy, friendship reassurance, buddy-buddy and touchdown scoring.

Now in vogue is a new kind of hugging: Zoom hug-ins and Facetime one-on-ones. Each is best prefaced with an caring remark such as, 'Hey (Dear Friend, Love of My Life, Neglected Relative, etc.), while I can't hug you in person and still be six feet away for safety, accept this virtual 20 seconds as well-meant approximation of the real, honest-to-goodness act on my part!"

If you want some inspiring music and images to encourage your reluctant venture into virtual hugging, listen to and watch Tom Rosenthal and Billie Marten's 'Hugging You" on YouTube. It has accompanying pictures of huggers straight and LGBTQ, young and old and that are touching in mood and memory.

And please know and rest assured my many PG readers, if only I could, I'd hug you one by one.



BY JON HOADLEY

Viewpoint

In the Age of COVID-19, Where are Our Leaders?

Over the last couple of months, we have seen the coronavirus rapidly transform from a small outbreak halfway across the world into a full-fledged global pandemic. What was once a news story in a different country is now wreaking unprecedented havoc on our entire society. The need for capable leadership and data-driven policy is essential at a time like this.

Across the country, we are seeing mayors and governors step up to lead their regions with actions to protect their citizens and minimize the spread of coronavirus. However, we have yet to see this same level of leadership and incorporation

of scientific data at a national level. President Trump still has not proposed a unified plan that keeps us safe and restarts the economy. Recently, he said, "When somebody is president of the United States, the authority is total" — it is not — and then turned around and told governors, "You're going to call your own shots."

We have watched as he called the virus a hoax, slow step utilization of the defense production act and make false claims daily about the virus' nature and spread. Now, he's taking

See **Viewpoint**, continued on next page

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► Viewpoint

Continued from p. 14

credit for the crucial economic stimulus plan that Democrats in Congress worked overtime to fix from its corporate bailout origins while preventing an independent watchdog from overseeing the process.

This is a failure of leadership.

In 2018, Trump dissolved the White House's pandemic response team seeing no use for them as the U.S. was not facing a pandemic. Even as experts claimed that the biggest current threat to the U.S. was a pandemic, Trump brushed off the concerns of experts in the field and never looked back. Trump scrambled to create a pandemic response team that did not rely on experts, but rather his most loyal supporters and, for some reason, an infomercial host. Our first responders, doctors and nurses, and everyday citizens are suffering because of it.

Yet, there are bright lights coming from state and local leaders.

Across the country, we have seen numerous mayors rise to the occasion to fully utilize the power of their office to lead their citizens and protect their cities in ways that instill trust and faith in local government. In Atlanta, Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms was one of the first in the country to halt the shutoff of vital utilities to citizens who may be late or unable to pay their bills at all during the pandemic, ensuring that citizens would not be further affected in ways beyond their control. In Los Angeles, Mayor Eric Garcetti took extra steps to ensure companies were adhering to the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order by announcing that any non-essential business remaining open during the order would have their utilities shut off to halt operations. In Chicago, Mayor Lori Lightfoot acted quickly to open up new lines of funding for the city's coronavirus response initiatives to allow the city to move quickly in the actions it must take to combat the effects of coronavirus.

On a larger scale, we have seen governors throughout the country utilize the power of their offices to protect their citizens and states while the White House slow rolls its response. Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York has been on the forefront of coronavirus response and made national headlines

with his pressuring of the White House to respond quickly and meet the needs of his and other states before the pandemic causes further damage. Michigan's very own Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has been ahead of the curve in her response and now joined with other governors to create a regional approach to reopening the economy.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom has reacted quickly with innovation as his response as his state is facing a shortage of health care workers. Governor Newsom has called for medical students and medical retirees to join the California Health Corps to expand the number of caregivers in the state while not jeopardizing the quality of that care.

All of the instances above have one thing in common: These elected officials based their actions on the recommendations of scientific experts.

When you need to fix your car, you go to a mechanic. When you're sick, you go to a doctor. When we're in a public health crisis, you listen to scientists and public health experts. They did not brush off the opinions of experts, concern themselves with ratings or spew false information in an effort to reassure the public. They recognized the need for true leadership and policy guided by science and expert opinion. Then they got to work.

As we continue to battle the coronavirus, some of my Republican colleagues in Lansing are more concerned about picking a partisan fight than listening to the scientific experts. Their actions encouraging people to protest unsafely in Lansing could extend the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope that the White House and Lansing Republicans can follow the bipartisan lead of governors and mayors to craft a national response that focuses on policies based on expert research and data. We can beat COVID-19 and we must act as quickly and fiercely as possible.

