Obama signs DADT repeal

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

Following a dramatic and eloquent speech, on Dec. 22 President Obama signed the legislation that will launch the repeal of a 17-year-old law that prohibits openly gay people from serving in the military.

“This is done,” he said, looking up and slapping his hand on the table, and the crowded auditorium of an Interior Department building in Washington, D.C., erupted with cheers and applause.

The historic ceremony took place less than 24 hours after Republican Senate Minority Leader

President Obama signs the DADT Repeal Act of 2010 during a ceremony at the Interior Department in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 22. Official White House photo by Chuck Kennedy

Doctors united in career and life

BY ROSS FORMAN

David Moore and David Blatt can appreciate the significance of Dec. 1 more than most in Illinois.

It was, of course, World AIDS Day and also the day that the Illinois State Senate passed the Civil Union Act.

Their lives, personally and professionally, are intertwined through their long medical fight against HIV/AIDS—and the fact they were married during the interval when gay marriages were legal in California in 2008.

But soon they might be able to remarry in their home state.

“There are many aspects to World AIDS Day, most personally for me it has been a time to

Dr. David Blatt and David Moore. Photo by Hal Baim

Turn to page 10
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**ADDITIONAL TESTING LOCATIONS:**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Location</th>
<th>Testing Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MAN’S COUNTRY</strong></td>
<td>5017 N. Clark St.  9p.m.-12 midnight</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BIOSCRIP PHARMACY</strong></td>
<td>Belmont at Clark Street Every Thursday 10a.m.-6p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STEAMWORKS</strong></td>
<td>3246 N. Halsted St. Every Friday 7-10p.m.</td>
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Senate confirms Feldblum to EEOC seat

BY LISA KEEN
      KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The U.S. Senate gave final approval to lesbian law professor Chai Feldblum as President Obama’s nominee to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) on Dec. 22.

Feldblum has been serving on the five-member commission since April, when Obama put her onto the commission using a procedure that enables him to circumvent a Senate confirmation vote temporarily—a recess appointment, so called because it can be done while the Senate is on recess.

But appointees who take their positions via the recess appointment still have to go through the confirmation vote in the Senate. That vote, for Feldblum and three other nominees to the EEOC, has been held up for months by an unidentified Republican senator—or senators—using the Senate rules that enable any senator to put a hold on an appointee’s confirmation vote.

The Senate confirmed the appointments of Feldblum and three other EEOC nominees by unanimous consent, a process by which the Senate can vote on a number of routine matters at once.

Interestingly, one letter in support of Feldblum came late in the process from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world’s largest federation of businesses. The group has been in the news in recent months for funneling millions of dollars into the midterm elections, mostly in support of Republican interests.

Randel Johnson, senior vice president of the chamber, sent a letter to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell Dec. 21, urging the confirmations of Feldblum and two other nominees.

“The Chamber has not, and know that we will not, agree with them on every issue,” wrote Johnson, “but it has been our experience that each is open to hear and consider the concerns of all interested stakeholders.”

Another letter came Dec. 21 from the head of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), Henry Jackson. Jackson said SHRM had worked with Feldblum on “critical workplace issues such as retirement security and workplace flexibility,” while Feldblum headed Georgetown University Law Center’s Federal Legislation and Administrative Clinic.

Jackson said that Feldblum and the other EEOC nominees “have provided a fair hearing on all viewpoints and serve as thoughtful and constructive arbiters of equal opportunity issues in the workplace.”

Numerous right-wing groups voiced opposition to Feldblum shortly after she was nominated last fall. The Traditional Values Coalition called her a “radical,” saying she would “use her power to strip nearly all First Amendment rights of freedom of expression/free exercise of religion from businesses,” while Concerned Women for America said she “represents one of the most serious threats to religious freedom we have seen in a long time.” And The Family Research Council said Feldblum “openly admitted to supporting polygamy.”

But, strangely, no opposition surfaced during Feldblum’s public confirmation hearing last November. Instead, numerous pro-civil-rights groups, including the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, lobbied hard for her appointment.

Feldblum is probably best known for her work on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which she helped write in 1990, prohibitions against discrimination in employment, public accommodations and other areas against people with disabilities.

The law also covered people with HIV infection, something Feldblum is well known to the LGBT community as a key counsel on the drafting and negotiations over the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). She also served for a time as legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union in Washington, D.C.

Feldblum served for a year as a law clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun. And, prior to joining the EEOC, she was a professor of law at Georgetown University and as co-director of the university’s Federal Legislation and Administrative Clinic.

The Human Rights Campaign issued a statement Dec. 22 praising the Senate for confirming Feldblum to a full term and noting that, had it not done so, Feldblum’s temporary appointment would have expired in December 2011. Her current appointment term will continue through July 2013.

“2010 Keen News Service

Target still making anti-gay donations

Earlier this year, Target was in the middle of a political firestorm when it was discovered that the company (along with Best Buy) sent $150,000 to MN Forward, a Minnesota political action committee (PAC) that was backing anti-gay gubernatorial candidate Tom Emmer.

The heat became so intense that eventually Target CEO Gregg Steinhafel sent a letter of apology to his employees.

However, it seems that the corporate giant is still making donations to anti-gay organizations and individuals. The Huffington Post has reported that $31,200 of the $41,200 Target allotted to federal elections went to anti-gay politicians or political action committees backing those candidates. For example, Kelly Ayotte—who resigned her post to protest the legalization of marriage equality and same-sex adoption—received $1,000.

On the other hand, as previously indicated, a few pro-LGBT individuals received funds. For example, Target PAC gave $3,000 to Chuck Schumer. Closer to home, Center on Halsted Executive Director Modesto “Tico” Valle has confirmed that Target has been a corporate sponsor of the facility, having provided $15,000 program grant last year. Valle added that the center has to apply annually, and that the money is not guaranteed.

Incidentally, Emmer recently conceded the governor’s race to DLF candidate Mark Dayton, who begins his term Jan. 3, 2011.

President Obama turns to openly gay U.S. Marine Corps veteran Eric Alva during the ceremony where the commander-in-chief signed the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi is directly behind Obama, but retired Navy commander Zoe Dunning is on the far left and U.S. Sen. Susan Collins is on the right. Alva was the first U.S. serviceman to be injured in Iraq, losing a leg in the process. Photo by Patsy Lynch

REPEAL from cover

Mitch McConnell took an 11th-hour action of trying to make implementation of repeal much more difficult and time-consuming. According to a report on Politico.com, McConnell tried to amend an introduction to the annual defense authorization bill that would have required that implementation of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) not take place until after the four service chiefs certify that it could be done without negative consequences for military readiness.

The DADT-repeal legislation requires certification by the president, the secretary of defense and the chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. According to Politico, McConnell attempted to add the amendment by unanimous consent, but Sen. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., a champion of the repeal measure, objected. Lieberman’s objection effectively blocked the amendment from being considered without first getting the consent of at least 60 senators.

The president was greeted with a roar of cheers and applause after he was introduced by Vice President Joe Biden at 9:13 a.m. on Dec. 22. As the president greeted many special guests on stage with him, the crowd began to chant, “Yes, we can”—a prominent slogan of Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign. When the president reached the podium, he smiled and called back, “Yes, we did.”

“I am just overwhelmed,” said Obama, beginning his prepared remarks, “This is a very good day, and I want to thank all of you, especially the people on this stage.”

Then he told a story about a soldier who fought in the Battle of the Bulge in the Belgian mountains against the Germans in World War II. The soldier, Andy Lee, put his own life in peril in order to scale a railroad and rescue a fellow soldier, Lloyd Corwin. Forty years later, Lee told Corwin he was gay.

“He had no idea,” said Obama of Corwin, “and didn’t much care. Lloyd knew what mattered. He knew what kept him alive.”

Obama also told the story of a young servicemember who gave him a hug on a receiving line in Afghanistan several weeks ago, when the president made a visit to the troops. The woman whispered in his ear, “Get Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell done,” said the president. “And I told her, ‘I promise you I will.’”

With the signing of the bill, Obama has also fulfilled a long-standing promise to the LGBT community overall, a feat that is prompting widespread praise, even from gay Republicans.

“He made this a priority,” said R. Clarke Cooper, executive director of the Log Cabin Republicans, “He was sincere and correct about making this a priority.” Cooper, a former servicemember who had a front row seat during the ceremony, said that, as the president shook hands with guests on the front row, following the ceremony, Cooper said to the president, “You said ‘Get me those [Republican] votes,’ and I got more than you needed.”

In a critical procedural vote to force the repeal measure to the floor in the Senate Dec. 18, six Republicans joined Democrats and Independents to provide more than the 60 votes necessary to break the Republican-led filibuster.

Cooper said the ceremony was a “very emotional” one in the auditorium and that “there were definitely many tears of joy” in his eyes and in the eyes of other former servicemen discharged under the DADT policy during the past 17 years.

The president acknowledged the tenacious work of numerous individuals during the Dec. 22 ceremony, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, House Majority Whip Steny Hoyer, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Republican Senator Susan Collins, and the bill’s sponsor Rep. Patrick Murphy. NBC News Washington Bureau Chief Mark Whittaker, speaking on MSNBC shortly before the ceremony, said it was House Majority Whip Hoyer who idea it was to take DADT-repeal language out of the annual defense authorization bill—which was being filibustered by McConnell, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and most Republicans—and put it into a separate stand-alone bill last week.

The House passed that bill Dec. 15 by a 250-175 vote and sent it immediately to the Senate, which approved it Dec. 18 65-31.

The president also singled out Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., in the front of the auditorium, for having “kept up the fight” in the House.

Speaking to MSNBC’s Lawrence O’Donnell Dec. 21, Frank characterized the Congressional vote to repeal DADT as being “comparable to the 1964 Civil Rights Act.”

“It is an enormous move forward,” said Frank. Frank said he was moved by a special ceremony held on Capitol Hill Dec. 21 by House Speaker Pelosi and Majority Whip Hoyer to sign the enrollment document for the bill to be sent to the president. Frank said the hundreds of people in attendance saying “God Bless America.”

“It was a very moving moment,” said Frank. Also on stage for the Dec. 22 ceremony were Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen and Staff Sgt. Eric Alva, an openly gay Marine who was the first servicemember wounded in the Iraq War.

The president used 15 pens to sign the legislation into law. It could not be determined by default to whom those pens will be given.

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The United Nations General Assembly on Dec. 21 overturned its recent vote that removed a reference to sexual orientation from a resolution against extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

The resolution urges member states to protect the right to life of all people and calls on governments to investigate killings based on discriminatory grounds. For the past 10 years, the document included sexual orientation in a list of discriminatory grounds on which killings are often based.

In November, a General Assembly committee composed of all U.N. member nations removed the gay reference in a vote of 79 to 70 with 17 abstentions and 26 absents. That led to an intense campaign, headed by the United States, to reinset the reference.

The reinstatement vote was 93 to 55 with 27 abstentions and 17 absents. Then, the vote to pass the full resolution with the gay language back in place was 122 to 1 with 62 abstentions.

The document is believed to be the only U.N. resolution ever to reference “sexual orientation.”

Most opposition to acknowledging anti-gay killings came from Arab, Islamic and African nations, whose representatives complained that they don’t know what “sexual orientation” means or that sexual behavior is an inappropriate basis upon which to grant official recognition or human rights protections.

Notably, South Africa and Rwanda reversed their previous votes against gay inclusion.

“Countries that tried to roll back crucial protections for gay and lesbian people have been defeated,” said Boris Dittrich, acting director of Human Rights Watch’s LGBT Rights Program. “The resolution does justice to gays, lesbians and transgender people in countries where they are targeted for assaults and killings simply because they love someone of the same sex or because they are transgender.”

The office of President Barack Obama’s press secretary issued a statement that said: “President Obama applauds those countries that supported the amendment offered by the United States to ensure that ‘sexual orientation’ remains covered from state-sponsored discrimination is not a special right, it is a human right. Today’s vote in the United Nations marks an important moment in the struggle for civil and human rights. The time has come for all nations to redouble our efforts to end discrimination and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.”

The U.N. resolution is an important moment in the struggle for civil and human rights. The time has come for all nations to redouble our efforts to end discrimination and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The United States’ former ambassador to Romania, Michael Guest, who now works with the LGBT-oriented Council for Global Equality, called the U.S. campaign to rescue the gay language “remarkable.”

“The United States took a very principled position, and our diplomats worked very hard at the U.N. and in capitals around the world to explain to other countries why this is an important human rights cause,” Guest said. “The State Department and the White House should be commended.”

