BY ANDREW DAVIS

History was made Jan. 9 as embattled Gov. Rod Blagojevich became the first person in his post to be impeached (formally charged with misconduct) by the State House. The vote, which was in favor of the governor's impeachment by a vote of 114-1, directs the Illinois Senate to put Blagojevich on trial—with the goal of removing him from office.

Later that day, Windy City Times spoke with State Rep. Greg Harris, one of the politicians who voted for Blagojevich's impeachment. Harris talked about various aspects of the vote and what he thought of the governor's press conference that took place earlier that afternoon. (During the press conference, Blagojevich said that he was not surprised by the impeachment—not because of the allegations, but because of ongoing friction between him and the House.)

Windy City Times: I just want to make sure I understand this from a technical perspective: So now it’s all in the Senate’s hands, correct?

Greg Harris: Right, but there are a number of steps. We voted to create an investigative committee to look into the circumstances surrounding the accusations toward the governor. They can determine if, in their mind, there was evidence there for impeachment, to gather that evidence and then make a recommendation to the full House, which they did [Jan. 8]. Today, the House impeached the governor by a vote of 114-1.

Impeachment is akin to an indictment in this case, so it now goes to the Senate, and then there will be a full trial.

WCT: Were you surprised the vote wasn’t unanimous?

GH: [Pauses.] I don’t know if anyone knew what to expect; it’s the first time this has happened in the history of the state. Everyone voted their conscience.

WCT: How difficult was it for you to vote to impeach the governor? What was that whole process like for you?

GH: There were certainly any number of allegations—dozens of pages in the investigative
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Robinson part of inauguration

Openly gay Episcopalian Bishop V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire has been selected to deliver the invocation Sunday, Jan. 18, at a concert that will kick off the inaugural celebrations.

In addition, the Rev. Sharon E. Watkins will deliver the sermon in the National Prayer Service (which ends the ceremonies) at Washington National Cathedral. She will be the first woman to lead that service.

The choices of Robinson and Watkins mark for a diverse group of religious officials who will be involved in religious activities. Obama had already chosen the Rev. Rick Warren, an evangelical minister, to deliver the invocation during the inauguration ceremony—a choice that angered many gay-rights activists, as Warren had gone on the record saying that he was against same-sex marriage (even comparing the concept to incest and pedophilia). Also, the Rev. Joseph Lowery, a Black civil-rights advocate, will deliver the benediction.

Who voted for Prop 8

BY BOB ROEHR

Party identification, ideology, religiosity and age were the factors most likely to determine how a person voted on Proposition 8, California's initiative that banned gay marriage. The report by political scientists Patrick Egan and Kenneth Sherrill was released Jan. 6.

It also called into question an election day exit poll which said that about 70 percent of African Americans had voted in favor of the ban. The report found that Black support for the measure was as low as 59 percent.

The report was based on a new survey of 1,066 California voters soon after the November election, precinct vote totals, and demographic data on those who voted.

“The main story is that California voters have shifted dramatically toward support for same sex marriage,” said Egan, a professor at New York University. Compared with the November exit poll conducted by NEP indicating that 70 percent supported the measure, while Blacks (57 percent) and Latinos (59 percent) supported it.

Egan concluded, “Holding all variables constant, age, religiosity, party identification, and political ideology have strong, significant, and independent effects on how Californians voted on Proposition 8.”

The Black vote

Hunter College professor Ken Sherrill said the exit poll conducted by NEP indicating that 70 percent of African Americans voted for Prop 8 was an outlier unsupported by any other poll, and more importantly, not supported by the actual election returns.” Four other polls around election day found estimates of black support that ranged from 42 percent to 58 percent.

He looked at precinct returns from counties representing two-thirds of California's black voters and merged that with census data. “We came to the conclusion that between 57 and 59 percent of African-American voters supported Proposition 8 ... a far cry from the NEP estimate.”

Higher rates of participation in religious activities appears to explain the higher rates of support for Prop 8 among African Americans and Latinos. “Once we held the effect of attending religious services constant, the effect of race and ethnicity were reduced to statistical insignificance,” said Sherrill.

Knowing someone gay

One surprise is that knowing someone who is gay did not appear to have a significant effect on how the person voted. “This factor appears to have been trumped by voter's party identification and ideology,” said Egan.

Sherrill added, “About two-thirds of California conservatives said they knew or were related to someone who is LGBT. About four out of five of them voted for the referendum,” the same proportion of those who said they didn't know someone LGBT.

“This leads us to the conclusion that, at least in terms of marriage equality, opposition to our rights isn't personal, it's ideological and partisan.”

Looking at broader trends over time Sherrill said, “Support for marriage equality has increased by about 1 percent a year since 2000, and virtually every demographic trend is on our side. This is very recent news. Second is that we face hard core, generally intractable opposition among Republicans and conservatives.”

“Mitigating that is the fact that California is becoming less Republican and more conservative. In fact, hard core opposition to such things as marriage equality may be costing Republicans the support of younger voters.”

Changing minds

“We need to redouble our work with people of faith to overcome the notion that civil marriage of same sex couples somehow threatens their religious liberties,” said Mark Wilson, coordinator with the American African Minister Outreach. “We have to convince them that protecting all families equally is just, moral, and within our own religious realities the moral thing to do.”

He spoke the power of personal stories, of empowering "gays and lesbians within the churches to hold their churches accountable. How can they preach love and goodness while practicing injustice and inequality at the same time, he asked rhetorically.

Egan said, “This has been movement towards marriage equality among religious groups since 2000. “There has been a 9 point movement among Protestants, a 4-point movement among Catholics, and a 7-point movement among Jews. It suggests that not only within the faith are faith and gender not necessarily out of contention.”

Sherrill said, “What we find is that knowing gay people doesn’t make much of a difference for people. It’s another thing to sit down and talk with them about everyday life and what marriage equality really means.” He said that rich and layered understanding of gay people can come through direct contact and through the media.

Scott Davenport, managing director of FreeM to Marry, said, “It is the sustained, ongoing set of conversations that happen one-on-one, among friends, in the culture, and in the media over a long period of time that has created the shift that we see. It is not the flashpoint in the heat of a campaign that moves people along. That sustained work will help us set up a win the next time out.”

The activities were funded by a grant from the Evelyn & Walter Hass, Jr. Fund, through the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Former Task Force executive director is now a grants officer for the Fund with responsibility for its LGBT activities.

A PDF version of the 16-page report is available at www.mathiaskortchy.com/downloads/is-

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Chicago gay groups participated in two protests this past week, both propelled by the November passage of Proposition 8 in California and subsequent protests against them nationwide. The first was a feeder march outside the Hyatt Global Headquarters building at 71 S. Wacker. This was part of an action that began in California in the spring of 2008, when gays discovered that Doug Manchester, owner of the Manchester Hyatt in San Diego, had donated $125,000 to the efforts behind Proposition 8. Since then, protesters have asked the Hyatt Corporation to sever ties from Manchester. (Hyatt manages the hotel for him.) The second protest was a rally at the James R. Thompson Center, 100 W. Randolph, where people gathered to rally against the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) signed into law by then-President Bill Clinton in 1996. Both rallies occurred Jan. 10.

The Hyatt action was called by Equality Illinois, and approximately 50 people braved the extreme cold and thick snowfall to participate. Board president Art Johnston and emcee Allison Leber rallied protesters. People were encouraged to sign a petition that asked Hyatt to take action against Manchester and support “marriage equality.” Johnston talked to Windy City Times about the impetus behind the protest, saying that, “We’re here today to bring the message home to Hyatt that they cannot ignore the actions of Doug Manchester, whose early donation to Proposition 8 certainly helped it pass, leaving us with the consequences.” Some have questioned whether Manchester should be punished for money he gave as a private citizen; Johnston’s response was that “There’s no question that he has a right to spend his money the way he pleases. And we also, as citizens, have the right to bring it to people’s attention and suggest that they might not want to stay at the Hyatt. As long as the sign outside the Manchester hotel says “Hyatt,” Hyatt has to repudiate his actions.”

Among other things, the survey showed that over 90 percent of the seminaries surveyed do not require full-semester, sexuality-based courses for graduation; and that seminaries offer three times as many courses in women’s and feminist studies as they do in LGBTQ studies or other sexuality-related issues. To read the survey, see www.religiousinstitute.org/SeminaryReport.htm.

Ted Lechowicz dies BY YASMIN NAIIR

Former Cook County Commissioner Thaddeus S. “Ted” Lechowicz died Jan. 5 at the age of 70. Lechowicz was from a family of Polish immigrants and was a member of a traditional Chicago Democrat, representing a large Polish-American voting bloc on the city’s Northwest Side, where he spent his entire life.

Despite what many might consider the relatively conservative bent of his Catholic community, Lechowicz was instrumental in getting the Cook County Human Rights Ordinance passed in 1993. Rick Garcia, one of the gay activists who worked on the legislation, told Windy City Times that “We would not have had the ordinance without him, I met with him [on the recommendation of Maria Pappas], and he agreed to cosponsor a comprehensive human rights ordinance with Pappas. This was a huge step because it gave the other white ethnic commissioners the permission and the need to support it.”

This would seem to be an unusual move on the part of what Garcia called a “regular Democrat,” but, according to him, Lechowicz supported the bill for two reasons. One, he “understood the issue and had enough power that it wouldn’t hurt.” In addition, it provided him an opportunity to “stick it to the [supposedly] progressive Democrats” who, according to Garcia, “told us they’d support gay rights and told their suburban [constituents] it would never happen.”