State Rep. Jon Hoadley is in his third term as the representative for the 60th House District, which includes Kalamazoo and portions of the city of Portage and Kalamazoo Township. He currently serves as the Democratic vice chair of the House Appropriations Committee, as well as the Democratic vice chair of the House Fiscal Agency Governing Committee. Find out more about Hoadley online at jonhoadley.com.

Creep Of The Week

Donald J. Trump

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Currently trending political advice: Do not chug Lysol. Do not inject bleach. Do not smoke Clorox wipes.

Also add to that list: Do not vote for Republicans. My God, what a sick and dangerous joke is this president and his party.

In some ways it makes sense, this fierce protectionism of the most unqualified person to ever hold the highest office in the land. Republicans are completely incapable of governing. After all, they don't believe that government is capable of being competent or helpful and so they have an incentive to be terrible. And, my oh my, do they meet even the lowest, most cynical expectations. Trump is so terrible that he has people waxing nostalgic about George W. Bush and Democrats getting misty-eyed over Ronald Reagan (waving to John Kerry: KNOCK IT OFF). Note: when one person is MORE terrible than another, that doesn't make the less terrible person not terrible.

The COVID-19 pandemic makes the difference between Republicans and Democrats nakedly clear. One party is taking advice from the country's top medical experts about how to navigate this crisis. The other party puts a guy on TV every night who believes that windmills cause cancer and that we should try to kill coronavirus by beaming sunlight into a body — literally putting sunshine where the sun doesn't shine. One party takes unprecedented steps to save American lives. The other party encourages protesters in Confederate flag tube tops and "Don't Tread on Me" banners to descend upon state governments who dare to take these steps. One party thinks that staying alive is goal No. 1. The other party thinks that life only matters when it's inside a womb.

There are 50,000 Americans dead as I write this. Surely there will be more by the time you read it. And that's just the deaths we're counting. There are likely more. The number of people who are sick is no doubt being undercounted due to the completely botched response by the Trump Administration to this crisis. We didn't test. We didn't do contact tracing. We didn't do shit. The only thing Trump offered to fight this virus was racism against the Chinese and guess what: racism is as ineffective against COVID-19 as mainlining Purell.

As crass and narcissistic and awful as Trump is, it is astounding to me that he has yet to show any care or concern for tens of thousands of people who are dead. I mean, it's not astounding to me that he doesn't care, it's astounding to me that he doesn't have advisors saying, "You probably should express some kind of condolences." Actually, scrap that. I suspect he does, but he is so out of control, so completely off leash, so totally insane that he listens to no one. Not even Ivanka.

Trump's Republican party claims to be pro-life, but when it comes to life outside of the womb, they DGAF. There are Republicans across the country making the argument that letting scores of people get an incredibly infectious virus and die is preferable to hurting the economy. That death is the lesser evil when compared to a tanking stock market. And then they want to turn around and pretend they're holier than thou because they oppose abortion.

Trump's Republican party claims to be pro-life, but when it comes to life outside of the womb, they DGAF. There are Republicans across the country making the argument that letting scores of people get an incredibly infectious virus and die is preferable to hurting the economy. That death is the lesser evil when compared to a tanking stock market. And then they want to turn around and pretend they're holier than thou because they oppose abortion.

In Michigan, where I live, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat known to Trump as "that woman from Michigan," has gotten some pushback from Trump supporters for her "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order, which has just been extended until May 15. She's had protesters in front of the capitol and even her house. People are protesting her audacity to limit their liberty in an effort to not kill thousands of people. They are taking "give me liberty or give me death" to the extreme, here. And Michigan Republicans are with the protesters on this. They have a majority in the state House and Senate and they have forced both bodies to meet in person in Lansing, most recently so that the Republicans could pass bills stripping Whitmer of some of her power — bills that Whitmer is obviously not going to sign. So the whole thing is just a political stunt. A political stunt that puts peoples' health and lives at risk. This is even after Rep. Isaac Robinson (D-Detroit) DIED in March from COVID-19. Michigan's Republican party is a ghoulish circus of nightmare clowns.

But they, of course, take their cues from their Dear Leader who tweeted "LIBERATE MICHIGAN" as protesters without masks crammed elbow to elbow toting assault rifles and boasting about allegiance to white supremacy, intentionally blocked streets in the capital, including access to a hospital.

Remember those death panels Republicans warned us about when Obama dared to give people health insurance? Well, they're here. And the panelists are Republicans. Vote them out before they kill you.