The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Interssex Association said: “We want to celebrate the victory over forces which tried to push the reference to sexual orientation into oblivion one month ago (and which) still refuse, in theory and in practice, to acknowledge that human rights are truly for all, LGBTI people included, and—what is perhaps worse— grotesquely mask their homophobia and transphobia by referring to the universality of the Human Rights Declaration and indecently try to include under the term ‘sexual orientation’ bestiality and pedophilia.”

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

Boris Dittrich. Photo courtesy of Human Rights Watch

Dan Choi on the DADT repeal and his well-being

BY BRYAN MOORE, DOT429.COM

Dan Choi, one of the nation’s most well-known gay ex-Army soldiers and West Point graduates, told dot429 about his reaction to the repeal of DADT, “the new age” of gay activism, his recent hospitalization, and his future.

Choi’s face and name have become nearly synonymous with the fight against DADT (“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”). Choi emphasized that the repeal of DADT is not simply a triumph for the LGBT community, but for civil rights, saying, “there are few people who get to put in all this effort and see the benefit from the rewards of their labor. We know that it’s a civil rights historic event, not only for gay civil rights, but for overall civil rights. Our work is not just for us, but as we take down the wall of our oppression, it really lowers the walls of other people’s as well.”

While Choi admitted that he will not be invited to the White House bill signing and has never been asked by OSD (Service members Legal Defense Network) to speak at a press conference, he explained, “I prefer not to be there at this point. It is not out of bitterness, it is really out of my soldier’s instinct. To seek recognition and fame is counter to the ideals of service.”

There are many opinions surrounding Dan Choi’s role in the repeal of DADT. As a grassroots advocate, Choi believes his role is integral to the cause: “My role has changed a lot and it has confused a lot of people… my activism has turned into something of being a lightning rod for the attention to DADT nationally and internationally, I saw myself and my role as a media whore. That is not far from what Choi aspires his legacy to be, telling dot429. “I would like to be seen as somebody who made enough trouble and agitated enough that people could not ignore the situation anymore. That would be the feather in my cap.”

Despite being a central public figure in gay activism, Choi, who came out of the closet two years ago, suffers from the same issues that plague many people when they come out: “I’m not fully part of the gay community, I am very new to the gay community. As a military person, it was very difficult for me to embrace the diversity of our entire movement, but I quickly had to because they were embracing me. At the same time, I am not fully there as far as feeling as if I am a solid part of the community. I feel like I am a solid part of the movement, but not the community.”

While the repeal is great news, Choi believes there is still a lot more work that needs to be done. He said, “If this certification drags, I have no problem starting a Supreme Court case. I intend to go on the federal level and augment the other cases. We cannot let up on the pressure.”

On Dec. 10, Choi was admitted to the hospital and diagnosed with Combat PTSD. He said, “I was suicidal and I finally dealt with it. I finally said that it got to be too much.” Choi believes his suicidal thoughts are a composite of coming out to his family and the world, not having people he can trust and not seeking therapy when he returned from the military, “I am medicated.” Choi said. “I am on a medication to help me sleep and to deal with my anxiety attacks.” He further explained, “I have a recurring nightmare of Iraqi men with no hands and no heads asking me to help them out.”

As the movement propels forward and the LGBT community continues to push towards equality on all levels, Dan is trying to “learn to balance [his] fervor with [his] human needs.”

“I found a truth throughout this year that I might not have seen when I first started—action and sacrifice speaks much more loudly than the best crafted, eloquent speech.” With that said, Choi offhandedly mentioned, “the Libertarian party has asked me to run for Senate, because I am old enough in 2012.” While there is no confirmation that he will run, Choi reiterates his dedication to equal rights, stating, “success for me would be to deeply fall in love again, have a family, and really become something of a professor without portfolio for equal rights.”

Dan Choi (right) gets a ring back from Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid upon the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” Photo from Twitter

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WINDY CITY TIMES
Dec. 29, 2010
INDICATION: REYATAZ is a prescription medicine used in combination with other medicines to treat people who are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). REYATAZ has been studied in a 48-week trial in patients who have taken anti-HIV medicines and a 96-week trial in patients who have never taken anti-HIV medicines.

REYATAZ does not cure HIV or lower your chance of passing HIV to others.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

Do not take REYATAZ if you are taking the following medicines due to potential for serious, life-threatening side effects or death: Viread® (emtricitabine) when taken by mouth, Halolos® (triazolam), ergot medicines (dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine, and methylergonovine such as Cafemerg® Migrana®, D.H.E. 45®, ergotrate maleate; Methergin®, and others), Propulsid® (cisapride), or Dramamine® (dimenhydrinate).

Do not take REYATAZ with the following medicines due to potential for serious side effects: Camptosar® (irinotecan), Crinum® (lindane), Meracor® (levostatin), Zocor® (simvastatin), Uroxatral® (alfuzosin), or Revatio® (sildenafil).

Do not take REYATAZ with the following medicines as they may lower the amount of REYATAZ in your blood, which may lead to increased HIV viral load and resistance to REYATAZ or other anti-HIV medicines: rilpamain (also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater® or Rimactone®, St. John’s wort (Hypericum perforatum)-containing products, or Viramune® (nevirapine).

Serevent Diskus® (salmeterol) and Advair® (salmeterol with fluticasone) are not recommended with REYATAZ.

Do not take Viread® (tenofovir) if you are taking REYATAZ and Norvir® (ritonavir).

The above lists of medicines are not complete. Taking REYATAZ with some other medicines may require your therapy to be monitored more closely or may require a change in dose or dose schedule of REYATAZ or the other medicine. Discuss with your healthcare provider all prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamin and herbal supplements, or other health preparations you are taking or plan to take.

Tell your healthcare provider if you are pregnant, breast-feeding, planning to become pregnant or breast-feed, or if you have end-stage kidney disease managed with hemodialysis or severe liver dysfunction.

Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any side effects, symptoms, or conditions, including the following:

- Mild rash (redness and itching) without other symptoms sometimes occurs in patients taking REYATAZ, most often in the first few weeks after the medicine is started, and usually goes away within 2 weeks with no change in treatment.
- Severe rash has occurred in a small number of patients taking REYATAZ. This type of rash is associated with other symptoms that could be serious and potentially cause death. If you develop a rash with any of the following symptoms, stop using REYATAZ and call your healthcare provider right away:
  - Shortness of breath
  - General ill-feeling or “flu-like” symptoms
  - Fever
  - Muscle or joint aches
  - Conjunctivitis (red or inflamed eyes, like “pink-eye”)
  - Blisters
  - Mouth sores
  - Swelling of your face
- Yellowing of the skin and/or eyes may occur due to increases in bilirubin levels in the blood (bilirubin is made by the liver).
- A change in the way your heart beats may occur. You may feel dizzy or lightheaded. These could be symptoms of a heart problem.
- Diabetes and high blood sugar may occur in patients taking protease inhibitor medicines like REYATAZ. Some patients may need changes in their diabetes medicine.
- If you have liver disease, including hepatitis B or C, it may get worse when you take anti-HIV medicines like REYATAZ.
- Kidney stones have been reported in patients taking REYATAZ. Signs or symptoms of kidney stones include pain in your side, blood in your urine, and pain when you urinate.
- Some patients with hemophilia have increased bleeding problems with protease inhibitor medicines like REYATAZ.
- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking anti-HIV medicines. The cause and long-term effects are not known at this time.
- Gallbladder disorders (including gallstones and gallbladder inflammation) have been reported in patients taking REYATAZ.

Other common side effects of REYATAZ taken with other anti-HIV medicines include: nausea; headache; stomach pain; vomiting; diarrhea; depression; fever; dizziness; trouble sleeping; numbness; tingling; or burning of hands or feet; and muscle pain. You should take REYATAZ once daily with food (a meal or snack). Swallow the capsules whole; do not open the capsules. You should take REYATAZ and your other anti-HIV medicines exactly as instructed by your healthcare provider.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.
how you spend your time is up to you.

Once-daily REYATAZ can help fight your HIV.

REYATAZ, a protease inhibitor (PI), in HIV combination therapy:

- Can help lower your viral load and raise your T-cell (CD4+ cell) count
- Has a low chance of diarrhea (shown in clinical trials)
  - REYATAZ in combination therapy had a 1%-3% rate of moderate-to-severe diarrhea in adults
- Is taken once a day with a snack or meal

REYATAZ is one of several treatment options your doctor may consider.

Do not take REYATAZ if you are allergic to REYATAZ or to any of its ingredients.

Ask your healthcare team about REYATAZ www.REYATAZ.com

REYATAZ does not cure HIV and has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others.

Find out if you can save on REYATAZ.
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About all the medicines you take

**REYATAZ**

(generic name = atazanavir sulfate)

Capsules

**ALERT:** Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with REYATAZ. Read the section “What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?”

Read the Patient Information that comes with REYATAZ before you start using it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This leaflet provides a summary about REYATAZ and does not include everything there is to know about your medicine. This information does not take the place of talking with your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment.

**What is REYATAZ?**

REYATAZ is a prescription medicine used with other anti-HIV medicines to treat people who are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). HIV is the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). REYATAZ is a type of anti-HIV medicine called a protease inhibitor. HIV infection destroys CD4+ (T) cells, which are important to the immune system. The immune system helps fight infection. After a large number of (T) cells are destroyed, AIDS develops. REYATAZ helps stop HIV from multiplying. It is very important that you see your healthcare provider regularly while taking REYATAZ.

REYATAZ does not lower your chance of passing HIV to other people through sexual contact, sharing needles, or being exposed to your blood. For your health and the health of others, it is important to always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to lower the chance of sexual transmission. It is also important that you keep your health and the health of others in mind. It is important that you take your medicine as instructed by your healthcare provider. It is important to stay under a healthcare provider’s care while taking REYATAZ.

**Who should not take REYATAZ?**

Do not take REYATAZ if you:

- are taking medications that are not compatible with REYATAZ or any of its ingredients. See “What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?”

- are allergic to REYATAZ or to any of its ingredients. Spread of the virus can be controlled with medicines that develop because the immune system is weak. Some of these conditions are opportunistic infections, such as a fungus, herpes virus infections, and Mycobacterium avium complex (MAC) infections. It is very important that you see your healthcare provider regularly while taking REYATAZ.

REYATAZ does not lower your chance of passing HIV to other people through sexual contact, sharing needles, or being exposed to your blood. For your health and the health of others, it is important to always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood. Never use or share dirty needles.

Who should not take REYATAZ?

Do not take REYATAZ if you:

- are taking certain medicines. See “What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?” Serious life-threatening side effects or death may happen. Before you take REYATAZ, tell your healthcare provider about all medicines you are taking or planning to take. These include other prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

- are allergic to REYATAZ or to any of its ingredients. The active ingredient is atazanavir sulfate. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients in REYATAZ. Tell your healthcare provider if you think you have had an allergic reaction to any of these ingredients.

Tell your healthcare provider:

- If you have end stage kidney disease or are taking medicines for indigestion, heartburn, or ulcers such as AXID® (nizatidine), PEPCID AC® (famotidine), TAGAMET®  (cimetidine), ZANTAC® (ranitidine), AcipHex® (rabeprazole), NEXUM® (esomeprazole), PREVACID® (lansoprazole), PRILOSEC® (omeprazole), or PROTONIX® (pantoprazole), take REYATAZ 2 hours before or 1 hour after these medicines.

- If you are taking medicines for indigestion, heartburn, or ulcers such as AXID® (nizatidine), PEPCID AC® (famotidine), TAGAMET® (cimetidine), ZANTAC® (ranitidine), AcipHex® (rabeprazole), NEXUM® (esomeprazole), PREVACID® (lansoprazole), PRILOSEC® (omeprazole), or PROTONIX® (pantoprazole), talk to your healthcare provider.

- If you are taking antacids or didanosine (VIDEX® or VIDEX® EC), take REYATAZ 2 hours before or 1 hour after these medicines.

- If you are allergic to any of these ingredients.

- If you are taking antacids or didanosine (VIDEX® or VIDEX® EC), take REYATAZ 2 hours before or 1 hour after these medicines.

- If you are taking medicines for indigestion, heartburn, or ulcers such as AXID® (nizatidine), PEPCID AC® (famotidine), TAGAMET® (cimetidine), ZANTAC® (ranitidine), AcipHex® (rabeprazole), NEXUM® (esomeprazole), PREVACID® (lansoprazole), PRILOSEC® (omeprazole), or PROTONIX® (pantoprazole), talk to your healthcare provider.