Lechowicz was also unique in that he once had seats in both Illinois Senate and on the County Board. According to Garcia, “He was also helpful in Springfield. I often counted on him to get Democratic support in the Senate.”

Emanuel vacancy has March primary

The race to fill Rahm Emanuel’s U.S. House seat became real as Gov. Rod Blagojevich has set the dates for the primary and general elections. The primary will be held Tuesday, March 3; the general election will take place Tuesday, April 7.

Emanuel’s 6th Congressional seat was officially vacated Jan. 2 when he formally resigned in order to be President-elect Barack Obama’s chief of staff. Over a dozen people have expressed interest in the position, including Cook County Commissioner Mike Quigley and Illinois State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz.

Positively Aware marks 20 years

Positively Aware magazine has marked the 20th anniversary of publishing with a special anniversary edition in the January/February 2009 issue, released last week.

The issue looks back at the history of Positively Aware magazine, which first began publishing as TPA News, the agency newsletter of Test Aware magazine, which first began publishing in 1989 as a quarterly, with the 1991 anniversary edition in the January/February issue.

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WINDY CITY TIMES EXCLUSIVE

Obama answers 1996 gay media

Shown here is a copy of Barack Obama’s typed responses to the Outlines newspaper 1996 primary election questionnaire. Obama signed and dated the form Feb. 15, 1996, sending it to Outlines political reporter Trudy Ring. In 2000, Outlines newspaper purchased and merged with Windy City Times.

1996 statement: ‘I favor legalizing same-sex marriages’
NEWS ANALYSIS BY TRACY BAIM

During the final weeks of the presidential campaign last fall, several media outlets contacted Windy City Times because of an old Internet story from the 1996 Illinois State Senate race. In that campaign, Outlines newspaper, which merged with Windy City Times in 2000, reported that 13th District candidate Barack Obama supported gay marriage. Reporters wanted to know what exactly Obama had said.

Outlines newspaper, as with the new Windy City Times, surveyed candidates for all levels of elected office, and also reported on the results from pro-gay and progressive groups. We summarized the results in that 1996 article by Trudy Ring, but did not list exact answers to questions.

In that article Outlines did note that Obama was a supporter of same-sex marriage; that article was never challenged or corrected by Obama.

Now, in the process of sorting through my 25 years of archives of Chicago gay reporting to eventually post materials on www.ChicagoGayHistory.org, I have found the original surveys on which Ring’s reporting was based. Sometimes, it pays to keep those boxes.

IMPACT, which was Chicago’s main GLBT political action committee for several years, surveyed Obama and other candidates, as did Outlines. What we are including with this special Presidential Inaugural issue of Windy City Times are copies of the answers to the IMPACT and Outlines questions. For IMPACT, the Obama campaign simply responded on the form. For Outlines, the candidate typed in his answers and signed his letter.

More recently, as Obama has run for higher office, from senator to president, he has further shaped his views on marriage, and now he does not back same-sex marriage. In a January 2004 interview I conducted with Obama at the Windy City Times’ office, Obama clearly stated that lack of support for full marriage equality was a matter of strategy rather than principle, but in even more recent comments, it appears he is backing off even further, saying it is more of a religious issue, and also a “state” issue, so he favors civil unions. Both are compromises most gays do not support. First, the U.S. has a separation of church and state, and laws are in place locally and nationally that give benefits based on the very word, “marriage.”

Therefore, marriage as it is now defined is a government (both state and federal) institution that comes with specific financial and social benefits (taxes, benefits, inheritance, immigration, custody, etc.). So, until government eliminates the word “marriage” from state and federal laws, it is a government issue, and that includes the federal government.

Obama’s answer to the 1996 Outlines question was very clear: “I favor legalizing same-sex marriages, and would fight efforts to prohibit such marriages.” There was no use of “civil unions,” no compromise whatsoever.

The IMPACT marriage question was a bit less direct. It asked if Obama would support a Marriage Resolution being considered at the time, which read in part: “Because marriage is a basic human right and an individual personal choice, RESOLVED, the state should not interfere with same-gender couples who [choose] to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities and commitment of civil marriage.”

Obama responded: “I would support such a resolution.” What follows are Obama’s responses in our Windy City Times 2004 interview, six years after his successful 1996 state Senate run, when he was now running for U.S. Senate:

Tracy Baim: Do you have a position on marriage vs. civil unions?

Barack Obama: I am a fierce supporter of domestic-partnership and civil-union laws. I am not a supporter of gay marriage as it has been thrown about, primarily just as a strategic issue, I think that marriage, in the minds of a lot of voters, has a religious connotation. I know that’s true in the African-American community, for example. And if you asked people, ‘should gay and lesbian people have the same rights to transfer property, and visit hospitals, and at cetera,’ they would say, ‘absolutely.’ And then if you ask about, ‘should they get married?’ then suddenly...

TB: There are more than 1,000 federal benefits that come with marriage. Looking back in the 1960s and inter-racial marriage, the polls showed people against that as well.

Obama: Since I’m a product of an inter-racial marriage, I’m very keenly aware of...

TB: But you think, strategically, gay marriage isn’t going to happen so you won’t support it at this time?

Obama: What I’m saying is that strategically, I think we can get civil unions passed. I think we can get SB 101 passed. I think that to the extent that we can get the rights, I’m less concerned about the name. And I think that is my No. 1 priority, is an environment in which the Republicans are going to use a particular language that has all sorts of connotations in the broader culture as a wedge issue, to prevent us moving forward, in securing those rights, then I don’t want to play their game.

TB: If Massachusetts gets marriage and this gives momentum to the proposed federal Constitutional amendment against gay marriage? Obama: I would oppose that. After Obama’s WCT interview, he called to clarify that he opposed the proposed U.S. Constitutional amendment banning gay marriage.

He said he also opposed the proposed state bills banning same-sex marriage.

During his presidential campaign, he has remained consistent with his 2004 position, but clearly he has moved away from the 1996 statement of “I favor legalizing same-sex marriages.” A rose is a rose is a rose, but civil unions are not “marriage” unless 100 percent of the benefits are the same across all states and the federal government.

The full 2004 interview can be found at: http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/ARTICLE.php?AID=3931

Tracy Baim is publisher and executive editor of Windy City Times. She was the co-founder and publisher of Outlines newspaper.

From a photo from Windy City Times archives, 2004
Putting Obama's questionnaire in context

BY TIMOTHY STEWART-WINTER

In this issue of the Windy City Times, the world learns for the first time that almost thirteen years ago, during his first campaign for office, Barack Obama answered a questionnaire with the phrase, “I favor legalizing same-sex marriages.” The response appeared in a questionnaire that his campaign faxed to the office of Outlines—a local LGBT newspaper that purchased and merged with Windy City Times in 2000—on Feb. 15, 1996. Later that year, in its voter guide for the general election, Outlines summarized Obama’s positions: “Supports gay rights, same-sex marriage; increased AIDS funding, abortion rights, affirmative action.”

Publisher and Executive Editor Tracy Baim retrieved the form from her archives while working on the Chicago Gay History Project. Her release of the document occurs at a unique time. On Jan. 20, for only the third time since the Stonewall riots, a new Democratic president will be sworn in. Some LGBT activists, infuriated by the president-elect’s decision to invite evangelical pastor Rick Warren to pray at his inauguration, argue that Obama must do better than the last two Democratic presidencies, which they believe have resulted in pro-gay judicial appointments but too little else. Jimmy Carter was the first to invite gay activists to a White House meeting (which he did not attend); Bill Clinton was the first to pursue gay voters during his presidential campaign. Yet Carter said little to nothing in the course of Anita Bryant’s national anti-gay crusade, and Clinton’s left us with the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

To put Obama’s stunning statement in context, it helps to know how things were going for him in mid-February 1996: he was in the middle of a messy standoff with the 13th District’s incumbent state Senator, Alice Palmer. After promising not to run for reelection and publicly endorsing Obama, a civil rights lawyer who had never held office, Palmer changed her mind in December 1995 and tried to get back into the race. For several weeks, neither candidate backed down, while local political leaders sought a resolution. The conflict would end in a matter of days, when Obama supporters successfully challenged the validity of signatures collected by Palmer’s campaign. But on the day the fax went to Outlines, Obama was an unlikely candidate, up against a progressive incumbent in a very progressive district, who needed all the help he could get.

Earlier, in January, Obama had filled out his first known questionnaire on LGBT issues, which his campaign faxed to IMPACT Illinois, which was then the state’s LGBT political action committee. Instead of asking about marriage directly, IMPACT asked candidates if they would support a resolution stating that “marriage is a basic human right and an individual personal choice” and that the state “should not interfere” with same-sex couples’ right to marry. Obama’s response, which appears to bear similarities to his handwriting on other documents from the period that have been released, was “I would support such a resolution.” Other answers, expressing unfamiliarity with HIV laws and with two openly gay candidates for office, reflect Obama’s inexperience.

The two questionnaires are an artifact, of course, of a very different moment in Obama’s history, but also in the history of the same-sex marriage debate. Beginning in 1995, after the highest court in Obama’s native Hawaii began seeking to force that state to grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples, legislators in statehouses nationwide stampeded to ban the practice preemptively. On Feb. 13, 1996, just two
Three years after the Illinois Human Rights Act amendment that bans sexual-orientation and gender-identity discrimination went into effect, the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) has seen its fair share of complaints being filed. Windy City Times talked with IDHR Director Rocco Claps about the complaints as well as domestic-partner benefits.

Windy City Times: How are things going with the amendment and filing?

