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‘Ex-gay’ Therapy Bans, Anti-LGBT Adoption Bills Advance in States

BY CHRIS JOHNSON

A host of LGBT-related bills are making their way to the desks of governors around the country and could have a major impact on LGBT Americans if signed into law.

Anti-LGBT bills that would enable taxpayer-funded adoption agencies to deny placement to LGBT homes over religious objections are heading toward passage in two states, but bans on widely discredited “ex-gay” conversion therapy are moving forward elsewhere and one state is considering a transgender non-discrimination bill.

Two states that are on the cusp of enacting anti-LGBT adoption bills are Oklahoma and Kansas:

In Oklahoma, both chambers of the legislature passed versions of anti-LGBT adoption bills that are set for consideration in conference committee before final approval and transmission to Gov. Mary Fallin.

In Kansas, the Senate attached the bill to House Bill 2481, a non-LGBT related bill approved by the House. The House refused to concur with the amended bill, so the bill was sent to conference. The measure could be dropped or included in the final package in conference committee, but there’s also a renewed effort to convince the House to accept the amended bill.

Cathryn Oakley, state legislative director for the Human Rights Campaign, said passage of the bills would place at risk not just LGBT people seeking to adopt a child, but other potential parents to whom adoption agencies may have objections, such as single mothers, interracial couples or couples where one parent has been divorced.

“These bills would really artificially limit the pool of prospective parents who are able to adopt,” Oakley said. “Given that there are all these children who need adopting, and there are all of these LGBTQ adults who are interested in adoption, it seems really counter-intuitive to allow for a government agency to refuse to interact with different kinds of parents for no reason other than to allow them to discriminate.”

Oakley added the bills are also constitutionally suspect because states have obligations under the Establishment Clause and the Equal Protection Clause to treat families equally under the law and “not to be discriminating some religious beliefs for other religious beliefs.”

“They don’t get to delegate those responsibilities away when they contract with an agency, so these agencies are doing the state’s work on taxpayer dollars, they also then inherit those obligations to treat people equally under the law,” Oakley said.

Joining LGBT groups in opposition to the bills are child welfare organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Child Welfare League of America and the North American Council on Adoptable Children.

One letter signed by these groups says the Oklahoma bill would result in harm by “excluding any single class of potentially qualified parents (such as LGBTQ people) from the pool of potential parents.”

Supporters of the bills are organizations supporting Catholic adoption agencies — such as Catholic Charities, the Catholic Conference of Oklahoma and the Kansas Catholic Conference — who say these agencies will have to shut their doors if forced to place children into LGBT homes.

Another anti-LGBT adoption bill also advanced to the floor of the Senate this week in Colorado. However, the Republican-majority chamber rejected the legislation, Senate Bill 241, by a 16-19 vote thanks to a united Democratic caucus and two Republicans who broke with their party on the legislation.

Daniel Ramos, executive director of One Colorado, said in a statement the defeat of the anti-LGBT adoption bill was a win for his state.

“This was another installment in a series of horrific bills we have seen this session that would take Colorado backwards in the areas of LGBT equality, and its defeat today is a victory for the people of Colorado,” Ramos said.

As these anti-LGBT adoption bills are considered, other measures seeking to ban widely discredited therapy aimed at changing an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity are also advancing:

In Hawaii, the state legislature this week sent to Gov. David Ige a measure, Senate Bill 270, that would prohibit subjecting LGBT youth to the practice. In Maryland, the legislature sent a similar measure, Senate Bill 1028, to Gov. Larry Hogan, who’s indicated he’d sign the measure.

In New Hampshire, the Senate last month voted to approve House Bill 587, which would seek to ban “ex-gay” therapy for youth. The House already passed a version of the legislation, which is now pending before conference committee.

In California, Assembly Bill 2943 is now pending before the Senate after the Assembly approved the measure. California has already banned conversion therapy for youth. The bill would take things a step further and generally classify the practice as fraud.

The practice of therapy aimed at changing an individual’s sexual orientation or transgender status is considered ineffective at best and harmful at worst. Major medical and psychological institutions, including the American Psychological Association, the World Health Organization, the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, widely reject conversion therapy.

Oakley said those proposals are “really important” because they’re affirmation that nothing is wrong with being an LGBT person.

“What they’re really saying out loud is that we understand LGBTQ people are who they are, they’re not broken, they can’t be cured, there’s nothing to be fixed, you are who you are and [we acknowledge] that no major medical health group believes conversion therapy is legitimate or healthy,” Oakley said.

According to a recent report at the Williams Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, an estimated 698,00 adults in the United States have undergone conversion therapy. That includes 350,000 adults who underwent the practice as teenagers. The report estimated 20,000 LGBT youth will undergo the practice before the age of 18 in the 41 states that at the time of the report didn’t ban the practice.

Another pro-LGBT bill was set for consideration in the New Hampshire Senate on Wednesday that would add a prohibition on anti-trans discrimination to the state’s non-discrimination law. The New Hampshire House already passed the bill, House Bill, 1319 in March with a bipartisan 195-129 vote. (The Senate vote was set to take place after Blade deadline for this article.)

New Hampshire is one of three states — along with New York and Wisconsin — where the law bans anti-gay discrimination, but not anti-trans discrimination, although New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed an executive order expanding state law to cover transgender people.

A New Hampshire Senate committee reported out the legislation with a “do not recommend vote. A similar version of the legislation was voted down in the Senate last week after opponents stoked fears about bathroom access for transgender people.

On the eve of the floor vote, Oakley nonetheless said she’s “very hopeful” the chamber will approve the bill. New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu is expected to sign the measure.

“New Hampshire is the Live Free or Die State, and what could more live free or die than non-discrimination bills, making sure that people are able to be who they are?” Oakley said.

If the anti-LGBT adoption bills in Kansas and Oklahoma are rejected, it would mean no anti-LGBT bills in any state would have become law in 2018.

Oakley said movement in state legislatures of the pro-LGBT bans on conversion therapy and the prohibition on anti-trans discrimination while fewer anti-LGBT bills move progress is a positive sign.

“State legislatures are at historic levels of Republican control, so it’s important to say that this is happening all at the same time that we’re looking at increased Republican leadership in the states,” Oakley said.

This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National LGBT Media Association.
N.H. Senate Approves Transgender Rights Bill

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

The New Hampshire Senate on Wednesday by a 14-10 vote margin approved a bill that would add gender identity to the state’s nondiscrimination law.

State Sen. Bette Lasky (D-Nashua) described House Bill 1319 as “a common sense New Hampshire bill.” State Sen. Dan Innis (R-New Castle), who is openly gay, is among the other senators who also spoke in support of the measure before the vote.

“Anti-transgender discrimination is wrong,” said Innis.

Sexual orientation has been included in New Hampshire’s statewide nondiscrimination law since 1998.

The state Senate in 2009 rejected a bill that would have added gender identity to the statute. New Hampshire remains the only New England state without transgender-specific protections in its statewide nondiscrimination law.

“No transgender people should have the same rights as everyone else,” Gerri Cannon, a trans rights advocate who is a member of the Somersworth School Board, told the Washington Blade after Wednesday’s vote. “Our Transgender residents and visitors can now feel safe in New Hampshire. Our voices have finally been heard.”

Linds Jakows, campaign manager of Freedom New Hampshire, which advocated for HB 1319, in a statement said “New Hampshire lawmakers showed tremendous leadership in support of the transgender community and their loved ones.”

“This law will go a long way to affirm the dignity of transgender Granite Staters and allow them to truly live free,” added Jakows.

Janson Wu, executive director of GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders, which is based in Boston, agreed.

“Today, the New Hampshire Senate voted to affirm the dignity and humanity of transgender Granite Staters, and to ensure they have an equal opportunity to live and work free from discrimination,” said Wu.

The New Hampshire House of Representatives in March approved HB 1319, which gay state Rep. Ed Butler (D-Hart’s Location) introduced.

More than 50 Republicans voted for HB 1319. A spokesperson for Republican Gov. Chris Sununu on Wednesday said he plans to sign the bill.

“In a national landscape where transgender people are too often attacked for who they are, New Hampshire is a shining example for other states across the country,” said Jakows.

“We look forward to the day Governor Sununu seals New Hampshire’s motto of Live Free or Die with his signature.”

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

Anti-LGBT adoption bills and bans on “ex-gay” therapy are moving through state legislatures (Photo by Ted Eytan; courtesy Flickr)
There's Nothing Wrong with Being a 'Super Late Bloomer'

BY DAVID RYALS

T

ough many choose to keep a written diary as a way to cope with troubles, author Julia Kaye did so in a more art-inspired way: through comic strips. What started as a personal project of daily, stress-releasing three-frame comics, turned into a full book format. Each page is essentially a daily reflection that helped Kaye through her 2016 transition. The book, released in May of this year, examines all the various ups and downs of transitioning and how some days can feel much better than others.

Between The Lines reached out to Kaye before the book’s release to talk about her struggles in writing the book, its public reception and about new projects in the works.

What made you realize you were a cartoonist and how did the subject of “Super Late Bloomer” choose you?

Comics have always been a part of my life in one way or another – from reading newspaper strips growing up to web/indie comics as a teen and beyond. I tried my hand at a lot of areas of the visual arts over the years but I always gravitated right back to it. I started spending all my off-hours from work writing and drawing, I had the bug and felt a powerful need to make my own. In my mid-20s I started and eventually became known for an absurdist humor webcomic called "Up and Out".

Meanwhile, around 2015 or so, my gender dysphoria had steadily gotten worse to the point where I couldn’t ignore it any longer, leading me to finally start down the path toward self-acceptance – and transitioning. Early on in transition I found myself facing new, mentally-taxing situations daily and desperately needed a way to help process all of the complex emotions that come with living with gender dysphoria. I didn’t know any other trans people at the time – which was incredibly isolating – I found there was just so much to transitioning that was difficult to explain and relate to the cisgender people in my life. There was a very real gap in their understanding.

So, alongside seeing a therapist, I turned to making journal comics. A little daily project just for myself, my only goal to be as honest with myself as possible – which was a very new thing for me then! And so it all just sort of came together over time.

How was the creation process for "Super Late Bloomer?" Has making this book made you want to continue drawing comics?