- If you are allergic to any of these ingredients.

- If you have end stage kidney disease or are taking medicines for indigestion, heartburn, or ulcers such as AXID® (nizatidine), PEPCID AC® (famotidine), TAGAMET® (cimetidine), ZANTAC® (ranitidine), AcipHex® (rabeprazole), NEXUM® (esomeprazole), PREVACID® (lansoprazole), PRILOSEC® (omeprazole), or PROTONIX® (pantoprazole), talk to your healthcare provider.

- If you are allergic to any of these ingredients.

- If you develop a rash with any of the following symptoms stop using REYATAZ and call your healthcare provider right away:
  - redness
  - itching
  - rash
  - general ill feeling or “flu-like” symptoms
  - fever
  - muscle or joint aches
  - conjunctivitis (red or inflamed eyes, like “pink eye”)
  - blisters
  - mouth sores
  - swelling of your face
  - yellowing of the skin or eyes. These effects may be due to increases in bilirubin levels in the blood (bilirubin is made by the liver). Call your healthcare provider if your skin or the white part of your eyes turn yellow. Although these effects may not be damaging to your liver, skin, or eyes, it is important to tell your healthcare provider promptly if they occur.

- If you have liver problems or are infected with the hepatitis B or C virus. See “What are the possible side effects of REYATAZ?”

- If you have diabetes. See “What are the possible side effects of REYATAZ?”

- If you have hemophilia. See “What are the possible side effects of REYATAZ?”

- About all the medicines you take including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Keep a list of your medicines with you to show your healthcare provider. For more information, see “What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?”

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- Who should not take REYATAZ? Some medicines can cause serious side effects if taken with REYATAZ.
REYATAZ® (atazanavir sulfate)

- a change in the way your heart beats (heart rhythm change). Call your healthcare provider right away if you get dizzy or lightheaded. These could be symptoms of a heart problem.
- diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) sometimes happen in patients taking protease inhibitor medicines like REYATAZ. Some patients had diabetes before they started taking protease inhibitors while others did not. Some patients may need changes in their diabetes medicine.
- if you have liver disease including hepatitis B or C, your liver disease may get worse when you take anti-HIV medicines like REYATAZ.
- kidney stones have been reported in patients taking REYATAZ. If you develop signs or symptoms of kidney stones (pain in your side, blood in your urine, pain when you urinate) tell your healthcare provider promptly.
- some patients with hemophilia have increased bleeding problems with protease inhibitors like REYATAZ.
- changes in body fat. These changes may include an increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck (“buffalo hump”), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms, and face may also happen. The cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.

Other common side effects of REYATAZ taken with other anti-HIV medicines include nausea; headache; vomiting; diarrhea; depression; fever; dizziness; trouble sleeping; numbness, tingling, or burning of hands or feet; and muscle pain.

Gallbladder disorders (which may include gallstones and gallbladder inflammation) have been reported in patients taking REYATAZ.

What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?

Do not take REYATAZ if you take the following medicines (not all brands may be listed; tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take).

REYATAZ may cause serious, life-threatening side effects or death when used with these medicines.

- Ergot medicines: dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine, and methylergonovine such as CAFERGOT®, MIGRANAL®, D.H.E. 45®, ergotrate maleate, METHYLERG¥NE®, and others (used for migraine headaches).
- GRAF® (gemcitabine, used for Tourette’s disorder).
- PROPLUSLID® (cisplast, used for certain stomach problems).
- Triazolam, also known as HALDOL® (used for insomnia).
- Mirtazapam, also known as VESID® (used for sedation), when taken by mouth.

Do not take the following medicines with REYATAZ because of possible serious side effects:

- CAMPSTOR® (rimonabant, used for cancer).
- CRIKVIN® (indinavir, used for HIV infection). Both REYATAZ and CRIKVIN sometimes cause increased levels of bilirubin in the blood.
- Cholesterol-lowering medicines MEVACOR® (lovastatin) or ZOCOR® (simvastatin).
- UROXATRAL® (alfuzosin, used to treat benign enlargement of the prostate).
- REVATIO® (sildenafil, used to treat pulmonary arterial hypertension).

Do not take the following medicines with REYATAZ because they may lower the amount of REYATAZ in your body. This may lead to an increased HIV viral load. Resistance to REYATAZ or cross-resistance to other HIV medicines may develop:

- Rifampin (also known as RIMAETE®, RIFADIN®, RIFATER®, or RIFAMATE®, used for tuberculosis).
- St. John’s wort (Hypericum perforatum), an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John’s wort.
- VIRAMUNE® (nevirapine, used for HIV infection).

The following medicines are not recommended with REYATAZ:

- SEREVENT DISKUS® (salmeterol) and ADVAIR® (salmeterol with fluticasone), used to treat asthma, emphysema/chronic obstructive pulmonary disease also known as COPD.
- VFEND® (voriconazole).

The following medicines may require your healthcare provider to monitor your therapy more closely (for some medicines a change in the dose or dose schedule may be needed):

- CIALIS® (tadalafil), LEVITRA® (vardenafil), or VIAGRA® (sildenafil), used to treat erectile dysfunction. REYATAZ may increase the chances of serious side effects that can happen with CIALIS, LEVITRA, or VIAGRA. Do not use CIALIS, LEVITRA, or VIAGRA while you are taking REYATAZ unless your healthcare provider tells you it is okay.
- ADCIRCRA® (tadalafil) or TRACLEER® (bosentan), used to treat pulmonary arterial hypertension.
- LIPITOR® (atorvastatin) or CRESTOR® (rosuvastatin). There is an increased chance of serious side effects if you take REYATAZ with this cholesterol-lowering medicine.

Other medicines (not all brands may be listed; tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take): REYATAZ® (atazanavir sulfate)

- Medicines for abnormal heart rhythm: CORDARONE® (amiodarone), Lidoïne, quinidine (also known as CARDIOGUARD®, QUINDEX®, and others).
- MYCOBUTIN® (rifabutin, an antibiotic used to treat tuberculosis).
- BUPRENEX®, SUBUTEX®, SUBOIKONE® (buprenorphine or buprenorphine/naloxone, used to treat pain and addiction to narcotic painkillers).
- VASCOR® (bepridil, used for chest pain).
- COUMADIN® (warfarin).
- Tricyclic antidepressants such as ELAVIL® (amitriptyline), NORPRAMIN® (desipramine), SINEQUIN® (doxepin), SURMONTIL® (trimipramine), TOFRANIL® (imipramine), or VAINTYL® (protriptyline).
- Medicines to prevent organ transplant rejection: SANDINIMUNE® or NEORAL® (cyclosporin), RAPAMUNE® (sirolimus), or PROGRAF® (tacrolimus).
- The antipruritic trazodone (DESYREL® and others).
- Fluticasone propionate (FLONASE®, FLOVENT®), given by nose or inhaled to treat allergic symptoms or asthma. Your doctor may choose not to keep you on fluticasone, especially if you are also taking NORVIR®.
- Coicchine (COLCRYS®), used to prevent or treat gout or treat familial Mediterranean fever.

The following medicines may require a change in the dose or dose schedule of either REYATAZ or the other medicine:

- INVIRASE® (saquinavir).
- NORVIR® (ritonavir).
- SUSTIVA® (efavirenz).
- Antacids or buffered medicines.
- VIDEX® (didanosine).
- WAVE® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate).
- MYCOBUTIN® (rifabutin).
- Calcium channel blockers such as CARDAZEM® or TIAZAC® (tizanidine), COUREA-HS® or ISOPTIN SR® (verapamil) and others.
- BAKIN® (enanthemycin).
- Medicines for indigestion, heartburn, or ulcers such as AXID® (nizatidine), PEPCID AC® (famotidine), TAGAME® (cimetidine), or ZANTAC® (ranitidine).

Talk to your healthcare provider about choosing an effective method of contraception. REYATAZ may affect the safety and effectiveness of hormonal contraceptives such as birth control pills or the contraceptive patch. Hormonal contraceptives do not prevent the spread of HIV to others.

Remember:
1. Know all the medicines you take.
2. Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take.
3. Do not start a new medicine without talking to your healthcare provider.

How should I store REYATAZ?

- Store REYATAZ Capsules at room temperature, 59° to 86° F (15° to 30° C). Do not store this medicine in a damp place such as a bathroom medicine cabinet or near the kitchen sink.
- Keep your medicine in a tightly closed container.
- Keep all medicines out of the reach of children and pets at all times. Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Dispose of unused medicines through community take-back disposal programs when available or place REYATAZ in an unrecognizable, closed container in the household trash.

General information about REYATAZ

This medicine was prescribed for your particular condition. Do not use REYATAZ for another condition. Do not give REYATAZ to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them. Keep REYATAZ and all medicines out of the reach of children and pets.

This summary does not include everything there is to know about REYATAZ. It does not cover all possible side effects.

What are the ingredients in REYATAZ?

Active Ingredient: atazanavir sulfate

Inactive Ingredients: Copropranolol, lactose monohydrate (milk sugar), magnesium stearate, gelatin, FD&C Blue #2, and titanium dioxide.
TPAN gets $75K from Elton John AIDS Foundation

Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) has been awarded $75,000 from the Elton John AIDS Foundation. The money will fund The L.I.F.E. Program® (Learning Immune Function Enhancement), a health-enhancement and wellness-counseling program for people living with HIV. The L.I.F.E. Program® provides participants with the knowledge, motivation, skills, and support necessary to establish and maintain health-protective routines.

“We are overjoyed by the generosity of the Elton John AIDS Foundation,” said Bill Farrand, TPAN’s executive director. “TPAN is proud to continue offering such a pragmatic and dynamic program with this resounding support. The L.I.F.E. Program® has proven results in Chicago and throughout the country, which is parallel to our existing programs and services.”

TPAN is the 18th site to offer The L.I.F.E. Program®, and the goals are to optimize health outcomes for people living with HIV by assisting participants in improving their performance on biological, psychological, and social factors that can impact health and reduce the number of people who become infected with HIV. The L.I.F.E. Program® at TPAN will do this by assisting participants in reducing HIV transmission risk behaviors and developing healthy lifestyle changes.

Since 1991, The L.I.F.E. Program® has been implemented in six states and has improved health outcomes and quality of life for more than 3,000 HIV-positive people. TPAN’s collaboration with Shanti L.I.F.E. has already received many successful reviews from participants, who have come to know TPAN for its history of quality, cutting-edge HIV/AIDS programming. TPAN’s first round of trainings ended with impressive results: all 20 participants reported positive outcomes, including significant increases in long-term goals.

For more information about TPAN or The L.I.F.E. Program®, please contact Bill Farrand at 773-989-9400, ext. 242, or e-mail b.farrand@tpan.com.

The Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF) was established in the United States in 1992 by Sir Elton John. EJAF’s U.S. office is located in New York City. In 1993, John also established the Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF-UK) in the United Kingdom, headquartered in London. These two organizations function as separate entities with their own distinct grant-making criteria and separate board memberships. In 2006, EJAF disbursed more than $56 million to support its work.

Dr. Paul Harrison, director of EJAF’s Health Care Program, said, “The Elton John AIDS Foundation is delighted to support The Blatt–Moore internal medicine practice’s integration of the L.I.F.E. Program® into its practice. The Blatt–Moore practice is a leader in the field of HIV/AIDS care, and has a track record of providing high-quality care to patients living with HIV/AIDS. We believe that The L.I.F.E. Program® will be an important addition to their practice, and will help to improve the health outcomes of their patients.”

For more information, please contact Bill Farrand at 773-989-9400, ext. 242, or e-mail b.farrand@tpan.com.

DOCTORS from cover

pause and remember the many dear friends and patients that were lost in the early years of the epidemic,” said Moore, 61. “Their courage and fight, the web of supportive and caring relationships they wove, will always be a foundation of support and courage for me in my own life and in helping others face hard times. It’s about remembering, for me.”

Added Blatt, 60: “Lori Cannon said that for some of us, every day is World AIDS Day. It does seem as though the pandemic has dominated David’s and my lives since it began. So many friends and patients have been directly or indirectly affected, as has the world more generally. When we were first involved, many people did not want to deal with the problem, but the need was great, and I feel good that we were part of another large group of folks who did get very much involved.

To this day, the relationships with fellow caregivers and patients remain hugely meaningful to both of us.

Moore and Blatt, partners, groundbreaking medical practitioners and advocates in HIV/AIDS care, and known for their personal attention to their patients, were inducted into the Chicago Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2007—and now they are officially retiring.