Rocco Claps: What I find really interesting—and you should know that when I talk about numbers, I have three different stacks in front of me and we keep numbers by fiscal year—is that no matter if you look at fiscal year or calendar year, we see a distinct increase. So far, within 2009, 5 percent of all the charges coming in [involve] sexual orientation and gender identity, which is a big increase for us; originally, it was about 1 percent in '06.

WCT: And what do you attribute that increase to?

RC: We have an increase in charges coming in, which I [attribute to] the economy. Typically, the most vulnerable employees in a workplace setting are the ones who are victimized first, fired first or treated differently when the economy gets bad. We’ve seen that in repeated patterns over the years, so that’s not so surprising to me. What is surprising is that we’re at 5.3 percent—and I do believe that because people know that we exist.

WCT: Well, I want to go back to something you said: You talked about a correlation between filing and economic hardships. So, when people have jobs, do they tend to not file and possibly [put up] with possible harassment?

RC: Well, it’s very individualized, but we know that people are getting laid off more often now. People have less options; in other words, they can’t find jobs [as easily]. That may prompt people to file, so that they can possibly get back pay or their jobs back. But we find that individu-als in the workplace who are more vulnerable to discrimination tend to be the first ones to be fired first.

WCT: OK. I’m a sociologist, but what does that say about employees and employers?

RC: Frankly, I’m much more prompted to feel discrimination if I don’t have options; unfortunately, people tend to fire those who are different from [themselves] or who they don’t like—and if I’m one who is fired or laid off, and I don’t have an immediate ability to find another job, I think that my life is more affected by it so I might try to get some sort of remedy for it.

WCT: The other bases of discrimination [besides employment] include real-estate transactions; public accommodations; sexual harassment in the workplace; and [payment of] financial credit. Could you explain that last one?

RC: Basically, it’s issuance of a loan, but keep in mind that real-estate transactions covers business transactions as well.

WCT: How long does it take to process a complaint?

RC: We’re in pretty good shape right now. Our average number is about 320 days right now; we’re required by law to process a claim in 365 days, and that’s from walking in the door to a resolution. And about 33 percent of our charges are settled within the agency; we offer mediation throughout so the parties often come to terms within the process of investigation.

WCT: How much evidence does a person need? Obviously, the more evidence you have, the better off you are.

RC: It varies by what they’re charging. But in our typical charge—employment—we tell people to bring in comparables. If a gay man is alleging harassment, you should be able to [show] that he is being treated differently than a straight man who does the same job he does. In employment cases, showing comparables of-the same work makes a huge difference.

WCT: As a snapshot of fiscal year ‘09 (from July ‘08 to today), we’ve had 89 sexual-orientation charges and, of those, 11 are related to gender identity. But we’ve also had 2 bisexual, 67 ho-mosexual, 2 heterosexual and 3 perceived orien-tation.

Visit www.state.il.us/dhr or call 312-814-6200.

LGBT couple murdered in Indianapolis by ANDREW DAVIS

A man arrested Dec. 31 for two murders in Indian-apolis has admitted to committing the crimes, according to WTHR.com. Christopher Cornell, 20, confessed to Indianapo-lis Metro Police Detectives that he killed Avery Elzy, 34 (who police said lived an “alternative” lifestyle, according to the Web site), and Michael Hunt, 22, on Dec. 26 at the couple’s house at 5853 Rosslyn. One of the couple’s three dogs was also killed.

When asked what was meant by “alternative,” Sgt. Paul Thompson of the Indianapolis Police Department told Windy City Times Jan. 8 that the couple was “in the LGBT spectrum.” Thompson added that, so far, the double murder does not look like a hate crime; however, authorities are still investigating the motive.

RC: You should know that the bill that the gov-ernor signed in 2005 does say “perceived sexual orientation,” so that would be valid in Illinois as well. So it can be someone who isn’t gay but who is treated like they’re gay.

WCT: When you and I talked in ‘07, something you said regarding outreach was that you felt that you all could do more downstream. How has that progressed?

RC: Well, we need to do better at it. We’ve done a number of informational workshops around the state, and sexual orientation is al-ways part of those events because it’s part of the law. We’ve partnered with Equality Illinois in a number of things here in Chicago and a few places downstate, but we need to do a better job of that. It’s always a challenge when you have budget restrictions and you’re teaching people about what’s available to them.

I do think that it’s getting through, which is why we have an increase in charges. We’ve had an increase every year since the bill became law.

WCT: To our knowledge, have you received a substantial number of gender identity-relat-ed complaints?

RC: As a snapshot of fiscal year ‘09 (from July ‘08 to today), we’ve had 89 sexual-orientation charges and, of those, 11 are related to gender identity. But we’ve also had 2 bisexual, 67 ho-mosexual, 2 heterosexual and 3 perceived orientation.

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From left: The Rev. Stan Sloan, Mayor Richard Daley and 46th Ward Alderman Helen Shiller. Photo by Emmanuel Garcia

Mayor attends Chicago House ceremony

BY EMMANUEL GARCIA

Chicago House and Social Service Agency invited Mayor Richard Daley to the Uptown neighborhood for a ribbon-cutting to unveil the new Families Building on the North Side. The Rev. Stan Sloan, the organization’s CEO, said the apartment-style residential building cost over $2 million. Although a large portion of the funds came through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, half of the cost was paid by private donations.

The apartment units are for families whose lives have become complicated or affected by the HIV/AIDS virus. The site is part of a city-wide effort to combat the homelessness that the HIV/AIDS virus causes.

The apartment units are for families whose legal situation; they weren’t criminal, certainly threaten the healthcare costs because of his legal situation; and the biggest state of the union. The refusal of the governor so that is legally allowable into the entire conference. It felt like the same old “secretive” process that had happened during the No on 8 campaign.” — Veteran lesbian activist Robin Tyler on Dec. 30 protesting a decision to limit media access during portions of a big Jan. 24 summit in Los Angeles where more than 250 gay activists will organize and strategize on how to win back same-sex marriage in California. Sum- mit organizers have said they are worried that activists will organize and strategize on how to challenge the decision by Obama to spend political capital. It was made with the certitude that a leader with a mandate can do no wrong.” — New York Times columnist Frank Rich, Dec. 28.

“I RESIGNED FROM THE PLANNING COM- MITTEE of the Equality Summit because I felt that the press should be al- lowed into the entire con- ference. It felt like the same old ‘secretive’ process that had happened during the No on 8 campa- ign.” — Veteran lesbian activist Robin Tyler on Dec. 30 protesting a decision to limit media access during portions of a big Jan. 24 summit in Los Angeles where more than 250 gay activists will organize and strategize on how to win back same-sex marriage in California. Summit organizers have said they are worried that activists will organize and strategize on how to challenge the decision by Obama to spend political capital. It was made with the certitude that a leader with a mandate can do no wrong.” — New York Times columnist Frank Rich, Dec. 28.

“MLK, Jr., open mic on Jan. 19

On Jan. 19, Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, will welcome Pow-wow Chicago for an open mic event in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., Day and in acknowledgement of the upcoming inauguration of the first African-American Presi- dent, Barack Obama.

The event—which will feature female poets, writers and performers—will take place 7-9 p.m. Admission is $5; for more info, e-mail creid@centeronhalsted.org or visit www.powwowchi- cago.org.

CJR’s South Side march Jan. 19

The Coalition of Justice and Respect (CJR) will hold a march Monday, Jan. 19, at 10 a.m. that will begin at E. 3rd, 7900 S. among other things, CJR will march “for respect of African-American gay men and lesbians and against racism in the LGBT community.” For more information, call 773-559-1751.


Mark your calendars:

State Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., Dec. 18 after Barack Obama announced that prominent evangelical preacher Rick Warren will deliver the invocation at the presidential inauguration.

“I HAVE DECIDED TO DECLINE THE INVITA- TION to attend the inauguration as I cannot be part of a celebration that highlights and gives voice to someone who advocated repeal- ing rights from me and millions of other Cali- fornians. (Rick) Warren actively works to divide Americans based on who we are and has been an ardent supporter of efforts to ostracize LGBT Americans.” — Equality California Executive Di- rector Geoff Kors Dec. 18 after Barack Obama announced that prominent evangelical preacher Rick Warren will deliver the invocation at the presidential inauguration.

“WHAT I THINK THE MORE VISIBLE WE ARE, the more difficult it is for people to be prejudiced, and it just spreads; it’s going to spread like a good virus around the world. Unfortunately there are still countries in this world where homosexuality is punishable by death and there’s dozens of them that can put you in jail and will put you in jail. So we’ve got a long way to go. Here we are complaining that you can’t get married, and if you’re in Nigeria they’ll hack you to death. So there’s still a long way to go. The easiest way to support it is to be out and be active here.” — Openly lesbian tennis great Martina Navratilova to the Vancouver gay newspaper Xtra! West, Oct. 23.

“BOTH POLES OF THE GAY RIGHTS MOVE- MENT, FROM GRASSROOTS activists to pol- ished politicians, complain that they were shut out of No on 8’s decision-making process from the start.” — The Advocate, Dec. 16.

“WE SPENT A LOT OF TIME TOGETHER AND I’M CURIOUS if you feel that all of our intimate cuddling and spooning all night long might have been a little too much more enjoyable than you would like to admit.” — Openly gay “Survivor: Gabon” player Bob Crowley to winner Bob Crowley during the final episode, Dec. 14.

“You’re a wonderful person. I like you a lot. And you’re nice and warm at night. I didn’t gave a hoot.” — “Survivor: Gabon” winner Bob Crowley, in response to Haggard.


—Assistant: Bill Kelley

“HE SAYS HE IS STILL THE GOVERNOR, the governor until the Senate votes to convict him on impeachment charges.” — WCT: Were your impressions of Blake Haggard different after the press conference?