LGBT Detroit Launches New Political Arm of Agency

BY BTL STAFF

LGBT Detroit has announced the launch of LGBT Detroit Mobilization, a new 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization aimed at endorsing candidates that support protections and rights for individuals regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

LGBT Detroit Mobilization, with support from the For Our Future Action Fund and the Voter Movement Project, plans to organize the political interests of LGBT individuals and allies in the city of Detroit. The new organization's intent is to activate non-regular LGBT voters, conduct voter educational forums and identify local candidates and issues important to LGBT Detroiters.

"By promoting and defining local LGBT issues for candidates, elected officials and the general public, the non-profit will send comprehensive endorsement questionnaires to candidates on all local, state and federal levels with the interest of educating them on issues that impact the community," said LGBT Detroit Mobilization board treasurer Antonio Johnson-Seals.

LGBT Detroit Mobilization board secretary Michael Gilmore elaborated.

"Through mobilizing our constituency via issue-based outreach, LGBT Detroit Mobilization will use grassroots lobbying, digital and direct email campaigning where important dates, voting locations and candidate endorsements are announced," he said.

As soon as stay at home restrictions are lifted, LGBT Detroit Mobilization plans to begin organizing public town hall meetings and issue-based political forums in advance of the November 2020 election cycle.

"These town hall meetings and forums are a chance to ask questions and voice major concerns for those specifically in the Detroit area," said Anthony Martinez, program coordinator for LGBT Detroit Mobilization.

For now, the group is hosting a virtual town hall discussion via Zoom, which is scheduled for Wednesday, April 22 at 7 p.m. The hour-long webinar will cover topics such as new legislation, volunteer recruitment, organizing strategies and the Get Out The Vote campaign.

For information on the discussion and for volunteer opportunities contact Anthony Martinez at anthonymartinez@lgbtdetroitmobilization.org or visit LGBTDetroitMobilization.org.

COVID-19's Upset to WSU LGBTQ Campus Life

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Shaking Up the Routine

It's undeniable that coronavirus has drastically changed the patterns of daily life around the world. Whether one is temporarily unemployed and quarantined at home, attending work via Zoom meetings or ramping up hours due to an essential worker status, it's clear that the definition of a "normal" day has changed. And with thousands of institutions moving courses online and sending students home, the same can be said for universities.

However, for the LGBTQ student population on college campuses, there may be an added layer of challenges in particular related to the loss of everyday campus life. At Wayne State University, for instance, Student Senate President Stuart Baum said that many of the LGBTQ students who have been forced to move home in lieu of other living arrangements have stopped living visibly "out" lives.

"We have a lot of students who live on campus who have had to leave and they're at home now with their folks, and they just can't live a life being out. They can't live their authentic selves," Baum said. "And then we also have a bunch of students who maybe have always lived at home and have just commuted to school, but the fact that we have the student organization meetings, that's where they've been able to live their out lives on campus during the day and still have that refuge here on campus."

And while it is only a temporary shift, statistics have shown that LGBTQ people tend to suffer from depression and other mental illnesses at a higher rate than heterosexual peers. Because of that, it's possible that a sudden shift to living in the closet might compound negative feelings on top of stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic. And

because, or perhaps as a result of, how crucial positive parental and familial relationships are for the well-being of youth, many LGBTQ people fear coming out to parents because of potential rejection. Baum said that even in his own accepting family experience, coming out was made easier because of his campus life.

"I grew up in a very supportive family, but being able to go to student organizations and meet with fellow members of the community, that was what really gave me the support that I needed to feel comfortable coming out," he said. "So it's still hard to feel that in a community of others not like you."

COVID-19 Slows the Expansion of Equality at WSU

But there's another reason LGBTQ students at WSU have been impacted differently due to COVID-19. Besides missing out on everyday one-on-one student interaction, this year, students were unable to attend WSU's April Pride Week events because of the virus. And though that might seem like a short part of an otherwise full school year, Baum said that Pride Week held a special significance for the LGBTQ members of the WSU student body. Specifically, because of the school's lack of enough LGBTQ-specific resources, classes and events.

"We're one of the only public universities in the state ... that really have been lacking in terms of providing resources for LGBTQ students," Baum said. "And we looked at it in kind of two buckets: one is student life, so things involving Pride week, like the fact that we don't really have a lot of programming, we don't have a support staff or budget for that programming in the student life bucket. But we also don't really have the academic life and engagement resources that other universities have. For example, we only have a couple of courses in the books that are offered in the realm of queer studies, and they haven't been

offered for years because there hasn't been faculty to teach them."

Baum said that this stems primarily from a lack of dedicated funds in WSU's budget to aid LGBTQ students. As Student Senate president, he decided to take action, and he co-sponsored a resolution to promote diversity, inclusion and provide support for LGBTQ students at WSU. Elements of the resolution include advocacy for the establishment of a previously proposed LGBTQ+ Resource Center, a push for more classes and faculty in the field of queer studies and more. The response, he said, was overwhelmingly supportive.

