

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

# Between THE Lines<sup>TM</sup>

MADONNA IN DETROIT

How Her Show Reminded  
One Writer That Gay  
Boys Can Survive

RIP MARY 'METRA'

Remembering Longtime  
Publisher of Queer  
Nightlife Magazine

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAN LEVY

The 'Schitt's Creek'  
Creator on His New  
Film 'Good Grief'

## *Folk Fest Returns, As Inclusive As Ever*

Performer Lizzie No on the importance of queer community

By Sarah Bricker Hunt



MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1983

**BTL**  
Between! Lines



**PRIDESOURCE**

Are You Ready To  
Introduce Your Business  
to the LGBTQ+ Community?

[PRIDESOURCE.COM/ADVERTISE](http://PRIDESOURCE.COM/ADVERTISE)



*Hodges...*

**SUBARU**

FDG-41 **OUTBACK**

Come See  
Our Inventory

**HODGES  
SUBARU**  
Michigan's Premier "Culture/Style Dealer"

21205 Woodward Ave • Ferndale • MI • 48220  
248.547.8800 • [www.hodgessubaru.com](http://www.hodgessubaru.com)  
HOURS: **MONDAY** - 9:00A.M. - 7:00P.M.  
**TUESDAY - FRIDAY** - 9:00A.M. - 6:00P.M.  
**SATURDAY** - 10:00A.M. - 2:00P.M.

**EVERYDAY!**

EXCELLENT SERVICE • OUTSTANDING SELECTION • FANTASTIC PRICES....

BANK OF ANN ARBOR PRESENTS

47<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ANN ARBOR

**FOLK  
FEST  
2024**

HILL AUDITORIUM | 7PM

**FRIDAY, JAN. 26**

Old Crow Medicine Show  
Devon Gilfillian • Bailen • Darren Kiely  
Sons of Mistro • Emcee Jeff Daniels

**SATURDAY, JAN. 27**

Emmylou Harris  
Michigan Rattlers • Steve Poltz  
Lizzie No • The Sea The Sea  
Emcee Jeff Daniels

TICKETS ON SALE NOW @THEARK.ORG  
Program Subject to Change





- 4 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish
- 6 How Madonna Reminded Me That Gay Boys Can Survive
- 7 Community Tributes Pour in for Mary Sappington, Long time Publisher of Queer Nightlife Magazine Metra
- 8 Creep of the Week: DeSantis to Iowans: 'I'll Reveal My True Height If I Win the Caucus.' Height Remains a Mystery
- 9 The Scroll: Mighty Real/Queer Detroit Announces 2024 Queer Art Exhibition
- 10 Pride in Prevention: Michigan's Inspiring PrEP Campaign
- 12 Ferndale's First Black Mayor on Her Historic Win
- 14 How LGBTQ+ Families Can Foster Change in 2024
- 15 What Queer Community Means to Ann Arbor Folk Fest Performer Lizzie No
- 16 Dan Levy on Why Chosen Family Is So Important
- 18 Why Ferndale's Boston Tea Room Might Just Be Your New Cozy, Queer Hotspot

page 15



Photo: Cole Nielsen

**VOL. 3204 • JANUARY 25, 2024**  
**ISSUE 1246**

**PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP**

www.pridesource.com  
Phone 734-263-1476

**PUBLISHERS**

Benjamin Jenkins  
benjamin@pridesource.com

**Publishers Emeritus:** Jan Stevenson & Susan Horowitz

**EDITORIAL**

**Editorial Director**

Chris Azzopardi  
chris@pridesource.com

**Managing Editor**

Sarah Bricker Hunt  
sarah@pridesource.com

**Senior Staff Writers**

Ellen Shanna Knoppow, Jason A. Michael

**CREATIVE**

**Cartoonists**

Paul Berg

**Graphic Designer**

Sarah Wolf

**Contributing Photographers**

Andrew Potter, Andrew Cohen

**ADVERTISING & SALES**

sales@pridesource.com

Carolyn Cardenas

734-263-1476

carolyn@pridesource.com

Tim Powers

734-263-1475

tim@pridesource.com

Ann/Andy Cox, 248-613-2513

anncox@pridesource.com

**National Advertising Representative**

Rivendell Media, 212-242-6863

**MEMBER OF**

Michigan Press Association

National LGBT Media Association

National Gay & Lesbian Chamber

Q Syndicate



2022 AWARD WINNER



"Pride Source"



Follow us @pridesource



@pridesourcemedia



Pride Source



Email your op-eds to  
editor@pridesource.com



Sign up online to receive our E-Digest

Our rate cards are available online. All material appearing in Between The Lines is protected by federal copyright law and may not be reproduced in whole or part without the permission of the publishers. Between The Lines is supported by many fine advertisers, but we cannot accept responsibility for claims made by our advertisers, nor can we accept responsibility for materials provided by advertisers or their agents.

Copyright 2023

# Delivered ~~Straight~~ to Your Mailbox

Support LGBTQ+ journalism and get BTL delivered to your door for just \$95/year or \$10/month.

WWW.PRIDESOURCE.COM/SUBSCRIBE

# 5 **Queer** Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

January and February can be a slog, but it's not all bad when there are good reasons to brave the frigid Michigan winter. Go on, get out of the house just long enough to commute to another warm spot for a "RuPaul's Drag Race" viewing party, see "Wicked" as it stops in Detroit on its North American tour, warm up at a lesbian-forward dance party or set your body and mind in motion at a meditation and vision board event. And don't miss a new art exhibit focused on a deep exploration of the concept of gender, the work of a University of Michigan professor.



"RuPaul's Drag Race," Season 16 cast photo. Photo: MTV

## Attend a 'Drag Race' Viewing Party

Fifteen years after drag icon RuPaul first welcomed viewers to her showdown, eager contestants are still overflowing the Werk Room on "RuPaul's Drag Race." Now in its 16th season, see if Plane Jane's rate-a-queen sabotage gets revealed and what other drama this new system stirs up. Who will she shade next? What's going on with all these bananas and Taiwanese queen Nymphia Wind? Grab a seat and a drink and spill the tea every week.

*Fridays, 7:30 p.m. (showtime at 8 p.m.),  
Five15 (600 Washington Ave., Royal Oak).  
Reserve tickets at [bit.ly/3UczA0y](https://bit.ly/3UczA0y).*



## Get Lit with the Litty Committee

Kick off the new year with the Litty Committee. Exodos Nightclub will play host to the latest event offered by the lesbian social club in the Exodos Rooftop Lounge on Jan. 28. Come for DJ Three Thirteen and a bevy of beautiful party hosts — stay for free shots (for the ladies), hookah, drink specials and the opportunity to dance the night away. "We have been known to bring the most beautiful lesbians in the city together in some of the most luxury nightclubs in Detroit for the last two years," Litty Committee tells BTL. "We love bringing all different kinds of like-minded women together under one roof."

*Sunday, Jan. 28, 9 p.m.-  
1 a.m., Exodos Rooftop  
Lounge (529 Monroe St.,  
Detroit). Tickets at  
[bit.ly/3Smtjyn](https://bit.ly/3Smtjyn).*



Celia Hottenstein as Glinda and Olivia Valli as Elphaba in the National Tour of "Wicked."  
Photo: Joan Marcus

## See 'Wicked'

Don't miss the Broadway in Detroit touring production of "Wicked," now playing at the Detroit Opera House. If you've yet to see this modern classic musical, you'll find a nod to the queer-loved "Wizard of Oz," but "Wicked," now celebrating its 20th year on Broadway, is its own unique thing (though it enjoys similarly queer-prominent popularity). The story focuses on the good and bad witches of Oz and the complicated, sometimes fiery relationship between the two unlikely frenemies, set to a soundtrack for the ages. The touring cast includes out gay performer David Kaverman, a swing actor who also plays multiple characters in the musical, including The Wizard.

*Through Feb. 15, Detroit  
Opera House (1526 Broadway  
St., Detroit). Tickets at  
[broadwayindetroit.com/  
events/wicked](https://broadwayindetroit.com/events/wicked).*





### Create a Vision Board for the New Year

Queer-owned Welcome Home Yoga & Wellness invites the community to set new intentions for the new year at a special 90-minute yoga and art therapy event, Ignite Your Vision: Artful Vision Board and Goals Setting Workshop for Creating a Purposeful 2024. Board-certified art therapist Shazia Siddiqi, owner of Let's Art About It Art Studio, will lead participants through a vision board experience and Welcome Home owner Robyn Childers will lead a guided meditation and a goals-setting discussion. Refreshments and light snacks will be provided.

Jan. 27, 1-2:30 p.m., Welcome Home Yoga & Wellness (6375 W. 7 Mile Road, Detroit). Reserve tickets at [bit.ly/3HnGCby](https://bit.ly/3HnGCby).



From "My Gender States."  
Artwork provided  
by Rogério M. Pinto

### Contemplate Gender Through Art

Following up on his 2022 exhibit, "The Realm of the Dead," artist and University of Michigan social work professor Rogério M. Pinto returns to the school's Women's and Gender Studies exhibit hall this month with a new art exhibit entitled "My Gender States." The new work features prose written by Pinto, collaborative sculpture work with Sarah Tanner and photography by several artists. Pinto tells BTL, "'My Gender States' gave me a unique opportunity to study and convey artistically my myriad gender expressions that started developing from a very young age to this moment in my life as I still continue to question and to study and to marvel at how gender states are formed and change over time and how the events of our childhoods can shape our lives. I hope my exhibit will inspire others to look inward and find their own gender states."

Through Aug. 13, Lane Hall Exhibit Space (204 South State St.). More information at [irwg.umich.edu/lanehall](https://irwg.umich.edu/lanehall).

Big League Productions, Inc.  
PRESENTS

"all of us invent ourselves.  
some of us just have more imagination than others."  
- CHER

the  
cher  
show  
a new musical

March 19-24 • Fisher Theatre  
[broadwayindetroit.com](https://broadwayindetroit.com)

Groups (10+) [broadwayindetroitgroups@theambassadors.com](mailto:broadwayindetroitgroups@theambassadors.com)  
(subject: The Cher Show)

# How Madonna Reminded Me That Gay Boys Can Survive

The performer demonstrated why she's always been a gay icon during hometown concert



BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

When Madonna came home this week, so did I.