GH: I would say that he has a vastly differ- ent perception of what is going on around him than I think the rest of the people in Illinois do. Whether you agree with the impeachment or you don’t, I wouldn’t say that—as given what’s happened in the last month, culminating with today—things put the governor in a very bad situation. And for him to get up and say that “it’s business as usual” makes you wonder if he’s paying attention or if he’s listening to the same stuff we are.

And the people of Illinois are put in a bad position. We cannot pay our bills, it’s cestus us another $20 million to borrow money to pay healthcare costs because of his legal situation; the state’s bond rating has been downgrad- ed—and we’ll suffer for years because of the situation. He doesn’t seem to grasp that he has a part in this.

WCT: Also, just to clarify: Even during the
Will 2008 be the end of hate?

There is a great deal of frustration and anger these days directed at those who oppose gay marriage. By discussing these topics, I often hear words like “hate,” “bigot,” “judgmental” and “intolerant.” While it’s completely understandable to react this way, it’s not always a fair characterization of the people who oppose us. And even if it is fair, it’s not the most respectful response. I’d like to propose an alternative—please hear me out:

The word “hate” is defined as “detesting, having intense dislike, extreme hostility, or animosity toward something or someone.” By this definition, there are unquestionably those who hate LGBT people. Those who physically or verbally harm others due to their sexual orientation or who eternally condemn us by stating that “God hates fags” are clearly hateful. But fortunately, these people are a small subset, still occasionally visible, minority. In any case, we have the choice to respond to their hatred by hating them in return.

Putting them aside, there are far more people who simply disagree with us when it comes to gay marriage. While their denial of us having the same rights as they have is clearly unjustifiable, I don’t see that as hate. Hate is a strong word, and disagreement is not hate. In many cases it’s just ignorance. Some people fear and oppose those that which they don’t understand or care to understand. Others just rely on the stereotypical images often portrayed by the media, or they object to changing the definition of marriage. Whatever their reasons, just because someone disagrees with us, it doesn’t necessarily mean that they hate us.

I have some very good straight Christian friends that simply don’t agree with me on certain topics—gay rights being one of them. While this frustrates me, I don’t question for a minute that they love me. Catholics and Democrats; Christians and Jews; and gays and straights all love each other and still disagree. If love is the unconditional acceptance of someone regardless of the parts of them that we may find unfavorable, then we are kind to a person in spite of any good qualities that they may have. So, even if someone does not accept one part of who we are (as much as that feels like a complete rejection of our personhood), it doesn’t mean that they reject every part of us.

So maybe they don’t hate us; they’re just judgmental, intolerant bigots. Well, to judge is simply to have an opinion or an estimation after careful consideration. Bigotry is intolerance of any differing viewpoint from one’s own. And intolerance is not respecting or recognizing someone else’s opinions. We all have opinions and make judgments, but where the line is crossed is if someone is either not willing to listen to another’s perspective or they form a judgment based only on their own sexual orientation (or appearance, age, etc.). But it’s entirely possible for someone to hear and acknowledge someone else’s viewpoint—generally respect his or her opinions, irrespective of disagree. In that case, it’s not judgmental, bigoted or intolerant. It’s simply honest disagreement. I realize that some of this is semantic, but words have power and we have to be careful how we use them. Please understand that I am in no way saying that we should not respond to those who oppose us. Without those who have bravely stood up to injustice and demanded equality, we would not be where we are today. But when we respond to those who oppose us in a way that effectively gets our point across while still respecting those who oppose us.

Those who truly hate LGBT people will probably respond by saying, “Well, it’s true. They’re not productive to engage in a dialogue with them. But for the vast majority of others, I doubt that we are trying to change their minds by calling them haters when they don’t genuinely hate us, or by calling them judgmental, intolerant bigots when they simply disagree with us. Perhaps taking these sorts of inflammatory words out of our conversations (even in cases where the words are justified) will invite a sense of respect toward us that will lead to an openness to further discussion and understanding. I think this is a far more productive approach.

It’s certainly understandable for us to respond to rejection with anger and hatred, but I don’t think that’s the best and most effective option. As Gandhi said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” So in 2008, let’s be the change by not judging those who we feel are being judgmental. Let’s be the change by respecting the opinions of those who we don’t feel are being intolerant of us. Let’s be the change by respecting the opinions of those who disagree with us. And maybe if we don’t see the end of hate…

Ron Robert is a freelance writer and is a co-founder and board member of Reconciling Ministries Network, an affirming fellowship for LGBT Christians and their allies; contact him at ron@gbchristian.org.
Dancin’ Feats
BY ZACHARY WHITENBURG

Although Hubbard Street Dance Chicago has been amassing works by Israeli dancemaker-cum-movement revolutionary Ohad Naharin since the waning days of the Conte administration, the occasion to see dancers chosen, trained and directed by Naharin himself could well be the most important event of an already landmark season. En marked contrast to the precious significance assigned to individual pieces of choreography, Naharin treats even his most celebrated works as modular parts of larger collection, organizing and rearranging them at will into grand montages. One of the more traveled of these, Deca Dance, will alone represent the Batsheva Dance Company upon its first visit to Chicago since the mid-’70s.

Composed of excerpts from eight pieces dating from between 1992 and 2008, Deca Dance is sewn together by a total reinvention of dance vocabulary—a new and unorthodox vocabulary that Naharin has refined for over a decade. Drawing from currents in movement therapy and somatic studies, gaga has become a tool Naharin uses to “find” movement within the body, as opposed to imposing forms upon it—it’s what gives all his dances such thrilling unpredicability and ease. Combined with an uncommonly delicate touch with body language and a tendency toward evasive, seemingly dangerous abandon, his innumerable strengths as a choreographer make him one of dance’s most groundbreaking artists.

Batsheva Dance Company at the Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Congress, Feb. 7 at 7:30 p.m. and Feb. 8 at 2 p.m. Tickets and more information are at http://auditoriumtheatre.org.

—Four years ago I attended a touring festival of Japanese contemporary dance in Montréal and it remains one of the most enjoyable, unsettling and bizarre performances I’ve ever seen. One troupe on that program, Sennichimae Blue Sky Dance Club, appears here as part of the triple bill Japan Dance Now at the Dance Center. Bold pop repackagings of the generally arch-serious dance form butoh, Sennichimae are bringing selections from 2006’s The End of Water. Complementing the evening are BABY-O with the aggressive solo-and-video piece E/G-Ego Geometria and Nibroll, whose Coffee (2002) promises a trip into volatility. What happens in Japan’s modern dance scene is unlike anything on Earth: Be sure to venture out for a look at what the other hemisphere is up to.


—Suburban balletomane get the goods brought to them when Sergei Radchenko’s Russian National Ballet Theatre brings its by-the-book Swan Lake to the McNinch Arts Center at the College of DuPage, 425 Fawell, Glen Ellyn, Jan. 11, at 2 and 7 p.m., $36-46.

—Local treasure and recent Lucky Plush addition Asmina Chermos keeps things interesting this month with two happenings: Jan. 14 finds her and Fred Longish-Holm in the beer cooler at the Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia. For the latest installment of the Immediate Sound Series, which this month features their “microgig” along with a quartet of musicians and a DJ set by art dealers Gorbatov vs. Dempsey. On Jan. 17 Chermos will perform with and host Baltimore composer Jon Berndt at Silverspace, 1474 N. Milwaukee, at 8 p.m. Find more information about her many projects at asminachermos.com.

—CDI/Concert Dance, Inc. Director Venetia Stifler isn’t about to get caught up in iPhone mania: Her newest work, Digital Fidgeting, shines the hard light of reason on compulsive behavior in an always-on world, as part of communication-themed mixed bill Talk to Me. It’s at the Ruth Page Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn, Jan. 16-18 and 23-25, at 8 p.m., with Sunday performances at 3 p.m. $20. See www.ruthpage.org.

—Populist new-music group Fulcrum Point taps the local dance scene by inviting Thodos Dance Chicago to join in for Modern Myths. The company will premiere founder Melissa Thodos’ new Arias, with Fulcrum Point handling the Stockhausen. It’s at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph, Jan. 20 at 7:30 p.m. The admission ($15-30) includes a complimentary post-performance wine-and-plates reception. Details are at fulcrumpoint.org, thodosdancechicago.org and harristheaterchicago.org.

—Bona fide Argentinean tango is unforgiving to all but its most expert practitioners. Fortunately, that’s exactly who will be on stage for Tango Fire, an internationally touring showcase with enviable production values and a lot of leg. At the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Jan. 24 at 3 and 8 p.m., $45-85.

—Camille Saint-Saëns’ The Carnival of the Animals is one of my favorite ballet scores—if you want to introduce your kids to the good stuff, New York Theatre Ballet is performing it, along with an abbreviated Sleeping Beauty, at the Harris, Jan. 30 at 8 p.m. and Jan. 31 at 2 and 8 p.m. See above for venue details.

—Peripheral to the Japan Dance Now festival is a special single, free performance of Blue Sky Black Monk, a collaboration between Sennichimae Blue Sky Dance Club and Chicago’s Black Monks of Mississippi. One can only wonder at what will happen when Sennichimae’s pop-meets-butoh approach meets the Black Monks’ Southern Baptist-meets-Buddhist stylings. Find out Feb. 3 at Experimental Station, 6100 S. Blackstone, at 6 p.m.
Miss Saigon

As Kim’s conflicted Marine, Chris, the strapping Kevin Vortmann sings wonderfully and gets his character’s anguish across (although he isn’t as convincing in his introspective Why God, Why falling-in-love song). Also providing strong support is John Sanders as the Marine John; Melissa Dye as Chris’ American wife, Ellen; and Jean D’Angelo as the villainous Thuy. The rest of the ensemble throws themselves into the roles and Stacey Flaster’s gyrating choreography.