"We got every single LGBTQ student, faculty and staff organization to support this, and then we got the student government to support it, and then we even got the academic side, which is the faculty government, to support it unanimously," Baum said. "This was the first time that we had really any initiative on campus that was supported by all the students and all the faculty and all the staff."

However, because of the social distancing required to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Baum said for the first time he's worried about the resolution's fate. Much of the concern, he said, lies with WSU's fiscal year that ends in October.

"So we always have budget negotiations that go into the summer, rather than other universities that have a budget end in June. Last year, all of our budget priorities, we had to work well into the summer to actually see them through ... which has all been complicated with the switch to online," he said. "Part of the concern is that, especially with a lot of the student leaders that have been involved with this moving on, we need to figure out how to organize going into the next year."

Despite these complications, Baum said he's far from throwing in the towel. He said he's working with other members of the Senate to "create infrastructure for other students to be there once we all graduate." He said the biggest push right now is to keep the WSU student body informed about these efforts — like through social media.

"Being able to show your support for social media for this, being able to share updates and news about this is really crucial to keep it alive, and to really give it the roots that it needs to stand up for next year and through the summer," he said.

But obstacles to its progress or not, Baum is keeping a positive attitude.

"I don't think it's doom and gloom forever," he said. "I think things will get better, and that we can build on the momentum and advocate for needs to be met at the university and create the community that we need at the university."





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Jadein Black and Boylesque Drag Present Virtual Drag Shows Weekly, Give Back to Community

BY JASON MICHAEL

With bars and clubs across the state — and most of the nation — closed due to the COVID-19 crisis, the LGBTQ community’s beloved drag performers and nightclub entertainers are, like so many, out of work. But now, Jadein Black and her Boylesque drag troupe have taken to performing virtual shows online each week and splitting the profits with local causes and nonprofits.

Black first started doing drag when she was still in her teens.

“When I first started, I was in it for the titles, looks and just pure fun,” Black recalled. “As the years went on and pageants and shows came and went, I started to lose my motivation. It felt like my drag didn’t really have a purpose anymore. That’s how our group, Boylesque Drag, got started.”

Black founded the group in 2012 with friend and business partner Chanel Hunter.

“We began using this art form as a way to help others and just give back to the community,” she said. “Ever since then, I have continued to love what I do without any hesitation.”

Prior to the pandemic, Boyleque, whose

home bar is the Tap Room in downtown Ypsilanti, was traveling across the state doing shows in various venues.

“I was doing up to three drag bingos a weekend across the state — and never in the same place twice,” Black said. “Each show we did raised money and awareness for a nonprofit/cause and that is what I love. I love being able to use drag in ways to not only help groups and people but to also help them become more openminded about our community.”

When at the Tap Room, which is two to three times a month, “our house cast consists of roughly eight performers with a special guest or two every show,” Black said. “When we aren’t at the Tap Room, we are out of town at shows across the state helping at various fundraisers. Chanel Hunter, Maxi Chanel and myself are the three individuals who do our traveling gigs.”

With the clubs closed, Black and Boylesque began getting innovative.

“Up until the pandemic, the majority of our cast has been lucky enough to make drag their full-time job, so I knew we had to think of a way to keep these performers employed and working,” Black said. “Plus, now everyone is stuck at home as well with nothing to do. So,

with some research and lots of planning, we were able to come up with this idea of virtually bringing our regular shows to everyone’s homes.

“This is something we were already doing — just on a bigger scale,” Black continued. “For our ‘in person’ shows, we are able to raise more money for these nonprofits and causes than what we are even earning to perform. Part of the Boylesque Drag mission is that we do our shows to help others — never just for profit. But, like I said before, since our performers are out of work, we are trying our best to still help others while making sure we can still pay our bills.”

So far, Black and Boylesque have raised money for the Jim Toy Community Center, Ann Arbor Pride, Ypsilanti Pride, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital COVID-19 Unit Staff and others.

“During this pandemic, the choice of who to give to is rather easy,” Black said. “The individuals who need the most assistance right now are those who are suffering from this illness and those who are working directly with those who are suffering. When I thought about what impact we could make, I wanted to start out with thanking those medical workers who are on the front lines with these patients. So, for

last week’s show and this week’s show, we have raised money for COVID-19 Unit Staff workers and then we are using that money to purchase GrubHub gift cards.

The idea of giving food came naturally.