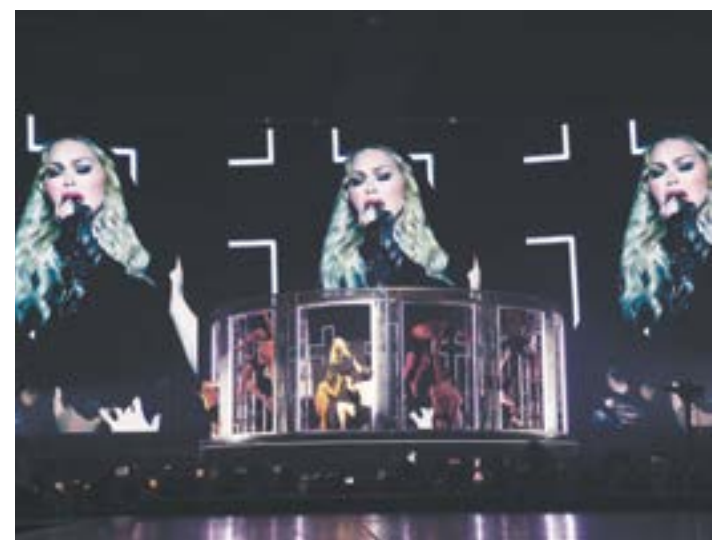
I came home to a version of myself that had grown up against so many odds, surviving hard-to-be-gay 1990s oppression, anti-queer Catholic dogma and all-consuming, AIDS-fueled fear that almost took me out. But not without Madonna's help as someone who showed me that I could survive — that I deserved to.

I didn't think I'd make it through those years (Madonna didn't think she'd make it through *last* year, after a health scare, in which she "almost died"), but there I was at 11 p.m. on a Monday night in 2024 at Little Caesars Arena at a show with Madonna right in front of me, memories of how she influenced me as a gay boy flooding my mind: seeing her bend gender in the "Express Yourself" video, the way she dismantled sexual shame with "Human Nature" and how she introduced me to queer culture before the internet could when I kept MTV on in the background to catch the "Vogue" video just so I could feel better about feeling different than the other boys.

What I saw Madonna do on stage for her Celebration tour may seem less bold by today's pop star standards, ones that, of course, were heavily influenced by her, but I thought a lot about that gay boy I was and gay boys now and this era of "don't say gay." At the concert, Madonna said gay and queer and lesbian and sex and masturbation and kink and AIDS. She also literally said "I went to my first gay nightclub here," referring to growing up in Rochester Hills and, as a teen, clubbing at Menjo's in Detroit.

All grown up now, I was clubbing with Madonna in Detroit at a much bigger Menjo's (you can imagine anything if you try hard enough — the story of my youth), watching as she made out with a female-presenting dancer during "Hung Up." Boys wore heels throughout this queer extravaganza, and sometimes not much else (a couple wore just jockstraps, their butts completely exposed). Some boys were in Madonna drag, including one that wore the cone brasserie made famous by her, also worn by her in this show.

During "Don't Cry For Me Argentina,"



(Clockwise, from top) Madonna during her Celebration tour in Brooklyn. Courtesy photos/Getty Images. Madonna showcases images of the gay rights movement during her Celebration tour in Detroit. Photo: Chris Azzopardi

reimagined as a march anthem, she wore a Pride flag as a cape, raised a fist and chanted, "No fear." For "Vogue," she honored the song and video's ball culture roots and, through images of the Stonewall riots era, history of the gay rights movement. During that number, she also took on the role of house mother —

she really has mothered so many of us — at the end of a runway where voguers served and we all, including Madonna, ate. And Bob the Drag Queen, who could celebrate Madonna in a way that spoke directly to my inner gay boy whose life she changed, emceed the whole show.

The entire concert was performance art with heart, where Madonna did show her age. But it was in a way you wouldn't expect: She was much softer than I had ever known her

See **Madonna**, page 13



# Community Tributes Pour in for Mary Sappington, Longtime Publisher of Queer Nightlife Magazine Metra

Sappington leaves behind legacy of unwavering LGBTQ+ allyship, community-building

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

For over 40 years, she told us where to find the best in queer nightlife in metro Detroit, Northern Ohio and Windsor. Mary Sappington, who died Jan. 14 at age 75, was perhaps better known as “Mary Metra,” the founding publisher of Metra magazine, which has been in print for 45 years. Sappington, who died peacefully in her sleep, is being remembered as a hero by the local community.

When Metra announced the news on their Facebook page, the comments section quickly started filling up with tributes. “She was a true pioneer and champion for the LGBTQ+ community in southeast Michigan,” said Facebook user Julz Latte Da, who worked for Metra for several years in the mid to late ’80s. Latte Da said that Sappington’s passing was “heartbreaking.”

Michael Chereton commented on the post that Sappington was “a true and loving staple in the Detroit LGBTQ+ community. ... She had a laugh as warm as her huge heart.”

Sappington was born in Cedar City, Missouri on Jan. 5, 1949, but the family moved to Michigan when she was a young child. After graduating from Utica High School, she initially worked as a hairdresser.

Later, as the owner of her own beauty shop, Sappington, quoted in a Wayne State University oral history project from 2018, recalled that she advertised her shop in a fledgling LGBT newspaper because “by the time I was 20, 21 years old, I just knew gay men and we just had a good time.”



Mary Sappington. Courtesy photo

*“Mary was a joy, and she did a lot of things for the LGBTQ+ community. She was really a trailblazer and ahead of her time.”*

— Frankie Wingle, current co-owner and editor-in-chief of Metra

That newspaper, Metra Gay News, soon went out of business, and she saw an opportunity. Sappington and her husband, Kenneth Lamparski, with help from some friends, decided to print and publish an entertainment magazine. They put together early issues in the basement of her shop in Romeo. In those days, it was hard to even find a printer who would work with the magazine.

“We never had a porno magazine, but as soon as they saw two men even touching each other or doing anything like that, they were like, ‘We don’t do that,’” Sappington shared in the oral history project.

Starting in the early ’80s, Sappington and the magazine began producing the Metra picnic, an outdoor affair filled with fun and just a bit of debauchery. The picnic drew large crowds — up to 2,000 people — and was held annually for nearly four decades. When they had trouble finding a spot large enough that would rent it to queer folk, Sappington solved the problem by buying Salt River Park.

Sappington would go on to publish Metra, which she started in 1979, for over 40 years. During that time, she developed quite a reputation for being such a strong ally to the queer community.



Talking about the Metra picnics, Lady T Tempest, who performed at many of them, said, “They were some of the most amazing times of my life. [Mary] always made me feel like a million dollars. Her kindness and respect were unmeasurable. There are no words that could ever express how I feel about her, and how thankful I am that she was and is a part of us.”

Tim McKee, a former manager of nightclubs Menjo’s and the Hayloft, recalled how wild the picnic got, especially in its early years. “Everything you can imagine went on at the picnic,” he said. “There was always a big pavilion with tons of entertainment.

See **Mary Metra**, page 19



## DeSantis to Iowans: ‘I’ll Reveal My True Height If I Win the Caucus.’ Height Remains a Mystery



BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

There are people I love who live in Florida and I truly, truly wish that they lived anywhere else. None of them are Republicans — in fact, they are all very liberal. And while one could argue that Florida needs all the liberals it can get, one could also argue that a sprinkling of liberals is no match for the ultra-right extremists who have a lock on the state government and openly embrace fascism.

And now that Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (a man who seems to have garnered a lot more interest in his height than in his campaign) has dropped out of the presidential race (and endorsed Trump, of course), he can get back to making Florida even worse.

DeSantis lost bigly, and he spent a hell of a lot of money doing it. The DeSantis campaign and his Never Back Down PAC coughed up about \$35 million before the Iowa caucus. Total votes: 23,000. That puts the cost per vote at about \$1,500. Not a great return!

Business Insider: “DeSantis’ campaign was over when he tried to compete with Mickey Mouse.”

NBC News: “A total failure to launch.”

*Even I have to admit that DeSantis has been wildly successful at making Florida an unwelcome place for women, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people.*

DeSantis never had a chance. Republicans are married to Donald Trump (they believe he is the legitimate president, after all. Also maybe Jesus). It’s gross. I hate it. But I can’t say I’m sad to see DeSantis humiliated.

I mean, just Google his name. The headlines are scathing:

USA Today: “Ron DeSantis 2024 campaign was doomed by fatal flaws, awkwardness.”

Why Ron DeSantis was doomed from the start.”

And then there’s The New York Times: “Ron DeSantis Made Smiling Look Hard.”

“The more people saw him, the less they seemed to like him,” writes Michelle Cottle in the piece. “On the presidential campaign trail, he was robotic and awkward, rude and arrogant, with the interpersonal skills of poorly designed A.I.”



**“BURUNDI DOESN’T NEED WESTERN HUMANITARIAN AID IF IT MEANS WE HAVE TO BE HUMANE!”**

An article in Mother Jones called DeSantis “a guy famous for interpersonal awkwardness who based his campaign on performative acts of dickishness, like using Florida’s funds to fly migrants without their consent from Texas to Martha’s Vineyard.”

Accurate!

A lot has been made of Scott Wagner, head of the Never Back Down super-PAC, assembling a jigsaw puzzle in the office for hours in the days leading up to the Iowa caucus. He’s getting a lot of criticism, but, honestly, it looks like Wagner was the only one using his time wisely in the lead-up to DeSantis getting his total and whole ass kicked. Jigsaw puzzles are self-care.

“DeSantis’ staff, including press aides in Tallahassee who regularly attacked reporters critically covering culture war politics like his ‘Don’t Say Gay’ law and book bans, could probably all have benefited from chilling out and doing some puzzles with a nonbinary friend or perhaps a librarian,” writes Dan Friedman in Mother Jones.

Granted, plenty of articles said something along the lines of, “Despite his success in Florida...” And even I have to admit that DeSantis has been wildly successful at making Florida an unwelcome place for women, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people. Congrats, Ron, you’re someone who hurts people on purpose, whether for political gain, personal satisfaction or both. You’re a mean creep.

Without DeSantis in the race, the only real threat (ha!) to Trump is Nikki Haley, former governor of South Carolina and U.N. ambassador under Trump.

Make no mistake, Haley isn’t as terrible as Trump, but she’s still terrible! Recently she answered a question about the cause of the Civil War by saying it was over “the role of government and what the rights of the people are.” When she was criticized for not mentioning slavery (because the Civil War was fought because of slavery by and large), she defended herself by saying, “I had Black friends growing up.”

Black friends growing up, huh? OK, sure. (She did not.) Even if that was true (it isn’t), I doubt she has Black friends now. Because, you know, she’s racist and all.

