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NEWS
4 History Wheel
6 Queer Theory Symposium
6 U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib Visits REC to Hear From LGBTQ Faith Leaders, Youth
7 Report: Michigan Had 31 Hate Groups in 2018
8 Pastor in Murder of Transgender Woman Accused of Regularly Paying for Sex Work
8 ‘Don’t Say Trans’ Bill Dies in South Dakota Legislature
8 Ingham County Services Committee Passes Gender-Neutral Bathroom Resolution
12 LGBT Democrats Play Visible Role at DNC Winter Meeting

OPINION
10 Parting Glances
10 Let’s Continue the Conversation: Suicide
11 Creep of the Week

LIFE
14 Children’s Book ‘Made by Raffi’ Shares Anti-Bullying Message, Promotes Acceptance
16 Kyle MacLachlan is Like a Fine Wine
22 Happenings
25 Puzzle & Crossword

COOL CITIES: ANN ARBOR
21 It’s Not Just Bath Bombs and Rainbows: A Self-Care Series

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
26 Michigan Move Over Law Could Cost Noncompliant Motorists $400
26 Gov. Whitmer Encourages Young Women in Michigan to Participate in Cybersecurity Competition
February - Detroit Public Schools CEO Creates Task Force, Looks at LGBT Student Issues: In response to a community town hall, Detroit Public Schools CEO Dr. Kenneth Burnley announced that he would create a task force to examine issues and craft policies to rectify the many problems plaguing gay students. Several serious homophobia-related crises had erupted in Detroit’s schools, including assaults and violence directed toward gay students, so-called lesbian “gangs” that had forcefully emerged, and what had been described as a rampant and growing HIV/AIDS epidemic.

March: Supporters of the anti-gay marriage amendment to the Michigan Constitution pushed its Decline To Sign campaign, a grassroots effort to encourage people in Michigan to refrain from signing the petitions. The measure’s proponents had vowed to appeal the Board’s decision in court.

April: A group calling itself Citizens for the Protection of Marriage began circulating petitions to get the anti-gay marriage amendment proposal on the Nov. 2004 ballot. In response, the Coalition for a Fair Michigan ruled against the Board of Canvassers Sept. 3, saying it goes too far. The Michigan Court of Appeals turned in over 482,000 signatures to the Secretary of State’s office on July 5.

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November: Michigan’s Governor Jennifer Granholm spoke out during her “Ask the Governor” radio program on WJR AM 760 against Proposal 2 calling it unnecessary and saying it goes too far.

November: Proposal 2, which sought to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman in the state’s constitution, won by a margin of 59-41 percent. Nationally, Michigan’s loss was part of a much larger trend. Ten additional states had similar measures on the ballot, and the measures passed in all of them.

The measure’s proponents had vowed to appeal the Board’s decision in court.

Before going to the Michigan Senate for a vote.

of the two-thirds majority needed to pass HJR U 23, the State Board of Canvassers denied the proposed constitutional marriage amendment. The measure’s proponents had vowed to appeal the Board’s decision in court.

WANTED: Gay History of the 2000s

THE ‘00S – 2004

Dark Days for Gays in 2004

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**Michigan Psychoanalytic Society Presents 44th Annual Symposium on ‘Queer Theory’**

To be held on Saturday, March 16 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. at Livonia’s Schoolcraft College, the Michigan Psychoanalytic Society will hold its 44th annual symposium titled “Queer Theory Meets Psychoanalysis: Productive Synergies and Clinical Implications.”

“Psychotherapists and psychoanalysts are often unaware of Queer Theory and its relationship to thinking analytically about non-normative and normative genders and sexualities,” write event organizers. “They are unfamiliar with the theoretical constructs of ‘sexual life and sexual death drives’ proposed to be related to polymorphous sexuality. Understanding Queer Theory propositions will give new perspectives on how perverse sexual practices provide acceptable expression of self configurations.”

The event will feature two guest speakers: Ann Pellegrini, Ph.D., a professor of Performance Studies and Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University; and Avgi Saketopoulou, Psy.D. who is studying at NYS’s postdoctoral program. Her work focuses on the areas of trauma and its psychic representation, psychosexuality and more.

Featured panelists will be David M. Halperin, Ph.D.; Sally Rosenberg, D.O.; Michael Shulman, Ph.D.; Don Spivak, M.D.; and moderator Susan Flinders, Ph.D.

The Symposium has six clear objectives:

1.) Participants will gain an understanding of major queer theory concepts.
2.) Participants will be able to explain the relevance of queer theory.
3.) Participants will be able to describe key themes for both queer theory and clinical psychoanalysis.
4.) Participants will be able to describe how rigid adherence to normativity can be restrictive.
5.) Participants will be able to discuss concepts of the sexual life drive and death drive relating to the sexual and to polymorphous perversity.
6.) Participants will be able to explain how perverse sexual practices may open up space for new configurations of the self.

 Though the event registration starts at 8:30 a.m. with program introductions starting at 9 a.m., a continental breakfast will feature be provided until 10 a.m. Programming for the morning session will last from 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., with the afternoon session beginning after lunch at 1:45 p.m. The event will come to a close with the panel discussion that ends at 4:15. To find out more information about the event, reach out to Monica at monicasimmons@ix.netcom.com or call 248-851-3380.

![Image](https://example.com/image.jpg)
There were 31 hate and extremist organizations operating in Michigan in 2018, according to a new report from the Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil rights organization located in Alabama.

The SPLC released a 73-page report, titled "Rage Against Change," on Wednesday, Feb. 20, which documents an increase in active extremist and hate organizations in Michigan.

"Hate cannot continue to flourish in our state," said Nessel, who found the Fair Michigan Justice Project with Wayne County Prosecutor Kym L. Worthy to investigate and prosecute hate crimes. "I have seen the appalling, often fatal results of hate when it is acted upon."

That is why Nessel has established a hate crimes unit in her office lead by former Macomb and Wayne County Prosecutor Sunita Doddamani.

"To fight against hate crimes and the many hate groups which have been allowed to proliferate in our state," she said.

In addition to Nessel's hate crime unit initiative, MDCR is developing a process to document hate and bias incidents in the state.