“The outpouring of kind expressions of appreciation during this time of reflection has been humbling,” Blatt said. “These incredible nurses and others with whom we have shared this labor are such a special group.”

Moore and Blatt are, perhaps, best known for establishing the complementary Unit 311 at Illinois Masonic Medical Center—and their AIDS work with patients, their partners and family members. The two even made house calls.

Until 1971 became a model for AIDS units at medical centers across the United States.

“I never dared to hope, back then, for the progress which has already been made,” in the fight against AIDS, Blatt said. “Most of my patients have been doing great, and have been able to carry on with their lives. It has been a really good experience to give honest hope to the people for whom I have cared since the improvements in therapy became available. The treatments, though they obviously can be difficult for some, need to be way more widely available around the world. Because the treatments are so effective, it drives me nuts when the drugs are not available to people in some of the most severely affected regions of the world.

“I think I speak for both of us, and many others, when I acknowledge the centrality of rela- tionship. At the risk of sounding like a moron about ‘life is with people’ type of sentiment, I think that is true, and the relationships people have in their own lives, and/or with their doctors, are crucial for people to stick with the motive to do well.”

Blatt grew up in Indianapolis in the 1950s and 1960s, and began his medical career by working in the emergency room of the local public hospital, Marion County General, as an orderly. He graduated from Harvard College and The George Washington University School of Medicine in Washington, D.C., and then moved to Chicago for a residency at Cook County Hospital—and that’s where he met Moore.

Moore is a 1973 honors graduate of Southern Illinois University, and he earned his doctorate at the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1975. After his Cook County Hospital internship and residency, he earned a board certification in internal medicine, worked as a teaching attending internist at Mount Sinai Hospital, and in 1981 joined with Blatt to form their partnership practice. Moore also held teaching appointments at the University of Illinois College of Medicine and at Rush Medical College.

“I will miss my patients very much,” Moore said. “The practice has been an extended family to me, and I look forward to continuing some of those friendships into the future.

“The tragedy of AIDS in the early days of- fered the ability to contribute and work with dedicated folks of all kinds, faiths and professions toward a shared goal of support of those with illness. I don’t know this that response would be possible in the medical business model today. In some ways, in the worst of times we found the best of ourselves in both the gay and medical communities. I was incredibly fortunate to meet my life partner so early in my life, and to have shared so much of what has brought substance and meaning to us both. David Blatt is not only my best friend and companion, but my role model for what it means to be a physician and a human being. I will always fall short of what I idealize about him. That respect and admiration are strong components of our relationship.”

The Blatt–Moore internal medicine practice, located on Halsted Street in Lakeview, focused on gay-health issues from day one—and still did in 2010, some 25 years later. They treated, comforted and nourished patients who, in many cases, were also their close friends, and sadly many died along the way.

The most striking turning point in AIDS as a care giver was the introduction of the protease inhibitors in the mid 1990s, along with the ability to measure the amount of virus present,” Moore said. “We began then to have the tools necessary to suppress the virus and allow immune system recovery. That changed the literal face of AIDS in this country, hopefully forever, certainly more meaningfully than anything short of a cure. Prevention, of course, is the ultimate weapon.”

Moore said retirement certainly will allow him time to read more than medical journals, study piano and learn to speak Spanish.

“Most of my free time is spent improving my skills at classical piano and my goal is to perform with other chamber musicians,” Moore said. “The voice one can give to the world through musical expression is unique and I find it very rewarding.”

Added Blatt: “I realized this is the time to retire in a quite peaceful way, although I will miss my patients and colleagues immensely. [Still], I am certainly hoping to maintain many of those relationships as lifetime friendships. I am the luckiest guy in the world, in the history of the world—and that’s on a bad day. I don’t [say that with] arrogance, but as just indeed being lucky and grateful.”

After all, Blatt started working as an emer- gency room orderly at age 15, in a busy public hospital.

Now he can exhale. Now they both can ex- hale.

“Over the last six years or so, my other in- terest—becoming a paramedic—has become a huge passion,” Blatt said. “I sort respect the intense, demanding, highest quality work I see that group of colleagues perform and am eager to continue accompanying them.”

“I suppose it is also time for me to begin exercising, something I haven’t done in a year that begins with a ‘2’.

“David and I put a lot of effort and thought, from early on as out gay doctors, into trying to parse the good from the creepy aspects of profes- sionalism. Maintaining healthy boundaries without stuffy hierarchy continues throughout life to be a work in progress.”
Howard Brown Health Center (HBHC) has reached its target of raising $500,000 in 50 days. A little more than two months ago, Jamal Edwards, the CEO of Howard Brown and then-chair of the board of directors Mark Andrews, stood in front of a group of press and community members to announce that the organization was in deep financial trouble and would need $500,000 by the end of the year if it were to keep its doors open, and an additional $500,000 over the next year. In an understated but enthusiastic announcement and reception Dec. 23, Edwards spoke to a group of approximately 60 to announce that they had raised more than $658,754.

The amount came from 1,200 donors, according to Edwards, and was significantly added to by a donation of $25,000 from Walgreens, announced by Denise Scarpelli, the company’s market pharmacy director. Edwards spoke of the 20-year partnership between Walgreens and HBHC. Beginning Jan. 1, 2011, according to an accompanying press release, Walgreens “will expand its participation in Howard Brown’s 340B program beyond the Sheridan Road clinic to include Walgreens locations at Clark and Barry and Broadway and Ridge.”

In addition, an anonymous male donor, whose son received healthcare upon being diagnosed with HIV about seven years ago, donated $200,000 in a matching challenge grant. That person appeared via speakerphone and spoke for a few minutes about the reasons for his donation, specifically citing the work of Dr. Robert Garafalo in the care of his son: “[My son] spent two months in the hospital and Rob was probably there as much as I was.” Edwards noted that Dahlia Mehdi, then in the nursing department, had also been instrumental in the man’s care.

The anonymous donor credited Howard Brown’s care and treatment program for his son’s turnaround saying, “a year later, my son ran the Chicago marathon. A year later he married. A year later, I have my first grandchild. … I tried to imagine a young guy or girl … maybe their parents, because of choices they’ve made, aren’t as supportive of them.” Praising Howard Brown, he said, “It’s an ongoing effort—it’s your organization, your entity, these people are here for us.

Howard Brown reaches $500K
BY YASMIN NAIR

Gay politician makes history in Poland
BY ANDREW DAVIS

Kristyan Legierski made history in Poland by coming that country’s first openly gay elected official when he was elected to the Warsaw City Council Nov. 21. Responding to questions sent in early December, Legierski discussed the LGBT atmosphere and politics with Windy City Times.

Windy City Times: What is the LGBT scene like in Poland? Are some areas (such as Warsaw) more open/receptive than others?

Kristyan Legierski: Warsaw is the most open and LGBT-friendly city in Poland. And generally, cities in Poland are more open than other areas—but it is obvious as I think.

WCT: What are the key LGBT issues in Poland? Discrimination? Civil unions (or marriage)? Adoption?

KL: In my opinion the key issues is still discrimination and civil unions, but without adoption. [Concerning] adoption, there is no space to debate yet...

WCT: Illinois just approved civil unions. Are LGBT activists trying to get civil unions approved in Poland city by city, or are they trying to get the whole country to vote for it?

KL: There is no other possibility to get civil unions approved than the whole country. Polish law doesn’t allowed to have different laws in different cities on this matter.

WCT: What started your interest in politics? How far would you like to take your career? Would you like to lead the country someday?

KL: I don’t plan to lead the country. I will stay in politics as long as I feel I should be in it. It is not a matter of my plans, but rather a matter of sense.

WCT: On a personal note, who was the first person you came out to?

KL: Honestly, I don’t remember. I guess it was one of my best friends at university.

WCT: What do Polish LGBT activists (or what do you) think of the LGBT scene here in the United States?

KL: We used to have a problem in Poland with men who have sex with men not being able to donate blood, and there are no restrictions against gay men being in the army—so I’m glad that you are, in some aspects, ahead of us. [Ended sentence with “happy” emoticon]

However, to be honest, I think and hope that you will quickly changed this bad rule. [Editor’s note: Congress passed the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” repeal measure Dec. 18.] Generally, I think that being gay in the United States is much more easy than here in Poland—not because of law but because of the population’s mentality.

WCT: Regarding population, are there many Blacks or Africanians in Poland?

KL: I know personally maybe 10 Black people in Poland. (There are, naturally, many more than 10 Blacks in Poland, but I’m trying to give you a picture of the general situation.)

Kristyan Legierski.

Howard Brown CEO/President Jamal Edwards and Walgreens Market Pharmacy Director Denise Scarpelli. Photo by Hal Baim
Rick Garcia on firing, El board’s comments

BY YASMIN NAIR

Ousted Equality Illinois political director Rick Garcia continues to fight back against his firing from the agency he co-founded.

Last week, in interviews with Windy City Times, El CEO Bernard Cherkasov and board leaders Dalila Fridi and Jeremy Gottschalk said that the firing of Rick Garcia was not a sudden event. According to them, it was the culmination of a series of conversations and discussions internal to the organization.

This past weekend, Garcia spoke to WCT from Miami, where he is on vacation, and emphatically denied that version of events. He also speculated on reasons why events unfolded as they did.

Windy City Times: So, could you address the claims made by Bernard Cherkasov and some members of the board of directors that the process that resulted in your firing had been going on for a year prior to that.

Rick Garcia: That is an absolute lie. I knew nothing, that they were displeased with my performance, until, I guess, the end of July. I knew about this three months ago. And the other part that I think is important is that I was told that after 90 days there would be a review. There was no review. After they squeezed the blood out of me for the civil-union bill Bernard just called me and terminated me. So there was no review and no reason given for my termination. And I think those are very important points and the most important point is that this was not a board decision. The board rubber-stamped what he said. This reminds me of the former Soviet Union; the decision. The board rubber-stamped what he said. It’s sad; it saddens me. And I think that is sad. I don’t want to tie you to your desk but you need to be in the office more.

RG: And [he also] said I shouldn’t be bringing embarrassment to the organization at any time, in any way. And I said, “What is that about?” And he said, “Well, some of your quotes are embarrassing. People have complained that you have embarrassing quotes.” So, I wasn’t supposed to criticize anybody else, [and] I was supposed to spend more time in the office. Then he said, “We will review you in 90 days, and decide what to do after that.” So, I was off for a month; I took the month of July off and went back in August and have just been working and basically working the civil-unions bill, working on getting Gov. [Pat] Quinn elected. [I was] called in on the 15th of December and was told, “This is not working out. I am terminating you.”

RG: I was to give a talk that evening, on the civil-unions bill at the Center on Halsted, at 6 o’clock, and he called me in at 5 o’clock and said, “This is not working out, and we are going in a new direction and I am terminating you right now.” And I thought that was curious, considering it’s worked out for me and for this community successfully for 20 years and the direction that we’ve been going has been, I think, the right direction for the state of Illinois and a winning direction, and you’re the one who’s been here for two years, so if it isn’t working out why don’t you go find your own organization? I didn’t say that to him but that’s exactly what I thought and that’s what I think now. Rick Garcia. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald (Mystic ImagesPhotography.com)

if it isn’t working out, who isn’t it working out for? It’s working out for me. And it’s working out not only for me but it’s working out for our community.

WCT: What was Jeremy Gottschalk’s role in this as the president of the board?

RG: From what I can tell, his role is to parrot to the board what Bernard writes. So Bernard will write a memo and Jeremy will send it out under his name. … The second to the last memo board members got was, “Rick is back, things seem to be working out, and we’ll have a review in 90 days” or something like that. Then the next memo that the board gets from Jeremy is: “Bernard has informed me that he terminated Rick Garcia at 5 o’clock today, as you all know,” and then some people complained that “we don’t know anything about this, we didn’t meet about this.” Then he writes a clarifying letter in which he claimed that he had talked to every board member and Jeremy claimed he had talked to every board member about Rick, and in 90 days there was going to be a review and one of the options at the end of that review was that Rick would be terminated. Some board members said, “It’s not saying we’re going to terminate him in 90 days; it says we’re going to review the situation in 90 days.”

So Bernard reviewed the situation, fired me and then told the board. And then Bernard tells the board to follow the Howard Brown principle—shut your mouth, don’t say a word, don’t gossip, don’t even talk among yourselves, if you have any questions direct them directly to Bernard, not to Jeremy. Let’s not have a board meeting; direct them to Bernard if you have any questions about the situation.

So I don’t think there was an opportunity for the board to discuss this. I know of no opportunity and I’ve talked to a number of board members that know of no opportunity, and some of them told me they didn’t participate in any of this.