And she’s no friend to LGBTQ+ people, either. According to the Human Rights Campaign, “Haley has been loud in her opposition to LGBTQ+ issues, opposing initiatives such as allowing transgender kids to participate in sports to supporting a more extreme version of DeSantis’ ‘Don’t Say LGBTQ+’ bill.”

So, yeah, there are no good Republican choices for anyone who isn’t a racist homophobe. And that’s by design. They did this to themselves. The Republican Party has been extremist for a long time, but they are lurching ever rightward with no end in sight. Don’t give any of them your vote.



THE SCROLL

QUICK HITS & CAN'T MISSES

Mighty Real/Queer Detroit Announces 2024 Queer Art Exhibition

.....

Mighty Queer/Real Detroit, an expansive 2022 citywide art exhibit featuring the work of queer artists, is making a return in 2024, organizers have announced. The latest installment of the biennial show will feature 170 local queer artists, up from around 150 in 2022.

The 2024 show, titled “I’ll Be Your Mirror,” centers on the relationship between art and those experiencing

it. In addition to artworks on display at galleries including Scarab Club, the Detroit Contemporary Art Center, the Hannan Center and Swords Into Plowshares Peace Center, “I’ll Be Your Mirror” will offer an evening of queer cinema curated by filmmaker Adam Baran and a one-woman show by Pamela Sneed, “A Tribute to Big Mama Thornton.”

Similar to 2022, the exhibition, set for May 31 to June 30, will feature wide-ranging art media, including paintings, performance art and photographs dating back to the 19th century. Visit [mrqd.org](http://mrqd.org) and the show’s Instagram page at [@mightyrealqueerdetroit](https://www.instagram.com/mightyrealqueerdetroit) to stay updated.



“Christy, Daisy,” 1993. Photo: Linda Simpson

Annual Michigan Conference on Suicide to Feature Jay Kaplan

.....

An annual conference focused on suicide awareness and prevention in Michigan, titled “Kevin’s Song,” will include a session on gender-affirming care and suicide presented by ACLU LGBT Project staff attorney Jay Kaplan. The 8th annual event, set for Jan. 25-27 at St. John’s Resort in Plymouth, is themed “Continuing the Conversation.”

The conference provides an opportunity for educators, mental health professionals, students, business and community members to work together with members of the public, survivors of suicide loss and attempt survivors on the ongoing public health crisis of suicide. The mission of Kevin’s Song, reads press materials, is to “break down the barriers to build pathways to better models of prevention and treatment in order to save lives. Learn more at [kevinssong.org](http://kevinssong.org).



Michigan LGBTQ+ Commission Responds to Rep. Tim Walberg’s Anti-LGBTQ+ Remarks

.....

Jackson, Michigan U.S. Congressman Tim Walberg sparked controversy after speaking at Uganda’s National Prayer Breakfast in early January, where he praised the country’s Anti-Homosexuality Act, which includes the death penalty, prompting a response from the recently appointed LGBTQ+ Commission of Michigan. “We

strongly condemn such statements and actions that promote discrimination, violence and persecution based on sexual orientation and gender identity,” a statement issued by the Commission reads.

“Representative Walberg’s endorsement of legislation that targets the LGBTQ+ community is not only deeply troubling but goes against the principles of equality, human rights and dignity that we hold dear,” the statement reads. “[The Act] imposes severe penalties, including execution, for ‘aggravated homosexuality’ and has led to increased discrimination, persecution and violence against LGBTQ+ individuals in the country.”

Local Trans Photographer Earns Elite Degree

.....

White Lake-based trans photographer Edelyn Westwood has earned the Photographic Craftsman Degree issued by the Professional Photographers of America. The degree is the highest honor awarded by the professional credentialing organization and is awarded to only a few photographers each year. Westwood earned more than half the requirements for the degree after coming out in 2021. In 2023, she founded Edelyn Westwood Photography LLC.



Ruth Ellis Center Launches 2024 Volunteer Training Sessions

.....

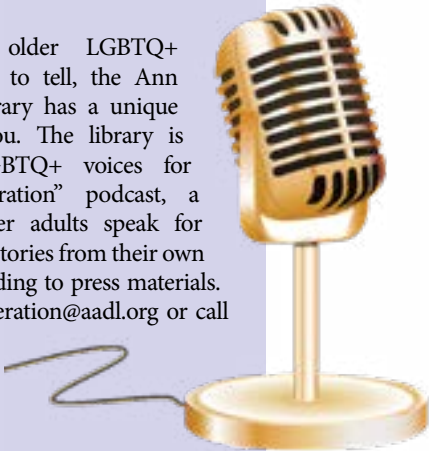
Ruth Ellis Center (REC) has announced the 2024 dates for its quarterly training for community members, new staff, interns and prospective volunteers. The trainings cover REC’s guiding principles, help new volunteers get off to a good start and provide education about sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. The 2024 dates are Jan. 26, April 26 (virtual), July 19, Oct. 4 and Oct. 5 (virtual). Register at this QR code. Email [training@ruthelliscenter.org](mailto:training@ruthelliscenter.org) for more information.



Ann Arbor District Library Seeks Older Gay Voices

.....

If you’re an older LGBTQ+ adult with a story to tell, the Ann Arbor District Library has a unique opportunity for you. The library is seeking older LGBTQ+ voices for its “Gayest Generation” podcast, a forum where “older adults speak for themselves and tell stories from their own perspectives,” according to press materials. Email [thegayestgeneration@aadl.org](mailto:thegayestgeneration@aadl.org) or call 734-327-4224 to participate.





# Pride in Prevention: Michigan's Inspiring PrEP Campaign



## BY OUR SPONSOR, MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (MDHHS)

A new messaging campaign focused on authentic Michigan voices is aimed at preventing the spread of HIV through the use of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is spearheading the initiative, titled “MIPrEP. MIChoice.”

The campaign centers on real stories from real people who live in Michigan and are using PrEP to help protect their health. MDHHS selected nine diverse people to

spotlight, sharing information about why each of them has decided to use PrEP, which was approved for use by the FDA in 2012.

## PrEP is highly effective for reducing the risk of contracting HIV

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is medicine that can be taken to reduce a person's chances of getting HIV from sex or sharing drug injection equipment. PrEP is for people who do not have HIV but

have the chance of getting it. When someone taking PrEP is exposed to HIV through sex or sharing drug injection equipment, the medicines can keep the virus from establishing a permanent infection. Taking PrEP as prescribed by a health care provider can reduce the chances of getting HIV by up to 99% from sex and by at least 74% from sharing drug injection equipment.

Medication also can be taken following a possible exposure to HIV to help prevent transmission of the virus. In such cases, the medications are referred to as post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). Both PrEP and PEP can be prescribed

by a doctor, physician assistant or nurse practitioner.

## Authentic stories shine a light on real-world PrEP usage

The campaign highlights nine different, remarkable individuals from diverse backgrounds in the local LGBTQ+ community in Michigan who use PrEP through digital ads, social media posts, audio streams, print advertisement, posters and materials displayed in

establishments like bars, restaurants and beauty and nail salons — places where people gather together in community.

One participant, Christopher, was photographed as he lives life as a gay man and also as his drag persona, Caj Monet. Christopher says that PrEP helps him take control of his sexual health. “People are afraid of it because they’re not educated about it,” he says, adding that he hopes the campaign will build awareness of PrEP and prompt people to talk with their health care provider for more information.

“PrEP helps me take control of



my own sexual health,” Christopher says in the campaign materials. “People are afraid because they’re not educated. In the Black community, things like mental, emotional, physical health and homosexuality are sometimes very taboo. I tell people not to be scared of medicine. It’s best to have all the information to make an educated decision about your health.”

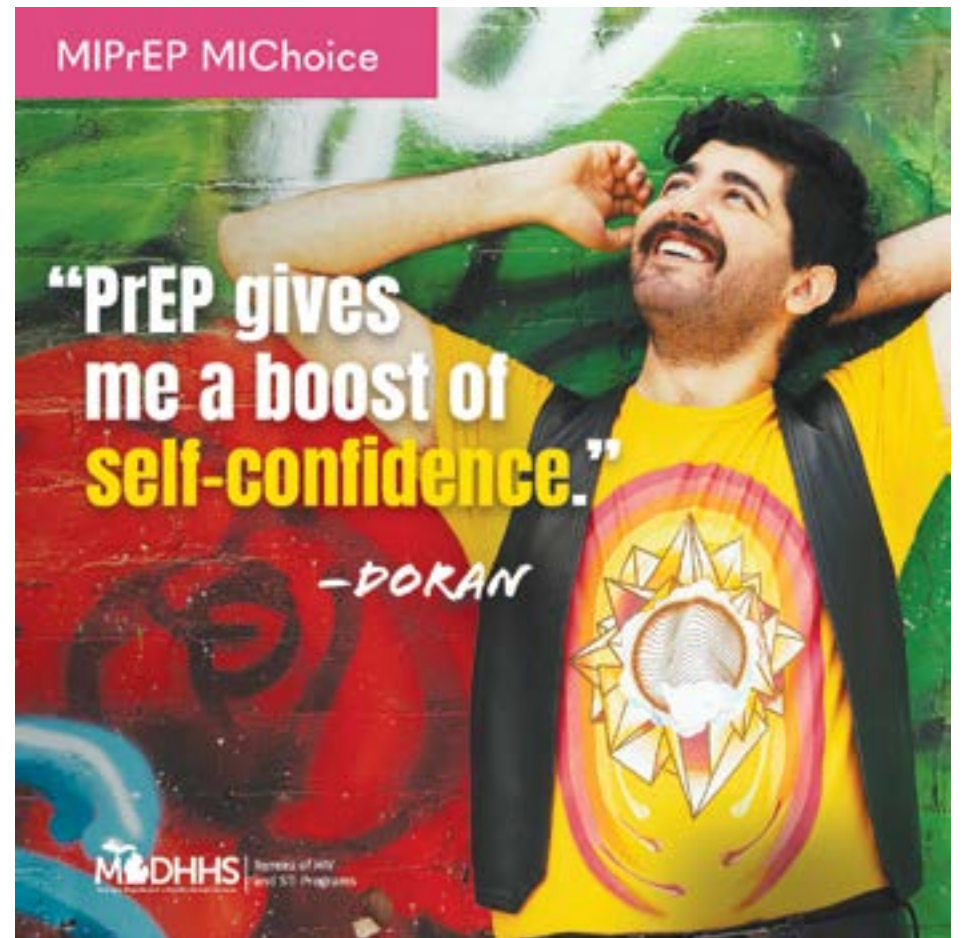
Ballroom house mother, female illusionist and founding member of the Trans Sistās of Color Project, Monica is co-chair of the Michigan HIV/AIDS Council (MHAC). She talks about losing friends and loved ones to the HIV epidemic. “My main goal is to stay protected, live a long, happy, healthy life and to still have healthy sex,” she says. “When you’re on PrEP, you can do all of

I highly encourage others to get on this pill that lowers the chance of getting HIV.”