The spectacle in this Miss Saigon might not be as grand as its original production. Yet Drury Lane comes through where it counts emotionally, and that’s more important.

Look, What I Don’t Understand

All my grandparents did it. They sailed into the unknown (literally sailed, before air travel), seeking freedom and a better life in a fabled, far-off land. From America’s Pilgrim forebears, through waves of 19th-century European immigration, to late-20th-century Asian and Balkan arrivals, the tale of flight, escape and hope is familiar. Sometimes I’ve been moved to tears sensing the courage and desperation that made my grandparents—and millions of others—take such a leap of faith. Likewise, a gug in any language is brutal and too familiar, whether gulags of the Czars and Soviets, the Nazi “labor camps,” the Cambodian killing fields or the not-so-friendly confines of Cuba, courtesy of Castro and/or Guantanamo.

The Quest for Freedom, then, is a general story which frequently features an Escape from Persecution subplot. But the general story can be filled with personal and particular details: the conversation overhead, the bottle of cognac as a bribe, the hair-breath escape, the unexpected gun, the gift of a radio, etc. It was my grandparents or your cousins or even you who took the journey. In the case of newly minted actor and ensemble member Kevin Vortmann, he/they arrived in Chicago unknown, but they appear to have the talent to achieve things if they stay.

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THEATER REVIEW

**Touch**
Playwright: Toni Press-Coffman
At: New Leaf Theatre at Lincoln Park Cultural Center, 2045 N. Lincoln Park West
Phone: 773-516-3546; $12-$18
Runs through Feb. 14

**BY SCOTT C. MORGAN**

Touch could be any run-of-the-mill tale of love won and tragically lost if it weren’t for an unexpected series of storytelling choices made by playwright Toni Press-Coffman. New Leaf Theatre rises to Press-Coffman’s challenge by doing its own smart subversions in its richly emotional and moving staging. Press-Coffman’s 1999 drama unfolds largely as a series of solo reminiscences by Kyle, an astronomer relating his courtship and blissful marriage to a free-spirited woman named Zoe.

Despite being seemingly mismatched (Kyle is a taciturn loner who finds solace in science; Zoe wears garish clothing and gregariously collects friends), they complete each other in the perfect sense.

Actor Dan Granata inhabits Kyle so honestly and commandingly that you feel every rush of joy and warmth as he reveals how Zoe opens him up to be a more expressive and emotional man. Yet you’re also worried because Kyle’s past-tense storytelling foreshadows that the happiness will end.

So when Zoe disappears while doing a mundane errand one Thanksgiving, you share Kyle’s utter despair, anger and shock. That’s when Kyle starts to close up and other characters barge in to relate what happens, sharing their side of the story and recreating events past as in real time. As Kyle’s childhood science buddy friend, Ben-dane errand one Thanksgiving, you share Kyle’s story and recreating events past as in real time. As Kyle’s childhood science buddy friend, Ben-dane errand one Thanksgiving, you share Kyle’s story and recreating events past as in real time. As Kyle’s childhood science buddy friend, Ben-dane errand one Thanksgiving, you share Kyle’s story and recreating events past as in real time.
To be sure, Catherine and her eclectic band of co-workers embrace their newfound status as independent wage-earners (and later, martyrs) with proto-feminist enthusiasm—faltering at times, but always rallying to their purpose. Her war-veteran husband has his moments of ambivalence, but remains devoted to his wife. The villains emerge as less than monsters, however. (Recall that in the early part of the 20th century, “radiation” was not the immediately sinister threat it became after the advent of nuclear weapons.)

Rachel Walsh’s direction for this Rivendell Theatre Ensemble production likewise shuns cheap-weep melodrama. Instead, Rebecca Spen- ce (nestled cozily in Jessica Kuehnau’s scenic-collar) conveys with intelligent compassion Catherine’s spiritual growth from humble protector of her own loved ones to crusader on behalf of a “family” encompassing a nation of workers like herself. In this, she is ably supported by Justine C. Turner, Jessie Fisher and Ashley Neal’s loyal comrades, along with Sean Cooper and Ron Wells as various men, supportive and otherwise. History lessons should all be this engaging.

By Mary Shen Barnidge

Madame Curie, just previous to her discovery in 1898 of the hitherto unknown element that would be called radium, said that she “hoped it would be a pretty color.” When it proved to be a delicate blue substance that glowed softly in the dark like an angel’s halo, it quickly became the prime ingredient in the coating on industrial machine and clock-face dials. But it was also highly radioactive. And while a single wrist-watch might not present a danger to its wearer, the women employed at the downstate Illinois factory who painted the numbers onto hundreds of timepieces every day—working bare-handed in small rooms, moistening their tiny brushes with their own salvia—soon began to complain of mysterious illnesses.

Melanie Marnich’s docudrama recounts the story of Catherine Wolf Donohue, who took legal action against the businesses permitting these hazardous conditions. (After several appeals, she finally won her case, only days before her death—the publicity meanwhile spurring manufacturers to implement safety measures in their operations.) And though it’s easy to imagine this chronicle as a 1930s-style populist propaganda film, sneering corporate bosses exploiting poor and helpless females, playwright Marnich is not so much interested in assigning blame or villanizing villains as less than monsters, however. Instead, Rebecca Spencer’s scenic-collar conveys with intelligent compassion Catherine’s spiritual growth from humble protector of her own loved ones to crusader on behalf of a “family” encompassing a nation of workers like herself. In this, she is ably supported by Justine C. Turner, Jessie Fisher and Ashley Neal’s loyal comrades, along with Sean Cooper and Ron Wells as various men, supportive and otherwise. History lessons should all be this engaging.

To be sure, Catherine and her eclectic band of co-workers embrace their newfound status as independent wage-earners (and later, martyrs) with proto-feminist enthusiasm—faltering at times, but always rallying to their purpose. Her war-veteran husband has his moments of ambivalence, but remains devoted to his wife. The villains emerge as less than monsters, however. (Recall that in the early part of the 20th century, “radiation” was not the immediately sinister threat it became after the advent of nuclear weapons.)

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The cast of the pre-Broadway production of Dirty Dancing: The Classic Story on Stage co-hosted a party with The Joffrey Ballet at the Joffrey Tower, 10 E. Randolph, on Jan. 5 to celebrate the opening of Academy of Dance, Official School of The Joffrey Ballet.

The evening featured two live music and dance sets by members of the Dirty Dancing cast, plus a silent auction and deluxe cocktail reception.


Good ‘Dirty’ fun

Entertainment news

Openly gay British talk-show host Graham Norton is planning to give the annual Eurovision Song Contest—which will take place in May in Moscow, Russia—a more risque feel than his predecessor, Sir Terry Wogan, did, according to PinkNews.co.uk. Norton, whose TV shows involve nudity and blue humor, said that “the show goes on quite late so I plan to do some jokes.” According to Wikipedia, the most notable winning Eurovision artist was ABBA, who won the contest for Sweden in 1974 with the song Waterloo.

Deborra-Lee Furness—the wife of hunky leading man Hugh Jackman—is growing tired of the gay rumors surrounding her husband. According to People.com, Jackman told the magazine that “she said the most infuriating times would be in the bathroom because all she’d hear is: ‘Is he or isn’t he gay?’” “I don’t know, he’s married. ‘Oh, who cares? I’m sure he’s gay,”

The movie Mamma Mia! has broken a record in the United Kingdom, according to IMDb.com. Twenty-five percent of all British households own a copy of the DVD, making it the biggest-selling film there, ever, beating out The Curse of the Black Pearl.

Howard K. Stern, the former attorney of the late Anna Nicole Smith, has apparently filed the allegation in her book about Smith called Blond Ambition.

Comedienne Kathy Griffin faced a lot of criticism from CNN after co-hosting that station’s New Year’s Eve telecast with Anderson Cooper, according to TheImproper.com. When Griffin mentioned that she might host a reunion of Bad Girls Club, Cooper and somebody off-camera started kidding her about it. “Screw you. Why don’t you get a job, buddy?” she screamed to the off-camera guy. “You know what? I don’t go to your job and knock the d**ks out of your mouth.”

Jennifer Hudson, Beyonce Knowles and Alicia Keys have received NAACP Image Award nods for their singing and acting. People.com reported. Hudson—still grieving the losses of her mother, brother and nephew after they were killed last year—led all nominees with seven nominations. The awards ceremony will air Feb. 12 on FOX.

Nicole Kidman felt that her latest movie, Australia, would be savaged by critics because she was not proud of her own work in the film, according to IMDb.com. Appearing opposite Hugh Jackman as British aristocrat Lady Sarah Ashley in the movie, Kidman said that she “couldn’t connect emotionally” to her character.

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The Curious Case of Benjamin Button
By RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, the sumptuous romantic epic that marks the third collaboration between director David Fincher and Brad Pitt. Who would’ve thought Fincher, with his overtly sour resume, would make what on first look is a thriller and drama is a romantic tragedy.

The story is told in flashback by the dying Daisy to her daughter (Julia Ormond) as Hurricane Katrina is about to strike New Orleans. This hoary old framing device offers Blanchett the chance to create a character’s such a cipher. Blanchett, playing the elusive Benjamin, though for the first hour of the picture he also gets to play old and narrator, the voiceovers begin to sound like parody a second time around. But there is something undeniably cool and weird and oddly compelling here— it’s a movie that goths will surely adore—and whatever it is swept me away the first time I saw the film.