Hate and bias incidents are those instances where an action does not rise to the level of a crime or a civil infraction. For instance, Lansing's Old Town experienced a spat of flyering by the white nationalist group Patriot Front over President's Day weekend. Flyers were removed by residents and visitors, but were posted on social media, showing the group was targeting immigrants as well as Jews with the flyers. The flyers are protected under the First Amendment and do not rise to a crime.

"Hate and bias incidents serve to create a chilling effect in diverse communities, such as Old Town," said Arbulu.

This is not the first time Lansing has been affected by a hate and bias group. Michigan State University's Young Americans for Freedom, a key group with a history dating back to 2006, was listed as the first university recognized hate group in SPCL Hate Map history. Until last year, the white nationalist group was led by Kyle Bristow as well as Richard Spencer. Bristow withdrew from public white nationalist activism over alleged threats. He also ran the Foundation for the Marketplace of Ideas until his break from public white nationalism.

FMI had several high profile white nationalists on the board, including Spencer and Jason Van Dyke.

Van Dyke, a former Michigan resident now living in Texas, served as the legal advisor to Bristow's MSU YAF in 2006 to 2007 while it was on the Hate Map. Van Dyke most recently served a brief stint as the interim executive director of Proud Boys. Van Dyke is currently facing felony charges for filing a false police report in Texas over an alleged complaint of his gun and camera gear being stolen from his vehicle. He sued an activist in Texas for revealing his white nationalist history to a prosecutor's office in Texas which rescinded his job offer as a result.

Moving forward, by documenting such incidents in a database, MDCR, working with community partners, will be able to create targeted awareness and education programs to address and combat such incidents in general.

"Identifying and calling out hate and bias incidents is an important tool in our toolbox to educate Michiganders about the undertone of hatred in our communities," Arbulu continued. "But they also serve as a first step in developing community dialogs to strengthen our collective resolve to reject hate, bias and division. The Department looks forward to helping all of our community partners in fostering these important, powerful and ultimately life-changing discussions as we become more diversified."
Ingham County Services Committee Passes Gender-Neutral Bathroom Resolution

**BY BTL STAFF**

I

n a Feb. 19 Ingham County Services Committee meeting, a resolution unanimously passed to improve the accessibility of gender-segregated restroom facilities on Ingham County's property.

Therefore be it resolved, that all restrooms and gender-segregated facilities on property operated by Ingham County shall be accessible to individuals consistent with their gender identity or gender expression and that all single-occupancy restroom facilities shall use gender-neutral signage," read the resolution.

Commissioner Ryan Sebolt, a member of the LGBTQ community himself, emphasized why it was important that the resolution be passed.

“We updated some of our nondiscrimination policies last year to include this language, gender identity and expression. We’ve seen a movement both in the federal courts and with the new governor to be more inclusive,” Sebolt said. "I thought this made sense with consistency in terms of our existing policies, as well as treating people with basic dignity and respect, that we move this policy forward so there is no ambiguity on where Ingham County stands on this issue. It’s about access to our residents and fair and equal treatment.”

The issue was added to the committee’s agenda via a letter sent by Michigan’s ACLU LGBT Project. During the public comment portion of the meeting preceding the decision, Chair of the Ingham Community Health Center Board of Directors Todd Heywood and Vice Chair Jennifer Hanna commented on the efficacy of existing gender-neutral bathrooms within the Center.

“We want to let you know that in the Ingham Community Health Center, our freestanding facilities all have gender neutral facilities and we follow this policy already,” Heywood said. “This is how we operate and how we have operated, and we have done that for years without really much discussion about it because it’s the right thing to do.”

Heywood also cited that the implementation of bathrooms like these could contribute positively to the Human Rights Campaign’s Healthcare Equality Index rating. Something that he said is “important to bring in more patients.”

“It’s important to bring in more revenue,” Heywood said. “And, most importantly, it’s important in the service of our patients and clients in saying, ‘You’re welcome here. This is a safe space.’”

Hanna echoed his sentiments, adding that not only is it a benefit to the LGBTQ community, but also to families.

“I appreciate the gender-neutral bathrooms. Especially as a mother, you can go in with older kids, plus I have never had an issue with it.”

Lansing Chapter Leader of Transgender Michigan Nicole Hope emphasized the importance of the resolution, too.

“I am also, myself, transgender,” Hope said. “The short of this is, ‘Do you want to affirm that people like me can exist in public or not?’”

‘Don’t Say Trans’ Bill Dies in South Dakota Legislature

**BY CHRIS JOHNSON**

L

egislation that would have barred K-7 teachers from teaching about gender dysphoria, often the experience of being transgender, died in the South Dakota legislature on Friday.

The bill, House Bill 1108, was approved in South Dakota House last week by a vote of 39-30. On Friday, however, a Senate committee voted to table legislation by a 7-2 vote.

The South Dakota “Don’t Say Trans” bill was one of 78 anti-LGBT bills and 18 bills that were specifically anti-transgender pending in state legislatures throughout the country this legislative session, according to the Equality Federation.

“No instruction in gender dysphoria may be provided to any student in kindergarten through grade seven in any public school in the state,” the bill stated.

HB1108 was the third anti-transgender bill to fail in the South Dakota legislature, according to the National Center for Transgender Equality.

Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, said in a statement the failure of “Don’t Say Trans” bill should serve as a wake-up call.

“After the failure of two previous bills targeting transgender people, this bill’s death should serve as third strike for the state legislature,” Keisling said. “Throughout this process, it’s become clear these bills have nothing to do with safety or concern for children and far more to do with fear based on ignorance. South Dakota better off discarding by some in the state legislature to target transgender youth, and families across the state are surely celebrating this win.”

Another anti-trans bill, House Bill 1225, remains pending before the state legislature. The legislation would prohibit transgender kids from competing in high school sports consistent with their gender identity; A House committee favorably reported out the bill this week.

Keisling said even though HB1225 is pending, the failure of the “Don’t Say Trans” bill is a victory.

“While we are still watching a fourth bill that would severely limit transgender students from playing sports, we send our congratulations to transgender South Dakotans, their families, and allies who testified against this bill and worked tirelessly to replace such prejudice with their acceptance and love,” Keisling said.