Reese says taking PrEP makes him feel safe. “It makes me feel confident and takes the worry out of the moment,” he adds. “Taking PrEP lessens the chance of getting HIV. I encourage people to get tested, talk to their doctor, and open the door to more safety.”

PrEP a form of safety. Still, he shares that he practices safe sex. “It’s just peace of mind more than anything,” he explains. “I know PrEP doesn’t prevent everything, but it helps prevent HIV. It’s important to normalize PrEP to other people as well who may not take it or know that it exists. For anybody that’s sexually active I can’t recommend PrEP enough.”

who stays busy with activities like volleyball, bowling, hiking and kayaking takes a proactive approach to her sexual wellbeing. “I am a single mom of three boys,” she says. “I got a job and was talking to others about how PrEP helps prevent HIV and I thought I should be taking this myself. It’s an extra step of protection. You think you know your partner, but you never



Doran, whose hobbies include theater, writing and embroidery, says in the campaign that PrEP “empowers” him. “I’m making choices for my personal health to do what is best for me,” he continues. “It gives me a boost of self-confidence, which being queer and a Middle Eastern man, you tend not to have as much. A big part of the queer Middle Eastern experience is shame. That shame leads people to not talk about things, or look for help, and just to continue behaviors without the knowledge of what they are doing. Taking PrEP gives me a sense of safety, protection and self-care.”

those things. Being trans we are already stigmatized and have labels on us. I choose to be healthy. I choose to live my truth. PrEP gives me that sense of choice.”

David and Reese, a Michigan couple, are featured together in the campaign. David, a drag performer, and Reese, an outdoor enthusiast, mention the peace of mind that comes with taking PrEP. “PrEP gives me comfort and security,” David says. “I’m taking precautions for my safety. I love that feeling for me and my partner. Peace of mind is hard to come by when first coming out. I am from a small town and didn’t know about PrEP.

In the campaign, Michigan activist Alfredo reveals that he wasn’t sure about PrEP at first. “After a few years of skepticism, I finally got on PrEP,” he shares. “I decided it’s best to be proactive in maintaining my own sexual health because it’s a part of my health in general. I wanted to be a good example to others. I feel encouraged because this medicine is available to our community now. I get discouraged because some people can’t get over the stigma. We need to make HIV less scary. PrEP is just part of my tool kit.”

Chase, who enjoys camping, hiking and live music, considers

Artist and wigmaker Jeena shares a vulnerable moment in the campaign materials. “At one point I thought I had HIV,” she reveals. “It turned out that I didn’t, but I felt comfortable enough to seek help. It’s nerve-racking to go inside a testing clinic. I don’t feel that way anymore. It’s better to live comfortably than to feel anxious. PrEP gives my partner that safety and security of knowing that I don’t have HIV. It makes me feel at peace. My advice? Don’t believe all the myths out there, listen to the medical professionals. Do it for the people you love.”

Tiffani, a Michigan mom

really know. It’s a daily reminder of your choices and to take care of yourself.”

The campaign isn’t just about helping to prevent HIV. It’s also about celebrating the diversity, resilience and empowerment of those in the Michigan LGBTQ+ community.

*This article is made possible with support from MDHHS. Between The Lines’ journalism is achieved through the support and partnership of advertisers like MDHHS. To learn more about the “MIPrEP MI Choice” campaign, visit [Michigan.gov/MIPrEP](https://Michigan.gov/MIPrEP).*



# Ferndale's First Black Mayor on Her Historic Win

Raylon Leaks-May plans include a focus on housing equality and community inclusion

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

Queer or not, the mayor of Ferndale is an important figure in Michigan's LGBTQ+ community.

In a city with 19,000 residents that boasts its own LGBTQ+ community center, Pride festival and designated gay bar, newly elected Mayor Raylon Leaks-May will face challenging decisions and help set the tone for city council. With that in mind, BTL sat down with Leaks-May, a proud Ferndalian for more than 30 years who can recall the heyday of Winkelman's department store and F&M, to get her take on heading up one of the queerest hubs in the suburban Midwest.

After 11 years as an elected official and more as a community volunteer, Leaks-May won in a landslide against a gay candidate, fashion marketer Sean Hurley. This seems to show that evaluating a candidate's overall record is what matters most to residents of the city.

"I didn't think about that," Leaks-May said. "Typically people are running because they care about the community. They want to do great things for the community. So I feel like anyone has an opportunity to do that. I knew that I was going to run on my experience. I was going to run on my desire to do the right thing. I was going to run on my love for the community, my love for the people in a community that I love."

"The residents were used to the current mayor," Leaks-May added, speaking about Melanie Piana. "As I was able to get out and talk with people and express what I love about the city plans that I'd like to see come forward, I think people started to realize my intentions and that I'm a totally different person and a totally different leader with my own vision."

Part of that vision is affordable housing, an area of expertise given Leaks-May's role as a resource specialist for Area Agency on Aging 1-B. She said at work they often take calls from people experiencing housing insecurity.

"Ferndale is such a dynamic little town, and I'd like to see people who want to reside here and be able to afford to be able to live here with diverse housing options," Leaks-May said.

Keeping Ferndale an inclusive community is important for Leaks-May, who is proud of the strides made during her tenure on city council. She points out the Pride flag in council chambers was first displayed when Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter was mayor.

"I think that really relayed a message to this community that we're accepting

*"What I believe is that me being elected shows that Ferndale is open to change."*

and we understand that a fight for rights continues," Leaks-May said. "But you're in a community that recognizes the need to belong and that we want you to feel like you belong."

The Pan-African flag is also displayed during February, something Leaks-May initiated for Black History Month. "I'm happy to be a part of a lot of firsts and for us to be that community that kind of sets the bar for other communities to take a stand

---

See **Raylon Leaks-May**, page 20



Ferndale Mayor Raylon Leaks-May. Courtesy photo



to be. If she has been seen as someone who is impermeable to life's punches and the emotion that nostalgia can carry, it might only be because, until this once-in-a-lifetime show, the Bay City native has never performed 40 years of her hits-filled catalog just miles away from Menjo's with her 92-year-old father, Silvio, who she revealed has Parkinson's, in attendance — all after nearly dying last year.

"If you think I'm tough and if you think I'm a warrior and if you think that I'm a beast or a superhero, it's because of my father," Madonna told the audience during a long, emotional stretch in which she recognized him in a way that made it feel like she had few chances left to do so, even noting that he's still running his vineyard near Traverse City.

The 65-year-old gay icon spoke a lot about where she came from, recognizing a sign a fan made that read "Hometown Hero" and offering sincere gratitude to her Michigan fans who have stood by her. "Thank you for supporting me through all these years," Madonna said, nearly tearfully.

Emotions were also felt during the gut-punch of what came after "Holiday," which she performed on a revolving turntable — an extraordinary part of the stage — as she and her dance troupe moved with carefree ease. The song was as vibrantly performed as it was upon its release in 1983. But then the



Madonna performs at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit.  
Photo: Chris Azzopardi

when it comes to political theater, it doesn't get much more breathlessly moving than this. I knew the "Live to Tell" part of the show would stir something inside of me when I first read about it and saw a clip. What I didn't expect from feeling immersed in her performance — a feeling that was ever-present during the show — was experiencing myself during my own eras as Madonna was going through hers. If this is what they call "the soundtrack of our lives," Madonna, like a prayer, the kind I used to cling to in bed late at night as a suicidal kid hoping I'd grow up and be OK, more than took me there.

bouncy pop hit slowed to a haunting crawl, just one dancer left, no longer standing but lying on the ground. As she gently placed her jacket over the dancer's body, Madonna's voice whimpered the last couple of lyrics, before they both disappeared into the darkness.

She came back to the stage alone singing "Live to Tell" inside a framed lift that rose high toward the roof of the arena. During what became a heartfelt tribute, screens displayed images of friends she lost to AIDS, which was inspired by an Instagram account she follows, @theAIDSmemorial. Martin Burgoyne, Madonna's close friend and an artist who was instrumental in the early years of her career, was featured first, followed by another AIDS victim, and another. Then many, many more.

I was scared of being gay when I was a teenager who learned that people, many of them gay, were dying of AIDS, and

O	H	A	R	E		D	I	S	C		S	I	Z	E		
R	O	R	E	M		I	N	C	H		U	R	I	S		
G	R	O	U	P		S	H	U	E		R	A	N	T		
	A	N	N	E	T	T	E	B	E	N	I	N	G			
		I	R	E			R	A	T	O	N					
I	N	S	T	O	R	E				A	R	A	B	L	E	
W	A	T	E	R	N	Y	M	P	H		M	A	A	M		
O	D	E	D			E	C	O			N	Y	E			
N	I	A			J	O	D	I	E	F	O	S	T	E	R	
T	A	L	C	U	M					M	E	R	C	U	R	Y
		A	N	I	T	A				N	P	R				
T	H	E	O	T	H	E	R	S		S	H	O	R	E		
P	R	O	S			T	I	T	O		A	T	I	L	T	
G	A	L	A			E	R	N	S		N	U	T	S	O	
S	P	A	R			D	D	A	Y		S	M	E	A	R	

**Nyad**  
Puzzle can be found on page 21

Shop LGBTQ+  
PRIDESOURCE.COM

# RUTH ELLIS CLAIRMOUNT

L G B T Q +

- GENDER AFFIRMING CARE
- STI TESTING & TREATMENT
- HEALTH NAVIGATION
- CONTRACEPTION
- HIV TREATMENT
- PRIMARY CARE
- PREP

OPEN TO ALL AGES

**313-484-5888**  
61 Clairmount Ave.  
Detroit, MI 48202

**Health & Wellness Center**

**Ruth Ellis Center**

**MDHHS**  
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

**HENRY FORD HEALTH**

## Prism of Possibilities Psychotherapy

Christine Cantrell, PhD  
Fully Licensed Psychologist

Give yourself an extreme self makeover ...