Overall, the film seems more like a beautiful curio than anything else, a sort of artsy-fartsy Forrest Gump with the love affair played out against the great events of the 20th century (not unexpected, as both scripts were penned by Eric Roth, with this one co-written by Robin Swicord). The relationship between Benjamin and Daisy has many of the stop/start aspects of Pip and Estella from Dickens Great Expectations that Roth also used in Gump, but there’s not nearly as much of Pip’s romantic yearning that practically leaves off Dickens’ pages.

Pitt, as Benjamin, says a lot more in voiceover than he ever seems to impart to Daisy (and the less said about Pitt’s affair during the strange Russian episode with Tilda Swinton, playing yet another iceberg, the better). Also, like Gump, many of the voiceovers begin to sound like parody a second time around. But there is something undeniably cool and weird and oddly compelling here— it’s a movie that goths will surely adore—and whatever it is swept me away the first time I saw the film.

After that first screening, I thought something the piano teacher tells Pitt was the message of the movie. Commenting about his tentative play— ing score by Alexandre Desplat.

the emotional southern belle—a dancer whose presence blooms in the middle, when their ages and superb physical specimens finally match up. But the romance is doomed because as Daisy ages Benjamin continues getting younger— until he is glimpsed as a young boy beset with Alzheimer’s and old-age maladies, and finally, as a baby, lying in Blanchett’s withered arms. It’s not quite explained how Benjamin physically shrinks, however.

Also not explained is why—beyond the early physical fascination—the other characters are so drawn to the emotionally withdrawn Benjamin, who, until his affair with Daisy takes hold, seems only to exist by drawing on the life forces of the other characters. The lively swirl of humanity surrounding Benjamin—his black stepmother, an artistic piano teacher, a “character” who takes him to a sporting house for his first physical encounter, a rough hewn sea captain, an icy diplomat’s wife, his guilt-ridden father, etc.—all seem to leave more than they take from Benjamin the Black Hole, who never reacts much to anything beyond a cautious smile. Pitt’s character is a vacuum at the center of the film, sucking in all the others and not really giving anything back—until he finally looks like Brad the Movie Star, who audiences have enshrined since his appearance in The Tina & Louise. The film finally comes to life when we see Pitt astride his Harley, a golden-haired, latter-day Brando—as the women and gay men in the audience swoon and everyone looks on in envy at his physical beauty and the confidence it projects.

The Neo-Futurists, Chicago DIRECTED BY IVO VAN HOVE FEBRUARY 7-28

Strange Interlude Produced in association with The New Futurists, Chicago DIRECTED BY GREG ALLEN MARCH 6-8

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The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.
a seven-day guest pass to Bally's Total Fitness.

With an international street date of March 23, the Pet Shop Boys will follow up 2005’s Fundamental with another album under a one-word title: Yes. The electronic pioneers are working with British producers Xenomania, who have lent their skills to many (including Cher for her monstrous hit, Believe). Yes is expected to be more upbeat and electronic than its predecessor. The new number All over the World actually has incorporations from Tchakliskovksy. No word yet as to when the 11-track Yes will be out domestically. Next month, the Pet Shop Boys will receive the Outstanding Contribution to Music Award at the BRIT Awards.

Australian pop princess Kylie Minogue is issuing another remix package with Boombbox. This collection has mixes of staples from her recent energetic effort X, as well as mixes going as far back as 2000’s Light Years. Boombbox is highlighted by the mash-up Can’t Get Blue Monday out of My Head and the Scissor Sisters collaboration I Believe in You. Already featuring forward-thinking songs, Minogue’s catalogue receives the remix treatment from an eclectic lot, such as Chemical Brothers, Mylo and Fischerspooner. Just remember: this pint-sized star sampled I Feel Love on Light Years and did the urban-cowgirl shick for Cowboy Style before Madonna mainstreamed these trends. Need more Kylie? paulaabdul.com features a snippet of the American Idol host covering Minogue’s song Boombox.

Banarama has done multiple of remixes like Venus, Lang Train Running and Waterloo. Per the group’s Web site, the duo is currently working on a covers project with acclaimed dance-pop producer Ian Masterson. This slightly softens Sheena Easton’s overlooked 2000 disco homage Fabulous. One request: Please do not tackle the overdone Don’t Leave Me This Way or I Will Survive. The gals are remaining mum about the release date and track listing, saving their version of Depeche Mode’s classic Voyage. Banarama recently joined Reverend Run from Run-DMC in the recording studio. He wanted to sample their ‘80s take on On Na Hey Hey (Kiss Him Goodbye), but invited the ladies to redo the vocals. The release of The Annie Lennox Collection has been postponed until Feb. 10. Following an injury received while attending the International AIDS Conference in Mexico, the Why singer underwent spinal surgery to ease an impinged nerve. Containing 14 tracks, this is the first retrospective to span Lennox’s impressive solo career. The core here consists of staples from 1992’s Diva. The requisite two new cuts are a remake of Ash’s Shining Light and Pattern of My Life, which is a composition by Keane’s Tom Chaplin. On top of winning three Grammys for her solo works, Lennox’s Cold and Little Bird are among her five songs heard in the Demi Moore vehicle Striptease. In November the socially vocal Lennox received the AMA Special Merit Award at the American Music Awards and the Special Achievement Award at the 2008 German Sustainability Awards in Dusseldorf in December. Opening gay rapper Cazwell is planning to drop his full-length Watch My Mouth come March. The New York based MC’s latest, I Seen Beyonce at Burger King, is a hilarious farce. On this rapper’s delight, Cazwell runs into a break from Beyonce- doppelganger at Burger King. JCPenny and the liquor store. Cazwell adds tongue-twisting rhymes to Colton Ford’s That’s Me and Peppermint’s Servin’ It Up! On top of being part of a last year’s True Colors Tour, Cazwell appears in the videos for Sir Paul’s Do U and The Ones’ When We Get Together.

Here are some other RELEASES to look forward to in 2009: Morrissey’s Years of Refusal, rising star Anjulie’s self-titled debut, Jill Sobule’s self-released California Years, Amanda Lepore’s Brand New Woman, Placebo’s sixth outing, Antony and the Johnsons’ The Crying Light, Colton Ford’s Under the Covers, Telling on Trixie’s Ugly, Broke & Sober, funky-dance outfit LMFAO’s debut Party Rock, India.Arie’s Testimony: Vol. 2 Love & Politics and mix-singer-songwriter Levi Kreis’ latest, as well as sophomore outings from Lily Allen, dance artist Brian Kent and Chicago’s Dylan Rice.

Prince plans to trump all by having three albums out this year without the support of a major record label, according to the Los Angeles Times. MPLSOUND will offer more of an electro sound and a cameo from Q-Tip. Lotus Flower will focus more on guitars. Lastly, the 50-year-old purple one is working with a new protégé, Bria Valente, on the album Elixir.

### Upcoming concerts

Listed below are upcoming local concerts that, for various reasons, may be of special interest to the LGBT community. Venues are in Chicago unless otherwise indicated:

#### Jan. 17:
- Taylor Hicks, Martyl’s, 3855 N. Lincoln, 10 p.m.
- Jeannie Tanner, Katerina’s, 1920 W. Irving Park, 9 p.m.
- Adele, Park West, 322 W. Armitage, 7:30 p.m.
- Amy Armstrong, Freddy Allen, Mekole Wells and more, Davenport’s Piano Bar, 1383 N. Milwaukee, 8 p.m.
- Mavis Staples, Northwestern University’s Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, 50 Arts Circle, Evanston, 12 p.m.
- Inauguration gala/Martin Luther King, Jr., birthday extravaganza with Dee Alexander, Morse Theatre, 1328 W. Morse, 7:30 p.m.
- The Killers, UIC Pavilion, 1150 W. Harrison, 7 p.m.
- Women Only with Kat Fitzgerald, Uncommon Ground, 1401 W. Devon, 9 p.m.
- Blessid Union of Souls, Schubas, 336 W. Belmont, 8 p.m.
- Blood, Subterranean, 203 N. Genesee, Waukegan, 8 p.m.
- Lil John, Lechuck’s, 5400 N. Broadway, 9 p.m.
- Chuck Wicks, Joe’s Bar, 940 W. Lincoln, 10 p.m.
- BETTY, Old School Town of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln, 7 p.m.
- Shemekia Copeland, Old School Town of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln, 9 p.m.
- Missy Higgins, Vic Theatre, 5400 N. River, Rosemont, various times
- Patty Loveless, Old School Town of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln, 8 p.m.
- Buckovac’s, 1113 W. Lawrence, 5:30 p.m.
- Mekole Wells and more, Davenport’s Piano Bar, 1383 N. Milwaukee, 8 p.m.
- Lindsey Czechowicz. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald (MysticImagesPhotography.com)

#### Feb. 20:
- Thievery Corporation, Riviera Theatre, 4750 N. Broadway, 9 p.m.
- Jim Brickman, Genesee Theatre, 203 N. Genesee, Waukegan, 8 p.m.
- Lindsey Czechowicz, Uncommon Ground, 1401 W. Devon, 9 p.m.
- Chuck Wicks, Joe’s Bar, 940 W. Lincoln, 9 p.m.
- BETTY, Old School Town of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln, 7 p.m.
- Shemekia Copeland, Old School Town of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln, 8 p.m.
- Missy Higgins, Vic Theatre, 5400 N. Sheffield, TBD
- Patty Loveless, Old School Town of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln, 7 p.m.
- Riverdance, Rosemont Theatre, 4400 W. River, Rosemont, various times
- Britney Spears, Allstate Arena, 6920 N. Mannheim, Rosemont, 8 p.m.