The whole process was very therapeutic and relaxing. At the end of each day I would step away from the distractions of technology and life to reflect on the events of the day and how they affected me emotionally. I limited myself to three panels because I didn’t want it to be stressful, just a quick ‘n easy little mental check-in. It all happened very naturally. The biggest difficulty I faced being the days where there was just too much for one comic, but I tried my best to choose what felt most important. Being so vulnerable and opening up publicly has been an amazing experience. I definitely will moving forward.

What has the reception been to the book so far? And how have you felt about it after its completion and release?

The reception has blown me away. Queer people of all ages write to me telling me how they’ve come to understand themselves better through reading it, or were inspired to come out in their own lives from it. Cisgender allies excitedly tell me how helpful it’s been to understand gender dysphoria. A few have even confided that they were unknowingly transphobic before reading my work and have since become allies. It’s incredible! I’m so happy to have been able to have made such a positive impact.

What are you future plans for making comics? Are there any projects you have coming up that you would like to divulge?

I’ve got some ideas for moving forward but it’s still much too early to talk about them. Gonna keep my little baby ideas close to the chest for now!

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Author of "Super Late Bloomer," Julia Kaye
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Left: Terrence C. Ku, MD, WHNP-BC
Marie S. Mullen, MSN, CNM
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Rigth: Tonya M. Vaught, DNP, CNM, FNP-BC
Sarah K. Mount, MSN, FNP-BC
Constance Salay, MSN, CNM, WHNP-BC
(Not pictured: Nina Juvaisi, MD)

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The Best of Sister Scatterpin (1 of 3)

Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

No matter the time or the weather, there’s something emotionally tingling about the cellphone vibrations whenever Sr. Serena Scatterpin, Renegade Sisters of Mary, rings me up.

I’m spiritually goosed, as it were, from head to toe – which is a Godsend, because at my age there’s not much left to goose at either end (or middle).

“Is that a cellphone in your pocket, dear boy?” giggles Sister.

“Or, are you glad to hear me? Guess what? I’m in Palm Springs, Californication! It’s 60 degrees pool-side. My third gin and tonic. Yes, with a cucumber. Are you having a blessed day?”

Actually at minus-17 degrees, wind chill factor 32, shivering at a Royal Oak bus stop at sunset with my walker and a cup of Starbucks’ decaf coffee, I’m not having a blessed much of anything – with or without cucumber.

But, as I haven’t heard from Our Lady of Spiritual Matched London Luggage in a while, I am, I suppose, delighted.

“Speak slowly, Sr. Scatterpin. You’re slurring your words.”

Nota bene: As a fashion consultant to the rich and fabulous among the post-Vatican Recovering Catholic vocation set, Sr. Scatterpin’s much in demand. And, what can you expect? She travels a lot. Fortunately her now-and-then companion Fr. Manley Evergrope, S.J., has oodles of airline travel miles and beaucoup credit cards – but, pending an upcoming parish audit, dear readers, that’s strictly on the QT.

“I hope you’re dressed warm, dearie,” adds Sister, accenting her long-distance adomition with a shake-shake and a clink-clink of ice cubes – the sound makes me shiver.

“Scarf. Mittens. DKNY thermals. You shouldn’t be out cruising at your age. It’s dead of winter where you are. Father Evergrope says to say ‘hi,’” she says. “He’s getting brown as a berry. Clothes optional suits him just fine. No big thing – and I mean that literally too befuddled and too exhausted from the night before to head out to dinner with me and my ‘friends.’” After all, she had been up until way past her bedtime with my brother’s daughter attending a concert starring my other brother’s three boys – did I mention she failed to even acknowledge my son’s 18th birthday last week?.

I excused her but asked if she still wanted me to pick up a sandwich for her. Old women living on their own often don’t eat well, as I should know since I care for many of them in my job as a home help care provider. She said please.

In line at Subway, I hemmed and hawed to Rachael and, truth be told, a part of me gets off on shocking her.

“I’m all ears.”

“Where was I? Ah, yes. Are you ready for the moment of truth?”

“Ready as a hot New York minute,” I lie, an icicle forming drip by drip at the edge of my red, white and blue nose. “I’m all ears.”

I feign enthusiasm and wish I hadn’t left my rainbow earmuffs at home.
I swallowed hard. Ordered my mom’s sandwich and mine, sat in the booth at Subway and ate with Rachael and Sophie. Then, we drove back over to my mom’s to drop off her dinner. I composed what I wanted to say to her in my head.

“Mom, her name is Rachael. You can call her Rachael, or you can call her my partner, but, please, do not call her my friend.”

Mom locked eyes with me and flatly stated “Stop that,” followed with, “There are all kinds of lesbians in this condominium complex. Are you going to rub that in my face, too?”

I am so used to these kinds of exchanges with my mother that her insults don’t even rankle me anymore.

Without raising my voice even a notch, I replied, “Mom, this is the label I use to address Rachael. I don’t have a romantic or sexual relationship with her but that doesn’t make her any less of a person. She lives with me, she loves me, she is family to me. I wanted you to see us all tonight, especially you. So I’m so proud of her. I’m sorry you aren’t taking me up on this opportunity.”

“Dana, this thing you do, this poly-romantic journey. I don’t know, Sister,” I say. My brain’s eyes are closed. We are surrounded by images of heteronormativity. It’s my hope that Lopez will one day write "Once you commit to not being gay anymore, things will get hard," he writes. “In the gay world, you may have competed from time to time for the attention of men with nice physiques; now, you will be fighting against men with even more well-developed physiques, trying to achieve victory over them in order to win for yourself a coveted prize: a virtuous and desirable wife.”

Aaaaand fuck off. Women are not prizes. Women are human beings who have value and worth outside of whether or not they are somebody’s wife.

“Soon you will see how much harder life is for straight guys,” laments Lopez.

And he’s probably right that life is harder for him now that he’s “straight.” Self-hatred and denial are a bitch. But straight guys in general? Nah. They’ve been riding roughshod over all of us and continue to do so.
Michigan Mayors Against LGBTQ Discrimination in Focus

BTL Sits Down with Ypsilanti Mayor Amanda Edmonds

BY ELLEN SHANNA KNOPPOW

A s BTL continues the Mayors Against LGBTQ Discrimination series, we hear from Amanda Edmonds, Ypsilanti's openly lesbian mayor who ran unopposed in 2014 after winning her primary in a landslide. Edmonds announced in a statement last month that she will not be seeking re-election. BTL has decided to include Edmonds's interview, along with her amended statement which can be viewed online at pridesource.com. She is still the mayor, and proud of her city's accomplishments. While Edmonds is not running for re-election, the interview captures the tone she set while mayor of Ypsilanti. We can only hope the next mayor follows her lead.

Mayors Against LGBTQ Discrimination is a bipartisan coalition of municipal leaders dedicated to securing inclusive non-discrimination protections for all, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals, at all levels of government. It is a program of Freedom for All Americans, the bipartisan campaign to win comprehensive LGBT non-discrimination protections nationwide. Since its inception, membership in Mayors Against LGBTQ Discrimination has grown to 307 mayors in 48 states and the District of Columbia, including 17 mayors in Michigan.

Why did you join Mayors Against LGBT Discrimination? 

As an out LGBTQ mayor I understand first-hand the importance of feeling safe, welcome, and included in a community. Unfortunately, there are many communities where people don't feel safe, or they don't know where they stand because their elected officials and community leaders have been silent. While federal or state laws (or lack thereof) are dictating discrimination in our lives, we still live and experience our life daily in our localities, where it is crucial that we do everything we can to share our values to make our communities safe.

How does your city promote fairness, diversity and inclusion, and why is that important? 

The City of Ypsilanti is proud to have one of the oldest and most progressive non-discrimination ordinances in the state, that includes gender and sexual orientation, immigration status, and many other protected classes. This is particularly important in Michigan, where LGBTQ people have no protection from discrimination under state law. We've continued to update this ordinance as we recognize new groups of people who are vulnerable and need to explicitly be protected, as we did last year when we added immigration status.

We went another step in that realm, too, and solidified our practice and values into policy as we adopted a "Don't Ask" ordinance that clarified that for most interactions with our city staff (including public safety personnel), one's immigration status is not relevant and will not be brought up.

As mayor, what role do you play in challenging discrimination, and making your city more inclusive? 

As a mayor, I serve as an ambassador both within the community and outside of it. Being vocal matters. Last year we raised the Trans pride flag in front of our police station for Transgender Day of Visibility, and succeeded in having our Ypsilanti Community Schools do the same in front of 11 school buildings. We held flag raising ceremonies at both the police station and the school district admin office. When our citizens and students see that kind of symbol, it validates their existence and rights settings where they may be otherwise questions. I am putting to council a resolution to raise the flag again on March 31.

How do you ensure that your city's objectives are consistently reflected in the actions of municipal employees? 

Our Non-Discrimination Ordinance is law, and any complaints against employees of the city – as well as anyone in the community who may have violated it by discriminating in public accommodations, housing, or employment – are taken as a breach of law.

Where does your city need to improve? 

I have admired that Detroit Police Department has an LGBTQ-focused officer who works to liaison with the LGBTQ community. This position recognizes the additional safety concerns that LGBTQ persons face as victims of crimes and hesitancy to come forward. Our police department is very small and so having an officer focused on that is not appropriate in terms of scale, but I would love further resources to look into whether there are any ways our department can further gain trust of LGBTQ persons. I don't have any knowledge of distrust issues, but the opportunity to be more proactive in this area would be amazing.

In general, our community, our council, and our police chief deeply value community policing – which that Detroit officer is a great example of – but are so hindered by the lack of appropriate state funding for municipalities that there is little time to do more than minimal shift coverage and responding to emergency calls.

We'd love for Ypsi to be included in HRC or another orgs' lists of LGBTQ friendly communities, because we most definitely are. Unfortunately, we are either too small to be considered, or just don't have the resources to pull together the applications needed. So, we rely on the grassroots word of mouth that we are a welcoming place.

What is your vision for your city 10 years from now, in terms of being a welcoming place to live, work, and operate a business? 

I want to see an Ypsilanti where people from many backgrounds can afford to live, and thrive. As we develop economically in the ways that we must in order to provide quality services to our residents, we have to figure out how to not follow the too-common trajectory of gentrification and inadvertently squeezing people out. There is no silver bullet to doing so, but we must work at it every day.