- ▼ Speak Your Truth
- ▼ Discover What You Want
- ▼ Create Your True Self
- ▼ Heal Old Hurts. Find Wholeness

Located in Royal Oak  
www.christinecantrell.com  
christinecantrellphd@gmail.com

**CALL NOW! 248-591-2888**



# How LGBTQ+ Families Can Foster Change in 2024

Legislation evolving nationwide will impact queer families in the coming year

BY DANA RUDOLPH

After a 2023 that saw a rise in anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and more than 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills introduced across the country, where should LGBTQ+ parents and our allies put our efforts to advance equality in 2024? Experts at several leading LGBTQ+ organizations shared their thoughts with me.

## State parentage laws

Updating state parentage laws will be a key focus for many. Stacey Stevenson, CEO of Family Equality, explained, “Many states have parentage laws that are several decades old.” Updating them would “ensure that all children have equal access to legal parent-child relationships, regardless of the circumstances of their birth or the marital status, gender identity or sexual orientation of their parents.” Several states updated aspects of their parentage laws in 2023 and others have efforts underway, including Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Oregon and Pennsylvania. In 2024, Stevenson said, “We intend to capitalize on that momentum to protect LGBTQ+ families.”

Polly Crozier, director of family advocacy at GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), concurred. “It’s not a political issue, it’s a child issue, making sure all states have more paths to parentage for children,” she said. “I think there’s a lot of work still to be done.”

Jordan Budd, executive director of COLAGE, the national organization for people with LGBTQ+ parents, similarly noted, “All children, no matter who their parents are, deserve to feel safe and secure in their family.” COLAGE’s top priorities for 2024 will be “culture change and education around our families, what they look like, and how they form, as well as fighting for parentage reform in as many states as possible.” “The good news,” he said, “is that a sizable number of states are already considering action on this topic for 2024.” He encourages LGBTQ+ families to get involved.

## Fertility fraud and gamete regulation legislation

Other types of bills may warrant caution. Crozier warned of the “unintended



consequences and tremendous dangers” of a national push to pass fertility fraud and gamete regulation bills, which began in 2019 with a narrow bill in Utah criminalizing doctors who use their own sperm to impregnate patients. While that in itself wasn’t bad, Crozier explained that we are now seeing “really broad bills criminalizing not only doctors who willfully do that but also gamete donors, for misrepresenting any information about themselves they should have reasonably known, which is problematic for many reasons.” Donors could be criminalized “because you didn’t realize that your mother had breast cancer when you were a baby, or whatever. It just puts the bar so high,” she said. This could reduce the donor sperm supply “to such an extent it is not available.”

While she is sympathetic to those who want “truth and transparency” in gamete donation, she nevertheless asserts, “Criminalizing donors does not get you truth or transparency. Transparency is a system where people feel able to fully disclose anything and not risk criminalization.” She urges those working at the intersection of reproductive justice and LGBTQ+ justice to make sure these bills are not “inadvertently shutting down

an area of medicine that our families need to build themselves.”

## Gender-affirming care legislation

For Shannon Minter, legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), “The single most urgent priority is getting rid of state laws that ban medical care for transgender adolescents. These laws affect only a very small group of young people, but their impact on the transgender youth who need this care is devastating. And they set a dangerous precedent of allowing the government to deny medical care to stigmatized minorities,” which “should not be permitted in any democratic country.” He noted that NCLR is petitioning the Supreme Court “to review the Sixth Circuit decision reversing our successful challenge to the ban on medical care for transgender adolescents in Kentucky.”

Sarah Kate Ellis, president and CEO of LGBTQ+ media advocacy organization GLAAD, agreed that a focus should be “pushing back against bills banning healthcare for trans folks and ensuring the safety of trans youth at school, as well as their free and equal participation in

extracurriculars like sports. And lastly, which is where GLAAD comes in, fighting misrepresentation and dehumanizing narratives around transgender people, while also providing the resources to accurately cover transgender people and issues.”

## Bolstering LGBTQ-affirming community and corporate support

More broadly, she also sees “opportunities in accelerating LGBTQ+ acceptance in the business world.” She observed that “While Anheuser-Busch and Target suffered in the long run by caving to anti-LGBTQ+ extremists and backtracking on LGBTQ+ support, hundreds of companies, like Nike, Walmart, Sesame Street and more, proudly incorporated Pride and other LGBTQ-inclusive marketing.” GLAAD has data, she said, showing that “Americans are twice as likely to buy or use a brand that publicly supports LGBTQ+ people and our rights.”

Ellen Kahn, senior director of programs and partnerships at the Human Rights Campaign, stressed the need for local action, saying, “I think a top priority is for LGBTQ+ parents to organize locally with like-minded organizations to ensure that our school boards provide inclusive leadership and protect and expand policies that support LGBTQ+ families, and this includes running for school board positions as well as fully vetting candidates and campaigning for those who are unwavering on our issues.”

She added that although opponents of LGBTQ+ equality have concentrated on “stripping rights away from trans youth, and to some extent, trans adults,” their goal is broader. “They do not want us to be married, to raise kids, to teach in schools, to have any power — so stay engaged at both the local and national level, vote, speak up and find a community that will have your back.”

And Crozier advised that despite the anti-LGBTQ+ action and rhetoric we’ve seen over the past year, “We’ve just got to keep believing in ourselves, because all this media attention, all these bills, all these court cases, are trying to tell us we are one thing — but we’re freaking awesome and our kids are awesome.”



# What Queer Community Means to Ann Arbor Folk Fest Performer Lizzie No

And why the Fest has always valued diversity

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

A good folk song might feel innocent on the surface, especially when it's a lilting, acoustic-driven ballad, but hardcore folk fans aren't drawn to this genre because it's easy listening. Good folk music demands more of its listeners. Gentle deliveries often bely an urgent message, whether it's a Dust Bowl-era protest song about the bloody battle for worker rights sung clear and true by a young Woody Guthrie in the 1930s or secret messages hidden in the African folk slave music that gave birth to the genre long ago.

Barb Chaffer Authier, marketing director for the mainstay Ann Arbor music and arts venue The Ark, tells BTL that folk is about combining the personal with the universal. "It's poised to draw in the listener and create connection," she says. Authier points to a quote from modern queer-loved folk legend Ani DiFranco, who once said, "Folk music is not an acoustic guitar — that's not where the heart of it is... It's an attitude, an awareness of one's heritage, and it's a community. It's sub-corporate music that gives voice to different communities and their struggle against authority."

The Ark will soon play host to the 47th annual Ann Arbor Folk Festival, set for Jan. 26 and 27 at Hill Auditorium, featuring headliners Old Crow Medicine Show on Friday and Emmylou Harris on Saturday. Over the years, the lineup has included musicians recognized as grandparents to the genre like John Prine at the first show in 1976 to nationally acclaimed artists like DiFranco, Bonnie Raitt, Arlo Guthrie, Patty Griffin, Indigo Girls, Brandi Carlile, Aimee Mann, and beloved Michigan acts like Nervous But Excited and the Michigan Rattlers. The mix of performers is unpredictable, but always eclectic and always focused on vulnerable, raw songwriting and performance.

Each year, Authier carefully curates the lineup alongside a team of employees at The Ark, a non-profit music venue dedicated to folk and roots music that began in 1965 as a community gathering spot for four local church groups. The process, Authier says, can feel like "putting the pieces of a jigsaw together."

Under the direction of longtime Program Director Anya Siglin, the team is in constant discussion for months about bands they've discovered, artists they follow and

performers they'd like to include. "We go into the process thinking about all the ways to showcase the diversity of the music The Ark presents," Authier says. "That diversity shows itself in gender and racial identity, but also in music style and genre and even the makeup of the performances with a mix of solo singer-songwriters, full bands and diversity of instrumentation."

Authier says it can be challenging to narrow the lineup with just a handful of performers each night. Still, she says, "we definitely believe in the importance of striving for that diversity to showcase the full spectrum of Ark artists."

One diverse Ann Arbor Folk Festival artist ready to hit the stage Jan. 27 is queer, Black, gender-nonconforming harpist, singer-songwriter and guitarist Lizzie No, who tells BTL that performing at the festival, which they call "legendary," is a dream. "I tour a lot," they say, "but honestly, some of the best shows and experiences are folk festivals, because it's not just about you playing your songs. It's about the audience. The folk community really shows up. I'm so excited."

The performer agrees that there's something inherently inclusive about folk music. "I think there is a storytelling capability that folk music has that brings a lot of people to the genre as both listeners and as artists," they say. Folk, they note, has always been a format for political messaging. No says they feel a responsibility as a folk artist to speak truth to power while being inclusive of all working people. "It's not just about you and your ego. It's about the audience and the community."

"Pretty much every political possible opinion on the spectrum can be represented in folk music, but ... it has to be inclusive — it's for everybody. If it's not, then we're not really doing

our jobs when it comes to folk music," they add.

No's brand of folk somehow manages to mesh a lush, sometimes cinematic note with poetic but



See **Lizzie No**, page 19

Lizzie No. Photo: Cole Nielsen



# Dan Levy on Why Chosen Family Is So Important

The ‘Schitt’s Creek’ creator plays a grieving husband in his directorial film debut, ‘Good Grief’

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

**T**he grief was very real for Dan Levy, who lost his grandma and rescue dog, Redmond, over the span of a couple of years during the pandemic. And then he did something very Dan Levy with that grief — he opened a blank page and got to work on “Good Grief,” a Netflix film, out now, that he wrote, directed and stars in.

The film is the “Schitt’s Creek” creator’s first major endeavor after his Emmy-winning show became a sleeper hit as the world shut down due to the Covid pandemic when we sheltered in place (in front of our TVs). In “Good Grief,” Levy plays Marc, an artist we meet at a Christmas party that ends tragically for his husband, Oliver (Luke Evans), who dies in a car accident right outside their place. Marc is left trying to make sense of his sudden loss and what he didn’t know about Oliver’s life before it ended, which takes him to a secret flat Oliver had in Paris. With Marc on his unexpected journey to healing his shattered self are his dearest friends, Sophie (Ruth Negga) and Thomas (Himesh Patel).

I recently spoke with Levy about the film, which he sees as an opportunity to flex new creative muscles, including his portrayal of a character who may be as stylish as David Rose even if he isn’t him, exactly.

**It’s nice to have you back in regular conversation, Dan. It’s been a few years. The world was on a real Dan Levy kick for a while.**

[Laughs.] I think it’s nice to take a break. It’s nice for *everyone* to take a break. You don’t want to ever overstay your welcome. So I’m happy that there’s something that I care about that I’m able to talk about now.