“We came to this decision by asking our friends what would benefit them and their colleagues the most,” Black said. “One thing they all mentioned was food. These workers are exhausted from the crazy hours they are needing to work to keep our loved ones alive and something as simple as making a meal is just not an option some days. Also, not only does this give them a break from having to meal prep, this also helps support those local businesses who are still open during this time.”

Black and Boylesque are adding new showtimes and changing cast members every week. For exact dates and times, visit facebook.com/boylesque.michigan. The suggested donation for the show is \$10. For a donation of \$20 or more, attendees get a shout-out during the show. Tickets can be purchased through Venmo, CashApp or PayPal.



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COLOURS Conference, Pride Awards Gala Postponed to 2021

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT — The COLOURS Conference and Gala 2020 presented by the Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce and the Michigan Diversity Council has been postponed to May 2021. Kevin Heard, president of the DRLGBTCC said that the



“top priority is the well-being and safety our employees, exhibitors, presenters, partners and event attendees.”

“We have been closely monitoring updates and recommendations regarding COVID-19 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as state and local governments, and, after much consideration, have made the decision to postpone the event until May 13 through 14, 2021,” he said.

COLOURS was originally planned for May 14 and 15 of this year. The event would be the first conference focused wholly on LGBTQ issues in the workplace, LGBTQ opportunities in supplier diversity and small business development in Michigan. It would have also included a keynote address by transgender advocate, actress and model, Carmen Carrera.

The Executive Director of the Michigan Diversity Council is Darlene King. She said that the move to next year ensured

it would be prioritized.

“It was our hope to move the event to the fourth quarter of this year but due to the rescheduling of hundreds of events during the third and fourth quarters, we did not want to have this amazing and important inaugural event become lost in the midst of others,” King said. “We are still dedicated to hold this highly important and much-

needed conference in Michigan.”

Heard agreed.

“This virus will change how companies and organizations implement conferences and trade shows around the world,” he said. “We believe a postponement to next year will allow us time to collect the best practices moving forward, to not only have an impactful conference but a safe conference for all of our attendees, corporate partners and small business owners.”

Current registrations will be valid for the 2021 date and the website has been updated to accommodate for scheduling changes. Registration will remain open for next year's conference. Current registrants are asked to email Ivy Hunter at ivy.hunter@nationaldiversitycouncil.org for any questions, concerns or requests for refunds. For more information and updates regarding the 2021 COLOURS Conference and Pride Awards Gala, please visit michigandiversitycouncil.org.

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PUZZLE P. 25

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Stay Home, Stay Safe, Stay Entertained

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Whether working from home or not working at all, most people have extra time on their hands as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. And while it's true in theory that one could pen their memoir or scrub the house from top to bottom, perhaps it's best to give oneself a break and remember a stay-at-home order is not the same as a staycation. With that in mind, *Between The Lines* offers the following opportunities for viewing pleasure without leaving the couch — or bed, to set the bar low.

Shelling out just \$10 to watch a live Hollywood drag show might sound like a thing of the distant past, but with “PEG Presents: Digital Drag Fest,” such reasonably-priced shows are available now. Currently offered through the end of April, tickets are limited for each event and feature drag icons from “RuPaul’s Drag Race” and other LGBTQ entertainers.

“Drag is about resilience, and this festival is meant to share that message during a challenging time in our world,” said David Charpentier, Founder and President of PEG. “We want to give fans an opportunity to continue supporting their favorite queens and provide a welcome distraction for drag lovers around the globe.”

Another recurring show for drag fans is the “Do it For Betty Drag Brunch,” which is exactly what it sounds like — and this one’s free. Catch it on Facebook live, every Sunday, noon to 1:30 p.m. To quote host Schwa de Vivre, “Join me for a fabulous Live-Streamed Drag Brunch Variety Show where we’re gonna TURN IT OUT while STAYING INSIDE! We are self-quarantining and social distancing for all the Betty’s in our lives — especially BETTY WHITE.” Home audience members supply their own bagels, lox

and mimosas.

“Stars in the House” was launched in mid-March by Sirius XM Broadway host Seth Rudetsky and his husband, producer James Wesley. It’s a twice-daily stream of what’s billed as “online mini performances and sassy chats” with stars of stage and screen. This project promotes support for the Actors Fund’s services for



those most vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19. “Stars In The House” airs at 2 and 8 p.m., and it can be viewed online as well as on its website, Playbill.com and BroadwayWorld.com. Donations, which are tax-deductible, are encouraged. For more details including a list of performers click here.

In response to the LGBTQ community’s need for a safe, affirming space in this time of crisis, themfest was created by Conde Nast’s them. network. Available daily on them’s Instagram live, check out their lineup of queer artists of all stripes.