What drew you to Ypsilanti? What is it like for you, personally, living in an inclusive city? 

I moved to Michigan in the mid-90s and to Ypsilanti in 2002, after having been drawn here several years before that. I loved its diversity, its deep community pride, and its residents' willingness to step up and make the change they want to see, despite often difficult (particularly municipal) financial conditions. I love that my own working class neighborhood of little bungalows includes people from many racial and ethnic backgrounds and ages, as well as many LGBTQ families. I love that I can walk down the street in Ypsi with my wife and not worry about my safety.

Tell us about Ypsi Pride. 

Ypsilanti had a long-time annual clean up day called Ypsi PRIDE, renamed as of last year as Ypsi Proud. That made way for an amazing first ever Ypsi Pride event, celebrating the LGBTQ communities during one of our first Fridays Ypsi celebrations. This first Ypsi Pride was organized by volunteers and was an overwhelming success.

What was so beautiful about it is that it was truly inclusive – there were all ages and all cultural backgrounds present, including both LGBTQ folks and allies. It was actually the 'place to be' that Friday evening – no matter your identity. There were family-friendly drag shows, music, art, dancing, pedicabs, and much more. I can't wait for the second annual this year.

There's an amazing photo of you officiating at a wedding in June of 2015 after marriage equality was extended to same-sex couples. What is it like performing these weddings, and why is Ypsi a great place to be married? 

That was one of the most memorable days of my life. I performed three weddings that day, and am friends with two of the couples now. The energy of that crowd was unlike any I've ever experienced, and at that point I had not performed many weddings yet as mayor, and had forgotten to bring my ceremony script. So, I winged it, which was a bit nerve racking but also fun. I'm now up to 104 weddings--including many for LGBTQ couples-- and can perform it in my sleep.

For folks who want a civil ceremony, Ypsi is a great place – not only because I can be an officiant (per MI marriage law mayors can perform weddings in the county in which they serve), but because in addition to city hall we have so many cool indoor and outdoor venues, local restaurants, and friendly folks ready to welcome people for their nuptials. (FYI, my dream this year before the end of my first term is to perform a wedding while moving through Ypsi aboard Amtrak!)

Stay connected to the city of Ypsilanti online at cityofypsilanti.com. Follow Amanda Edmonds on Facebook at facebook.com/amtappster.
Volunteering Opportunities Available at Motor City Pride

BY DREW HOWARD

Beverage servers, gate monitors and set-up/tear-down crew members are just a few of the volunteer opportunities now being sought for Motor City Pride 2018, running June 9 through 10 at the downtown Detroit Hart Plaza. Pride organizers opened up volunteer registration to the public this week as they enter the final weeks of preparation. Help is needed on both days of the festival, Saturday and Sunday, as well as the days bookending the festivities on Friday and Monday.

Dave Wait, event chair, said close to 260 volunteers have been utilized throughout the weekend in years past. According to the 2018 volunteer registration form, organizers this year are ideally looking to fill more than 350 shifts.

Volunteers are needed as early as 9 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday to help set up the festival, Wait said. “They make sure the tables are in the proper spaces, banners are up and just making sure trash bins, bags and all the little odds and ends are taken care of so the grounds look good and ready to enter,” he said.

Moving into the afternoon, volunteers are also used to help serve beverages, monitor the welcome gates, work the information desk, man the volunteer check-in desk, assist entertainment on stage and supervise the family area. Additionally, volunteers will be needed on Sunday to direct the parade and the parade marshals.

“We haven’t gotten to the point where we’ve had too much volunteer help,” Wait said. “We are always looking for more people to help on Saturday and Sunday afternoon.” Volunteers help is most appreciated at the welcome gate and beverages center, Wait said, which each need close to 90 shifts filled total between Saturday and Sunday. As of this published story, both positions still have dozens of openings.

There are some added perks to volunteering at festival, Wait noted. “Those that sign up get free admission to the festival, a T-shirt, as well as vouchers for food and parking,” he said. “We recognize them and thank them for helping at the festival.” Volunteer opportunities are open to all interested regardless of experience. Organizers encourage individuals to only select times and areas that they are absolutely available to assist, as slots are limited.

To register as a volunteer go to motorcitypride.org. For a brief look at the available volunteer opportunities, look below:

**Friday, June 8:**
- Friday Set-Up (6 - 9 p.m.)

**Saturday, June 9:**
- Saturday Supervisor (8:30 a.m. - 10 p.m.)
- Saturday Set-Up (9 a.m. - 1 p.m.)
- Stage Hand (11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. & 4 - 8 p.m.)
- Family Area (11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.)
- Festival Information Booth (11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. & 4 - 8 p.m.)
- Beverage Staff (11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. & 4 - 8 p.m.)
- Welcome Gates (12:30 - 4:30 p.m. & 4 - 8 p.m.)
- Volunteer Check-in (4 - 8 p.m.)
- Saturday Close (6 - 9 p.m.)

**Sunday, June 10:**
- Festival Director (8:30 a.m. - 10 p.m.)
- Sunday Set-Up (9 a.m. - 12 p.m.)
- Volunteer Check-in (9 a.m. - 12 p.m. & 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. & 2:30 - 6:30 p.m.)
- Parade Assistance (10 a.m. - 1 p.m.)
- Welcome Gates (11 a.m. - 3 p.m. & 2:30 - 6:30 p.m.)
- Stage Hand (11 a.m. - 3 p.m. & 2:30 - 6:30 p.m.)
- Family Area (11 a.m. - 3 p.m.)
- Festival Information Booth (11 a.m. - 3 p.m. & 2:30 - 6:30 p.m.)
- Beverage Staff (11 a.m. - 3 p.m. & 2:30 - 6:30 p.m.)

**Monday, June 11:**
- Festival Director (9 a.m. - 2 p.m.)
BY KATE OPALEWSKI

Walk into Gigi’s Gay Bar today and you’re likely to see drag queen Nickki Stevens grace the stage. Her punchy humor, big looks and classy style – despite her trucker mouth – have been thrilling audiences since the late ’80s. But, what some might not know is that in many ways, Stevens’ act could be considered double. After all, even though her mother, Sharon Hughes, doesn’t grace the stage herself, she spends her Saturday nights working concessions, selling jewelry and providing her drag daughter much support: from painting, to cleaning, to decorating.

“I’ve gotta keep her active,” said Stevens. “If you rest, you rust.”

After three decades of female impersonating, Stevens has become something of a drag mother herself as the manager and show director of Gigi’s Cabaret since 1990, which, according to Stevens is the “longest-running showroom” in Michigan history.

And, with any long-running show, along with the drama onstage, running things comes with a bit of sass off of it as well.

“It’s like grade school. Whenever you get more than two girls in a room it’s trouble,” said Hughes about watching her daughter manage several different personalities, four of whom Stevens has taken upon herself to mentor in the skills of the art form. They are Destiny Hunter, Veronica Madison, Revue and Serena Escavelle. Sadly, her fifth drag daughter, Tori Lancaster, passed away in the mid-’90s. Stevens said that the secrets she passes on to her drag daughters, she learned from her own mom.

“Mother taught me honesty and hard work always prevails,” said Stevens who in a way was raised not only by her biological mother, but her drag mother and Detroit legend, Lady “T” Tempest, too.

“And if you can’t handle the truth, don’t ask the question,” she said.

Humble Beginnings

And with that drive coupled with a healthy serving of sass, it’s not surprising that Stevens has been doing drag long enough to be a well-seasoned veteran. From the moment Stevens saw Charles Pierce on TV she knew what she wanted to be when she grew up.

“Baby that’s it. That’s what I’m gonna do,” she said.

After all, Pierce was one of the 20th century’s foremost female impersonators. “I could be funny, pretty, accepted,” she said.” How’s that? That’s a big word.”

And acceptance was especially important for Stevens in high school, because her family had moved from South Bend, Indiana, to West Bloomfield and, in many ways, she felt out of place.

“I was always funny, but I had to be to be the gay one in school or you’re gonna get beat up,” she said. “It’s better to be self-deprecating and be the joker.”

A talent she said she honed while she worked as a server at the Ram’s Horn diner, where every table was a different audience. Stevens’ mother, Hughes, agreed that humor might have been the best coping mechanism after moving across state lines.

“My heart was breaking because all the rest of the kids were driving Lamborghinis to school and she had a Fiesta,” said Hughes. “High school was hard.”

But, even beyond Ram’s Horn, Stevens found the greatest comfort in the dressing room at the Pink Flamingo at 16. That’s when she began dressing drag queens – her role models – like Candy Sweet, Jennifer Foxx, Elaine St. Jacques, April Summers and Melba Moore. That was when she began to hone her love of the craft – and for heels, in which she stands at a comfortable height of 6’4.”

Stevens had already been performing at Gigi’s since 1988, but her mom didn’t start coming to watch her perform until 1995. Hughes worked nights before switching to the day shift as a charge nurse at Jackson State Prison from where she has since retired.

“I carried pictures of her and showed everybody at work. Half of my staff was gay anyway so they knew her,” she said. “People were surprised to find out that I was her mother. At first when the new boss comes, you know, people like to give them trouble, but not Nickki Stevens’ mother.”

Hughes spent a lot of time stoning Stevens’ costumes by hand in the late ‘90s. That’s how she got started making jewelry, which she now sells at the bar and at various pageants. The business, owned by Stevens, is called Purple Angel Jewelry.

“It’s a little hobby of mine. It’s no big deal,” said Hughes, who believes, “We all have angels watching over us,” and her favorite color is purple. So, with every piece
of jewelry made, Hughes said another angel starts watching over members of the community, friends and customers.

**Hitting Her Stride**

Stevens was a traveling performer on the road with the all-male dance troupe, Male Order, in the late ‘80s. Quite the hustler, Stevens made appearances throughout the Midwest, in Ohio, Dallas, Florida, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. She also flew back and forth between Detroit and Chicago for almost a year to be the hostess and emcee at the famed Baton Show Lounge from May 1995 through February 1996.


She also received the Detroit Entertainer of the Year award 12 times at the Detroit Performer Awards, and the Emcee of the Year award for 24 consecutive years (and now the award is named after her). She was the first and only drag queen to receive the Spirit of Detroit Award from the Detroit City Council in the late ‘90s.