WCT: As you may know, Dalila Fridi has gone on the record to say they gave you a letter, and that this process began a year ago.

RG: Dalila and Jeremy and Bernard may have had conversations among themselves about me, but no one told me.

WCT: So you’re saying: If there was a process, it was not a process that necessarily involved you as well.

RG: There absolutely may have been a process, but it certainly did not involve me because I was told nothing about it until three months ago.

WCT: Have you heard from anyone from the board? We know that some did not sign on to a brief statement sent out by Gottschalk.

RG: What I’m hearing is that as a board they did not talk about it; it was stressed on them, it was announced. They got an e-mail at about 5:30 saying that “Bernard has fired Rick at five.” And, by the way, Christina Kahri is on the list of signers but I don’t know that she ultimately signed. I think that she was duped because she called me immediately and said, “No one talked to me about this.” It’s my sense that most of those signers may have signed on just because they thought it would keep the peace. I don’t know; this is just my assumption because all of them are good-hearted people and they want to do the right thing, and I think that the president of the board and the CEO said, “We had to do this and this is what we have to say.” I think they decided that one.

WCT: Did they bring up the civil-unions bill, in relation to your firing?

RG: Absolutely not. It was like I had nothing to do with the civil-unions bill. They didn’t even mention it. In one of the memos that was sent three months ago to the board from Jeremy, it outlined the things that the board had noted about me. One of them was, “Rick has alienated key legislators and to such an extent that it may jeopardize it.” I love that I have a copy of the memo even though I’m not supposed to see it—that’s how we play politics in Chicago. I didn’t get it from friends because I wouldn’t jeopardize them; I got it from people I wouldn’t expect would give it to me [looks for it, can’t find it in this briefcase]. Anyway it was that I jeopardized the civil unions bill because my speaking out to the press about the bill upset some legislators. But I wasn’t saying anything different than [Rep.] Greg Harris. I’m not defending myself. I don’t need to defend myself. Honey, I won.

If I’ve alienated legislators, number one, how was it that I was able to work with our lobby and bills and stuff is it? I’m still around here.

And how is it that I’m able to stick my head in the governor’s office and the mayor’s office or [Cook County Board President] Toni Preckwinkle’s office and “can I have a minute of your time?” If I’m so alienating to legislators, why have I served on two governors’ transition teams and Tony Preckwinkle’s transition team? So that’s just bogus, and they tell it to people who don’t know any better.

The other thing Bernard said is that I have offended our partners and made embarrassing statements to the press and I said, “What do you mean, offensive?” He responded that it was “[that] when you commented on the financial situation at Howard Brown and you should not have done that.” He was really, really angry. I mean, this was an outburst, and this is why I did what I did, or, oh, Rick, you really shouldn’t have.” He was mad—that was the maddest I’ve ever seen him.

These were the criticisms three months ago. I think that I’ve done my job well over the last three months, since August when I came back and, boom, I’m out of there, summarily and in “bye.” You pass one of the most significant pieces of legislation for the lesbian and gay community, and they say goodbye to you.

WCT: We heard from people like June LaTrobe, former head of the trans community, that the like the trans community, were taking your expulsion very seriously. What are you hearing about from those communities?

RG: I’ve had this outpouring of support from many people throughout our state. Downstate folks and here—and especially the trans community. And I think the reason is that when HRC [Human Rights Campaign] threw the trans community under the bus by including transgender identity and even of ENDA, I was one of the first 10 activists in this country to speak out against them. And I’ve always stood with the trans community. I’ve fought hard to make sure that the state law included gender identity so that they know that I am a strong ally.

Bernard is enraged with the Human Rights Campaign and partners with the Human Rights Campaign, and that alienated—talk about who’s alienating who—that alienated a number of transgender people who are still bickering and fighting about how HRC treated them. And the only reason these people have remained faithful to us is they knew that Rick was there and Rick would protect their interest. [LaTrobe was one of the four people who showed up for a protest in support of Garcia Dec. 23.] I think that’s why there’s a huge outpouring among transgender...
famous who are uncomfortable with the direction Equality Illinois was moving in, sucking up to HRC.

**WCT:** Has anyone from the board or others in EI reached out to you?

RG: I have absolutely no clue; I have an understanding that our board and, I believe even staff have been directed not to talk to me or engage with me. That’s what I’ve been told. I don’t know for sure but they have not engaged me at all. I will tell you this: If I was in the board’s position or the CEO’s position, I would be highly embarrassed at how miserably this whole situation was handled and I would be ashamed, ashamed of the duplicity and the mendacity surrounding this whole issue.

**WCT:** What interest do you think the national organizations like HRC have in all of this?

RG: I do not know what is behind my firing at that exact time. ... But what has been suggested to me, and of course we’re talking about a state or a state organization, is the influence that some of the national organizations such as HRC want to have on statewide organizations. [WCT] has not obtained any separate confirmation about this, and the publication is in contact with national organizations. And they’ve always had a problem with Illinois; we don’t deal with them, we will not have anything to do with them. And now we have a CEO who is enamored with Washington, D.C., and enamored with national partners and wants to suck up to them at every opportunity he can get. HRC people despise me and I despise them. And, you know, I think that may play into this.

Other state leaders who I’ve talked to this week have suggested those national funding groups and organizations see Illinois as a state that just passed civil unions. And that we’re ripe for the picking. The problem from my point of view, and Bernard knows this, is that, as I say, when those national organizations come into the state they ruin [local organizations]. Talk to Fair Wisconsin, talk to a number of organizations. The most important thing is they lose, they lose on our issues.

I don’t really know if that’s the underlying reason for my termination now, but I think it resonates that they announce that we’re terminating Rick Garcia and in the same breath we’re getting a state equality grant of a $100,000 for our “new direction.” We’ve had the same direction for the past 20 years—and now all of a sudden we have been successful for the direction.” We’ve had the same direction for the past 20 years—we have political work to do. This is not a social club where we stand around and smile, and shake hands and go to cocktail parties and black-tie dinners. That’s part of it but that’s not all of it. And we are about success and winning and I do not know what he is about. Except hobnobbing and trying to be somebody.

**WCT:** Where is this coming from in the support or reached out to you?

RG: I have a zillion e-mails and messages on my Facebook page. I’ve heard from Gery Chico, Ald. [Edward] Burke, James Meeks, Carol Ronen, people from downstate Illinois, people from the suburbs, PRLAG people. ... I mean, it amazes me, the number of people and the diversity of people. I mean, trans people, Republicans, Democrats, suburban downstate and they all express shock and/or anger or “What in the hell is going on?” They’re very, very angry at what has happened to me.

**WCT:** In terms of the timing, you had been at the White House the day before [for a holiday party]? Was there something that happened there that might have affected EI’s decision?

RG: Yes. When I was at the White House, I spoke with President Obama and Mrs. Obama, and the president congratulated me on the great work on the passage of the civil-unions bill in Illinois, and there was a big hug. While I was talking to him, I did say, “Mr. President, would you please free [former Illinois Gov.] George Ryan and let him go home?” And that was the lead item in the Michael Sneed’s column the next day [in the Chicago Sun-Times], the day I was fired. I don’t know what the connection could be but there are some who have called and said, “I think it was that George Ryan piece.”

I think that Bernard did not want me to be the face of the spokesman for the organization, and I wasn’t speaking for the organization there, but the reality is that when Rick Garcia opens his mouth, he’s not just Rick Garcia, he is Equality Illinois. And I think that was part of the problem, that when I spoke out, Bernard thought I was speaking for the whole organization. And that was very problematic for him because he wants to be the face and he wants to be the voice. And I’ve always been the face and I’ve always been the voice. Frankly, I have the head and I have that voice. And the experience. And you know what? I will continue to have it.

**WCT:** Could you address the rumors that you weren’t paid for your work during the last three years?

RG: In the beginning I was paid nothing, for the first three or four years, and then I started to get a small stipend. Then, probably about six years ago, I started making a reasonable salary, but I never had benefits until about six or seven years ago. At the time of my termination, I was making $72,000 with benefits.

**WCT:** How did you support yourself in the first few years?

RG: I wrote letters to religious organizations of nuns to ask for grant money. And every now and then I’d work at a coffee shop that was comparable to Starbucks. I would come in to the coffee shop and work a little bit and then take off and then run down to the county building because we were working on a rights ordinance there, and then come back and put my apron on over my suit. Because that’s how I
The holiday season is a difficult time of year for many of us. Our culture's egregious forms of commercialism always bother me—and its anemic recognition of other celebratory forms of this holiday season other than Christmas, like Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Ramadan and the celebration of the winter solstice.

Too often we see the glitz and glamour that this holiday brings and we have totally missed its spiritual message. And because much of the spiritual aspects of this season are lost, so too, by too many of us, is the gift of giving to the neediest in our communities. In my community, one of the neediest groups is our LGBTQ homeless youth and young adults.

And, unfortunately, our LGBTQ homeless youth and young adults face the annual angst of feeling that this holiday season will not have a queer-friendly space for them. This holiday season one of the themes that looms large for many of us is LGBTQ homelessness.

Why homelessness? Because many of our LGBTQ youth, myself included as once a homeless youth, do not really have a home to go to where they can sit at the family table and be fully out—or if out, fully accepted. As with Mary and Joseph, Jesus' parents, during the time of his birth who traveled from inn to inn to finally find there was no welcome space for them, LGBTQ youth live nomadic street lives, traveling from place to place to sadly find out there is neither room nor space nor home for family to be permanently welcome into it.

Unfortunately, many of our homeless LGBTQ youth and young adults across this country this holiday season will not have a queer-friendly shelter to go to. And too many will spend the time alone even where homeless LGBTQ shelters across the country will be open because they cannot miss their families and communities—especially around this holiday.

As we gear up for this holiday season let us enjoy the time. Let us make home, if not with biological family, then certainly with beloved friends. But let us also not forget the continued struggle of the LGBTQ homeless youth and young adults searching for home for the holidays.

Send letters and viewpoints to Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com. Items may be edited for length or clarity.

Julianne Moore.

Remember our homeless gay youth this holiday

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My best and worst of 2010 theater

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

As a theater reviewer, I typically eschew the industry practice of getting complimentary press tickets to shows that I have no intention of reviewing or covering in print. Yet I come to regret my ticketing stance when it comes to writing a year-end round-up piece like this, since I can’t truly deem what was the best or worst in Chicago theater because I haven’t been keeping up with the entire theater scene during the year.

The logistics of just seeing everything is also a challenge, what with more than 200 theater organizations as members in the League of Chicago Theatres producing upwards of 800-plus shows each year. So please forgive me if I missed out on what so many others consider to be the best or worst in 2010. (The entries below are listed in alphabetical order.)

The best:

**Billy Elliot**, Ford Center for the Performing Arts, Oriental Theatre—It’s too bad that this award-winning London and Broadway smash didn’t resonate strongly enough with Chicago audiences to become a multi-year hit. Still, this 2005 musical adaptation of the popular 2000 film about a Northern English lad who has a dream to become a multi-year hit. Still, this 2005 musical adaptation of the popular 2000 film about a Northern English lad who has a dream to

**Parallelogram**, Steppenwolf Theatre—Taking a step back from some of his more overtly political plays, Bruce Norris latest world premiere for Steppenwolf was a wonderful "what-if" comic drama involving time-shifting questions of morality and fatalistic views of the future. A Parallelogram was a very funny and far-reaching thought-provoking play.

**Talk Radio**, Drury Lane Theatre Oakbrook—Drury Lane Theatre continued on its revitalized winning streak with director/choreographer Rachel Rockwell’s grand and glorious staging of this epic 1998 masterpiece that can rightly lay claim to the title of “The Great American Musical.” All the Jeff Awards lavished on this Drury Lane production were rightfully deserved.

**Red Herring**, Noble Fool Theatricals—The Noble Fool Theatricals name will soon be no more as the St. Charles-based company is changing its name to Fox Valley Repertory in January. But the company definitely lived up to its mix moniker earlier this year with a superbly acted production of Michael Hollinger’s Cold War-set mystery comedy.

**She Loves Me**, Writers’ Theatre—Luxury Chicago casting abounded in this critically beloved 1963 musical comedy romance by Fiddler on the Roof composing team Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick. This intimate jewel-box production courtesy of Writers’ Theatre showed once again why She Loves Me stands out as a perfectly constructed book musical from Broadway’s golden age.