This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National Gay Media Association.
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For decades, a seeming legitimate requirement asked for admission to Detroit gay bars was three pieces of ID, including one with photo selfie (in or out of drag optional). The request was intended to keep white bars whites only and, in some cases, men only.

(A touch of irony these days is that one of Detroit’s oldest bars has done an about-face in the past couple of decades, and is now almost exclusively a black gay bar. There was a time in the mid-’60s when the drinking glass of an intruder was audibly broken as the offending patron was leaving its premises. Tonight’s the night when your presence is not welcome, Mary!)

I was 19 when I borrowed a friend’s ID to go with some of my lesbian friends to the Silver Slipper, a dyke bar on Grand River, not too far from downtown Detroit. Straight tourists and gay men sat downstairs. Lesbians sat in a restricted balcony area. Segregation of another kind.

For my 21st birthday celebration I went with three of my Cass Tech gay art grads – Edward Flourney, Eddie Gonda and Gordon Bernard (aka Rita Hayworth). We celebrated that historic evening in my young life at the Flame Show Bar, located at 4264 John R at Canfield, near Wayne University.

The Famous Flame roster included such giants as Billie Holiday, Della Reese, Etta James, Dinah Washington, B. B. King and Big Joe Turner.

The Flame Show Bar, opened in 1949, six years after Detroit’s infamous race riot of 1943 – for which I was sent home for safety from Burton Elementary School – and what was then called a “black and tan” club.

The nickname meant that whites were permitted and actually welcome to drink, listen and sway to the best of African-American jazz musicians, vocalists and soloists.

The Flame had ample space for larger groups, including my Night of Legal Adulthood, a very special, daring now-historic LGBT drag group. The Jewel Box Review.

The Jewel Box, started by drag devotes and one butch, power-punch lesbian, was kicked into its long-lasting show biz high heels in 1939.

Star of the Jewel Box Review was Storme DeLarverie, who was 19 when they joined what many have called America’s first gay community. Storme certainly was nice to look at and a first-class male drag persona. (“I think I could go straight for Storme!” quipped Ms. Rita. “Make that two of us,” added Eddie Gonda.)

As for Storme, they were more than just a storm. Storme was an LGBTQ hurricane! Her now-legendary tussle with the police – “Hey, copheads! I’m not taking any of your cuffs or your friggin’ bullhorns! Period! You got another think a-coming!” – ignited the Stonewall riots in 1969. She was 40.

Storme was born in New Orleans to an African-American mother and a white father. She’s now remembered as an LGBTQ activist, gay civil rights icon and entertainer whose career included the Apollo Theater, Radio City Music Hall and many LGBTQ venues worldwide.

She worked for much of her long life as an emcee, singer, bouncer, bodyguard and volunteer street patrol worker, and, as she liked to 1D her remaining years and status (died May 2004), her skeletonized body is in the New York Historical Society’s permanent collection.

So Donald! What’s this I hear about you pushing to end global persecution of LGBTQ tragedies?

Oh, I’m not targeting you, Vlad...

Confidentially, Mohammed, I’m just trying to drive a wedge between Western Europe and Iran...

I don’t really mean it, Kim!

Whew! You had me worried, Sir!

It is vital that we continue the discussion on suicide with the recent loss of a member of the trans/gender-nonconforming community. Our community shared this advice in Transcend The Binary’s recent study, “Finding Our Strength.” Transcend the Binary is an organization dedicated to aiding the TGNC community through resources, education, research and affirming care, and this work aided that goal in exploring the daily lives of over 300 individuals in our TGNC community, with support from the University of Michigan.

Nearly everyone included in the report worried about discrimination in everyday life, and Transcend’s research shows that we internalize discrimination, too – the majority responded accepting this as a ‘fact of life’ and one third believed they were responsible for this mistreatment. Additionally, anxiety rates were found to be very high – our research shows 80 percent reported anxiety and 20 percent were at risk for depression. National also data shows that 40 percent of our community attempts suicide.

Consulting with our licensed clinical social worker, Caitlin Tupper, she said guilt, shame and stigma can prevent people from disclosing depressive symptoms and suicidal ideations. Because of this, at Transcend, we work to destigmatize and normalize mental health concerns and this is a large reason why our model of care centers on peer advocates providing support services; they can draw on their own personal experiences as appropriate.

There are also barriers to accessing services. This may include past negative experiences with therapists as well as unfamiliarity with, or lack of trust in the therapy process. We work to overcome these roadblocks by personally vetting therapists for a strong background in TGNC care. Transcend offers continued advocacy support for our clients, as requested. We problem-solve sliding scale and transportation barriers. We work one-on-one with our clients to build their ‘support team’ – connecting them with a suite of services, referrals, support groups and peer counseling.

You are part of this support team, too. In Finding Our Strength, 88 percent of respondents reported reaching out to others to talk. We have compiled lists below to empower you in supporting loved ones who may be experiencing depression or suicidal ideation.

Warning Signs & What to Watch For:

- Giving away belongings or saying goodbyes
- Isolating self from others
- Impulsive or reckless behaviors uncharacteristic of the person
- Recent major life stressors and/or losses
- Irritability and anger
- Making “jokes” or vague statements about suicide
- Lost interest in activities and passions they once had
Creep Of The Week

BY D’ANNE WITKOWSKI

Is "weird sex" really what this all amounts to? Well, of course it is if you don’t think that gays and lesbians are actually human and capable of forming long-term loving relationships and creating safe and nurturing home environments for children.

You could also try engaging someone you believe to be gay or lesbian in conversation. You could say something like, “Hello, How are you?” or “Gee, it sure is cold/hot today!” You can then ask, “Does your life amount to more than doing weird sex?” And they’ll likely say, “Yes,” or possibly stop talking to you altogether because, seriously, what is wrong with you?

One of the most fascinating parts of Robertson’s philosophy is that he argues that gays are destroying all that’s good and holy, while at the same time arguing that there are hardly any gays at all.

“One percent, ladies and gentlemen, get it? One percent of the country, from what we understand, are lesbian, two percent are homosexual. And that is all, and yet that two percent and one percent are taking charge of the rest of us because they’re so vocal and so authoritative and they apparently dominate these legislative bodies.”