“I had so much money, (but) I couldn’t spend it because I couldn’t get out of bed,” said Stevens, referencing the huge amount of travel she had to do. “It was fun. I had the opportunity to work at one of the best-known female impersonator bars in the country, but this is my sandbox and I don’t travel as much as I used to any more.”

Gigi’s, like many other gay bars, used to be a sanctuary for the LGBTQ community. Gigi’s was originally owned by Tony Garneau in the early ‘70s until his death in 1991. In his will he left the bar to his longtime employees, four of whom still run the place.

“There were 45, 50 bars back then. You could go to a different bar every night of the month and still not hit them all. Until the internet and Grindr and everything else ruined everything,” said Stevens, noting that a majority of their audience now is heterosexual.

“I hate RuPaul’s Drag Race, but thank God for that b*tch because all them straight housewives of Royal Oak want to see drag queens now. So alright, bring them on....”

She continued, “It makes more people - now that it’s mainstream - curious and (they) want to come see us. She’s actually making me money, which I’m happy for,” said Stevens. “If gay people walk in here on a Saturday night, I’m like ‘Are you lost?’”

Stevens attributes that to a number of things, but mostly cultural acceptance.

“We all fought and fought since Stonewall for equal rights and once we got them and we could hold each others’ hands walking down the streets of Ferndale or Royal Oak, then the bars seemed to not be the sanctuary that it used to be,” she said.

However, as lauded as Stevens is, her career has come with its fair share of challenges, too – ones that other drag queens weren’t afraid to warn her about when she was just starting out.

“I said, ‘Oh I want to do this one day.’ And they all said, ‘No you don’t.’ I said, ‘Oh yes I do.’ They said, ‘No you don’t.’” said Stevens. “Well now I know exactly what they were talking about. No I don’t.”

However, resistance or not, Stevens is one of the few who have been fortunate enough to make a living as a female impersonator for this long. Depending on who they are, how long and where they have performed, drag queens can make anywhere from $25 a night to $5,000 a week.

For her, and most, she said that drag as a career is “a trade-off.” When asked what that means, Stevens explained that, “Gay men come out to be with men and when you look like a woman half the week and spend half your life on stage, they don’t want to have anything to do with you,” she said. “Oh, everybody loves you, but not one loves you. That’s the problem.”

At an age “somewhere between birth and death,” Stevens said she is ready for retirement but, “It don’t look like that’s gonna happen until that Powerball hits the right way.” Until then, she seems to have found her niche on the microphone.

“Not a lot of drag queens can do that,” she said. “If I never had to do another number in my life and just talk on the microphone, I’d be happy.”

**The Trade-Off**

It’s not that Stevens doesn’t love her success – she is the legendary “Blonde Bombshell” and the “Peroxide Piranha” from Detroit who has entertained and inspired many – but after all this time, she still feels like she’s second-rate in a subculture.

“We’re fine as long as the spotlight is on us. If I’ve got jeans and a button-down shirt on and my hair blown out, trying to look like a boy as much as possible with all this botox and silicone in my face, they don’t want anything to do with me, ‘Oh, that’s Nickki Stevens,’” she said, adding that she was married for 13 years to a man who left her. “I’ve gotta go out of town to find a date so they don’t know who the hell I am. Some men find it as a fetish. I don’t want anything to do with that.”

“It’s why her mom said they’re so close. “We don’t get that men stuff,” laughed Hughes, also a divorcee.

“We’ve lived together for 14 years. I never cut the umbilical cord,” she said. “We’re hell on wheels. We have more fun than anybody.”

They spend their time together doing things like shopping, traveling to Las Vegas and hanging out by the pool at home during the summer months.

Plus, Hughes considers herself to be a people person which helps them work together even more so. She enjoys engaging with guests at the bar whom she said always want to talk about her daughter. And, as most mothers would, she loves to gush about her child. Hughes said Stevens is, “The most beautiful thing I ever saw. I knew when she was three she was going to be a star.”

Gigi’s Gay Bar is located at 16920 W. Warren Ave. in Detroit. Hours are 8 p.m. to 2:30 a.m., Sunday to Monday and Wednesday to Friday; and 7 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. on Saturday. For more information, call 313-584-6525 or visit facebook.com/gigisgaybar/ or facebook.com/gigiscabaret. Follow Nickki Stevens online at facebook.com/nickki.stevens.
Rachel Weisz’s Quest for Queer Stories

‘Disobedience’ Actress on Her New – and Upcoming – Sapphic Tales

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Rachel Weisz has strong feelings on makers of queer films discussing their work with queer media. To not do so, she says, would be “ridiculous and wrong and unthinkable.” The topic is broached in light of her new Sapphic film, “Disobedience,” released just months after “Call Me By Your Name,” which received little LGBTQ-specific promotion from its director, writer and lead actors, Armie Hammer and Timothée Chalamet.

As producer and star of “Disobedience,” Weisz was instrumental in the lesbian drama’s inception and creation, which began when the 48-year-old British actress’ quest to tell more female-centric stories led her to an array of feminist books, including Naomi Alderman’s 2006 novel. She optioned the book’s film rights, then found her director: Sebastián Lelio, the Chilean filmmaker with plenty of arthouse cred, including 2013’s “Gloria” and “A Fantastic Woman,” the 2018 Oscar winner in the Best Foreign Language Film category.

In “Disobedience,” Weisz portrays Ronit, a lapsed Jew now living as a photographer in New York City who returns to her Orthodox Jewish enclave in London for her Rabbi father’s funeral. There, her childhood friend and lover Esti (Rachel McAdams), now married to Ronit’s father’s protégé Dovid (Alessandro Nivola), is emboldened by her passion for Ronit to pursue her own path to self-discovery and, ultimately, religious freedom.

Weisz – known for her roles in “About a Boy” and “The Constant Gardener,” which won her a Best Supporting Actress Oscar in 2006 – has further feminist ambitions: She’ll play a queer woman in the upcoming historical drama “The Favourite,” before portraying British military surgeon Dr. James Barry, born Margaret Ann Bulkley, a 19th-century woman who disguised herself as a man to become a doctor.

Can you just produce queer stories for the rest of your career?

Yes, please. Do you have any books to point me toward?

You know what, you’re up on lesbian lit more than I am. I hear you got deep into it.

I read a few books.

“Call Me By Your Name” did almost no LGBTQ press promo and made very little money despite critical acclaim. But you’ve been everywhere talking about “Disobedience”: mainstream press, queer press. I think some promoters think we’re living in a time when gay is mainstream, so niche press sometimes gets overlooked. So, thank you for not overlooking us. As a producer, why is it important to reach out to queer media with a film like “Disobedience”?

If you’re queer, your subjectivity is not in the margins – it’s front and center for the life you’re leading. But mainstream stories have pushed queer stories into the margins of storytelling, and I think that’s what’s so wonderful about Sebastián. His film before “Fantastic Woman” (“Gloria”) wasn’t a queer story but was about a 58-year-old woman’s dating life and her sex life – again, something that in storytelling is not front and center. “Fantastic Woman” was about the experience of a trans woman, something that’s not normally front and center in the story.

So, this film is about two queer women struggling to be free to love who they want to love, so I’ve gotta say, hats off to Sebastián.
He does the opposite of objectifying things; he subjectivises things.

And yeah, in terms of speaking to queer outlets, I mean, it’s essential. How would we make this film and then push you into the margins? That would be ridiculous and wrong and unthinkable.

What kind of measures were taken on your behalf to avoid falling into the male-fantasy-gaze trap that so many lesbian films end up in?

I can’t claim that I did anything apart from entrust myself into Sebastián’s point of view, and I knew that he doesn’t objectify women or men, or anybody. He has empathy, and he makes them into real people. Rachel McAdams and I just trusted him.

The male gaze doesn’t always have to be objectifying, and I think his point of view on how these women desire each other, I find it beautiful. He’s the auteur. He authored the whole film, and the story; I can’t claim anything apart from being clever enough to trust him. (Laughs)

Some people claimed the gaze in “Blue is the Warmest Color” was male, and problematic because of that. Are there any problematic lesbian or queer films you’d seen prior to “Disobedience” that were in your consciousness while shooting this movie?

No. I did see “Blue is the Warmest Color” and I enjoyed it, even though there were people who perhaps didn’t. Listen, just to see a woman loving a woman and that being represented was very exciting. I liked the film very much. But no – I didn’t have a “to do or not to do” list, and I certainly didn’t research lesbian films. I looked into my heart and how I love this person. It was very emotional and vulnerable and full of yearning, and I didn’t have any other references in my mind. I don’t believe Rachel McAdams did either. We certainly never talked about it. I just loved this person, this woman.

What parts of yourself did you tap into for a role that essentially centers on same-sex desire?

It doesn’t feel any different. It felt different in that it’s softer and more vulnerable, but that might not be true with all women, but certainly with Esti it was. We’d been childhood friends and we’d known each other. We had a huge history and we were in love. She was my first love, and yeah, it felt like love. I didn’t have to open a different door in my brain; she’s just the person I loved. So, I didn’t really think of it in those terms.

Let’s talk about how liberating that sex scene is: How do you hope it may influence other queer people who feel pressure to live an inauthentic life?

I hope this film is inspiring to anyone who feels like they’re not free to love who they want to love. We’re saying as actors that love can be an act of defiance, and sometimes one has to be disobedient to the social norms around us. To be free, sometimes it costs a lot, it’s not always easy. So, I’m not going to glibly say, “Just do it.” It’s hard. It’s really hard. But I hope the film is inspiring, but also realistic. It shows the incredible struggle that Esti goes through with her sexual identity. So, I mean, I hope it will inspire people.

What’s the closest you’d come to playing a lesbian character previous to “Disobedience”?

I’ve never played a queer character at all. Have scripts come your way and you’ve turned them down?

Oh, great question! I’ve been offered very few. Maybe there are more being written now, but in my career, I think I was offered once a script about a straight woman who had
an affair (with a woman), but the story didn’t – I mean, I loved the politics of it and the queerness of it, but the story wasn’t quite deep enough, somehow. But I would love to represent and play more queer women, so yeah, anyone who has any ideas...