Creative Capital supports innovative and adventurous artists across the country in various ways. Now, the organization has a vast selection of online options to choose from on its regularly updated COVID-19 webpage. For example, their carefully curated collection includes a link to livestreamed performances of “Trump Lear Online” every night through May 1, perhaps intended to supplement the

daily evening press briefings. Links to live chats with authors and artists, the Met Opera nightly streams and numerous film offerings are also available from one convenient online location.

For those missing their regular fix of visual art, free virtual access to 2,500 world-class galleries and museums might be just the thing to satisfy that craving — no shoes required. Google Arts & Culture’s easy-to-browse pages is where to head for that. Michigan museums in the collection include the usual suspects like the Detroit Institute of Arts and the University of Michigan Museum of Art, but also the lesser-known but equally-worth-perusing American Museum of Magic in Marshall can be found there as well.

If one does choose to get up off the couch it’s certainly a great time for outdoor exercise. But if the weather doesn’t allow or being reclusive sounds more appealing right now, staying active indoors is possible, too. There’s no shortage of online yoga and workout videos, but perhaps tap dance is more your fancy. For those with interest in dance and the space to practice it, check out the offerings from New York’s Gibney Dance. Pay-what-you-can (and free) classes, from ballet to hip-hop to vogue, plus free resources are available.

Finally, for those with \$180 to spare, MasterClass is offering a buy-one-get-one annual subscription right now that provides access to their streaming platform which makes it possible to watch or listen to hundreds of video lessons from the world’s best. From photography to music to sports, there’s something in their catalog of more than 80 classes to appeal to everyone. Why not start with David Sedaris’ class on storytelling and humor? If anyone can provide the inspiration to complete a memoir during this pandemic, he can.

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Motor City Pride 2020 Postponed

BY BTL STAFF

Originally scheduled for June 6 through 7 at Hart Plaza in Detroit, Motor City Pride 2020 has been postponed due to COVID-19 concerns. Festival representatives released an official statement on their site explaining the decision. Read it below.

Motor City Pride is announcing the postponement of the 2020 Pride Festival and Parade originally scheduled for June 6-7 at Hart Plaza. Planning is continuing with cautious optimism for a festival to be held later in the summer. This decision was based on reviewing CDC reports and guidance for public events, along with initial comments from Governor Whitmer on the reopening of the state's economy. Motor City Pride is working with city representatives on alternate

dates to hold the festival later this summer. New dates will be announced as soon as we gain a clearer understanding of the timeline for the return of safe public gatherings.

As members of the LGBTQ community, we are united in our movement, we are united in ensuring the health and well-being of each other, those dear to us, and of our attendees as we plan this year's festival. During this time of universal uncertainty, we take the safety and health of our community very seriously. We urge everyone to follow the guidelines and protocols put forth by public health officials.

Motor City Pride's underlining goal is to support each other. We wish everyone well during this uncertain time and look forward to seeing you at the festival and parade.

- Motor City Pride Team



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Ann Arbor Jewelry Shop Offers Weekly Giveaway to Essential Employees

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

Abacadabra Jewelry and Gem Gallery in downtown Ann Arbor is hosting a weekly giveaway as a way of showing gratitude to health care workers, first responders, grocers, postal staff, delivery folks and everyone risking their safety to provide essential services in this difficult time.

“A cornerstone of our ethic at Abra has always been to give back and pay it forward to the community, arts and causes that capture our hearts,” reads the store’s posts on Facebook and Instagram announcing the giveaway. “Now,

we would like to send a little bit of brightness to a frontline worker that you are grateful for.”

To nominate someone for the giveaway, simply tag and share the story of an essential worker to one of Abracadabra’s social media posts.

“We want to share the stories of these heroes and give away a gift card of a donated piece of jewelry to a randomly selected nominee each Friday at 7 p.m. until we can reopen again,” the post read. “We miss being open downtown and want to give back to the community.”

Abacadabra Jewelry and Gem Gallery is a family-owned store that first opened in 1974.

“Steven, now retired while his wife Katherine runs the business, is still a passionate gemstone lover,” said Courtney McDonough Haughton, Abracadabra’s digital content coordinator. “He arrived in Ann Arbor from Detroit as a squatter at the Art Fair in 1973. His mission from the start involved making ethically sourced, and mindful of our environment, jewelry. Since the beginning, we’ve been using post-consumer recycled metals, and ethically sourced stones, for all the jewelry we make, as well as featuring handmade jewelry from other talented artists who share those values.”

Abacadabra has been closed since last month, but it is continuing to run its business online.