Got that? Hardly any homos to speak of, but who run the world? Gays. Lesbians and gays are just so darn powerful that they run the whole country, which is why Trump is … wait a minute.

OK, either the gays are doing a very bad job dominating the government, or, and hear me out, maybe Robertson is just making shit up because he’s a harmful old man?

Robertson continued, “I think if Christians begin to speak out and insist that if some politician goes along with the gay agenda, that they’re going to be voted out of office [politicians will] start saying, ‘We want to listen to the majority of the people in our society.’ Until they do, that small minority is going to be dominating everything we do and every aspect of our lives.”

If only Christians had a voice in this country! If only there was some way Christians could meet in, like, groups. Maybe in special buildings. And they could establish specific days for, like, nationwide celebration. And maybe the whole thing could be tax exempt. I’m not sure what you’d call that, or if we’ll ever see such a thing realized in America. Perhaps someday Christians will be able to withstand the LGBTQ tyranny that forces everyone to say, “merry penis” and “vagina bless America.”

Pat Robertson

You know those online ads that promise, “One weird trick to lose belly fat” next to an image of, say, a crudely drawn banana. Even if you don’t know what exactly those ads are trying to communicate, you know not to click them.

But not Grandpa Robertson. And he didn’t even need to click to know it was trying to trick him into recognizing the “weird way” gays “do sex.”

On the Feb. 25 episode of “The 700 Club,” racist/homophobic-grandpa-for-hire Pat Robertson discussed the City of Philadelphia’s legal dispute with Catholic Social Services, an agency that handles foster placements for children but will not do so for same-sex couples. As that’s against Philadelphia’s non-discrimination policy, Philadelphia didn’t renew the agency’s contract.

Robertson thinks this is appalling and that it violates the God-given right of Catholic Social Services to discriminate against lesbians and gays. And the very fact that lesbians, gays and their allies have the audacity to complain is proof that they’re out for blood. Weird sex blood. Or something.

“The incredible thing about the homosexuals is they are willing to destroy lives and destroy the whole fabric of society so long as they and their weird way of doing sex is legitimized,” Robertson said. “They’re willing to tear down the entire edifice in order to have the majority of people recognize the way they do sex, that’s what it amounts to.”

Is it, though? Is “weird sex” really what this all amounts to? Well, of course it is if you don’t think that gays and lesbians are actually human and capable of forming long-term loving relationships and creating safe and nurturing home environments for children.

I mean, if when you see a gay man all you see is an anthropomorphic demon penis or when you see a lesbian you just see a vagina monster, then I guess I can see why you’d be afraid to let them take care of kids.

But, of course, there’s one weird trick to getting over your irrational fear of lesbians and gays: visualize them as fully human. When you meet a gay man, say to yourself, “He’s more than just a penis, he’s more than just a penis …” Then ask yourself why you’re so obsessed with gay penises and how maybe, just maybe, that says a lot more about you than him.

Charles Alexander is prolific both as a BTL columnist (700-plus columns) and as an award-winning LGBT community artist (1000 Facebook images). He is a Spirit of Detroit Award recipient and an Affirmations LGBT CENTER Jan Stevenson awardee. Connect with him at Charles@pridesource.com.

Viepoint

Continued from p. 10

- History of suicide attempts
- A stark change: suddenly seemingly improved / having more energy after a period of depression

How to Provide Support:

- Listen and be present. This in itself can be a great gift to them, by sharing an outlet to express themselves without judgement.
- Let them know they are not alone. Identify the support that they do have.
- You don’t need to ‘have the answers.’ Let go of the pressure to find ‘the right’ solution. Believe in them, and if anything, explore different options with them by asking questions.
- Ask them how they would like to be supported. Maybe it’s just talking, or being there.
- Identify what has helped them cope so far. This may be music, movies, video games, journaling, creating.
- Instill a sense of hope. Identify aspects of life that they still enjoy. Discuss future goals they are looking forward to. Make future plans with them.
- Assure them that they won’t always feel the way they are feeling right now. Acknowledge that this is hard. Acknowledge that they are strong. Assure them that there is more in store for them.
- Highlight what motivates them, or makes them unique. Encourage them to recognize their strengths. I may be very powerful for people to hear a perspective of what makes them special and what you admire about them.
- Encourage them to seek professional help. Normalizing and destigmatizing therapy is very helpful. Telling them that they deserve the space to work through this, and they

Parting Glances

Continued from p. 10

(By the way, one of the lesbians of the Village at Stonewall Riots time was BTL co-publisher, Susan Horowitz.)
“The New York Times commented in Storme’s obituary, “Tall, androgynous and armed – she held a state gun permit – Ms. DeLarverie roamed lower Seventh and Eight Avenues, patrolling the sidewalks and checking in at lesbian bars for what she called ‘ugliness’: any form of intolerance, bullying or abuse of her ‘baby girls.’”

An unexpected birthday gift for me that memorable coming-of-age celebration was – compliments of fellow CT artist Edward Flourney – a well-lit birthday cake, which gentleman that I was even back then, I declined to blow in public – especially in such a famous and decorous black-and-tan night club. Best gift of all – still so very long-lasting in my memory – Storme later dropped by our integrated table and wished me a happy birthday and good luck to my round of friends! And a long gay life!

“May all your jewel boxes be filled with glitter and be-proud good times. “ Then ask yourself why “He’s more than just a penis, he’s more

When you meet a gay man, say to yourself, “He’s more than just a penis, he’s more than just a penis …” Then ask yourself why you’re so obsessed with gay penises and how maybe, just maybe, that says a lot more about you than him.

www.PrideSource.com

February 28, 2019 | BTL 11
LGBT Democrats Play Visible Role at DNC Winter Meeting

DNC Chair Tom Perez told LGBT Caucus members he is confident LGBT people and the other diverse communities and working people that make up the Democratic Party’s electoral coalition will succeed in helping a Democratic presidential candidate defeat President Trump in the 2020 presidential election.

Michigan Connection

The Democratic Party’s support for LGBT rights and the election of a record number of LGBT people – nearly all Democrats – to public office in the 2018 midterm elections were widely discussed at the Democratic National Committee’s 2019 Annual Winter Meeting held Feb. 1 through 16 in D.C.