**Sweet Bird of Youth**, The Artistic Home—If you want to extol the glories of intimate Chicago storefront theater, then steer your friends and neighbors to The Artistic Home, where director Dale Calandra has created a sexy and gripping take on Tennessee Williams’ 1959 drama involving a fading Hollywood star, a good-looking gigolo and a corrupt Southern politician who can get away with castrating his enemies. It’s all good and juicy dramatic stuff.

**Traces**, Broadway Playhouse at Water Tower Place—Montreal-based Seven Fingers showed how their brand of smaller and intimate circus can truly amaze in this revue featuring a bevy of super-talented young daredevil performers. Traces was a wonderful way to reopen the newly renovated Broadway Playhouse at Water Tower Place.

**The Twins Would Like to Say**, Dog & Pony Theatre/ The Pirates of Penzance, The Hypocrites—These unconventional environmental stagings were by no means perfect, but both shook up theatrical expectations in fascinating and fun ways. Director Sean Graney found a new and campy way to tackle an operetta classic, while Seth Bockley and Devon de Mayo dramatized a mysterious based-upon-a-true-story incident where twin sisters retreated into a fantasy world of fiction.

**The Castle**, Oracle Productions—It was easy to guess the political reasons by Oracle Productions opted to stage British playwright Howard Barker’s difficult “Theatre of Catastrophe”-styled historical comic-drama involving crusaders in the Middle East. But the ultimate execution came off a snup and self-important.

**Prom Night!**, Les Enfants Terrible—There clearly is potential in this performance art troupe that depicts anatomically uncomfortable aliens encroaching on a special human event. But the ultimate execution of Prom Night! failed to follow good storytelling logic and just became an annoying slog.

**Talk Radio**, The State Theatre of Chicago at Heartland Studio—Audiences were actually invited to text and tweet throughout this staging of Eric Bogosian’s 1987 period piece. I hope those who actually did participate in this social media staging concept would have pointed out all the abundant anachronisms and wrong-headed directorial decisions to depict all the callers instead of preserving them as disembodied voices.
Speaking the speech in ‘10
BY MARY SHEN BARNDIGE

For many people, the big theater news in 2010 was in real estate. The former Balwic Art Center and Theatre Building Chicago continued to anchor the 2500 block of Belmont Avenue as, respectively, Theater Wit and Stage 773. Black Ensemble broke ground for a new theater at Clark and Montrose, its vacated space in the Beacon Street community center offering shelter for Uptown’s Pegasus Players. Drury Lane Water Tower Place got a sleek new makeover (and steadier use) under the title of Broadway In Chicago. Signal Ensemble moved into the likewise rehabbed fka Breadline warehouse at Ravenswood and Berenice, while the suburban Oak Park Festival Theater and Circle Theatre now share the quarters recently occupied by Oak Park Village Players. Oh, and storefronts Profiles and National Pastime got fancy new restrooms, making the Heartland Studio the last theater in town in no-in-house plumbing.

For other theatergoers, the 2009-2010 season should be declared the year of the vocal coaches. For many, the stage is set for a better vocal sound from the pit rather than the stage. Though we need not rely on “dramatic license” to allow a less-singing actor to be on stage, the pros now are better prepared to give them vocal support. The year’s major volunteer presence was in the areas of vocal coaching, choreography, tech, and set design. This fall, every theatre’s casting director was also its vocal coach. Add to that the fact that the show’s author has been attending the run of the play, and the difference is profound. The play is much better off as a result.

I am only aware of one instance where the vocal sound was not improved by the addition of a vocal coach: Chicago’s annual production of The Seagull. It’s a classic, sure, but one should never hear it, not once, with a better vocal sound. The cast was wonderful, and the singing barely audible at times.

I was not a fan of the 2010 Goodman production of The Caucasian Chalk Circle, but the vocal sound was great. And in the Goodman’s production of The Lion in Winter, the vocals were magnificent. I could hear them sing every word. There was no need for a script—just a program. The cast was wonderful, and they didn’t need any help from the vocal coach. The Goodman could use more of this in their future productions.

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Best of 2010
BY JONATHAN ABBABANEL

There are 200 or so theater companies in Chicago and its suburbs staging upwards of 800 shows a year and no one person can see more than one-third of them and remain sane. Best of 2010? Who the hell knows? I saw, maybe, 200 shows and here’s what I thought best of that relatively narrow sampling. In alphabetical order:

—*Boojum!*, The Musical, Broadway in Chicago. A dynamic, hard-edged and faithful stage version of the hit film about a coal-miners boy who wants to dance, with a pounding score by Elton John who now has learned how to write music that’s part of a show, not music applied to the show. Gorgeous staging and choreography, and four brilliant boys alternating in the demanding role of Billy.


—*Romeo and Juliet*, Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Australian director Gale Edwards showed Chicago audiences that R&J can be driven forward by its text and not slowed down by trusting the text as poetry. Her production successfully juxtaposed classic and modern visual devices, had slam-bang fight choreography and galloped along while cutting nary a word. Also, it was the most handsome production of the year (scenic and costume) and provided a clearly-gay Mercutio lusting after Romeo.

—*A Streetcar Named Desire*, Writers’ Theatre. A claustrophobic and physically-brutal staging by MacArthur Fellow David Cromer, which allowed me to see this often-parodied Tennessee Williams classic with fresh eyes. What higher praise can one give any production of a familiar work? Cromer physicalized things Williams left to the imagination—such as two men discovered in bed—and I didn’t agree with all his choices, but they were bold choices that certainly made the play a sweaty and sensual experience!

—*Travels with My Aunt*, Writers’ Theatre. One of the best shows and comedies of the year. Grahame Green’s richly comic novel—think Auntie Mame but her nephew is 15 instead of 12—has been wittily adapted for four adept actors all of whom dazzle and charm in multiple roles. The clever scenic design and the turn-on-dime staging make this a huge show in a most intimate venue. Best of all, it’s still running (through March 27).

—*Trust*, Lookingglass Theatre Company. This bleeding-heart liberal play won me over by the integrity of its acting and directing, and the truth of the family relationships portrayed. Not a play about internet sex predators—as some made it out to be—*Trust* was about family relationships, especially that between father and daughter, who end in a state of hard-earned grace, although sadder and wiser. Co-authored and directed by David Schwimmer who did himself proud.

—The Year of Magical Thinking, Court Theatre. Joan Didion’s one-woman adaptation of her own memoir about life and death was funny, touching, acerbic, heart-stopping, angry, philosophical, wise, profound, brave, clean and reverent ... and deeply moving. Performed to glory by Mary Beth Fisher, one of the best actors working today (and I don’t mean only in Chicago, where we are damn lucky to keep her busy), and directed by Charles Newell.


—*The Year of Magical Thinking*, The Hypocrites. Greg Allen—former artistic director of the Neo-Futurists—directed his own wonderful adaptation of Joan Didion’s *The Year of Magical Thinking*. His production successfully juxtaposed classic and modern visual devices, had slam-bang fight choreography and galloped along while cutting nary a word. Also, it was the most handsome production of the year (scenic and costume) and provided a clearly-gay Mercutio lusting after Romeo.

—William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Australian director Gale Edwards showed Chicago audiences that R&J can be driven forward by its text and not slowed down by trusting the text as poetry. Her production successfully juxtaposed classic and modern visual devices, had slam-bang fight choreography and galloped along while cutting nary a word. Also, it was the most handsome production of the year (scenic and costume) and provided a clearly-gay Mercutio lusting after Romeo.

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The top 10 LGBT films of 2010

Half a decade ago, 2005 was hailed as the “Year of the Gay Movie” thanks to high-profile releases such as Brokeback Mountain—movies that were both award contenders and audience pleasers. By that definition, 2010, with The Kids Are All Right, Black Swan and I Am Love vying for this same kind of awards attention and rapturous audience response, is easily tagged the “Year of the Lesbian Movie.” Ladies—nearly 80 years after the release of the unapologetic, lesbian clas-sic Maedchen in Uniform—it seems Hollywood has finally taken notice.

The year included several other high-profile movies with lesbian themes—The Runaways; Chloe; The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo and The Kids Who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest; and Splice (co-writer/director Vincente Natali’s blissful horror classic that masterfully brought gender-bending to the sci-fi realm). Gay men had plenty of onscreen portrayals this year, including a few dates at Reeling 29, this dramedy from Ian writer-director Luca Guadagnino, this masterful melodrama of a wealthy Milanese family in crisis. Swinton plays the matriarch, a Russian émigré who is inspired when her college-aged daughter comes out after falling for a woman she has to dance with on her own act of physical and emotional rediscovery with a hot, young chef. This Italian movie was not only one of the best LGBT films of the year; it was, hands down, my favorite movie. It’s a masterpiece on all counts.

1. Black Swan

2. The Kids Are All Right

3. I Am Love

4. I Killed My Mother

5. I Love You Phillip Morris

6. Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singers had already done their thing in the late 1960s brought that influence back home with them, but Black R&B singer...
Kandi Burruss: ‘Real Housewife’ goes on the road

By Jerry Nun

Kandi Burruss left the music group Xscape to pen hits for many artists, winning a Grammy and multiple awards along the way. Following the Real Housewives of Atlanta on Bravo Television, she now drops an album called Kandi Koated. Windy City Times met her at the club to find out why she is so sweet.

Windy City Times: Hi, Kandi. what a fun party and i am not tardy!

Kandi Burruss: I like your candy necklace.

WCT: Thanks. is it weird for you to watch the Xscape videos like they have on the televisions behind us at this place?

KB: Yeah, it caught me off guard when I first walked in. I was like, ‘Whoa!’ It threw me off. I didn’t know they were going to be playing videos from the first album.

WCT: That’s wild.

KB: I always tell people that I was growing up when we first came out so when I see pictures and videos to me that’s like looking at a high school yearbook. If everyone saw your high school picture how would you feel?

WCT: embarrassed. i was a nerd in high school! you have been such a big songwriter for so long, writing such hits as “no scrubs” for TLC, several for Destiny’s Child and “There You Go” for Pink.

KB: I did. I wrote songs for other people for so many years.

WCT: How does it feel to do your own thing now?

KB: It feels good. For a while I thought I wasn’t going to get that opportunity again. So it’s really a blessing to be back doing my thing.

WCT: That’s awesome. Do you like being on the show?

KB: It’s cool.

WCT: You should play at a gay club in Chicago. I know [Real Housewives of Atlanta co-star] Kim Zolciak did, and they loved her there.

KB: That would be nice. If they asked me to come out, I would.

WCT: you are touring with Fantasia, right?

KB: I am.

WCT: She is a sweetie.

KB: She is, and it’s like a family being on the road.

WCT: I heard a remix of your single “Leave U” and it’s perfect for the clubs. I wish you best of luck with this new album and the new year.

KB: Thank U!


Ke$ha in Chicago Feb. 24

Pop superstar Ke$ha’s “Get Sleazy” tour will bring her to Chicago Feb. 24, 2011. She will perform at the House of Blues, 329 N. Dearborn. Ke$ha, who just won the MTV EMA for Best New Act, is touring in support of her newest CD, Cannibal (RCA Records / Kemosabe Entertainment). It will be made available for sale separately, as well as bundled with Animal in a special deluxe repackage called Animal + Cannibal.


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This year was Robyn’s year. With the release of three EPs, a performance at the Pitchfork Music Festival and a sold-out concert at The Metro, the Swede cemented her comeback. Her somber electro goodie “Dancing on My Own” finds itself being the best song of the year. Also not to be missed are Robyn’s terrific remixes of Prince’s “When Doves Cry” and Björk’s “Hyperballad,” which have popped up on YouTube.

I am enamored helplessly by Kylie Minogue’s superb album, Aphrodite. The 12-track collection is consistent dance pop at its finest—just check out the title track and “Close.” Expect a tour in 2011.

Also delivering the goods, Kelis delivers clubland with the phenomenal Flesh-Tone. Her public divorce from Nas did not interfere with the party vibe found here, as witnessed on “Tino” and “Scream.”

Andy Bell’s lively Non-Stop is a perfect successor to the Erasure frontman’s first solo bow, Daft Punk duets with the openly gay Andy Bell on “Honey If You Love Him.” Jens Lekman joins Tracey Thorn for the deliciously dark take on Lee Hazlewood’s “Come on Home to Me.” Sarah Washington’s 1996 feel-good dance anthem “Heaven” has been redone by the team consisting of LBF, John LePage and siren Debbi Holiday. The high-light of Grove Armada’s Black Light is out crooner Will Young’s cameo on “History.” Kylie Minogue guests on the moody electronic masterpiece “Devotion” by The Hurts.