 Aren’t you playing actress Olivia Colman’s lover in the period drama, “The Favourite”? Oh yeah, in the next film. She’s a married woman, but she’s also my lover and confidant and best friend and advisor, and really is actually running England (laughs) – or so she thinks. But yeah, they’re lovers. They’ve been lovers for years.

 Before all these queer-oriented roles, you played the Wicked Witch of the East in “Oz the Great and Powerful.” What do you think that did for your gay following? I didn’t know it did anything for a gay following! I’d love for that to be true. Is that true?

 It’s Oz, so I’d say so.

 Oh, that’s fantastic! She’s a strong kind, yeah. That’s fabulous. Thank you. I actually wanted to play her like Tim Curry in “The Rocky Horror Picture Show.” I actually thought she was kind of a man in drag. I felt like she was Frank-N-Furter, and I talked to (director) Sam Raimi, but he had never seen “Rocky Horror.”

 Growing up with Jewish and Catholic parents, what were you taught to believe about the LGBTQ community? My ma’s passed away now; she died in her 80s. And my dad is nearly 90. They had me in their 40s. They had gay friends – homosexual male friends – but I wouldn’t say they understood in the way that my generation understands queerness. I guess they were kind of sheltered, I would say.

 How are you raising your 11-year-old son, Henry? He is just of a generation where he’s kind of – he’s colorblind. He just doesn’t think in categories. He thinks in a very free away that people should just love who they love. He sees everyone as just part of the human race. He doesn’t really see difference at all, so that’s good.

 You have another child on the way, with your husband Daniel Craig. If one of your children came out to you and Daniel one day as queer, how do you imagine you might respond? I’d be very happy for anyone I know and love to love whomever they want to love.

 As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBTQ wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).
Ain’t No Shame in Her Game

Jennifer Lewis to Visit Detroit: Tackles Stigma, Mental Illness in New Memoir

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

If actress Jennifer Lewis ignites a sense of motherly affection from viewers, it’s certainly not by accident. After all, her portrayal of a mother, aunt or general matriarch in more than a dozen roles in both TV and film has earned her the title “The Mother of Black Hollywood,” and that’s the title of her brand-new memoir, too. Also an ally for the LGBTQ community, Lewis made history when she portrayed the first black lesbian on TV in the mid-’90s. Currently, the former Broadway actress is the head of the Johnson family on ABC’s “Black-ish” as grandmother Ruby and in the process of a book tour to promote her new memoir.

In it, she said she has held “nothing back,” revealing all of her life’s struggles in detail and her daily fight with bipolar disorder.

Lewis’ next stop on tour will be on Saturday, May 12 at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit, where she will talk both about the book and sign copies for all attendees. Proceeds from this event will support the Community Health Awareness Group, an organization that is dedicated to improving the “quality of life of Detroit’s African-American community by addressing current health issues” and reducing the transmission of HIV by offering both information and support services for those with the disease.

Between The Lines caught up with Lewis during her touring schedule to talk about her personal ties to HIV, her work as an LGBTQ ally, how she has fought bipolar disorder since her diagnoses and what she recommends others do who have been diagnosed with life-changing illnesses.

Speaking of the LGBTQ community, you portrayed the first African-American lesbian character on TV in the mid-’90s. Was that a challenge for you?

Yes, on a show called “Courthouse” I played a judge who was a lesbian and something very funny happened in that. I’m straight — or whatever that means — I mean, there’s a chapter in the book called “Big Diva” (laughs)! But, here’s the thing: I wasn’t as uncomfortable kissing a woman as I was kissing a stranger. It was weird, you know what I mean (laughs)? So, I embraced all genders and whatever we are, darling, we are all God’s babies.

Did you find yourself fighting against a huge stigma when you were advocating for a cure that way?

Absolutely. But thank God that the stigma has started to subside. I have so many people that did die in shame and in agony because of the disease. There was so much shame attached to it but we’re certainly getting away from that now with so much counseling, and the churches and I see more billboards out there about it. Of course, African-American women are the highest demographic, and the struggle is not over.

You’re no stranger to stigma. You’ve been very candid about your fight with bipolar disorder in “The Mother of Black Hollywood”.

I didn’t find out until my early 30s that I was bipolar and in my 20s in New York while on the Broadway stage I had a sex addiction and with so many dead from the HIV/AIDS virus, I had a nervous breakdown and went into therapy. There, of course, was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and I was unwilling to take medication and I was very unwilling to actually do the talk therapy, but I advocate now (for) talk therapy and medication — if needed. My journey with my new memoir is living life with bipolar disorder and being successful. Being able to live a life that is level and not in the polar of high manic behavior or depression. So, it’s a lot about looking in the mirror and admitting to yourself that something is not right and having the strength and the courage to say the words, “I know.” It’s not just one addiction, it’s all addictions that have to be addressed so that we can pursue happiness. I stress that to the community that it is essential and that we take care of ourselves.

It must have taken a lot of strength to address those challenges so head-on. How were you able to become vulnerable enough to do so?

My therapist called what I had inside of me soldiers, and I used to think I was special because some of the symptoms are grandiosity, and (the feeling of) omnipotence and entitlement. I mean, the mind is just racing. So, what I say to that is look in the mirror. You know there’s something going on that doesn’t feel good. I tell people: there’re two emotions, one feels good and one feels bad and as human beings, we get to choose. And it’s not easy to make these decisions to change one’s life, but like I say in my interviews: you either want to live or die. And there are too many people that are the walking dead. That’s a choice. I’m not here to judge, but I’m not preaching. I’m saying this is my story and this is how I did it.

If you can learn something from what I experienced in my life, that’s the glory and the triumph of it all. This is me laying my burden down and I can’t tell you how freeing it is, and I have a new heightened reality because people come out there and express their challenges. That’s why I’m out on the road because I want people to handle it better than I did, to let them know that there ain’t no shame in mental illness and I use “ain’t” because I mean it. My whole motto is: “ain’t no shame in my game.” I use that over and over again. Mental illness is a serious disease and like cancer or lupus or sickle cell or any other disease, there is no shame in it.

What would be some first steps that you’d recommend for people who might have just been diagnosed with mental illness, or perhaps even HIV, and are having trouble coping with their new diagnoses?

I’ve always loved that Nike slogan “Just Do It.” If you take the first step, someone will be there to lend a helping hand. There’re 7.6 billion people on this planet, honey, we are never alone. Being alone is a choice. I’ll tell you what I do, when I don’t feel like doing myself: go out there and help somebody else

Mentor a child, get out in the world, go to your own city council meetings, get involved. I always quote John F. Kennedy, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” And as far as the resistance is concerned and this madman in the White House, the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. This is a country that was founded by the people for the people. We must never forget that and we must never lose that.

Jennifer Lewis will be at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History from 5 to 9 p.m. on Saturday, May 12. Tickets cost $60. More information can be found online at eventbrite.com.
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Many comedians know how to work a room and get laughs from their own experiences, but few know how to channel laughs from their own anxiety as well as Maria Bamford. Especially vocal about her own mental health, the “Arrested Development,” “Lady Dynamite” and “BoJack Horsemen” star has been lauded as “revelatory” by Entertainment Weekly and labeled a “must-see” by both Rolling Stone and Variety. She’ll be at the Royal Oak Music Theater on Friday, May 25 at 7 p.m.

Bamford is famous for her various voice impressions, her unique banter and has described her comedy in an interview with C-Notes as “chatty.”

“Well, the one thing that’s consistent is that I just keep making things. I think I talk a lot more in my own voice now. I don’t know if it’s for good or for bad. I think I deliver more words per second. I’m more chatty in my performance,” she said. “I was a bit more stilted, and I was more succinct before. I don’t know if it’s just that I feel more comfortable, but I’m more chatty.”

For more information about the show, go to royaloakmusictheatre.com. Tickets start at $29.50.
Royal Oak Holds Annual Mother’s Day Flower Sale

BY BTL STAFF

On Sunday, May 13, Royal Oak is hosting its annual “Royal Oak in Bloom” Flower, Plant & Garden show. This Mother’s Day event makes it easy to enjoy the increasingly warmer weather, get a head start on gardening and spend some quality time with family. With almost 70 vendors in attendance, the variety of “flowers, plants, landscaping items and decorative elements” for lawns is huge. And this year, the event will last an hour longer to allow for more shopping.

Event organizers say that this 25-year tradition has helped homeowners beautify their lawns and gardens from all over Michigan. “Designed to help Royal Oak homeowners beautify their property, Royal Oak in Bloom is a Mother’s Day tradition for many,” they said.

The “Royal Oak in Bloom” event will go on from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. There are no fees to attend the event, and parking is free. Both interested growers and vendors are encouraged to contact the Royal Oak Chamber of Commerce for more information. Prices vary depending on space required. For more information about the event visit royaloakchamber.com or contact Jennifer Clark at JenniferC@RoyOakChamber.com.

Artist Kevin Tolman Debuts Nature-Based Art Exhibit

BY BTL STAFF

The paintings of Kevin Tolman reveal the storied layers of an artist’s creative process. Robert Kidd Gallery’s spring exhibition focuses on the unfolding nature of Tolman’s compositions, which manifest deep illusory spaces activated by brilliantly placed marks and forms. Each painting invites the viewer to peer through quiet veils of skillful, intuitively worked mixed media, offering a glimpse at richly percussive underlying fields.

Born in Detroit, Kevin Tolman spent the early years of his career traveling extensively throughout North America and Europe. In 1981, Tolman established a permanent studio in the colorful high desert of New Mexico, whose landscapes, light and seasons continue to inspire the handsome, largely reductive palettes of his paintings to this day. Tolman’s works have been exhibited for over four decades and are represented in numerous important public, private and corporate collections, both in the U.S. and abroad.