Among those hailing the election of LGBT Democrats to local, state and congressional offices in what is being called the 2018 “rainbow wave” was DNC Chair Tom Perez. Perez mentioned what he called the importance of LGBT Democratic candidates in a keynote speech at the closing session of the annual DNC Winter Meeting on Feb. 16. The meeting was held at D.C.’s Marriott Marquis Hotel.

Perez also elaborated on what he said was the importance of LGBT Democrats running for public office at a meeting of the DNC’s LGBT Caucus held on the opening day of the DNC winter gathering on Feb. 14. Among other things, Perez praised the LGBT community and LGBT Democrats for emerging as a strong force in opposition to the Trump administration’s rollback of LGBT rights policies as well as other issues.

“Our democracy was on fire. You stepped up. You were the first responders,” he told about 85 people attending the LGBT Caucus meeting, including many of the 42 LGBT DNC members who make up the caucus.

“One of the things we learned is candidate quality matters,” said Perez in reference to the Democratic candidates who won their races on the local, state and congressional level in the 2018 midterm election.

“And when they had the likes of Danica Roem running for state legislative seats those things matter,” he said. “And that’s been a huge formula for our success over this cycle.”

He was referring to Danica Roem, the transgender Virginia lawmaker who beat an entrenched anti-LGBT GOP incumbent for a seat in the Virginia House of Delegates, becoming the nation’s first openly trans person to be seated in a state legislature.

In his remarks before the LGBT Caucus and in his speech at the closing session of the meeting, Perez also hailed the election last year of openly gay U.S. Rep. Jared Polis (D-Colo.) as governor of Colorado. He called Polis’ election as the nation’s first openly gay governor “truly historic.”

Perez served as an assistant attorney general and Secretary of Labor in the Obama administration. He told LGBT Caucus members he is confident LGBT people and the other diverse communities and working people that make up the Democratic Party’s electoral coalition will succeed in helping a Democratic presidential candidate defeat President Trump in the 2020 presidential election.

“You’ve been leading the charge to make sure that we are calling out these efforts to turn the clock back,” he said. “It’s painful to me as someone who spent a heck of a lot of time in the Obama administration fighting for equality to see what the Education Department is doing, to see what the Labor Department is doing, to see what the military is doing to turn the clock back for so many communities, including the LGBTQ community,” he said.

Gay Democratic activist Earl Fowlkes, immediate past president of D.C.’s Gertrude Stein Democratic Club, an LGBT group, serves as chair of the DNC’s LGBT Caucus. He outlined the caucus’s plans for working with the DNC to help elect more LGBT delegates to the 2020 Democratic National Convention than any previous convention.

“This is one of the first caucus meetings of the whole weekend,” he told the Washington Blade after the LGBT Caucus meeting on Feb. 14. “And it was very positive. We are still in an afterglow from the rainbow wave that came across the country as part of the blue wave of 2018,” he said.

“There are new faces here,” he continued. “A lot of people are coming as vice chairs and party officials in their own states. So, we can see the movement growing visibly just by the people in this room.”

Among those in attendance were The LGBT & Allies Caucus Vice Chair Mark LaChey, who was elected first vice chair of the Michigan Democratic Party and would become the first openly gay Michigander to serve on the Democratic National Committee; Ray Buckley, the openly gay chair of the New Hampshire Democratic Party; and Terje Anderson, the openly gay chair of the Vermont Democratic Party.

Also attending were gay Wisconsin DNC member Jason Rae, who serves as the DNC’s National Secretary; LGBT Caucus Vice Chair Evangeline Beechler, who serves as Vice Chair of the Idaho Democratic Party; and LGBT Caucus Secretary Laurence Zakson, who holds positions with the California and L.A. County Democratic Party committees.

Also speaking at the LGBT Caucus meeting were leaders of three national LGBT political groups who briefed caucus members and others attending the meeting on the status of LGBT rights initiatives, including the Equality Act, an LGBT civil rights bill pending in Congress.

Among them were former Houston Mayor Annise Parker, who is the executive director of the LGBTQ Victory Fund, which helps elect LGBT people to public office. The others who spoke were JoDee Winterhof, senior vice president for policy and political affairs for the Human Rights Campaign; and Stacey Long Simmons, director of advocacy and action for the National LGBTQ Task Force.

Polis greeted LGBT Caucus members on a video recording projected on a large screen at the caucus meeting. He mentioned some of the initiatives he and his new administration were working on in his first year in office.

“I’m busy being the governor of the great state of Colorado,” he said. “Come visit us some time.”

This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National Gay Media Association.
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BY EVE KUCHASKI

Whether it’s being picked last for kickball in grade school, feeling intimidated in a college lecture hall or enduring a rocky adjustment period to a new job’s work culture, feeling different among one’s peers is possible at any stage in life. And, for those in the LGBTQ community, the role as an “outsider” in certain circles can be lifelong. Though long past his own elementary school days, Craig Pomranz said all those feelings came rushing back to him when his godson came home one day and asked him, “Is there such a thing as a tomgirl?”

“He was feeling awkward. He doesn’t like noise and he’s not so into sports and he was feeling out of sorts with the other kids. I had tried to help him by giving him knitting needles,” Pomranz said.

His godson took to knitting immediately, and soon, his outlet made his issues at school more manageable. Inspired by the experience, Pomranz was compelled to share it.

“Initially, I actually was hoping he’d take dance lessons because I’m a dancer as well,” Pomranz said with a laugh. “But it was an important issue [him not fitting in], and literally came home and wrote it in two hours to tell his story in my way.”

Since publishing the story in a book called “Made by Raffi” in 2014, it has been issued across 11 countries and in eight languages. And, though the book is not an LGBTQ-specific one, Pomranz said that its message of acceptance is one that resonates across all communities — particularly regarding bullying and growing initiatives to end its influence.

Here’s BTL’s conversation with Pomranz on the topic and on the lessons he’s learned since publishing his godson’s story.

Why did you choose to write a children’s book on the subject, and were you surprised by how quickly it took off?