**What goes through your mind when something that is so personal to you gets its wings and is released into the world?**

Well, it’s tough because it’s done. And I care deeply about it, and that’s all that really kind of matters to me outside of the viewers that watch it and hopefully find some point of connectivity in it. It’s always a very sort of awkward thing to kind of have to sell your work.

But I’m really happy with it and it’s a movie that I know that I would like to watch and one that speaks to my life right now in a way that I feel is quite truthful. And yeah, it’s a weird thing to put it out there and then have people do what they will with it.

But at the end of the day, I’m grateful for the opportunity, ultimately. It’s a 180 from what people have come to know me from. And those opportunities don’t get handed out all the time. So I was really grateful that some people over at Netflix were willing to go in this new direction with me. And yeah, I’m just glad that there’s a movie out there that speaks to my life in a meaningful way, that speaks to friendship and found family and the fact that, for a lot of people out there who are without kids and without partners, that friendships are the great loves of our lives.

**Did you draw from your own found family for the film?**

I did. You know, I was realizing once you get into your 30s — I’m 40 now, but was 37 when I started developing the film — relationships change. Really good, long friendships. The more your life takes on weight, the more that applies to friendships and what we’re willing to compromise and what we’re willing not to, and the hard conversations we need to have



Dan Levy on the set of “Good Grief.” Photo: Netflix

in order to invest in our friendships so that they can have life going into the next 40 years of our lives.

It’s uncomfortable at times, but I’ve been finding myself having really meaningful, truthful conversations with friends through this desire to be OK. If you have a friendship that’s a decade or two decades old, there’s going to be some stuff that you need to talk about at some point, like an actual

partner. And it’s about normalizing that, and the fact that those hard conversations are essentially an act of love. It’s an investment in a meaningful relationship.

**How did working on this film help you process your own feelings around grief?**

Writing it really was the first step. I was going through some grief. I lost

my grandmother and I lost my dog. And it was the only thing I could do, really. I wasn’t able to articulate it vocally. And I sat down at my computer and just started to write an outline for this film, and it came quite naturally. And it has nothing to do with my own personal grief, but everything to do with the feelings and the detangling of those feelings and trying to understand what it all means.



So as a writer, I tend to put everything down on the page and see what happens. Between “Schitt’s Creek” and this movie, I’ve worked through a lot of stuff. And it’s good because you can put your life into a swath of different characters, and you’re able to ask questions of yourself and others by way of dialogue and the way that different characters interact with each other and process tragedy or love.

It’s all been this wonderful catharsis of sorts, and this movie was huge for me in that sense. It led me to this path of understanding that culminates in a scene toward the end of the movie between my character and [actor] Celia Imrie, where she ultimately says, “To avoid sadness is also to avoid love.” That was one of the big takeaways from this whole experience for me, and it just ended up on the page. And I didn’t really know where it came from, and yet it all was leading to that for me, that kind of revelation of the importance of being OK with sadness and letting it in and trying to understand it.

**In your own experience and through your exploration of grief, how do you think queer people are impacted differently when it comes to loss?**

I guess I can only really speak to my own experience because I think the community has experienced grief in so many different ways. And people are going to process it in so many different ways. I think for me, that really manifested in the friendships. In this idea of having a safety net of friends there to help you. Because I think for a lot of people in the community, they don’t have family to turn to. I’m very lucky that I do. But I think this idea of friendships helping to soften the blow of some real tragedy speaks to the community as a whole.

**In both “Schitt’s Creek” and now “Good Grief,” wealthy characters comment in various ways on social class. Is there something you’re still trying to say about that topic with this movie?**

I think so. I mean, I think in a way the character of Marc is such an avoidant, and essentially sort of ran away from his mother’s death into the arms of a very handsome and successful writer. And so

Oliver’s success, I think there was something nice about showing a gay man who’s successful and living a wonderful life, despite the odds, despite where he came from. I think we hear through his father’s eulogy that it wasn’t the easiest upbringing, and yet he succeeded. So there was something nice about showing that.

But for Marc, it was all distraction. He was able to really run away from his sadness into the arms of this beautiful new life that was soft and comfortable and exciting and sexy and all of those sort of wonderful things that would allow him to quickly not forget, but repress. So this indulgence before helped to really set up Marc’s relationship to his husband’s success, and ultimately realizing that he doesn’t need it. He doesn’t need that life in the end. He needed something a little bit more grounded, and he needed a life that was more defined for himself.

**When we spoke in 2018, “Schitt’s Creek” hadn’t become the cultural phenomenon that it eventually became. And kind of overnight, even though I know it was not overnight for you...**

It kind of was, though. I think it was over the pandemic, which felt like both forever and a complete blink.

**How weird to feel that during a pandemic, right?**

It continues to be a very strange thing. I talk to the cast about it. It’s a very weird thing to go indoors for two years and come out a completely different person socially. It’s really disorienting. And you don’t get to be out and about and slowly start to understand that people know who you are.

It’s a very harsh confrontation of the fact that your life is completely different and your relationship with privacy is completely different. And it also doesn’t allow you any time to understand that you are, in fact, recognizable. So I think of that as a great opportunity, because there’s no ego attached to quote-unquote “fame” at this point because we’re all still confused about what’s going on, to be perfectly honest.

[Actor] Emma Corrin is a very close friend of mine, and they went through something very similar with “The Crown” over the pandemic as well, where suddenly

everyone knew who they were, and yet we were all indoors. So we’re still kind of thawing to this new version of our lives. You can’t complain about it, obviously, because it’s off the back of great success and opportunity, but it is certainly disorienting and so weird.

**Were you even more eager to leave your house after or during the pandemic to understand what it might feel like as “Schitt’s Creek” became a success?**

No. It forced me into my house even more. [Laughs.] Now it takes more to get me out of the house, to be honest. Because it’s not something that I love, frankly. I accept it because it’s part of the job, but it’s certainly not something that I’m lusting after. And so yeah, it’s been very strange. It’s been wonderful. It’s great to hear people. I think fans of the show are so generous and so kind with how they approach me and the things that they say and the comfort that the show has brought them. So I think some fandoms can be really, really intense. I think the “Schitt’s Creek” fandom community is very kind.

**They have a Canadian sensibility, even though they might not be Canadian?**

Exactly. We’ve somehow succeeded in just Canadianizing our wonderful fans of the show.

**Did you think intentionally about how to move yourself away as an actor from David considering how iconic that character has become?**

It’s a wonderful thing because there’s a real personal connection, I guess, to the character and people feeling like they know me. I’m in some ways very close to David, and in some ways completely opposite. I think 80 episodes of doing the same character was the greatest experience, and yet you come out of it and you have a desire, as I think all actors do, to flex a different kind of muscle. And for me, I wanted to get into something a bit more dramatic. Unfortunately, given the culture of our industry, I only was receiving lesser versions of David Rose to play in other shows and movies.

And so I set out to write something for myself that I thought was a

challenge. It was all very guttural. It was very instinctual. I didn’t have to strategize. I tended to just listen to where my gut was telling me to go. And it was a great challenge. And as an actor, it really forced me to shake some habits that had formed over 80 episodes of playing an incredibly elastic, reactive human being. The character of Marc in this movie is so still and so calm, and shaking some of those impulses to broaden the performance was a real challenge.

But I hope for anyone who becomes identified by way of a character: We should be so lucky. There’s that. If people recognize me as David Rose for the rest of my life, let that be the case. It’s so rare that you get to participate in anything



Himesh Patel, Dan Levy and Ruth Negga, stars of “Good Grief.” Photo: Netflix

that affects people in that kind of way. But at the same time, I wish for any actor who is kind of being put in a box by way of their previous performances, that they’d be given the opportunity to show range. I think we’ve seen historically really great comedy actors excel in drama: Robin Williams, Tom Hanks, Jim Carrey...

We have to shift this idea that if someone becomes recognizable for one thing, that that’s somehow all they can do. I love the idea of pushing actors outside of their comfort zones. And I think this movie did that with every actor, frankly, from Ruth [Negga] and Himesh [Patel] to Kaitlyn [Dever] and Emma. Everyone was playing slightly against type, which was really exciting to me.

**Have you ever sent a David meme or GIF?**

No. I’ve never sent a David GIF. I have sent an Alexis GIF. I think that’s as far as I’ll allow myself to go. I’m too scared of what it looks like to send a GIF of yourself. It’s the Canadian in me. I could never. It’s way too arrogant.

**I have to ask you a question that everyone has been wondering: When will there be a “Schitt’s Creek” revival?**

I don’t know if we’ll ever do it. You end on a high note. Listen, we as a culture want, want, want, want, want. We want it now. It’s binge culture. We want to watch an entire season of a television show in two days because that’s what we want.



# Why Ferndale's Boston Tea Room Might Just Be Your New Cozy, Queer Hotspot

Daniel McLean spills the tea on what it's like working there

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

The only tea spilled at Ferndale's Boston Tea Room is the steeped kind that comes in varieties like Berry Ripe, Cinnamon Heart and The High Priestess. Just ask retail specialist Daniel McLean for a recommendation — he's been brewing it up for the past two years at the venue, where he also works the reception desk, sets up the psychic readers for the day and restocks merchandise like crystals, jewelry, books and a vast selection of tarot cards.

"Everyone is so nice and understanding and welcoming," McLean says. "People just come in here looking for help, and I feel really good being able to help them in any way that I can." He remembers being in awe of the place as a little kid. "It's also really cool to just be around the sparkly crystals," he adds. Clear quartz is McLean's favorite. "Anything that shines attracts me; anything that glitters and glows, that's me."

Nowhere is that glitter and sparkle more apparent than when McLean swaps his workday attire for the elfin glam of Luna Banx, McLean's drag alter ego who came to life seven years ago. He calls her a fantasy elf who's sweet and bubbly and who loves to dance. "She's not your typical supermodel," McLean says.

Banx sometimes struts her stuff at after-hours tea room events such as a recent one featuring German folklore villain The Krampus, a sort of horned anti-Santa who likes to spank naughty children. "We all got our pictures taken, and they brought in a bunch of dogs that got their pictures taken with Krampus," McLean said. "It's really cute, really unique."

Tea, crystals, psychics and drag queens — those unfamiliar with Boston Tea Room can expect unusual finds and unique experiences around every corner of the 12,000-square-foot space.