The artist reception will be on Saturday, April 28th, 5 - 8 p.m.
Thursday, May 10
Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce Merge & Mixer 6:30 p.m.
Michigan Employee Resource Groups for Equality (MERGE) Monthly Networking Event. All are welcomed to network. Hosted by Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce. Check website for monthly location, RSVP is Required. Soho, 205 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-542-7646 info@detroitlgbtchamber.com www.ferndalesoho.com

Friday, May 11
Live Band Karaoke at Dino’s for Ferndale Pride 9:30 p.m. Another awesome Ferndale Pride event happening at Dino’s in Ferndale for Live Band Karaoke! Put on your musical shoes and come perform! Dino’s Restaurant, 22740 Woodward Avenue, Ferndale. (248) 591-3466 julia@ferndalepride.com www.dinoslounge.com

Saturday, May 12
13th Annual Friends for Animals of Metro Detroit Mutt Strut! 8 a.m.
The 5K run and 2.2 mile walk is Metro Detroit’s only pet-friendly run and walk! Dearborn’s Gateway Trail, 22051 Cherry Hill Street, Dearborn. events@metrodetroitanimals.org www.famdmuttstrut.org

Saturday, May 19
Spring Fling Dance – Women Out And About 7 p.m. DJ Carol, BYOB, Private Dance Party at the Dance Scene. $15 Advance, $20 at the door. The Dance Scene, 25333 Van Dyke, Centerline. 248-943-2411 womenoutandabout.net/event/spring-fling-dance-2/

Soho’s 5th Annual Hot Daddies Contest 8 p.m. Another great Ferndale Pride event happening at Soho! Come one, come all… It’s the 5th Annual Hot Daddies Contest. Soho, 205 W. 9 Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-542-7646 julia@ferndalepride.com www.ferndalesoho.com

Wednesday, May 23
Otus Supply Featuring Kate Wright 8 p.m. Another fantastic Ferndale Pride event coming at you! Come listen to the music of Kate Wright in Otus Supply’s ‘The Parliament Room’. Check website for ticket pricing. Otus Supply, 345 E. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-291-6160 julia@ferndalepride.com www.otussupply.com

Outings

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Walk-A-Mom at Stony Creek Metropark
With the weather changing for the better, a way to enjoy both the nice days and finish off Mother’s Day is with a walk in the park. Stony Creek Metropark is hosting its annual Walk-A-Mom event where kids “of all ages” are invited to walk the trails alongside their moms. There is no registration necessary and the event is free. Daily passes to the park are free for pedestrians and cost $10 for vehicles. Stony Creek Metropark is located at 4300 Main Park Road, Shelby Twp. Call 586-781-9113 or go online to metroparks.com for more information.

Editor’s Pick

Shakey Graves at Royal Oak Music Theatre
Heading to the Royal Oak Music Theatre on Monday, May 21 is Shakey Graves. The Texas-born musician has been on the Americana scene since 2011 and is the recipient the 2015 Best Emerging Artist Award form the Americana Music Awards. Tickets start at $25. Doors open at 8 p.m. More information can be found online at royaloakmusictheatre.com.

Photo by Greg Giannukos.
Detroit’s only springtime pet-friendly run and walk! The Mutt Strut welcomes families and individuals of all skill levels run and walk! The Mutt Strut welcomes Detroit’s only springtime pet-friendly 21051 21 Mile Road, Macomb. 586-723- Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups famdmuttstrut.org signature drinks, and an afterglow. Max M. unique performances, hors d’oeuvres, musical experience. Ticket includes three will feature DSO musicians performing in year’s sold-out inaugural event, Mysterium 2700 www.chippewavalleyschools.org/ concerts. May 20, 10 a.m. Ann Arbor. Star Wars and the Power of Costume May 20, 10 a.m. Star Wars™ and the Power of Costume explores the challenges in dressing the Star Wars universe from the Galactic Senate and royalty to the Jedi, Sith and Droids™. Detroit Institute of Arts, 2100 Woodward Ave. Detroit. 313-833-7900 https://www.dia.org/ starwarsattheDIA Otus Supply Featuring Kate Wright May 23, 8 p.m. Another fantastic Ferndale Pride event coming at you! Come listen to the music of Kate Wright in Otus Supply’s ‘The Parliament Room’. Check website for ticket pricing. Otus Supply, 345 E. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-291-6100 julia@ferndalepride.com julia@ferndalepride.com www.otusupply.com www.ferndalepride.com Cinetopia Film Festival at Ann Arbor’s Michigan Theater May 31, 7 p.m. Created for the people of southeastern Michigan, the Cinetopia Film Festival features the best feature-length dramas, comedies, and documentaries from the world’s best film festivals (e.g. Sundance, Cannes, Venice, Toronto, Berlin, SXSW, Tribeca, etc.). May 31 – June 10 Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. 734-668-8397 www.cinetopiafestival.org Om @ The Max June 3, 10:30 a.m. Practice yoga to live music by French composers. Certified yoga instructor and DSO Librarian Ethan Allen leads a group yoga session open to all skill levels—accompanied with music performed live by a DSO percussion ensemble. The Cube, 3711 Woodward Ave. Detroit. https://www.dso.org/ShowEventView.aspx?id=5084&prod=5083 Ann Arbor Summer Festival 2018 Mainstage Lineup! June 5, 7:30 p.m. Passionate, provocative, and charming, the iconic singer/songwriter, activist, poet, and artist Ani DiFranco returns to the territory that brought her to the world’s attention backed by a full band. Born a gifted songwriter, by age Power Center, 121 Fletcher Street, Ann Arbor. (734) 647-3327 info@starwarsattheDIA.org info@starwarsattheDIA.org Tickets start at $7.53.
Drag Queens to ‘Catfight’ for the Title of Miss Kitty

Ruth Ellis Center Fundraiser Kicks Off Pride Month with Pageant

BY KATE OPALEWSKI

It’s about to get real catty in Detroit. The biggest catfight of the year is happening on June 1 at the Fillmore Theatre, 2115 Woodward Ave.

Eight amateur contestants will fight for the title of Miss Kitty in categories of evening wear, swimsuit, talent, and interview segments. The Catfight for the Crown is an elaborate, “tongue-in-cheek” drag show “beauty” pageant that brings forward a unique, over-the-top, entertaining and interactive way of raising critical funding to support the Ruth Ellis Center. This event is also designed to celebrate all forms of identity and expression.

The pageant will be judged by celebrity guests Nicole Eisenberg, member of the board of directors for GLAAD; Chuck Bennett, Detroit’s undisputed style guru and society icon; Elliott Broom, Vice President of Museum Operations at the Detroit Institute of Art; Jessie Beld Elliott, Founder and CEO at Beld & Associates; musician and songwriter, Ben Sharkey; and Detroit’s very own living drag legend, Lady “T” Tempest.

The idea for the show was presented to the Ruth Ellis Center by Harris Van Cleef, Vice President at Star Trax Event Productions. Catfight is a spin-off from a successful fundraiser in Los Angeles titled Battle for the Tiara, now known as Best in Drag Show. The original event has raised over $1 million to support Aid for AIDS during its reign with emcee Patrick Rush and the late Alexis Pittman, who was the founder and creator.

“For years I have wanted to give back,” said Van Cleef. “To me, it felt like Ruth Ellis Center is an organization that is really digging in and trying to do something on the front lines of what’s going on with an issue that many of us don’t even know is going on. As somebody who wasn’t affected in that way and was raised in a home where I happened to be accepted, I can’t imagine what it would be like to be someone who is turned away from their family or their community because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. For me, that’s really powerful.”

The Pinkys, the “goodwill ambassadors,” will be on-hand to take tickets, usher guests, sweep money across the stage and serve cocktails. These volunteer characters will all don the same pink dresses, so they can’t be missed.

“We have been extraordinarily lucky to receive help from everyone we have approached,” said Van Cleef pointing to people like Scott MacDonald, Corinne Roskopp, Mikki Gardner and Shannon McConnell, who are also responsible for the directing and managing of the event. “That’s been my experience so far. Everything we’ve asked for or needed has been given. People really care about the Ruth Ellis Center and the young people they serve. It’s really been miraculous and we’re all unbelievably grateful.”

But the process could not have been started without support from Project Beautiful - Inside & Out, the presenting sponsor for this inaugural event. Their mission is to build confidence and inspire hope as individuals and families rebuild their lives.

“The amazing work done by Ruth Ellis fits our mission perfectly. Our relationship with the Center has grown from buying 50 pairs of winter boots, to sponsoring meals and contributing to their pantry program, to our Rainbow Cabaret event last April that raised $40,000 for the capital campaign for their Health and Wellness Center. Catfight for the Crown is a natural evolution of our support and we couldn’t be more excited,” said Doris Gilles, founder and executive director.

Proceeds generated from Catfight for the Crown will be designated to support the capital campaign for the Ruth Ellis Health and Wellness Center, which provides affirming and accessible mental health and primary care services including acute care, chronic disease management, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, and gender-affirming hormones.

Young people can come to the Center to have dinner, take a shower, use the computer, get free clothing and food boxes and, most importantly, build community in a safe space. With the development of the Health and Wellness Center, they can now receive physical and mental health services in an environment in which they are already comfortable and which stands in sharp contrast to traditional clinical environments in which they may experience stigma or outright rejection. The Center has set a goal of completing the capital campaign in 2018 and hopes Catfight for the Crown will inspire others to get involved.

“Ruth Ellis Center has worked very hard to establish a robust culture of philanthropy and this event is a wonderful example of that,” said Mark Erwin-McCormick, Director of Development & Advancement at Ruth Ellis Center. “Here is an example of three separate entities, Harris Van Cleef of Star Trax Events, Project Beautiful - Inside & Out, and Ruth Ellis Center, coming together to leverage their collective resources for the sole purpose of ensuring LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness or other barriers to care have safe access to integrated primary and behavioral health care. That’s what Pride is all about.”

Van Cleef continued, “I believe that you need to show people a good time and so many people go to black-tie galas and while they’re amazing, the idea is to be able to go someplace and really just have fun and let loose to have a good time and still raise money. It’s a serious cause, but we’re doing it in a very fun, very light, very self-deprecating, humorous kind of way. That’s the beauty of it.”

For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Mark Erwin-McCormick, Director of Development and Advancement at Ruth Ellis Center at 313-252-1950. Visit ruthelliscenter.org for more information. To purchase tickets, visit universe.com/catfightforthecrown.

Out Loud Chorus Hosts Concert, Returns to Arthur Miller Theater

BY BTL STAFF

Ann Arbor’s Out Loud Chorus is a non-auditioned community singing group that is comprised mainly of LGBTQ chorus members, and the 55-person group has just completed their first year of direction under their new conductor William Scott Walters. This year also marks the group’s return to the Arthur Miller Theatre’s stage after “many years.”