“Since Gov. Whitmer initiated the stay-at-home mandate, we, like most non-essentials, have closed our doors to the public,” Haughton said. “We knew it was in the best interest of our staff and our community, but it has been a hard transition. Our online presence is small and to survive, we have had to quickly update our way of doing business in all ways with much more of an online focus than we ever envisioned. We worked quickly to put up an Etsy shop temporarily to keep some impressions running and have been working behind the scenes to get a storefront with shopping cart going on our website. We are now proud to say it is up with much work yet to do. Getting all of our inventory photographed and uploaded will

take some time, especially with limited access to the shop.”

Haughton said the store applied for and received a Paycheck Protection Program loan from the Small Business Administration before that program ran out of money.

“Katherine, our owner, has been working tirelessly looking into grants and loans to help us in any way possible, and we are extremely grateful to have received a PPP loan that will arrive this Friday,” Haughton said. “While it’s been a rough several weeks in quarantine, we have been adapting and thinking outside the box to make changes that will allow us to work safely and efficiently.”

Haughton said her position at Abracadabra is more than just a job and that there’s something special about the work that the store does.

“To some people, jewelry can be a talisman to remind them of something important, or a symbol of love and gratitude. The ability to wear something with so much emotional value commemorating a moment in time and customize it to your style is priceless,” she said. “We really miss being a part of that special moment in people’s lives. I think the core of this give-back giveaway is that by telling people’s story we honor and thank them for the job they are doing and in a small way, we can still get to be a part of a special moment with them while maintaining safe distance and expanding the love globally.”



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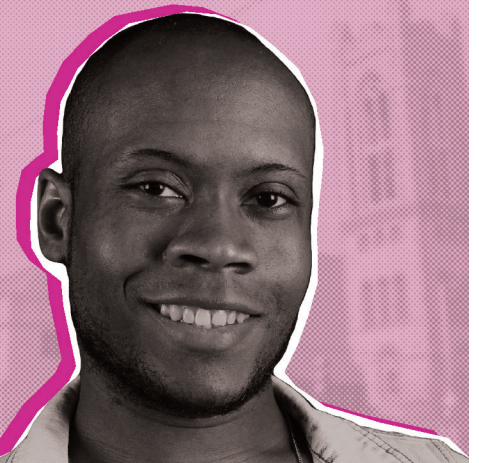
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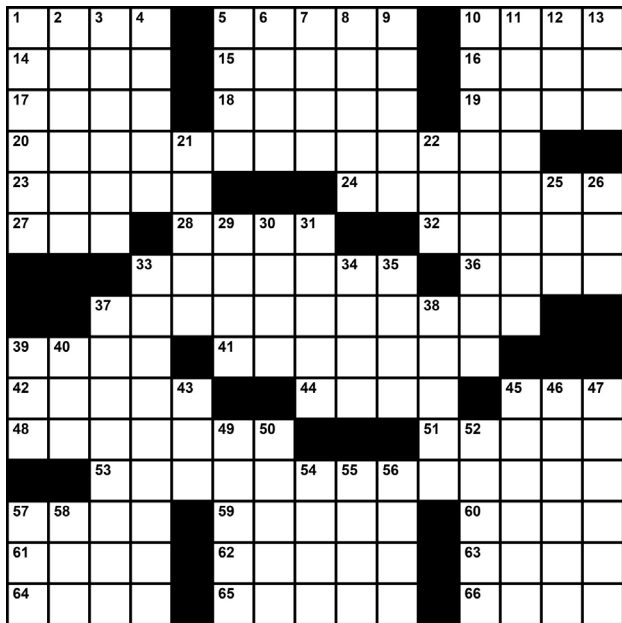
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 34 Raison d'___
 35 Frida's half-dozen
 37 Frequent online exaggeration
 38 Chicken hawk pads

39 Undercover agent
 40 "I Got Rhythm" writer Gershwin
 43 Organ pleased by Britten
 45 Peter who played Lawrence
 46 No pal of creationists
 47 Hardest to catch
 49 Whitman's leaves
 50 Eminem's ___ Mile_
 52 Questionnaire choice
 54 It's for skin care
 55 Hiker's snack
 56 Some of Mary's lambs
 57 Pink Floyd guitarist Barrett
 58 "Isn't ___ bit like you and me?" ("Nowhere Man")

Clues P. 20

Dernaissance

Q Puzzle

Across

1 Irene of _Fame_
 5 Sound of three men in a tub
 10 Bit of salt, for Stephen Pyles
 14 Way to come
 15 Stars that shoot off
 16 Emerald Isle
 17 _To ___ Foo Thanks for Everything!
 Julie Newmar_
 18 "I knew ___ along!"