### Andrew Davis

Cazwell.
Lonesome-voiced New England singer-songwriter Chris Pureka has been compared to everyone from Bob Dylan to Stevie Nicks, and Amy Ray. With the Jan. 20 release of her fourth album, Chimera—an eclectic mix of live songs, covers and previously unreleased studio tracks—Pureka once again reminds us that folk music is alive and relevant, especially in this time of hope and change. Before hitting Chicago’s Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont, on Jan. 28 as part of her Northeast/Midwest tour, Pureka phoned to discuss the inspiration behind her album’s title, her thoughts on Prop 8 and everything in between.

MUSIC

You just have to hear it: Talking with Chris Pureka

BY SARAH TEREZ ROSENBLUM

Windy City Times: How did you come up with your album’s title? Chris Pureka: I learned about the concept when I was a biologist and someone in the microbiology lab was working on a project splicing genes from one species into another species, typically called a “chimera project.” This record has unrelated stuff from all over the place that I’ve been collecting, so Chimera seemed like a cool metaphor for what I was doing. It’s also a throwback to my old friends.

WCT: What moved you to make Chimera? CP: As a musician you are always forced to make a show, you record things with friends [and you have] songs you feel are worthy of the public hearing, but they haven’t found a natural home. This record combines all that.

WCT: What was it like to sift through recordings to find your favorite live tracks? CP: Awful! [laughs] Often the best tracks were horribly flawed in some way, performances were ruined by recording problems or some one talking in the audience. Even the songs I put on the record are flawed, which is difficult for me because I like everything to be perfect. I tried to choose songs that weren’t just live versions of the same musical arrangements on my records, which was a challenge, because when I perform live, I’m pretty true to the record.

WCT: Some performers—Bob Dylan comes to mind—like to keep things up when they play live, but it sounds like that’s not your thing.

CP: One of my favorite parts of being a musician is being in the studio, and when I arrange songs I take it really seriously. Touring, I want [the songs] to sound as they do on the album because that’s the way I think they sound best, but obviously, a live show gonna be different, which is also fun.

WCT: Do you ever tire of certain songs?

CP: There are some that I don’t feel like playing anymore, but I’ll play them every once in a while because I know people want to hear them. If people come to hear a certain song you can’t ever play it … unless you’re Bob Dylan. Right now I’m writing a ton of new stuff, and I’m gonna play a lot of it on the tour because I’m super excited about it. That’s the way it should be, I think.

WCT: The New York Times said of your songwriting, “There’s no comfort, for her, in the clarity of her observations.” Is that an accurate description of you in your day to day life as well?

CP: I don’t walk around the world depressed; I reserve that part of me for my songwriting. It’s obviously something in my core, but I’m not a creepy here, you can’t just walk up to me and ask about my personal life.

WCT: Your songs are strikingly emotional, not just lyrically, but melodically. Why is that?

CP: Most of my writing is pretty visceral, I’m writing from an emotional place, and those emotions have to translate into something, because its energy, it can’t just dissipate.

WCT: Reviewers tend to bring up your background in science. Why do you think people are so interested in that?

CP: It’s surprising to people, that you can have a analytical mind as well as a poetic one, but part of biology is observation, which is also a big part of songwriting.

WCT: In what ways has making a living as a touring artist been more difficult in our current economic climate?

CP: The economy is affecting different sectors in different ways, but ultimately it impacts how many people are able to afford art. My main worry is, I’m making a new studio record, which is always really expensive. If people aren’t able to buy the final product that’s gonna be hard for me. On the plus side, gas prices are dirt cheap. Hopefully, they’ll stay that way till the end of my tour!

WCT: A lot of queer people describe hav- ing a circumscribed period of pure joy when Obama was elected, followed by deep disappointment, almost an estrangement, after Prop 8 passed. What was your experience?

CP: Obama’s election was a big step for minorities in general, but I feel like (the queer community) was left out. That’s especially disappointing because many queer people were instrumental in the Obama campaign. But Prop 8 isn’t as important as the Obama election; if McCain was president it would be like, who cares if gay people can get married because much worse things are going to be happening. Pick your battles. Given the choice I’m pleased with the outcome.

WCT: What do you think about evangelical pastor Rick Warren delivering the invocation at Obama’s inauguration?

CP: I know Obama is reaching out to the right, he wants to smooth everything over. That’s great in a lot of ways, but I feel like he needs to throw the left wing a bone. For the last eight years we haven’t had a voice; we haven’t had anyone representing us. He hasn’t nominated anyone radical to his cabinet, and then to also be catering to this random Christian right thing is really unfortunate. So, some of Obama’s choices have been disappointing, but I don’t want to pass judgment until I can see what he does when he truly has authority.

WCT: Back to music, what can your fans expect from the album following Chimera?

CP: That was actually a nice segue way. The next record feels darker, more political, still very emotional, whereas [Dryland] was really internal. Production-wise, it’s gonna sound a little more “indie,” for lack of a better word. The last record was kind of an “Americania” record. I’m not sure I’m describing it well. It’s really hard to talk about music. I mean, you can talk about it all you want but really, you just hafta hear it.

See www.chrispureka.com.

Playwright Susan Miller brings drama to the Net

BY JOAN LIPKIN

Enterprising artists like writer Susan Miller and director Tina Cesa Ward see the potential of the Internet because of its speed, audience potential, freedom of expression and relative low cost. And they’re not alone. Their new show, Anyone But Me—created specifically for the Internet—is being featured on the innovative new Web-based network StrikeTV (www.striketv.tv), which was started during the writer’s strike to produce and promote original programming for the Web. Executive producer and writer Miller is an Obie award-winning playwright (My Left Breast) and was a consulting producer/writer on Showtime’s groundbreaking series The L Word and ABC’s landmark series thirtysomething, among other TV hits. Director/writer Tina Cesa Ward screened her short film, In Their Absence, at more than a dozen film festivals around the globe and was awarded best short film four times.

“I’ve written and produced television series, like The L Word and thirtysomething, so it didn’t seem out of my realm at all to help create a Web series which takes the best of television as its model,” Miller said.

Anyone But Me premiered on Strike TV in December and, having been selected as an Editor’s Pick Video on AfterEllen.com, is officially hot. The people behind AfterEllen.com—the Web site for news, reviews, essays and information related to gay and bisexual women in entertainment and the media—are so psyched about the new series that they have begun streaming episodes.

Produced by Miller and Ward, the show is about New York teens coming of age in a post-9/11 world. The series introduces a new generation—ethnically diverse, gay and straight—searching for love and acceptance as they confront their own diverse identities and sexual awakening.

Their show is the only one on StrikeTV to be set and shot in New York City and address the stories of both teens and their parents. “I’m so proud of Anyone But Me. It’s about something. It’s about difference. It’s about relationships… it’s about us,” Miller said.

While the show includes several gay storylines such as one involving Vivian and Aster, two 16-year-olds involved in a romantic relationship, and Breek, a gay male teenager, Miller said she has had really positive responses from straight women and men, gay men and straight teenagers: “We have a multietnic cast. And we depict both gay and straight relationships. We explore the city and the suburbs. So, I think we have broad appeal.”

And with each episode being eight minutes long and available online 24/7, the show should fit into anyone’s schedule. “Theatre is something you should be able to make happen anywhere,” Miller said. “But, there are more and more obstacles. This seemed to have no bounds, you know? It’s a new form—[it’s] wide-open territory.”

To read more about the show, see www.anyonebutmeseries.com. To read a full-length interview with Susan Miller, in which she also discusses her experiences working on The L Word, see www.windycitymediagroup.com.

Joan Lipkin is the artistic director of That Uppity Theatre Company and a judge for the Kevin Kline Awards. She may be reached at 3Lipkin@aol.com.

BY JOAN LIPKIN

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Is that why you were in Puerto Rico and I couldn’t find you?

AS: Yes.

WCT: Have there been any roles that you have turned down that turned out to be huge hits?

AS: To tell you the truth, I don’t know that I have ever turned down a role. I have been in talks with people over the years but it never came down to someone giving a direct defining offer. So it’s not usually that black and white.

WCT: Tell me about High Art.

AS: It was wonderful. It was a once-in-a-lifetime character. When I read it, it completely resonated with me. Everything about that movie worked perfectly. Lisa Cholodenko the director was just brilliant. The cast was really fun. I liked the way it was shot, everything about it.

WCT: Your new movie, Steam, is about three generations of women who get to know each other in a sauna. What interested you in this project?

AS: Well, number one, that Ruby Dee was doing it. I liked the character and the storyline. I like doing independents. You never know … but this one had a good feeling about it. I liked the way it turned out.

WCT: That’s a steamy poster for the movie with the three women on it. What was it like working with Ruby Dee?

AS: I didn’t have a lot of scenes with her—just the three scenes where the women wind up together. But I am in awe of her. I was overwhelmed. She’s an amazing artist, icon, everything. She has been involved in politics and a brilliant stage actress. I felt I was so lucky to sit next to the camera and watch her up close.

WCT: You have done so much in your career already, but what’s next for you?

AS: I like doing different projects. I like characters that are offbeat, and funny and dark sometimes and complicated, all depends on the script. I have done a few episodes of TV, which is kind of new territory for me.

I like the last two films I did. One of them is called Welcome to the Rileys, which is with James Gandolfini and Melissa Leo. I don’t know when that’s coming out. They just finished shooting it.

And the Todd one was, like, going to moon, it was so great.