Now, the group is gearing up to showcase its Spring Concert there on both Saturday, May 11 and Sunday, May 12. The show’s theme will be Communication, “talk to me, baby.” And, for those who have not yet seen Walters’ conducting, it will be an opportunity to demonstrate his unique performance style.

Walters was a student of Jerry Blackstone at the University of Michigan’s Master of Music conducting program, as well as that of Robert Spano, Harry Bicket and Kenneth Kiesler. Walters has also instructed music in the Atlanta, Georgia, area before returning to Southeast Michigan.

In addition to its scheduled Spring Concert, the Out Loud Chorus will also be making an appearance at Ann Arbor Pride and the Ann Arbor Art Fair.

For those interested in joining the chorus, applications can be found online at olconline.org. New member nights are held in late January and September of each year and rehearsals are held every Monday night from 7 to 9:30 p.m.

The Spring Concert on Saturday, May 11 will be held from 8 to 10 p.m., and the Sunday, May 12 performance will be held from 8 to 10 p.m. The Arthur Miller Theatre is located at 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. More information can be found online about upcoming performances and ticketing at olconline.org.
Liz and the Luckouts Offer up ‘Raw Rock ‘n’ Roll’

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

The pessimism of their name aside, Liz and the Luckouts are a safe bet if you’re looking for “Detroit rock ‘n’ roll, just raw rock ‘n’ roll,” said Gretchen Domino, who plays bass and joins in on vocals. “Our sound is hard to describe.”

Maybe. But locals find it easy to enjoy. The cuts on their 2016 EP, “Twisted,” are catchy and the music is approachable in an ’80s, Joan Jett kind of way.

“Joan Jett, Chrissy Hynde, Suzi Quatro, I was inspired mostly the female musicians,” said Liz Scaris, who fronts the band and plays guitar. “I saw them all rocking out and I was like, ‘Yeah, that’s what I want to do.’”

Scaris had played in other bands for years before she decided to step out front.

“We couldn’t find another singer so that’s how I ended up doing it,” she said. “I always just played guitar but then I started singing and playing guitar. I’ve been in other bands as bass player, guitar player so I said I might as well try it myself and do it ... and it’s working out way better than expected.”

Domino and Scaris started playing together in 2011. Dan Durecki started playing drums with the band about four years ago.

“It’s just fun,” Durecki said. “Playing with them there’s never a dull moment. What I like about it is we’re not to the point. Every show that you see is going to be a one-off. Even though we rehearse we try to create a different version of the song almost every time you see it. It’s fun to play like that. If you play the exact same thing every day it’s like punching a clock. That’s what I like about it. We’re free to make magical mistakes.”

The band doesn’t just play together though. They also write songs together as well.

“We’re really organic in the way that we do it,” said Durecki. “They’ll come up with some sort of a hook and then I’ll come in and they’ll say, ‘Lay something down to this.’ So I’ll kind of come up with a rhythm to it. Or I’ll come in with a hook line and say this is what I’m thinking and they’ll build something around it.”

Scaris agreed.

“We’re all on the same page so that helps out a lot when it comes to writing music,” she said. “We all pretty much listen to the same music and come up with the same ideas. It just works.”

The formula has garnered some success. Last year Liz and the Luckouts were nominated for three Detroit Music Awards.

“Their’s a little bit of everything in our music,” said Domino. “We got some blues stuff and some jazz stuff that’s influenced it, as far as lines go and what we play as musicians.”

Durecki, perhaps, summed it up best.

“We’re not trying to reinvent the wheel,” he said. “We’re straight ahead ballsy three-chord rocking music. Our songs are catchy and hook-laden. That’s what I kind of want our sound to be. We’re trying to make really great rock songs and I think there’s still a place for that.”

Liz and the Luckouts will be playing at Cross Street Station in Ypsilanti on Saturday, May 12th. For more information visit facebook.com/theluckouts.
More more more ‘Tales of The City,’ now with Ellen Page

Just when you were fully annoyed and extremely tired and actually angry (hey, “Roseanne”!) at all the TV reboots and revivals, here comes the promise of 10 new episodes of Armistead Maupin’s “Tales of The City” on Netflix to make everything OK again. The good news? It’s a continuation of the beloved stories you’ve read and watched since the 1970s (if you were a books-first fan) and/or the ’90s (if you were converted by the PBS and Showtime installments back in the day), so there’ll be no rehashing the past, and Lauren Morelli (“Orange is The New Black”) is the showrunner. Meanwhile, original cast member Laura Linney is back as Mary-Ann, picking up where she left off, and for this batch of stories, her now-adult daughter, Shawna, will be played by Ellen Page (“Gaycation”). Making it even sweeter? Anna Madrigal is still high and kicking, and Olympia Dukakis has already signed on to bring her back to life. Someone at Netflix deserves a cookie bouquet for this one.

The pain and glory of Almodovar

In 2019 the world of cinema will get lucky again, because that’s when legendary Spanish director Pedro Almodovar drops his next movie. Here’s everything we know so far: it’s about a filmmaker whose past choices come back to haunt his present day life as he works on a new project. It’s called “Dolor y Gloria” (“pain and glory”) and it will star his longtime muse Penelope Cruz (“Broken Embraces”) and his other longtime muse Antonia Banderas, an actor who goes all the way back to 1982 with Almodovar and the film “Labyrinth of Passion.” Even the supporting cast is vintage Almodovar, with Spanish actresses Kiti Manver from “Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown,” and Julieta Serrano, who goes back even further than Banderas to 1980’s “Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del monton.” Will it be a comedy? A drama? Both? We don’t care, we’re just ready for the calendar to flip.

Lindsay Lohan getting dolled up for ‘Life Size 2’?

Obviously you all remember that time in the year 2000 when Lindsay Lohan was a child star and she was in that TV movie called “Life Size,” which is the one where little Lindsay’s Barbie-esque toy doll comes to life and is Tyra Banks. It was so good. And because it was so good, media mogul Tyra Banks has decided that things can only get gooder and now there’s going to be a “Life Size 2.” We need this. Tyra’s producing it. The world is quivering in anticipation. And Tyra needs Lindsay. Ms. Banks is talking about the project out in public and more or less confirming that it’s happening with the now-grown Lindsay, which may mean Lohan is in negotiations and very close to signing. Or it could also just be one of those SoulCycle things about putting your intention into the universe and manifesting the reality (listen, we have no idea what those words mean, either, but they sound productive). If you saw Lohan on Wendy Williams’ couch not long ago, it’s clear she’s in a good place and ready to be enjoyed as an actor again, so maybe we all just need to chant to the universe a little louder.
Across
1 Express pleasure orally 5 Give the once-over in a gay bar 9 It may be grand, to Glenn Burke 13 Chaplin partner
14 Collette of “The Hours” 15 Forfeit 16 Just right 17 Very top 18 Cicero’s singular 19 Start of a quote that follows “I don’t define myself”
22 Queen toppers 23 Made a profit of, in Mauresmo’s sport? 24 Web info source 25 MBA subj. 26 More of the quote 31 By mouth 34 The Gay ’90s, and others
35 Stone of “Easy A” 39 Revolution opponent 40 _____ in the hay 41 Bellow in the library 42 Homoerotic tail? 43 Two for Sue Wicks, once 45 AAA way 46 River of Gay Paree 48 Sponsorship 50 End of the quote
55 Responder to “Bite me!”? 56 Cruising 57 Black and white sandwich 59 With respect to 60 Went lickety-split 61 Began like Sheehan, with “off” 62 Precious stones 63 David _____ Pierce 64 To be, in Brest

Down
1 Fly cry 2 Grace to Will, once 3 Where to find some fruit 4 But of course 5 Chat room request 6 Nightclub in a Manilow song 7 One more time 8 Cynthia, who is the source of the quote
9 Marks on your lover’s back 10 Rough house 11 Brody of “The Pianist” 12 Judy Garland's “_____ My Shadow” 20 Starch source 21 Event for George Frenn
27 Designer Wang 28 Aphrodite’s son 29 Result of four balls 30 Wight, for one 31 Miss among Cole Porter hits 32 Sicom with Sara Gilbert 33 One way to walk in a Gay Pride March 36 Funny Cho 37 Marlon Brando, in “The Bounty” 38 Stein fillers 43 Reno action 44 Eastern philosophy 47 Bernstein’s staff members 49 Ham it up on Broadway 51 Diced meat 52 Catch sight of 53 Robert of “The Brady Bunch” 54 Go in only partway, at South Beach 55 Job for a rock band 58 It may be Sapphic

Undefinable Cynthia Q Puzzle

How do you speak to the LGBT community?

Through the publications they know and trust.

www.PrideSource.com
Local Lesbian Publishing Company Rakes in Multiple Awards

BY BTL STAFF

ANN ARBOR – Bywater Books is a small lesbian press company that has been awarded prizes for its 2017 titles. Founded in 2004, Bywater Books’ titles are available in print, ebook, and audiobook formats and cover every genre of coming of age lesbian fiction. Just last year, the company published 14 books, for which it won four Independent Publisher Book Awards (IPPYs), two Best Book of the Year awards in two categories from the Delaware Press Association. In addition, it secured two Foreword Independent Book Awards finalists from its array of works, two Lambda Literary Award finalists and one finalist for the Triangle Publishing Awards.

The eight-person team is headed by publisher Salem West, and has published titles by such authors as Rachel Spangler, Hilary Zaid and Lisa Gitlin. When asked how the company goes about choosing its variety of authors and topics, West said that it’s all about the looking for excellence — in whatever form it comes in.

“Bywater Books has long pursued quality and diversity in the literature we publish,” West said. “We know that lives are enriched when our lesbian stories are read, and it is clear that mainstream awards like the IPPYs help us to reach a widening world of readers.”

For more information about Bywater Books, visit bywaterbooks.com.

Metro Detroit LGBTQ Bars

Adam’s Apple
A friendly neighborhood bar open to everyone. Open 7 days a week. Voted the best karaoke bar for two years by Local 4 News in Detroit. Check out Facebook page for upcoming events.

8100 W Warren Ave., Detroit, MI 313-929-3774

www.facebook.com/pg/adamsapple.mi

aut Bar
Iconic LGBTQ gathering place in Ann Arbor since the early 1990s. Restaurant and bar serving eclectic menu with a Mexican flair. Located in Braun Court which is also home to the Jim Toy LGBTQ Community Center and Common Language Bookstore. Courtyard open on warmer nights. Hosts many community event fundraisers, rallies and celebrations. Popular with men, women and trans.