Completely. I think that part of it — it’s a number of things. First of all, I think that as we get older I think we forget how powerful a child’s book can be, how impressionable it is for us as youngsters because we sort of move on. But, if you think about it you go back, you start to realize that all the things you read when you were a kid were important and imposing as well. Because it was so quickly bought, it really tells you that it is a universal story and that everyone struggles with identity and fitting in to some sort of conventional norm. And we have to wonder, ‘Who sets these standards and why do they happen?’

Since it’s become so popular, you’ve received many letters from parents and children’s organizations praising the story and its impact. Is there one instance that stands out to you?

I heard from this man in Turkey who bought the book for his cousin and because his cousin’s son was different than the other kids and he thinks that, particularly in Turkey in this time, they needed to open their eyes to other ideas, and it was difficult for them. It crosses a lot of different issues.

What are some of those issues?

Some parents were writing me and saying that in the book they recognized that their child was, in fact, the bully. That was great. That’s a good thing to know that you can see that and then, how can you help that child change their behavior?

Stopping bullying in recent years has become a strong focus. Do you have any thoughts on stopping it?

I think one of the problems with the whole bullying thing is people try and have this whole concept of stopping bullying. You’ll never be able to stop bullying, so that’s not really the answer. The answer is to find becoming a whole person so you won’t become a victim of bullying, in my opinion. So, obviously, when I was a kid, I was already a professional singer when I was 11, so people thought that was a little odd, but then again I was also raised in a very orthodox community so there were other people that thought that was odd. Everyone has different aspects to them that other people don’t quite see. Mostly because they’re ignorant about it, they don’t understand it, and, once they do, they learn to respect you for who you are and where you are.

You originally wrote the story after your godson asked if he was a “tomgirl.” Why did that pull you to write?

He literally, he was maybe 9 years old when he said that, “Is there such a thing as a tomgirl?” And I immediately thought to myself that tomboy is now a positive thing. [People say], “Really? Oh, she’s assertive!” But if you say “tomgirl” people immediately think, “Oh, tomgirl?” It’s negative. It comes down to, “Why is that? Why should that be?” I’m always taken back to what Gloria Steinem had said once, “We have learned to raise our daughters more like sons but few have the courage to raise our sons more like daughters.” And it resonates so much with me because it’s so true when you think about using the word “girly,” why is that negative? And what does that say to girls? “Oh, you’re girly. That’s bad?” (laughs). It affects me a lot when I see the negativity that goes on around us and the misogynist behavior that goes on around in our world.

What do you hope that the LGBTQ community can take from this story?

I want people to also understand that it is our society and ourselves that put these limitations on people and that it’s very hard for all of us to sort of let go of those limitations. In this case, because I’m talking to your group, I would say every boy who likes to knit or doesn’t like sports isn’t necessarily gay, and every kid who likes sports isn’t necessarily straight. I really hope we can expand our mind to be accepting of everyone and I really, really, hope, especially in the world that we live in now, that we can find kindness. That’s what I hope.

To purchase or find out more information on “Made By Raffi,” go online to amazon.com. To find information about author, Craig Pomranz, go online to craigpomranz.com.
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In "Giant Little Ones," actor Kyle MacLachlan plays a gay divorced dad named Ray Winter parenting a distant teenage son, Franky (Josh Wiggins), who's grappling with his own sexual identity. I repeat: Kyle MacLachlan, a gay dad. The 60-year-old actor's range knows absolutely no bounds, inhabiting diversified worlds and traversing genre, from comedy to drama, from soapy to supernatural.

MacLachlan's first major role was in David Lynch's 1984 adaptation of "Dune" (soon, "Call Me By Your Name" actor Timothée Chalamet will be slipping into MacLachlan's stillsuit for the forthcoming remake) and two years later, in 1986, he collaborated with the screen auteur again on "Blue Velvet," starring alongside Isabella Rossellini. But it was Lynch's early-'90s cult TV series "Twin Peaks" that arguably made MacLachlan a marquee name (in 2017, he reprised his role as Agent Cooper in "Twin Peaks: The Return").

In his three decades in TV and film and on stage, MacLachlan has played a city official based on first big-city openly gay Mayor Sam Adams, Fred Flintstone's boss, the guy who fucks Nomi Malone in a swimming pool, Riley's dad in "Inside Out," Charlotte's husband on "Sex and the City," Bree Van de Kamp's husband on "Desperate Housewives," and because why the hell not: Cary Grant's ghost. Starring in writer-director Keith Behrman's "Giant Little Ones" as Helpful Gay Dad was really just an inevitably, but for MacLachlan, Ray is a warm hug of a role he deeply feels is important. One that, as a parent himself, even hits close to home.

Here, the actor talks about raising his son, Callum, much like Ray Winter does, gay fans who slip into his DMs and bears who love his rosé.

You've played dads before. But what about Ray spoke to you differently?

He had a journey in this as well, which I liked. It was really about the connection with his son, and at that age it's very difficult and made even more challenging by the fact that the parents are separated. Under the circumstances, Franky just doesn't know what to think or what to say, and I like that (Ray) really hung in there. I think in the original draft he was maybe a little more demanding,
and so we kind of softened that a little bit. There are still those issues, but it was really important to me to feel like Ray was there and he wasn’t gonna go anywhere and to remain as non-judgmental as possible.

His presence is always felt, but he’s able to give his kid space at the same time. I appreciated that he tells his son to focus on who you’re drawn to and not what to call it, essentially letting him know that sexuality is a spectrum. How did that resonate with you?

That was a really nice piece of writing on Keith’s part, I thought. Again, trying not to judge. Especially at that age, I remember for myself just kind of trying to find where you fit in, what you’re good at, what you’re not good at, who’s your group. There’s lots and lots of questions and insecurities that are masked by a false sense of identity or control or “I don’t want to hear what you say, I’ve got it figured out myself.” The idea of just being present, it’s the way I approach the relationship with my son, the not judging. I’m not going at it trying to make him into something he doesn’t want to be.

You were the stepfather of a gay son, Andrew Van de Kamp, on “Desperate Housewives.” Who does the better job parenting a queer kid: Orson Hodge or Ray Winter?