WCT: Do you have a Web site?

AS: Nope. I heard that there are a couple of people that have set something up on Facebook—that’s supposed to be me but it isn’t.

WCT: That sounds like War Games! When are you coming to visit your fans in Chicago?

AS: Oh, I always end up going down to Chicago. It’s one of my favorite cities. I have worked there a whole bunch. I have always had a great experience there. It’s one of those places where you get a good feeling when you think about it.

DVD REVIEW
Save Me
BY STEVE WARREN

Save Me was filmed on location in the middle of a metaphorical minefield and escaped unscathed. You’ve never seen a better balancing act at the circus.

With emotions running so hot on both sides there may not be a market for a fair and balanced (not in the Fox News sense) drama, even a good one like Save Me, about a Christian center that attempts to “cure” homosexuals.

Since out and proud actors Chad Allen and Robert Gant play two of the lead roles you needn’t fear that Save Me will take a homophobic stance, but the surprise is that the Christians aren’t thrown to the lions. Instead of one-dimensional villains, Gayle (Judith Light) and Ted (Stephen Lang) are portrayed as decent, well-meaning (if fallible) human beings.

They run Genesis House, a good name for a place that offers men a new beginning. The residential facility is described as “a Christian recovery program specializing in sexual brokenness.” Gayle’s 17-year-old gay son 00’d eight years ago and she chose to blame his orientation rather than his addictions. Ted began as her employee and became her second husband.

Mark (Allen) is dumped in Genesis House by his family, who can’t deal with him anymore. His combination of problems reminds Gayle of her son, so she takes a special interest in him.

So, for other reasons, does longer-term resident Scott (Gant), whose issues revolve around trying to please his dying father. Mark settles in and the program actually does him good in terms of recovery from his addictions. As far as becoming dehomosexualized, most of the guys seem to be going through the motions on that one.

An exception is Bill Prior (William Dennis Hurley), a “fifth-phase,” defined as “those who’ve accomplished what they set out to do.” He’s engaged to a woman he’s been dating for a year. Who knows? Maybe it will work, but he admits to “having thoughts” about Mark. The most sympathetic character is Lester (Robert Baker), Mark’s roommate, whose plumpness gives him low self-esteem (or did the egg come before the chicken?). He’s “never acted on my sexual brokenness,” but knows what he’s attracted to. He provides comic relief, like a sad clown, but is also the classiest thing to a romantic in the story.

The weeks and months go by, with individual and group therapy, church on Sunday, constructive activities like making birdhouses to sell for charity, and unspeakable lust building up in Mark and Scott. Ted encourages their “healthy, nonssexual friendship” while Gayle worries about it.

Genesis House is on thin ice financially and Gayle frequently has to put economic necessity ahead of her sincere beliefs and emotional problems. Light stays in a low-key mode because the script, written by her husband, actor Robert Desiderio, from a story by Craig Chester and Alan Hines, doesn’t encourage heavy historicisms; or if it did, director Robert Cary, whose previous films, Anything but Love and Ira and Abby, were lighter in tone (and deserved a wider audience), chose to take a higher road.

Save Me could have been a crowd-pleaser if there had been a screaming climactic confrontation followed by Gayle getting hit with a drop of water and melting, but then it wouldn’t have been respectful of all its characters, as well as a film you can show to conservative Christians and possibly have them learn from it instead of being offended. On the other hand, open-minded gays can watch it and not throw the baby Jesus out with the bilgewater.

If you want the other kind of movie, see Jamie Babbit’s But I’m a Cheerleader. Had they been made in reverse order it would have been seen as a satire of Save Me.

It’s ironic that the screenplay mentions the 12 Steps but not the Serenity Prayer, which is really what it’s about. While most of her charges at Genesis House learn to accept the things they cannot change and gain the courage to change the things they can, it’s Gayle who lacks the wisdom to know the difference.
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Word up: Performer wins ‘Talent’

Photos by Kat Fitzgerald/www.MysticImagesPhotography.com; see more photos at www.windycitymediagroup.com or in this week’s Nightspots.

Lucy (top, left), a spoken-word performer from POW-WOW at Jeffery Pub, took top prize at the “Gays Got Talent” final that happened Jan. 10 at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted.

Sami (top, second from left), a singer/songwriter who advanced to the final because of her performance at Star Gaze, was first runner-up.

Kerri (top, second from right), who also advanced from Star Gaze, was second runner-up.

Entertainment included drag-king troupe Windy City Blenders, Hot Toddy (male burlesque) and Angelique Munro. Sofia Saffire, Mitchell Fain and Kirk Williamson served as judges.

The contest was sponsored by Bud Light, Tourism Toronto, Broadway in Chicago, American Airlines, gayinsurance.com and Windy City Media Group.

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Groups for HIV+ Individuals age 35+
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Pulse, a safe place for HIV Positive People, TBWA fundraiser every Thursday, 6-10 p.m. The North End, 3733 N. Halsted St. www.tbwanetwork.com

Friday, Jan. 16
Center on Halsted presents Gender Queer Cabaret. Showtime at the Apollo, 5100 N. Clark St. 7-9 p.m. Hoover/Leppen Theater. Center on Halsted 3656 N. Halsted. www.centeronhalsted.org

Chinese deep dish pizza or your choice. Every Thursday, 6-10 p.m. The North End, 3733 N. Halsted St. www.tbwanetwork.com
BUSINESS
The incredible ‘Edible’ enterprise
BY ROSS FORMAN

Her first restaurant job was at D.B. Kaplan’s, a sandwich shop inside Watertown Place, where she earned $5/day plus tips as a runner in 1975. Andrea Herrera would make about $50 by the end of her shift, and was thrilled.

Amazingly, all these years later, Herrera is still active in the food industry. Quite active, come to think of it.

For the past 15 years, she has been the owner of Amazing Edibles, a full-service catering company located just west of UIC in Chicago.

“I like the kind of people who gravitate to the restaurant industry and food jobs. Plus, I like taking care of people, giving them pleasure through feeding them,” she said. “Throughout high school and college, I often ended up being the manager of projects or the resident advisor of my dorm, so being the manager and being in charge, coupled with my interest in and experience with food, kind of married into me having my own company.”

About 70 percent of her business is with educational institutions and not-for-profit organizations. The remaining is corporate, social parties or events in people’s homes. Amazing Edibles offers breakfast, lunch and dinners for groups ranging from 20 to 5,000.

“I have a great team of people working with me, which I think sets us apart from other catering companies. Plus, we have great food that is reasonably-priced, and we have excellent service.

“I kind of found a niche in the professional development market, which primarily deals with schools and universities, and community organizations where they’re doing ongoing training, seminars and/or meetings, and just need great food at a reasonable price.”

Half of her clients have been with her for more than 10 years.

“The company is small enough that we can give people one-on-one attention, but large enough that we can take care of their needs,” Herrera said.

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“The company is small enough that we can give people one-on-one attention, but large enough that we can take care of their needs,” Herrera said.

Among our staff, I have a number of gays and lesbians. Same with our clientele and my personal friends,” Herrera said. “I feel I am part of the community and I think it’s important to reach out to everybody. I don’t see why we wouldn’t support this community strongly.”

2009 INDOOR SOCCER SEASON

THE LEAGUE

We are hoping to register enough individuals to host both a competitive and recreational league. Participants will be able to self-select into one or the other upon registration. The Competitive League is for players who have several years of soccer experience, although still a friendly league meant for recreation, it will be faster, more controlled, and more competitive than its recreational counterpart. The Recreational Soccer League is for players who want a friendly, fun league where they can play and develop skills even if they are relatively new (or just returning) to the sport. Our ability to maintain two divisions will be dependent upon the number of participants for each.

REGISTRATION

Player fees are $81 and must be paid prior to the season starting. All players must be current CMSA members as well. Registration is available online at www.chicagomsa.com – please check our soccer page for additional information.

LOCATION:
Center on Halsted
3656 N. Halsted St., Chicago

CONTACT: For more information on the league, please email Jason and Nick at soccer@chicagomsa.com

Spots

Smucker’s Stars on Ice at Allstate
Feb. 21

The Smucker’s Stars on Ice tour will stop in the Chicagoland area Saturday, Feb. 21, 2009, when famed figure skaters perform at Allstate Arena, 6920 N. Mannheim, at 3 p.m.

The all-new production, “On the Edge,” will feature stars such as Sasha Cohen, Todd Eldredge, Michael Weiss, Iliana Kuik and special guest skater Evan Lysacek.


Leaguer

Bike to Work
Day Jan. 20

Tuesday, Jan. 20, will mark the Winter Bike to Work Day. Hundreds of bicycle commuters will convene at Daley Plaza, 50 W. Washington, 6:30-9 a.m. for Winter Bike to Work Day. Cyclists will be treated to coffee, hot cocoa and Eli’s cheesecake.

The day marks the coldest day in Chicago history: Jan. 20, 1985, when the official temperature at O’Hare International Airport was -27 degrees with 36 mph wind gusts, producing wind chills as low as 93 degrees below zero. Inauguration Day highlights the patriotic nature of bicycling.

Badminton

sign-ups in Jan.

Second City Badminton is currently holding its winter doubles league sign-ups. Online registration is taking place through Friday, Jan. 16; see www.chicagomsa.com.

Individuals looking for a team are encouraged to e-mail badminton@chicagomsa.com and indicate their experience level.

The cost is $165/team. Each team must carry a minimum of three players on the roster, although four are strongly recommended.

Play begins Monday, Jan. 26, and run for 13 weeks, including playoffs. The schedule will be posted the week of Jan. 19-24.

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