The remix of the year belongs to the Celebrity Murder Party Re-mix “Pretty Girl Ray Ray.” The Fast-fanatics. This networking gives the track that much more intensity.

Seeing Frenchie Davis perform at Pride Fest restored my faith in artists. The American Idol alumna nailed hits made popular by other female artists, including Beyoncé and Whitney Houston. The boisterous crowd loved Davis. She felt the connection and sang “When Love Takes Over” again as an encore.

Also giving fantastic concerts this year were The Cowboy Junkies, The Ettes and M’s & She’ll. The Cowboy Junkies used a mix of album tracks, covers, new material and storytelling, which garnered a great night. For Lollapalooza, I hurried to see The Ettes. Standing in the second row, I was mesmerized by drummer Maria “Poni” Silver’s sexy, animalistic stage presence, as the band performed a solid set including “No Home” and “Walk Out That Door.” She’ll wowed the audience at The Old Town School of Folk Music with material from her latest, Devil’s Halo, such as a rendition of “Let Me Love You Down” “I’ve Got It Girl” and “Mass Transit.” Five female artists had videos that made big impressions. “All the Lovers,” has Kylie Minogue proclaiming her message atop an ever-growing mound of beautiful 20-somethings kissing. Kelis is a futuristic hunter and mother in “Acapella.” In “Pretty Girls Rock” Keri Hilson serves a history lesson by dressing up as iconic women in music, like Josephine Baker, Janet Jackson and TLC. For the over-the-top “Telephone,” Beyoncé picks up Lady Gaga out of prison before the twosome poison everybody in a restaurant.

Dance routines, outrageous costumes, B-movie worthy dialogue and the Pussy Wagon from Kill Bill Vol. 1 complete the clip.

My favorite movie of the year is The Runaways. Kristen Stewart has been honored for her acting; however, her portrayal of a young Joan Jett is well done. The outstanding soundtrack features material by The Runaways, as well as David Bowie, Suzi Quatro and Sex Pistols. Stars Stewart and Dakota Fanning even tackle The Runaways’ classics “Cherry Bomb,” “Queens of Noise” and “Dead End Justice.”

Out last February, kd lang’s two-disc Recollection is the best retrospective I have heard in awhile. She will be remembered forevermore for the Grammy-winning “Constant Craving,” but lang’s voice is perfect on her versions of “Helpless,” “Hallelujah” and “Crying.”

I felt such a beaming sense of pride when Levi Kreis won the Tony Award for his role in Million Dollar Quartet. The out singer-songwriter and actor portrays Jerry Lee Lewis in this musical, which ran in Chicago before moving to Broadway. His song “Nothing at All” from the album Where I Belong reigned on top of Logo’s Click Chart as well. Bravo.

As I get older, I became more disgruntled with the way I dated. ‘I was in Chicago, who knows? You know, one of my top three all-time favorite bands are from Chicago. They are called My Life with the Thrill Kill Kult. I used to follow them on tour when I was in high school. They are a major, major influence for my band.

They are also a really big Dolly Parton fan. I saw your Dolly interview on Logo. It was a real dream come true. I have a total thing for real talent in older women. Maybe just because I have a real bond with these heroes from when I was a kid and I got- ten to meet so many of them and hang out with them. It’s been amazing. You know, Jane Fonda I’ve been hanging out with, and I did world fitness with her in Atlantis and she came to see us in Paris. I seriously have a club for women over a certain age. Other than what it is, that moment with Dolly was really one of my highlights of my life.

I read that you are doing a musical version of Armitstead Maupin’s Tales of the City. Yes, it opens on June 1. We worked on it in 2009. It’s a really solid show, and really funny, sweet, and sad, it just has a great overall vibe to it. I really like all the projects you guys do, such as when Del Marquis had his side project and I interviewed him.

It’s important to do a little bit outside of the band just to kind of let the pressure go. It kind of makes the band fresher the more we...
Steve Starr looks at Latin stars’ glamorous lives

BY YASMIN NAIR

Photographer and Chicago native Steve Starr is known for his painstaking detail. Starr treats every photo like an elaborate portrait session, and it’s no accident that he has long had a fascination for the glamorous movie stars of the early twentieth century, when film studios controlled their images. Starr, a photographer and columnist for Windy City Times, spoke recently about his latest book, Starlight: Glamorous Latin Movie Stars of Early Hollywood (Miina Hajratwala, $30; First Flight Books; 74 pages), a set of illustrated biographies of Maria Montez, Rita Hayworth, Lupe Velez, Carmen Miranda and Dolores Del Rio.

Windy City Times: Your last book was a Rizzoli publication about Art Deco frames (Picture Perfect: Deco Photo Frames 1926-1946, published 1991). This new book is illustrated with photos of the stars in some really beautiful Deco frames. Could you explain your fascination with that style and period and how it’s linked to your fascination with Latin Hollywood stars?

Steve Starr: I specialized in Art Deco for many, many years. When I redecorated one year, I put one frame on the wall. And I thought, “Well that looks good!” And then I put another one, and I had a thousand frames. Each one was more beautiful than the last. I had personal photos in them first, and then put stars in them, each one matched to the same time as I believed the frame was produced. Between 1926 and 1946, that 20-year period. Then I put the Rizzoli book together.

I decided to write about movie stars and the very first story I wrote, about Dolores Del Rio, was in Windy City Times. When people asked me to put together a book on the stars, I didn’t want to do a comprehensive one because there are so many from the past. I wanted to concentrate on that era and I like Latin art and culture and music. I like Rita Hayworth, and I thought Dolores Del Rio was the most beautiful woman, so I thought I would pick Latin stars.

What fascinated me were two things. They were very, very famous at one time, just as famous as [Hayworth’s most famous film]. Carmen Miranda became a costume thing with the basket and the fruit but she was really very talented. I think it’s because some movies live on, like Gilda (Hayworth’s most famous film). Carmen Miranda became a costume thing with the basket and the fruit but she was really very talented.

WCT: What do you think that is?

SS: Well, that generation is dying out, and if you’re really not into films (you won’t know who they are). Rita Hayworth’s famous but most people don’t know she was from Spain. I think it’s because some movies live on, like Gilda [Hayworth’s most famous film]. Carmen Miranda became a costume thing with the basket and the fruit but she was really very talented.

WCT: It also seems that cultural references keep them alive. I’m thinking of that line from Hayworth, quoted by Julia Roberts in Notting Hill, which appears in your book as well: “Every man I have ever known has fallen in love with Gilda, and awakened with me.”

SS: Yes, and it’s kind of a sad quote too. She was a very sad person. The only time she overcame her sadness and was confident was when she was dancing.

WCT: What does your book provide that’s new and different?

SS: I write stories that are fun to read. I go through from the beginning through to the end and it takes you on a ride, but it’s always as fact-based as I can make it because I hate misinformation. I also didn’t want some clinical thing. I remember buying a book about Bette Davis which was just, “She did this and then she did that.” It wasn’t very interesting as a story. So I try to make mine a story that you’re intrigued by. I tried to make it a glamorous collectible thing, I bound it in silver linen [with a dust jacket] and, to me, it’s an art piece.

WCT: Do you have a fondness for the glamour of that period. Was there more glamour then or do we have more media now?

SS: We have more media now, which ruins a lot of things. In person and in screen life, if you tell too much, it dispels the myth. [The studios] tried to keep their stars as gods and goddesses, so people saw them as ethereal things. They didn’t have television projecting every single moment of their lives. Years ago, when you’d go to downtown Chicago, you’d dress up. People would never go in an airplane not dressed up. There’s nothing glamorous about air travel today. That kind of excitement was just different.

WCT: Does your fascination for that time period and the glamour influence your photographic aesthetic?

SS: Yes, I think there is such a thing. It would be fun angles and proportions.

Proportions are the whole thing. Someone might be good-looking but you turn their head just a little bit and they look even better. Even if it’s just a snapshot, I make everybody look as good as I possibly can. I don’t want anyone complaining. And it’s really helped me in that field, too. [My subjects] always say, “That’s the best picture of me!” It’s easier for me because I am good at proportioning how to get the best. Also, they have fun with me. I don’t just walk by and snap them.

WCT: These days, with Facebook and all the technology, everybody’s a photographer. Is there a place for that kind of portraiture today?

SS: Everybody wants a good picture. Everybody can be attractive, if they had a choice, and everyone wants to look good. It’s in the cropping. And there is a place for that.
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Rick Garcia's supporters speak out

BY YASMIN NAIR

The firing of Rick Garcia as political director for Equality Illinois (EI) has sent shock waves around the city, state and national LGBTQ communities. The news of his forced departure has caused members of the community to speak out on his behalf. In the process, speculations and rumor have been swirling around.

Over the holiday weekend, friends and colleagues of Garcia spoke out on his behalf. Garcia also spoke with Windy City Times, and his comments are in a separate interview in this issue.

Catherine Sikora, a member of the EI board of directors, was one of those who did not sign on to a brief board announcement about the firing. She told Windy City Times (WCT) this was because she “didn’t think [the firing was a good idea.]” She would not elaborate on details, citing confidentiality reasons, and said she hoped things would be resolved amicably, adding, “To see this happening is just not pretty and it’s saddening.”

Art Johnston, a close friend and long-time associate of Garcia, also did not sign on; he has so far not responded to WCT’s calls.

On Dec. 23, a group of four demonstrators showed up outside the EI office to protest his ouster. Garcia, who was in Miami at the time, said that he was heartbroken by the support but had nothing to do with the protest. One of those at the protest was Robert Czar, who volunteered and then worked at EI for a total of four years until last spring. He said that, “The leadership of Equality Illinois created undue bad press for themselves. I think they handled the situation quite poorly. … Letting him go two weeks after the civil unions bill was passed, a week before Christmas, a month before the gala was horrible. … I think it’s disgusting. … I think it created more bad feelings in the community and it was something that wasn’t very well thought out.”

Asked what the reasons for the firing might have been, he speculated that “Equality Illinois is trying to go in a different way. I think the organization is kind of becoming obsolete and I think they’re trying to rethink their communication. Rick is vocal; his communications about the openness of non-profit organizations made them nervous.”

Elaborating on that point, Czar said, “He’s made comments about Howard Brown [Health Center] because of their financial issues and the need to have complete disclosure of their finances. I think that made a lot of people in the community very nervous, especially people who deal with non-profits.” Czar was also critical of EI, saying, “I think the organization is becoming way too elitist and I think that Rick was the person that stood for the people they were representing. When you’re representing a community, you need to be a little bit more open to an approach from the community and I think they’re just saying now, ‘Well, we’re going to do this way, shut up.”

Asked to elaborate on the organization’s elitism, Czar said, “They’re not very open to input from anybody in the community who doesn’t give a lot of money, who isn’t influential. It’s become less of a grassroots organization and more of a social elite.” He also said that he had often heard the comment, “I don’t have time to meet with somebody who’s going to give me a $35 check.” He would not name the people concerned. According to him, “Rick was always the person who was willing to show up at every event regardless of how much money it raised.”

The speculation that Garcia’s ouster is directly related to EI moving in new directions has arisen among community members. June LaTrobe, a transgender activist, spoke of her displeasure with what she saw as Executive Director Bernard Cherkas wanting closer ties with the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). HRC’s relationship with the transgender community has been rocky ever since the organization agreed to take gender identity out of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act in 2008 [they have since reversed course]. Since then, many transgender activists still speak and write of what they often refer to as HRC’s betrayal. LaTrobe also complained that Cherkasov was spending a lot of time in Washington, D.C.

It should be emphasized that there are no proven direct links between HRC and what happened to Garcia. As the accompanying interview with Garcia makes clear, the issue may be a larger one of the relationship between state organizations and larger national organizations, of which HRC is representative because of its size and political clout in Washington, D.C. In that context, for some, Garcia’s ouster may in part be a symptom of larger questions haunting the gay non-profit world as it struggles to survive in a bad economy.

In the case of EI, details are still emerging and the principals involved have somewhat different versions of what happened and why. Nonetheless, what is clear is that Garcia enjoys the support of many in the community, even those who may not support his style of leadership. Many have expressed a sense that Garcia’s firing happened in the wrong way and at the wrong time. Last week, Cherkasov stated that there is never a right time for such a decision. Yet, that may not appease those who see an ominous significance in the fact that Garcia was let go shortly after the passage of a historic civil-unions bill (an effort that was coordinated by a confluence of organizations and legislators including Rep. Greg Harris, not just EI) and the week before Christmas.