19 What fruits do in orchards
 20 Laura Dern series set in Monterey, California
 23 There's a single runner
 24 Treat to eat while dropping trou?
 27 Jan. 1 until now
 28 Unlikely to bite
 32 Intense desires
 33 Infuses with bubbles
 36 Ginsberg's "In Back of the ___"
 37 Laura Dern series about a

Down

1 Gay rodeo guy
 2 Rub some oil on
 3 Like a tree's cross section
 4 _West Side Story_ Jet, e.g.
 5 Prissy temper tantrum
 6 Trent of Mississippi
 7 Shaped like the office of the top homophobe
 8 Witchcraft trials city
 9 Greeting for Dolly

at www.pridesource.com

I Stay Ready. I Use Condoms.

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 Detroit, MI 48202
 313-446-9800

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Sinai Grace Hospital

For more information about PrEP and prevention services please contact our Lead Prevention Specialist Keith Hughes at khughes@miunified.org

WWW.MIUNIFIED.ORG



Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a way to help prevent HIV by taking a pill every day.

PrEP must be taken every day to be most effective.

- ✓ HIV Testing
- ✓ PrEP Assessment
- ✓ Insurance & Payment Guidance.
- ✓ PrEP Education



When taken consistently, PrEP has been shown to reduce the risk of HIV infection in people who are at high risk by more than 90%.

Your risk of getting HIV from sex can be even lower if you combine PrEP with condoms and other prevention methods.

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. 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

UNIFIED - HIV Health & Beyond

3968 Mt. Elliott St.
Detroit MI 48207-1841
313-446-9800
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

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

Advocacy

Equality Michigan

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

Campus

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

U-M Ann Arbor

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

Oakland University Gender & Sexuality Center

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

Eastern Michigan University

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

The Lawrence Tech LGBT Resource Center

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

Community Centers

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

Jim Toy Community Center

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

Affirmations

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

Legal

American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan

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

Fair Michigan

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

Know Your Rights Project

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

Older Adults

SAGE Metro Detroit

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

Political

The LGBT and Allies Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party

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

Professional Groups

Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce

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

Ties Like Me

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

Transgender

FtM Detroit

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

Get Listed, Promote Your Events

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

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



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

FtM A2 Ypsi

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

Transgender Michigan

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

Trans Sistas of Color Project

19641 W. 7 Mile Rd. in Detroit
313-537-7000 Ext 107
info@tscopdetroit.org
www.facebook.com/TSCOPD/

Youth

Ruth Ellis Center

77 Victor Street, Highland Park, MI 48203
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
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

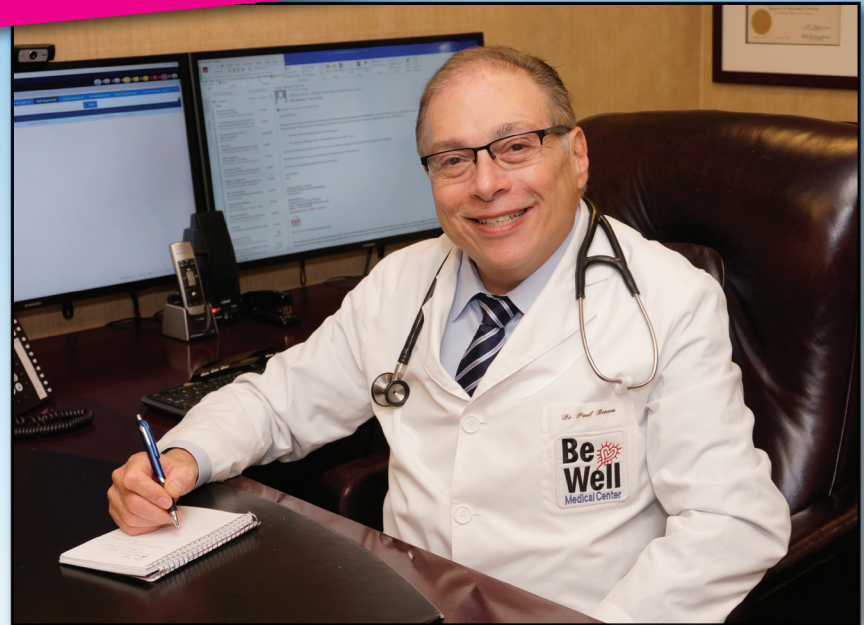
On the Edge of Primary Care PODCASTS with Dr. Paul Benson



Dr. Benson is launching a new podcast series for 2020!

Use your cell phone to capture the QR code above, or visit our website, Spotify, Apple, or Google for access.

Since 1980, our medical team has been committed to providing compassionate, sensitive care for all lifestyles. The topics and specialists featured on the podcast will help you keep pace with the most up-to-date info to improve your health!



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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