315 Braun Court, Ann Arbor
autbar@gmail.com
734-994-3677

www.autbar.com

Briggs Sports Bar
Located in downtown Detroit, across from GM World Headquarters, Briggs Sports Bar is a popular after-work watering-hole. This attractive club draws an energetic crowd, and is open 7 nights a week. Located in the Palmer Park area of Detroit, once the epicenter of Detroit’s gay scene.

2971 E. Seven Mile Rd., Detroit
313-366-6135

www.facebook.com/briggs-detroit

Club Gold Coast
One of Detroit’s oldest and most popular night spots, Club Gold Coast features male strippers and is open 7 nights a week. Located in the Palmer Park area of Detroit, once the epicenter of Detroit’s gay scene.

2971 E. Seven Mile Rd., Detroit
313-366-6135

www.facebook.com/clubgoldcoast

Escape Lounge
Nighting Club
So you’ve partied all evening but you’re not ready to call it a night. Escape Lounge is an all-male, after-hours, all-night eatery & bar. Opens at 10 p.m.

19404 Sherwood St., Detroit
313-892-1765

Hayloft Saloon
Sports & Video Bar is a male club offering Karaoke, pool, darts, six LCD screens and internet juke box. Open since 1980, The Hayloft is owned by Ron Harrington who also owns the gay bar, Side Traxx in Traverse City. This is a no-nonsense sports bar where men meet other men for fun, friendship and more.

8070 Greenfield Rd., Detroit
313-581-8913

http://hayloftsaloon.com

The Liberty Bar
Great little bar in the heart of Pontiac, Michigan. Food, drinks, in business over 60 years. They have a pub menu, with a trendy twist, and an extensive drink menu with a huge beer selection. Open for lunch too. Very friendly atmosphere.

85 North Saginaw St., Pontiac
248-758-0771

www.thelibertybar.com

Menjos Gay Entertainment Complex
Has been a gathering place for the gay community of Metro Detroit for decades. It’s also a bit of a Madonna mecca since she used to be a regular when the Material Girl was also a local Michigan girl. The mostly male 20-to-30 something crowd comes for the dancing and entertainment. The Complex includes the Menjos Bar, the Eagle Leather bar and the Olympus Theater. Open Wednesday to Saturday.

928 W. McNichols, Detroit, MI 313-863-3934

www.newmenjoscomplex.com

www.facebook.com/menjoscomplex

Necto Nightclub
(Pride Fridays)
Ann Arbor’s downtown nightclub, Necto attracts people from University of Michigan’s campus and the surrounding area. Multiple weekly & special events. The Pride night has been a staple in Ann Arbor’s gay scene since 1984.

516 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor
734-994-5835

www.necto.com

Pronto!
Has served the LGBTQ community for decades, right in the heart of Royal Oak. Pronto’s has teamed up with the Drag Queen Bingo hosted by Five 15 every weekend in the space right next door to Pronto!

608 S Washington Ave., Royal Oak
248-544-7900

www.facebook.com/prontotv

Queen’s Bar
Detroit
But don’t be confused by the name. It’s not about Queens as in gay men. Queens is named after the NYC borough – the owners have another Detroit bar named Bronx. Although not specifically an LGBTQ bar, Queen’s Bar has an unpretentious vibe and clearly welcomes LGBTQ patrons with a super-friendly staff that is very open.

35 Grand River Ave., Detroit
313-285-8019

www.facebook.com/pg/queensbardetroit

Soho Ferndale
This classy spot features wine, jazz, martinis and a comfortable, casual environment. Located right in the heart of Ferndale’s gay district, Soho has a weekly line-up of trivia, karaoke, dance parties, and sweet drink specials. Popular with both men and women.

205 W 9 Mile Rd., Ferndale
248-542-7646

www.sohoferndale.com

Woodward Bar & Grill
In the heart of Midtown, it is the oldest gay bar in Detroit dating back to 1960. It’s storied history is reflected in the pictures on the walls and in conversations you’ll hear from loyal patrons. The Woodward is open for lunch and dinner with simple but excellent fare, especially their burgers. During the day it serves the many business people in the area, turning mostly LGBTQ after 5 p.m. It’s popular with the Black LGBTQ community and is a welcoming environment for men, women, trans.

6426 Woodward Ave., Detroit
313-872-0166

www.facebook.com/Woodward-Grill-455392641237497

MOCAD Hosts Naughty Drawing

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

L ive models, cocktails and Tom of Finland-inspired art. That’s the setup that Detroit’s Museum of Contemporary Art will establish in its Cafe 78 on Saturday, May 19. At 2 p.m. guests are welcome to come and draw artwork that is based on the current exhibition at the museum: “TOM House: The Work and Life of Tom of Finland.” The exhibit features the work of Finnish artist Touka Laaksonen who created a unique style of homoerotic fetish art.

Hosted by Tyllonn J. Sawyer, the event is also sponsored by Equality Michigan and various other benefactors. This event is intended for mature audiences only.

More information can be found online at mocadetroit.org or by going to the event Facebook Page.
BY KELLY DERRA ADOLPHUS

Designer Perry Wayne taught himself how to sew and used that skill to start creating the type of fashionable clothes he dreamed to one day produce for the world. “Being a designer has always been a dream of mine,” Wayne said, and his creative process feels “like clean energy flowing through my bones breathing.”

Most recently, he focused this energy into the launch of his new self-titled underwear line, Wayne. Somehow, the line manages to be a breath of fresh air in an increasingly flooded market, mostly because of Wayne’s buy local spin. In place of obscure abdomens, Wayne uses real people plucked from our community to market the brand as models.

“I know them. If they look good, I’ll look good,” is what Wayne hopes potential customers will begin to wonder, which makes the brand’s overall aura that much more attainable and close to home.

Wayne received a head-to-toe breakdown of the fashion businesses during his time at the Art Institute of Novi. But he gets his sense of glamour from his mother. “My mother was a huge influence when I was a little boy,” he said. “She would always dress up in beautiful outfits and coats that would stop a runway.”

When it comes to his work ethic, Wayne calls himself “moody.” “Which means, I design my garments based on what mood I am in,” he said. “They’re extremely fitted and hit in all the right places. They also make me feel extremely confident, and that’s always been in issue for me wearing underwear. But now, thanks to my creative design work and precise cuts, I feel amazing in my own underwear.”

In the right pair, you could, too. The line’s highlights include neon blues, electric blacks and mesh in brief, jockstrap and trunk styles that are breathable and butt-hugging.

“The reason I came up with these particular designs is because they express who I am as a person,” he said. “Also, making men feel sexy and comfortable is the key to building confidence.”

Wayne admits, he only recently started experimenting with jockstraps – one of the most popular underwear garments for gay waistlines.

“Never have I thought I would wear a jock, but now I wear my Wayne jocks almost every day,” he said, explaining, “(It) might look intimidating at first, but, when it’s on, it makes you feel extremely confident. My goal is to make everyone feel good about themselves.”

By no means is that goal limited to gay men only. Wayne has plans to eventually launch a brick and mortar space welcoming men of all shapes, sizes and sexualities who want to feel good about what they are wearing underneath their pants.

“Men in general like to feel comfortable and sexy at the same time,” Wayne said. “Having underwear that is stylish and gives you that versatility is important to a guy’s taste.”

Grab your pair of Perry Wayne underwear at perrywayne.com.

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Wayne’s World

A Local Designer’s Breathable, Butt-Hugging Underwear Line for Men Feeling Sexy

抓你的Perry Wayne内裤在perrywayne.com。
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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 three of them:

AIDS Walk Detroit
Contact info@aidswalkdetroit.org or 248-399-9255 for more information. The walk takes place this year on Sunday, Sept. 15, 8:30 a.m. at the Royal Oak Farmers Market.

Macomb County STD Clinic
27690 Van Dyke Warren, MI 48093
586-465-9217
http://health.macombgov.org/Health-Programs-HPDC-HIVAIDS/Testing

Matrix Ryan White
HIV/AIDS Program
120 Parsons Street Detroit, MI 48201
888-226-6366
248-545-1435
www.matrixhumanervices.org/programs/ryanwhite/

UNIFIED - HIV Health and Beyond
3011 W. Grand Blvd. Suite 230
Detroit, MI 48201

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/lgbtcr
734-487-4149

The Lawrence Tech LGBT Resource Center
ltu.edu/student_affairs/lgbt.asp

Wayne State JIGSAW
Facebook.com/groups/WayneStateJIGSAW
wsujigsaw@gmail.com

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

Jim Toy Community Center
Ann Arbor
www.jimtoycenter.org
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
www.facebook.com/lgbtdetroit
or follow them on Twitter @LGBTDetroit.
20025 Greenfield Road
Detroit, MI
Phone: 313-397-2127

Affirmations
Fendale
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.acumich.org
313-578-6800

Fair Michigan
PO Box 6136
Plymouth, MI 48170
877-432-7643, 313-556-2300
fairmichigan.org
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
sagemetrdetroit.org
Facebook: SAGE Metro Detroit

Political
The LGBT and Allies Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party
Facebook.com/TheLGBT-CaucusoftheMDP

Stonewall for Revolution
www.facebook.com/stonewallforrevolution

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.

FTM A2 Ypsi
ftmmnarrorypsilanti@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@tscodetroit.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
313-486-2960
info@ruthelliscenter.org

Stand With Trans
Farmington, MI
www.standwithtrans.org
248-739-9254

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

PRIDESOURCE Magazine
The New Print Edition Coming June 1
Pride Source Magazine is currently in production. Non Profit basic listings are free. Just send your information by April 15 to janstevenson@pridesource.com. All advertising and content inquiries can also be made by calling 734-293-7200 ext. 101

Advocacy
Equality Michigan
19641 W. 7 Mile, Detroit, MI
313-537-7000
equalitymi.org
Facebook.com/equalitymichigan

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The LGBT and Allies Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party
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Stonewall for Revolution
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www.suitsandthecity.org

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https://www.facebook.com/FTMDetroit/
ftmdetroit@gmail.com.

FTM A2 Ypsi
ftmmnarrorypsilanti@gmail.com
https://www.facebook.com/ftma2ypsi/

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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

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