Garcia was at the organization for its entire existence, as a co-founder. He was its face and voice. That speaks to his longevity as an organizer and the unique stamp he provided EI, but it may also indicate that, perhaps, his departure was inevitable as part of the natural course of a long-standing non-profit poised at a transition point. Nevertheless, the firing has undoubtedly left a sore spot in the community and if responses so far are an indication, EI has some explaining to do.

According to Czar, “the organization was severely hurt by the way they handled this. Throwing out our elders, one of the founders, out, without a word to the community is disgusting. I think that Equality Illinois has to remember that not only does it represent the community, but it’s also supported by the community [in its] finances and volunteers, and I think they’re going to be a little more hand-pressed right now to get that support.”

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Surprise Hermes gift!
Evian water for a year
Elysian Spa Gift Package
Hermes Robe
Open at 3pm.
Give-aways all day including:
Saturday, January 1st
**BRAINS & BRAUN**

Tuesday, Jan. 4

Chicago mayoral candidate Carol Moseley Braun will hold an LGBT meet-and-greet at Downtown, 440 N. State.

Photo from Ken Smilke

**EVE ON THE ROAD**

**Friday, Dec. 31**

There’ll be plenty of partyin’ going on at a variety of clubs and private events around town.

Photo from 2008 by Kat Fitzgerald (MysticImagesPhotography.com)
“I need a girlfriend. I’m looking for funny, some- one who can deal with a busy schedule, which has been a problem for the past. Just a cool girl. I need someone to hang out with me.”—Evan Lysacek says what he’s looking for in a girl- friend. Yeah, that’s what straight guys always say they’re looking for—a funny girl.

You know what 2010 was? Exhausting! Are the years getting busier or am I simply getting old- er? Don’t answer that. Preparing this year-end column is a little like death—I had to go over 51 columns and had the entire year pass before my very eyes.

Early in 2010, Bette Midler ended her very suc- cessful Vegas show, “The Showgirl Must Go On.” At the time, I bemoaned that the Divine Miss M hadn’t filmed this stage extravaganza, but she’s no dummy. This New Year’s Eve, Bette debuts the show on HBO—pretty much ensuring that she’ll turn up on the red carpet for the 2011 Emmys. One of my favorite scandalous stories seems to have gotten lost in the shuffle. Larry King and his 72nd wife, Shawn, filed for divorce. It was alleged that Larry was having an affair with Shawn’s sister, while his wife was fooling around with her son’s baseball coach! CNN tried to do damage control in a unique way—they basically pushed Larry into retirement! Now Larry’s back with Shawn (well, he thinks it’s Shawn), and he’s sitting in the living room asking, “Is the caller there?”

We regularly ran salacious and titillating vid- eos on BillyMasters.com. And yet, my favorite video of the year features no flesh whatsoever. It is a performance by that song-and-dance duo, Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes. When Katie was asked to perform at the annual benefit for the Motion Picture and Television Fund, she enlisted the aid of Mr. Cruise for a number from Damn Yankees. As I said at the time, the pair sizzled with sexual chemistry not seen between a couple since Eyes Wide Shut! Apparently, whatever Katie wants, Katie gets—and until the contract runs out—did she get 10 years, too?

There certainly is no absence of chemistry between Calvin Klein and his latest paramour. When the 67-year-old designer showed up on red carpets from Manhattan to the Hamptons with 20-year-old aspiring model Nick Gruber, tongues were wagging (well, I suspect they were wagging long before then—possibly in the limo). When Nick was identified as online porn star Aaron Skye, we were in heaven. And the videos of him in action certainly made people flock to BillyMasters.com—and why wouldn’t they? The boy plays well with others.

The worlds of reality television and gay porn got blurred when Steven Daigle from “Big broth- er” was recruited by Chi Chi La Rue. He had a banner year: made a splash in porn, had a gay porn boyfriend, got into a fistfight in public, ended up in the hospital and was arrested. And he thought it was rough having to deal with Ju- lie Chen!

Over Halloween, we got a treat when “Flipping Out” assistant Trace Lehnhoff turned up at WeHo festivities showing off his well-defined torso in football shoulder pads, a jock strap and a smile! Since we have even more revealing Christmas photos, we think this is the perfect time to check out BillyMasters.com for a little ho, ho, ho.

I don’t have many virgin experiences left in me, but this year I got to experience my first White Party. It all started when Jeffrey Sanker asked me to come to Palm Springs and interview arriving luminaries on the white carpet. I was able to finally attend since the party had moved from its nomadic Easter weekend to the new stationary second weekend in April (Eas- ter’s a big day in the Masters family—that and Groundhog Day). The real reason Sanker wanted me there was because a film crew from The Real Housewives of Atlanta would be there to capture the “performance” of Kim Zolciak. I eschewed all discussions about her singing, such as it is, and focused on her personal life—cause that’s what I do. As it turns out, that’s exactly what the Bravo folks wanted, and you know I aim to please. Looks like I’ll be back in Palm Springs for Sanker’s White Party April 8-10. More details to follow...

Everyone’s talking about the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” but as far as I’m concerned, the big gay story of the year focused on a handful of teens who demanded equal treatment. Constance McMillen from Aberdeen, Miss., decided to fight her school when they told her she couldn’t bring her girlfriend to the prom. She sued, she won and the school canceled the prom. The happy ending is that she got tons of publicity, including an appearance on Ellen, where Tonic.com presented her with a $30,000 college scholar- ship.

While this was going on, Derrick Martin in Ma- con County, Ga., wanted to go to the prom with his boyfriend. As with Constance, there was no legal reason why he couldn’t—except he needed permission from the principal since his boy- friend didn’t go to the same school. The prin- cipal gave consent and the happy couple attended as planned. On the downside, Derrick was thrown out of his parents’ home. It should be noted that not only is his father a teacher at the school—he was voted Teacher of the Year in 2008. What a difference a year makes.

I’d be remiss if I didn’t note the accomplish- ments of mega-hot Broadway babe Nick Adams. In a very short time, he went from being sexy featured chorus boy, to sexy featured chorine as a Capelletti in La Cage aux Follies to nabbing a lead role in the upcoming Priscilla, Queen of the Des- ert, which is being produced by ... you guessed it, Bette Midler. See? We’ve come full circle!

When we’re playing six degrees of Bette Midler, it’s definitely time to end yet another year. I told you it was exhausting. And yet, the year wasn’t a complete success. I opened 2010 by saying I wanted to appear on “Wipe Out.” I don’t know why—I have a penchant for large balls, I guess. But, alas, that dream went unfulfilled— along with my early ambition of playing a mur- der victim on Unsolved Mysteries. There’s always next year, at least for “Wipe Out” (my corpse dream died when Robert Stack became one). For the best gossip around, you should keep an eye on www.BillyMasters.com, the site that never sleeps. Of course, I’m always at Billy@Bil- lyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before my next virgin experience. So, until next year, remember, one man’s filth is another man’s bible.
Transgender wrestler making name in the ring

BY ROSS FORMAN

In the ultra-macho, predominantly male world of pro wrestling, Mariah Moreno certainly stands out—even at only 5’9” and 140 pounds.

Moreno is, perhaps, the only out transgender pro wrestler in the world, although now she is just making her name—“Amanda, The Bloodthirsty Vixen”—competing in small regional, domestic promotions, often in front of sparse crowds.

She’s nowhere near the worldwide fame that comes to all associated with World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) or Total Nonstop Action (TNA) Wrestling, the top two promotions in the United States. But the girl’s got a dream, that’s for sure—and she thinks big.

“I’ve always been a fan,” of pro wrestling, said Moreno, 27, who has had a particular fondness for the now-defunct Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling (GLOW).

“While in high school, I caught wrestling on TV, and quickly became addicted. I had to watch it; I couldn’t get enough of it. And still can’t, to this day.”

Moreno lives in Long Beach, Calif., and has competed for such promotions as East Coast Lucha Libre and Legion Championship Wrestling. She has been a wrestling manager for three years and actually wrestling for a year.

“I was nervous just a bit [when I started wrestling], but really no different than anything else that I do in life. When I start a new job, or go to school, or go to the market ... yeah, I’m being more physical with these people [as a wrestler], but it’s work; it’s a job,” she said.

Amanda wrestles against men and women, and she said, “It’s been amazing, really a lot of fun, with a lot of friendly people.”

Being transgender has not been a problem for Moreno. Or for the wrestlers she works with and against. But some promoters have told her, “Thanks, but no thanks!” And that doesn’t bother Moreno.

“That’s absolutely fine and understandable since those are family-oriented companies with a high percent of minors in the crowd,” Moreno said.

“There’s a secret behind the name, A-man-duh,” she says, stressing each syllable.

“I’ve had a couple of companies in southern California that will not hire me because I’m transgender—that’s because they are family-oriented companies with a lot of kids in the crowd. It bothers me, but I totally understand because, well, I’m something out of the ordinary; I’m not the normal grocery story, for instance.”

Still, she added, “I’ve had an exciting career so far.”

Moreno wrestles almost every weekend, and works as a caregiver to the elder in her day job.

She previously spent two years working at a tanning salon.

“I would love to pursue a full-time career in pro wrestling—with WWE, TNA, or in Mexico or Japan,” Moreno said. “My character is very mysterious; not many people know much about me. My character also is hardware; I’ve done some crazy stunts in the past, some crazy dives, [through] tables, barbed wire and more. I’m pretty wild in the ring; I’m kind of crazy and out there.”

Being an out trans also has never been an issue.

“I was born male and, at age 15, I decided to start living my life as a female,” said Moreno, who had breast-augmentation surgery about five years ago. “I plan on going forward with [full transition] surgery within the next five to seven years.”

“I’ve actually felt this way since the age of 5. I was very open and vocal about how I felt at a very, very young age. In kindergarten, for instance, when the teacher asked to divide the students, boys on one side and girls on the other, I strongly felt I was female, so I went over to the girls’ side. And I caused a scene when the teacher asked me to go to the boys’ side [of the room], so much that my grandmother, who was my guardian, had to be called in.”

At 10, “that’s when I really started to feel like I was not in the right body,” Moreno said.

At 15, Moreno started dressing like a female, and “it worked for me.”

It worked despite issues from other students. “Yeah, I’ve had my share of brutal kids, but I think I ultimately gained their respect because I wasn’t one to be picked on,” Moreno said.

“I lived my life the way I wanted to live it, and I think everyone in school knew that. I’ve always been vocal about who and what I am. And I wasn’t going to let anyone shut me up or scare me, not at all.”

Does Moreno consider herself a role model for the LGBT community?

“I’m not sure about [being] a role model, but I do feel like I am opening doors, and I hope the world is noticing that transgenders are as actual humans, and people who can get physical in the ring; we’re not just these fragile individu- als,” Moreno said. “I hope to be a role model to other transgenders in the future.”

“Mariah is single and said she is attracted to men.

“The wrestlers have been great; I’ve never had a [personal] problem with another wrestler, and hope I never do,” Moreno said. “They have been very respectful to my lifestyle.”

How do I harness my intuition?

One of the most common psychic abilities to develop first is clairsentience, also known as clear feeling. Many of you have experienced this on some level without realizing what it was.

A common example is when someone is telling a story, and something they say resonates as something you know to be true. Most people get goose bumps on their arms or a chill up and down their spine.

That feeling is known as an affirmation sign or psychic goose bumps. It’s our spirit’s way of grabbing our attention. I often get goose bumps up and down my left side when I give people reads. Whenever I do, I pause and affirm the message that is being delivered. It’s my guides’ way of letting me know that I just received a big psychic hit.

Clairsentient people perceive information as a sensation in their body. Some people get butterflies in the pit of their stomach when others experience a pressure in their solar plexus.

Have you ever noticed how many times people use the phrase “It was a gut feeling” or “Something in the pit of my stomach told me not to (fill in the blank)?” That means that everyday people from all walks of life are using their innate psychic abilities and calling it something else like, “Oh, I got lucky,” or “what a coincidence,” and the list goes on.

Like me, some people experience physical sensations of the people around them. I have learned over time that certain feelings mean and have gained confidence in conveying the impressions I get.

The first step in harnessing this ability is to pay attention to the physical sensations you experience in your body when you receive psychic hits. With a little practice, you soon will establish your unique affirmation sign. Your affirmation sign can be used as your own personal guidance system. When used properly, it can guide you to situations that serve your highest purpose.

Delphina, a Chicago-based psychic medium, is a columnist for Windy City Times. See Spiritguiding.com or email questions to spiritguiding@gmail.com.
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BEST PLACES TO WORK 2010 for LGBTQ Equality