"We're coming up on our 45-year anniversary," said fourth-generation family business owner Heatherleigh Navarre. "It has really evolved over the years from a tiny little shop in Downriver to this great community gathering space that

brings together people of all backgrounds and all orientations in a safe, welcoming environment where they can feel free to be themselves."

At the Boston Tea Room, they place an emphasis on creating safe spaces and safe events, especially for those who feel marginalized. One of those events is the upcoming Psychic Self-Care Party where Banx will make an appearance — more on that later.

When McLean told BTL his story of landing his job at the tea room, he said he'd had it with being a barista during the pandemic. ("I wasn't making any money, and I'm not a big coffee drinker.") But what he didn't say is that a little magic brought him there — that was explained by Navarre. It happened the day they were interviewing five candidates for the position.

Each employee was asked to write down what they wanted in a new colleague or teammate. "And then we went around the room after we'd done the little spell and said, if you want to, share anything that you wrote down," Navarre said. "One of our existing employees said, 'Well, I just wrote down that I want someone that I can talk to about 'RuPaul's Drag Race.' They chuckled. Then they spoke to McLean. "It was like [McLean] had been summoned specifically for the role."

Navarre understands that for many, retail is an "in-the-meantime" job while an individual is in school or waiting for their dream career to get off the ground.

"We really appreciate people bringing their time and their talents to this role," Navarre says. One of her goals is to give them the



Daniel McLean, aka Luna Banx. Courtesy photo

opportunity to pursue other interests while employed there. For McLean, it was a win-win. And the fact that the drag events are low-key suits McLean just fine.

"As much as I would like [Luna Banx] to be more prominent in my life, I deal with a lot

of anxiety and depression and stuff like that," McLean says, noting that these issues contribute to occasional doubts about his performance skills. "Being able to perform at work has been really huge for me because I already know that the space is welcoming and warm and people there love me, so I really had nothing to worry about. It just kind of worked out."

Luna Banx will be assisting guests at the Jan. 26 Psychic Self-Care Party along

See **Boston Tea**, page 22



◀ **Lizzie No**  
Continued from page 15

straightforward storytelling. They aren't one to drop Easter eggs into lyrics like some artists; they say storytelling isn't really about sharing completely factually accurate autobiographical details, either. Every now and then, someone from an audience will confront them about the lyrical content of a song. They understand why this happens, but still, it can be frustrating when people miss that they are telling a story, not delivering a list of facts. "You always want to be understood when you're sharing art," they explain.

No's storytelling frequently focuses on their identity as a bisexual, gender-nonconforming person and the importance of queer community. The prospect of coming out can be terrifying, they acknowledge. "There's a really dangerous accepted wisdom based on the sad truth that people are often rejected and marginalized or harmed or in some way pushed out of their community," they say. "I know so many people have had that painful experience."

What queer people who haven't come out yet may not realize, however, is how welcoming the community can be on the other side. "We can miss out on the bigger story, which is that being a queer person and living authentically as yourself makes you a part of a huge community across the world and across time."

No's experience growing up within a Baptist evangelical family included a great deal of negative messaging about what it would mean if they came out. "What I didn't realize was that there was going to be this whole community of queer people that would catch me when I made that leap to be more open about my bisexuality and gender identity," they say.

Queer community was at the heart of No's 2022 experience touring with what they call a "queer country house band,"

headlined by the late Patrick Haggerty of the '70s gay country band Lavender Country. "It was just a ragtag group of amazing queer artists, and it was my first experience of feeling like I was physically in community with other queer people," they remember. "I was out and I was accepted, and I was explicitly saying that we were together on tour as queer artists. It was exhilarating."

No says the experience helped them learn how to lead with their honesty and values and how to live and perform without shame as a queer person, feelings they channeled into the song and video for "The Heartbreak Store," which opens with the stanza, "The cashier knows the drill/I came to sell all the hurt I couldn't keep/And she gives me that box to fill/Don't know who's buying what I'm selling cheap/If I can't fall out of love at least I'll set it down."

The song was the first single off No's latest album, "Halfsies," out now. When the catchy, guitar-driven tune was released in November, No said in a statement that the lyrics are about ridding oneself of the remnants of past loves. "In this velvet-walled speakeasy are a dozen other rejects who have set their burdens down," they wrote. "This is country music, so dancing and crying are both encouraged. Heaven is a honky-tonk full of queer people who have stopped being ashamed."

Shame doesn't seem to be a part of this earnest folk musician's vocabulary in 2024. Today, No is living out and proud and building community wherever they can find it. "I have definitely been guilty of forgetting that being queer isn't just about tweeting your truth into the void — you have to actually connect in person with other queer people. Otherwise, it's a really lonely journey."

*No will have LPs and CDs of "Halfsies" and other albums available for sale at the Ann Arbor Folk Festival. Her music is available for streaming in all the usual spots. Visit [lizzieno.com](http://lizzieno.com) and [theark.org/folk-festival](http://theark.org/folk-festival) for more information.*

◀ **Mary Metra**  
Continued from page 7

Anything and everything you can imagine was going on and that's just the way it was."

McKee remembered Sappington as a good businesswoman. "She'd rather run a blank page in her magazine than to discount the page," he said. "She understood that the minute you discount a page, everyone is coming after you for discounts. So she was definitely a solid businesswoman and a nice lady."

Former BTL publisher Jan Stevenson said much of the same. "I admired her commitment to her work with Metra magazine, and her ability to adjust to an ever-changing business environment. She faced many challenges as a woman who published a magazine primarily serving the gay men's market," Stevenson said.

Though she was straight, Sappington was beloved in the queer community. She kept Metra going until the height of the pandemic when the magazine took a hiatus. Eventually, Sappington sold the paper.

"Mary was a joy, and she did a lot of things for the LGBTQ+ community," said Frankie Wingle, current co-owner and editor-in-chief of Metra. "She was really a trailblazer and ahead of her time."

Testimonies to Sappington's enduring allyship have been plentiful after her death.

"Mary, you did good," said Facebook user



Michael Venable. "You made a difference. A really big one. And that is a legacy that we should all strive to achieve in our lifetime."

Karaoke DJ Karen O'Brien called Sappington "an inspiration and a support system to all of us."

"Nothing I can say is enough to describe the impact she had on me," she added, "and every life she touched."

*Services have been held. Donations may be made in Sappington's name to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.*





THE FINEST IN ADULT ENTERTAINMENT AT THE BEST PRICES!

SHANE SE  
HOUSE-PARTY GANGBANG  
GALCON  
PRIVATE MOMENTS

Rush - Jungle Juice - Maximum Impact - Swiss Navy - Amsterdam- ID Glide - COLT- Butterfly Kiss Pink- The Womanizer

**UPTOWN**  
BOOKSTORES  
ADULT VIDEO

2 LOCATIONS

WWW.UPTOWNADULT.COM

16541 Woodward Ave.  
at McNichols next to "Deja Vu"  
Highland Park  
313.869.9477

16401 W. 8 Mile  
Between Greenfield & Southfield  
Detroit  
313.836.0647

Hours:  
Mon-Sat 10am - 9pm  
Sun 12 - 6pm

## Raylon Leaks-May

Continued from page 12

and say, "You belong here."

Yet there will always be those who would divide a community. One such incident came a few years back in the form of a request to the council by Church Militant, a hate group with headquarters within city limits.

"What was difficult for me is the message that we received during the proposed resolution to raise that flag," Leaks-May said. "It wasn't one of love, it wasn't one of acceptance. It was one of isolation, and one to belittle a population that has every right to be here in this community." It was hard for her to witness the pain and distress caused by the incident.

While diversity is valued in Ferndale, there is work to be done, says Leaks-May, the first Black mayor in a city that is less than 10 percent Black or African American. "Representation matters," she said.

"What I believe is that me being elected shows that Ferndale is open to change," she continued. "It's something that's never happened before, and I'm really proud."

Just as LGBTQ+ council members have put forth initiatives like the rainbow crosswalk that stretches across West Nine Mile Road between Allen Street and Woodward Avenue, they also paved the path to getting an anti-racism declaration on the books. The new mayor believes things like these initiatives, which affect the entire community, are what lead to progress.

Leaks-May would like her time as mayor

to serve as an example to young people. "My children get to see this," she said of her "crew" of five teenagers, all of whom attended Ferndale schools. She first entered life as an elected official as a school board trustee.

Ferndale City Council Member Greg Pawlica has known Leaks-May since her first campaign 12 years ago. "I remember that particular campaign was a bit contentious," he said. Leaks-May's slate sought to replace some school board members who seemed out of touch with what the parents wanted, due in part to no longer having children in the district.

"The 'Bold Campaign' had parents that were interested in really transforming the schools," Pawlica said. "Raylon was part of this transformative group of people trying to re-energize the school district."

With eight years of service on council together, Pawlica has confidence in Leaks-May's ability to make tough decisions. He called her level-headed and not easily swayed by frivolous arguments.

"She will run a very organized and productive council meeting," Pawlica said. "But above that, as mayor, I think she's going to provide really great leadership to council. I think she has some really great ideas in regards to affordable housing I know that she really wants to continue to push forward."

Pawlica is one of three openly LGBTQ+ council members this term. That's three out of five, so queer Ferndalians are well-represented. As for Leaks-May, she believed the community knew her well enough to trust her, but she took nothing for granted. "That's why we reached out to as many people as we could to get the message across that I'm ready to take on this role," she said.

"Ferndale is such a dynamic little town, and I'd like to see people who want to reside here and be able to afford to be able to live here with diverse housing options."

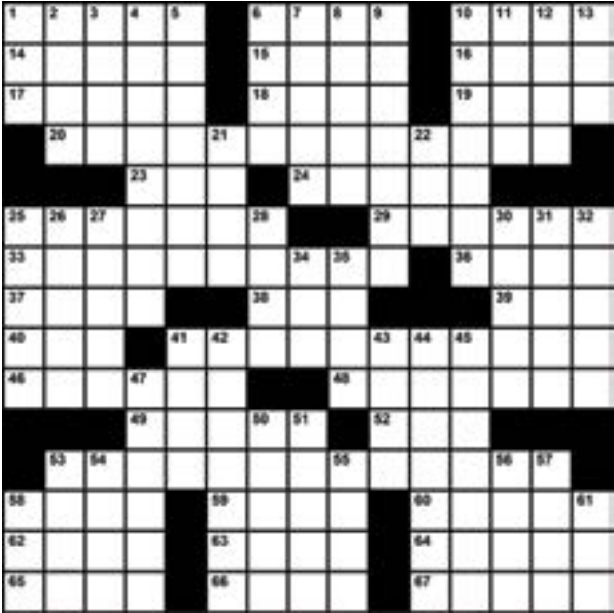
We value diversity in the City of Ann Arbor,  
and take pride in being different from the rest.