(Laughs) Orson, bless his heart. You know, he had good intentions, and there was an understanding there at attempting to connect. I don’t think Orson was ever comfortable in that role. I think Ray is more conscious and he’s a champion, in some ways, for anyone who’s being judged. In this particular case, it’s “hang on a second.” He’s sort of about turning the page: “Let’s look at this and what’s really happening here.” I liked that. And he does it with an inner strength and a firmness, but it’s not without a wry sense of humor, and that I liked about him too.

When were your eyes first opened to having an LGBTQ following?

I think it was probably with “Blue Velvet,” I guess. Thematically it expected so much of the audience and it told a story that was so unusual and so true. That sort of started it, but I think with the advent of social media, suddenly it’s really obvious and present. And it’s great.

How has it become obvious through social media?

Just through comments, and it’s fun to read and great to feel the support. And then because so much of it is built around David Lynch, there’s a real shorthand just in terms of terminology and phrases, and because of David’s visuals and his images and his dialogue, of course.

I have a friend who says “Blue Velvet” was responsible for his sexual awakening. Is that what gay fans tell you on Twitter?

(Laughs) Maybe not quite so personal! But you know, that’s film. Film is all about experiencing something and having your eyes opened, and I think that film in particular was about that; the exploration of it and the themes of it were so interesting, and they hadn’t really been dealt with that much.

What kind of attention did “Showgirls” get you from the LGBTQ community?

(Laughs) I don’t think it found its camp niche until a little bit later. It had to go through the “Oh my god, this is perhaps one of the worst films ever made” reaction and then people sort of said, “I think it was, in a way, a guilty pleasure.” Then that began to grow, and there’s a true hardcore following of it and that’s really fun. I’ve never said, “Oh yeah, in fact, actually, that was the intention,” or, “Oh yeah, it’s a great film” – it’s not a great film. But it succeeds at a level that I think is still entertaining and fun. And why not? That’s our business.

I was at a gay bar once and they were showing “Showgirls” on all the TVs. When you shot that film, did you expect for it to live on in the LGBTQ community like it has?

I think we all entered into the film – certainly, I did – looking at the creative side of it. So you had really talented people – (director) Paul Verhoeven, obviously – and I think his intention was to do something that was sort of hard and cutting-edge and expose and I think it kind of got away from him a little bit and became something else that was unexpected. But at the same time, we’ve all embraced it and said, “This is where it went,” and I gotta say, the film was probably gonna have a much longer life because of how it ended up than if it hadn’t. If it was a film that we intended to make, it would’ve been great and fine and OK, but now, it will live on forever.

Particularly at gay bars.

At least there! And midnight showings!

For 2004’s rom-com “Touch of Pink,” what was special about portraying the ghost of Cary Grant

See Kyle MacLachlan, continued on p. 18
who gives advice to a gay Muslim man?

It was really fun. First of all, just the research alone was great. Getting to watch all the films, reading up about him, who he was as a person and the business side of things in Hollywood and how he really, really created this persona, which I think he tried to get away from but it was what he was known for. So I loved the research of it.

And the director, Ian (Iqbal Rashid), whose story this actually was, was so lovely and I see him occasionally when I'm in London. He's just a terrific person and a very, very talented director, and I was flattered. He had actually seen me on the stage doing a new play with Woody Harrelson and I don't quite know how he got there from that performance (laughs), but he thought I'd be perfect. So that's a pretty big mantle to try to take on, and so we sort of softened that a little bit and said he's more the spirit of Cary Grant – he's not exactly Cary Grant. But I enjoyed stepping in those shoes and trying out that language and that kind of attitude and that whole thing. And it's got a beautiful message, and just the ending when he has to let go, it's very touching, I think.

In 2018, you were honored with a Dorian acting award by GALECA, the Society of LGBTQ Entertainment Critics, for "Twin Peaks: The Return," and in 2009, "Desperate Housewives" received Outstanding Comedy Series from GLAAD. Is there something special or distinct about having your work acknowledged by LGBTQ audiences and organizations?

Yeah, those stories, if they can speak to a community and there's a resonance there, that's the goal of this. They should be universal, but I think that if there's a relationship that can be created then we're doing a good job; something that's worthwhile that creates an emotional response and a connection, that's really what you want. I mean, that's what I want.

Your role as the mayor of Portland in “Portlandia”: Do you think that character would make a good mayor of Twin Peaks or Wisteria Lane?

(Laughs) He wasn't a really good mayor – but he was incredibly enthusiastic! I think that was the fun of it: He always got things a little bit wrong but they kind of ultimately ended up OK, with the help of Fred (Armisen) and Carrie (Brownstein), certainly. But, oh god, at least it would be a lot of fun to have him as a mayor of any community, I think.

Why haven't we seen you in more openly gay roles?

(Laughs) It's a good question. You know, the work just kind of comes, and it's one of those things where once it sort of filters through a little bit of whatever it does in Hollywood it finds its way into my inbox and you take a look at it.

Have there been gay roles you've turned down?

It's always about the quality of the material, so if it there was, it just wasn't worth telling.

But then you read something like “Giant Little Ones.”

And you know that it is a beautiful story. I had the reaction that everyone had: This is a story that needed to be told, and for any kids out there who are having this kind of “I don't know, I don't know” and they don't have anywhere to turn, it's like, well, we're not the answer, but we're at least an experience to say, “You're not alone.”

And a reminder to your own son that his dad is OK with whomever he becomes or wants to be.

In fact, he attends a school in New York and it's all about that. It's all about the acceptance of everyone, and it's a wonderful thing to watch because that wasn’t my experience growing up. Public schools, small town, very conservative. Not unlike the situation of Franky, there was a lot of “however tough you are” and "whatever sports you play," those are your identifiers. It's nice that he's having a completely different experience.

In your spare time, you are a winemaker. Are gay men some of your most loyal rosé buyers?

(Laughs) I should hope so, for god's sake! Rosé is one of those crazy things: It just keeps expanding and people love it and now it's not just for summer anymore, it's not just for the Hamptons anymore. It can be year-round and, yeah, it's been really fun. And yeah, very supportive.

In a queer context “bear” means a hairy, chubby gay man, so it can't hurt that “Pursued by Bear” is the name of your brand.

And in a queer context “bear” means a hairy, chubby gay man, so it can't hurt that “Pursued by Bear” is the name of your brand.