The City of Ann Arbor is an Equal Opportunity Employer

We are proud of our diverse workforce and our commitment to equal opportunity. We do not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived age, arrest record, color, disability, educational association, familial status, family responsibilities, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, height, HIV status, marital status, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, source of income, veteran status, victim of domestic violence or stalking, or weight in any aspect of our hiring or employment process. The City of Ann Arbor has earned a perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Municipal Equality Index (MEI), which assesses lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer equality in more than 500 cities across the nation.

a2gov.org/jobs





Nyad

Across

- 1 Its monitors show Windy City times
- 6 Frisbee, for one
- 10 They say it matters
- 14 "Air Music" composer Ned
- 15 "Hedwig and the Angry \_\_\_\_"
- 16 Novelist Leon
- 17 Type of sex
- 18 Andrew of "Melrose Place"

- 19 Give a lot of mouth
- 20 She played Diana Nyad in the movie "Nyad"
- 23 Land of O. Wilde
- 24 Be a snitch
- 25 About to happen
- 29 Fit for sowing one's seed
- 33 The meaning of "nyad" in Greek
- 36 Way to address a dominatrix
- 37 Had too many M&M's, e.g.
- 38 "The Name of the Rose" writer
- 39 Dec. 31 (abbr.)

- 40 Long in the field of acting
- 41 She played Nyad's trainer in the movie "Nyad"
- 46 Powder for bottoms
- 48 Freddie of Queen
- 49 "West Side Story" girl
- 52 David Sedaris' home on the air
- 53 2013 documentary about Nyad
- 58 Pam Parsons and Patty Sheehan
- 59 Brother of Jermaine
- 60 Not erect
- 62 The Oscars, e.g.
- 63 Sea eagles
- 64 Crackers or bananas
- 65 Hit boxers
- 66 "Saving Private Ryan" event
- 67 Compare gays to pedophiles, e.g.

Down

- 1 URL ending
- 2 Time for Frida
- 3 Middle name of "Viva, Las Vegas" singer
- 4 Together again
- 5 Hans Christian Andersen's naked marcher
- 6 Castro, in S.F.
- 7 "What does she see \_\_\_\_?"
- 8 Strap-on for a diver
- 9 One that comes quickly
- 10 Neighbor of Brazil
- 11 Caspian Sea land
- 12 "\_\_\_\_! Went the Strings of My Heart"

- 13 Hrs. in P-town
- 21 Graceful seabird
- 22 Edvard Grieg's land (abbr.)
- 25 Curt refusal
- 26 Conductor Boulanger
- 27 Get to second base, perhaps
- 28 Gave the once-over in a gay bar
- 30 African language
- 31 Put one on top of the other
- 32 What a drag queen may use on her nails
- 34 1,101 to 47 Down
- 35 Hart Crane work
- 41 2007 movie of Elliot Page
- 42 Failed to mention
- 43 Peat areas
- 44 Broadway Annie, and others
- 45 It takes balls
- 47 Many a senator stuck it in him
- 50 Last stop before home
- 51 Allstate rival
- 53 Cop flirting in a tearoom
- 54 "Hi" to Lorca
- 55 O'Donnell homophone
- 56 Holy union or commitment ceremony, e.g.
- 57 "Frozen" queen
- 58 Mag. leafs
- 61 Hard top

See p. 13 for answers

Shop LGBTQ+

PRIDESOURCE.COM

Supporting the Community Since Before it was Cool.

100% Local Agents. 100% Client Focused. Trillium Real Estate Helps People Make Good Decisions.

Sandi & Linda  
www.trilliumrealtors.com

323 Braun Ct. Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
734-302-3011

TRILLIUM REAL ESTATE





**HELLO 2024**

**IVEY**

@IVEYSALON  
IVEYSALON.COM  
100 S FOURTH AVE,  
ANN ARBOR 48105

## ◀ Boston Tea

Continued from page 18

with two other queens, Artemiss and Eros Lee. Partygoers will receive a mini tarot reading, a choice from a selection of nonalcoholic beverages, 10 percent off store merchandise, a swag bag and the opportunity to rub elbows with the queens and have their picture taken, all while a DJ spins a Pride playlist.

A fundraiser for Ferndale Pride, the Psychic Self-Care Party provides an opportunity for people to learn a little bit more about themselves and have a private experience that they might not get to otherwise, says Ferndale Pride Chair Julia Music. It's more chill than some of the other fundraisers Ferndale Pride hosts year 'round.

"It's something different," Music says. "It gives us a chance to get out of some of the nightclubs and show off one of our ally businesses that works with us throughout the year. It's also a chance for people to do some self-reflection. A lot of our events are really high-energy fundraisers where we might have club music on, and it doesn't really give people a chance to come out and just find some calm space."

Music loves handing out the goody bags ("kind of like when you were a little kid

at the birthday party") and hearing about the readings or a fun item purchased that night.

"We're just very happy to have Heatherleigh in the Boston Tea Room as a supporter of Pride," Music says. "Because of Heather's leadership, they're just so wonderful to their employees, to the people that come into their shop, and also to the organizations that make this city run. So we're very thankful to them."

McLean is also thankful for the tea room. He enjoys working in an environment where someone who comes in looking troubled, sometimes even crying, will often leave with a much brighter demeanor. And although he's the only man working there, McLean has had no issue acclimating to the woman-dominated space.

"I actually love it," McLean said. "Feminine energy is something that I've always kind of been connected and resonated with more. Working with women has always made me feel comfortable, like I could be myself."

*Psychic Self-Care Party: a Fundraiser for Ferndale Pride 2024 — Friday, Jan. 26, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., Boston Tea Room, 1220 Woodward Heights, Ferndale. This is an alcohol-free event. Purchase tickets at [bit.ly/47pakr8](https://bit.ly/47pakr8).*

**DIVA**  
*Royale*

WRITTEN & DIRECTED  
BY JEFF DANIELS

 the PurpleRose  
theatre company

**Extended Thru March 2, 2024!**  
PurpleRoseTheatre.org

**AFFIRMATIONS  
OPEN HOUSE  
PARTY**

We're having a party and we'd love to see you there!  
**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 09 | 7 PM-10 PM**  
290 W. 9 Mile Rd | Ferndale | MI

We're excited to welcome you into Affirmations, introduce you to new staff, and tell you about all the exciting things our community center has to offer.

This is a free event and all are welcome!

 Scan for more details!





**Delivered  
Straight to  
Your Mailbox**

Support LGBTQ+ journalism and get *Between the Lines* delivered to your door for just \$95/year or \$10/month.

[WWW.PRIDESOURCE.COM/SUBSCRIBE](http://WWW.PRIDESOURCE.COM/SUBSCRIBE)

**BIDWELL TOVAREZ PLLC**  
PROVIDING BANKRUPTCY SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

**A BRIGHTER TOMORROW**

For a Fresh Start and

Providing personal and compassionate assistance with financial problems including Chapter 7 and 13 bankruptcies, foreclosure, garnishments and elimination of second mortgages.

**What clients say about Bidwell Tovarez:**  
*"Most trustworthy and experienced"*  
*"Outstanding representation"*  
*"Services with a personal touch"*

**Bidwell Tovarez PLLC**  
333 W 7th St., Ste. 140     432 N. Saginaw, Suite 800  
Royal Oak, MI 48067     Flint, MI 48502  
248-270-3333     810-222-6422

[www.bidwelltovarez.com](http://www.bidwelltovarez.com)  
[derid@bidwelltovarez.com](mailto:derid@bidwelltovarez.com)

**Call 248-270-3333**

We are a debt relief agency. We help people file for bankruptcy relief under the Bankruptcy code.

**MERITHOT**

**CREATE  
SOMETHING  
EXTRAORDINARY.**

Merithot helps awesome companies create remarkable brands, strategies, websites and content.

Creative Marketing made with ♥ from Ann Arbor, MI

[www.merithot.com](http://www.merithot.com)



# New ED Treatment will Get Your Swing Back

**Sexual confidence is an essential quality of life.  
No one should be deprived of the pleasure!**

Whether it's medical, physical, or a combination of the two, challenges with sexual health can be frustrating and confusing to tackle.

At times, it may seem the only treatment options are experimenting with medications or devices that often don't deliver satisfying results. Be Well Medical Center, specializing in sexual health since 1980, is here to help you defeat ED for good with Alma Duo. This medical procedure is speedy, simple, and painless.

Alma Duo is a non-surgical and non-invasive treatment that can strengthen and improve men's sexual function. It is also a patented technology that is FDA-approved, extremely safe, and has a minimal risk of side effects. The innovative energy-based system is an attractive option for men that is administered in our office.

**Most Experienced & Knowledgeable**  
Established in 1980 as the first Primary Care Medical Clinic in the Detroit area specializing in LGBTQ+ care.

**Board Certified in Family Practice & Designated Patient-Centered Medical Home** by Blue Cross Blue Shield as a Center of Excellence.



Dr. Paul Benson's

**Be Well**  
Medical Center

1964 Eleven Mile Rd  
Berkley, MI 40872

(248) 544-9300  
doctorbewell.com

A REVOLUTIONARY TREATMENT FOR  
**MEN**



Living Life before  
Alma Duo.

Living Life with  
Alma Duo.

## Kindness & Patient Care: At the Top of Our Priorities since 1980

**Dr. Benson** is an Associate Professor at Michigan State University providing training to our next generation of physicians. **He leads our team of professional and talented Providers:**

Paul Benson, DO



Mark Bornstein, DO



Caleb Youngblood, PA-C, AAHIV-S



Mark Rosen, PA-C



Leon Bullough, NP-F



Marna Taylor, FNP-C



### New Locations Meet Community Needs

Be Well Medical Center is proud to partner with Wellness Services of Flint and CHAG:

**Living Well Medical Clinic of Flint** 810-257-3131 • 311 E. Court Street, Flint, MI 48502 • [www.wellnessaidsof.org](http://www.wellnessaidsof.org)

**Community Health Awareness Group (CHAG) | Living Well Clinic of Detroit** • 313-963-3434

1300 W. Fort Street, Detroit, MI 48226 • [www.chagdetroit.org](http://www.chagdetroit.org)