As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBTQ wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Cher, Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. His work has also appeared in GQ, Vanity Fair and Billboard. Reach him via Twitter @chrisazzopardi.
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It’s Not Just Bath Bombs and Rainbows: A Self-Care Series

BY BTL STAFF

Self-care is defined as a self-initiated and motivated function intended to improve one’s general health and well-being and it’s taken off in recent years. In fact, it’s more popular in modern U.S. history than ever before. A 2015 Pew Research Center study found that more millennials reported making self-care-related lifestyle improvements than the generation that came before them through workout regimens, diet plans, therapy and other changes. On Wednesday, March 6, Eastern Michigan University’s LGBTQ Resource Center is hosting a self-care series intended to introduce these positive practices into the lives of Southeast Michigan LGBTQ people.

“Join members of the LGBT Resource Center and Campus Life guest, Caroline Horste, for a discussion on self-care and exercises to practice self-care in your own life with a focus on the intricacies of LGBTQ+ mental health,” wrote event organizers. “LGBTQ+ and questioning folk only.”

The event will be co-hosted by Daisha Dominic of Queer Trans People of Color Conference, Lee Baker of TNQ and Horste.

The event will be held in the Halle Library located at 955 W. Circle Drive, Ypsilanti, in room 302. For more information on this event go online to gaybe.am/cD.
Editor's Pick

Trans/GNA Day of Artivism: Revival

On March 23, Transcend the Binary will partner with the Gender-identity Network Alliance to announce an creative art-making day for #REVIVAL, a day that's important to the transgender and gender non-conforming communities and promotes “a community celebration and space for collective healing, resilience, art and radical self-care.” Going from 3 to 7:30 p.m. attendees are welcome to attend the event. Find out more online at transcendthebinary.org.
Detroit Pistons Equality - Celebrating Pride Night

On March 28 at 7 p.m., the Detroit Pistons will partner with the city’s Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce to put on a Pistons Equality night aimed at supporting the LGBTQ community while taking on the Orlando Magic. Find out more online at gaybe.am/9Z.
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Gov. Gretchen Whitmer encouraged young women in Michigan high schools last week to explore their aptitude for cybersecurity and computer science through the 2019 Girls Go CyberStart program.

"Michigan has long been a leader in innovation that changes the world," Whitmer said. "To maintain our leadership and meet tomorrow's challenges requires us to develop a skilled cybersecurity workforce that can help protect our state's and the nation's most critical assets. We're excited to partner with SANS and to offer this opportunity for high school girls to discover and foster a passion for innovation and cybersecurity."

Participants use the CyberStart Game, an online series of challenges that allow students to act as cyber protection agents to solve cybersecurity-related puzzles and explore relevant topics such as cryptography and digital forensics. Michigan high schools where at least five girls in the Girls Go CyberStart Program master six or more of the challenges will win access to the full CyberStart Game for their entire school, extending the competition to both male and female students for the remainder of the school year. Students will also have the opportunity to win cash prizes for themselves and their schools.

The cybersecurity industry is one of the fastest-growing professions in the country, with the demand for skilled candidates outpacing the current supply. There is also a large gender gap in the workplace where only 11 percent of cybersecurity professionals are women. In Michigan, at least 10 high school girls will each get $500 scholarships to help them pay for college.

Participating students (and their teachers) do not need knowledge or experience in information technology or cybersecurity to participate in the free program. All that is required is a computer and an internet connection. Registration is open now and the games begin on March 20. Interested students and schools can register at girlsgocyberstart.org.

In 2018, the SANS Institute piloted Girls Go CyberStart, a program designed to inspire the next generation of cybersecurity professionals while identifying talented youth. The 2018 program provided the opportunity for 6,650 young women in 16 states to discover and demonstrate their aptitude for cybersecurity.

SUNDAY, MARCH 9 | 8:00 PM

Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit
D. Dan & Betty Kahn Building
Eugene & Marcia Applebaum Jewish Community Campus
6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield, MI 48322

THEBERMAN.ORG | 248.661.1900

Gov. Whitmer Encourages Young Women in Michigan to Participate in Cybersecurity Competition

Last week Michigan's Emergency Vehicle Caution Law, well-known as the Michigan Move Over Law, took effect. In an attempt to prevent injury and death to first responders, this law requires motorists to slow down to at least 10 mph under the posted speed limit and move over for stationary emergency vehicles with their lights activated. Failing to do so could cost a driver two points on their license and $400, while causing death or injury could result in a felony charge and include up to 15 years in prison and a $7,500 fine.

This law applies to the following vehicles:
- Police
- Fire
- Rescue
- Ambulance
- Road Service: including tow trucks and courtesy vehicles operated by the Michigan Department of Transportation.
- Road Maintenance
- Utility Service
- Solid Waste Hauler

The Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning has published a brochure to educate motorists about the topic with included frequently asked questions and answers and a visual guide. To find out more go online to michigan.gov.

Michigan Move Over Law Could Cost Noncompliant Motorists $400
Notable Michigan designers showcase their talent by combining contemporary furnishings with antiques in a series of vignettes.

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Amanda Wolfe

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Meet The Designers
Come meet Corey Damen Jenkins and Amanda Wolfe - Friday, March 8th, Noon til 2:00 pm
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An Important Message to Our
Be Well Medical Center Patients

We’ve been told by patients that they have received unsolicited calls to transfer their care to a provider in Farmington Hills.

We believe a former employee absconded some HIPPA protected information of some of our patients.

We are investigating the matter. If you do receive one of these calls, please notify our office. We’ve been assured by our EMR vendor that your health information is safe and secure.

There has also been some gossip going around that I’m antigay, transgender phobic, and racist. Anyone who actually knows me believes that this is clearly ridiculous and absurd. I’m a proud supporter, and open member of our LGBTQ community since 1980.

Our Be Well team has met and unanimously affirmed to concentrate on continuing our great and sensitive care and not waste our energies on “negative forces” from wherever they are coming, especially social media. We have the experience and self-confidence to know who we are and what we do!

— Dr. Paul Benson

Kindness and Patient Care has been at the Top of Our Priorities since 1980

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

Dr. Paul Benson, mascot Baxter, and the staff at the Be Well Medical Center.