Looking forward

Leaders in Chicago’s LGBT and HIV/AIDS communities speak with Windy City Times about the future. Included in this special section are (left to right, starting from top) AIDS Foundation of Chicago President David Munar, PFLAG’s Toni Weaver, Chicago House CEO the Rev. Stan Sloan, Equality Illinois CEO Bernard Cherkasov, Association of Latino Men for Action Board President Julio Rodriguez, Gay Liberation Network co-founder Andy Thayer, University of Illinois at Chicago’s Gender & Sexuality Center Assistant Director Liz Thomson, Gerber/Hart Library President Karen Sendziak, Howard Brown Health Center CEO/President Jamal Edwards and Center on Halsted Executive Director Modesto “Tico” Valle.

Riding the Midsommar wave

Andisonville kicks off the summer with its annual Midsommarfest.

Photo by Jerry Nunn

Gimme some Mo’

Comedian Mo’Nique was among the many performers at this year’s Milwaukee Pridefest.

Photo by Jerry Nunn
“I collaborate with Neff of Chicago because of the real beauty and design of the exotic wood choices available. When the finest in design is demanded, for me it’s always, Nothing but Neff of Chicago.”

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THAT’S ENTERTAINMENT
This week’s entertainment round-up includes items on Lynda Carter, Whitney Houston and Michael Strahan.

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS

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BIG TIME
Bent Nights critiques concerts by Big Freedia (above) and White Mystery. Also, read about gay Israeli singer Ivri Lider’s show at House of Blues. Photo by Vern Hester

Sugar & Spice looks at eateries that are hidden gems, such as Ada’s (above). Website photo

LIKE A ROCCO
Rocco Dispirito (left) talks about his reality-TV show, Rocco’s Dinner Party. PR photo

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June 15, 2011
June 15, 2011

WINDY CITY TIMES

HHS provides
more same-sex
guidelines

Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has provided guidance to state Medicaid agencies clarifying that they are able to offer same-sex couples many of the same financial and asset protections available to opposite-sex couples when a partner is entering a nursing home or care facility, according to a press release.

In a letter, CMS advised state agencies of their ability to ensure that same-sex partners can remain in shared homes without Medicaid liens being applied. The guidance also clarifies that states have the flexibility to protect same-sex partners under estate recovery and transfer of assets rules.

Low-income same-sex couples are too often denied equal treatment and the protections offered to other families in their greatest times of need,” said HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. “This is now changing. Today’s guidance represents another important step toward ensuring that the rights and dignity of every American are respected by their government.”

Orbitz agrees to review advertising with Fox News

Washington, D.C.—After a three-week campaign by high-profile LGBT organizations urging Orbitz to examine numerous examples of rampant anti-LGBT bigotry on News Corp’s Fox News Channel, the gay-friendly travel agency has agreed to review its advertising policy to ensure that it spends its ad dollars on programs that are consistent with its core corporate values of tolerance and non-discrimination.

Rick Jacobs, the founder and chair of the Courage Campaign, said he appreciates Orbitz taking this review and thanked them for their continuing support of equality for all Americans.

“Orbitz holds itself to high standards, which is why advertising on Fox News is so inconsistent,” said Jacobs. “Their actions can set the standard for other companies which is why advertising on Fox News is so inconsistent,” said Jacobs. “Their actions can set the standard for other companies which is why advertising on Fox News is so inconsistent,” said Jacobs. “Their actions can set the standard for other companies which is why advertising on Fox News is so inconsistent,” said Jacobs. “Their actions can set the standard for other companies which is why advertising on Fox News is so inconsistent,” said Jacobs. “Their actions can set the standard for other companies which is why advertising on Fox News is so inconsistent,” said Jacobs. “Their actions can set the standard for other companies which is why advertising on Fox News is so inconsistent,” said Jacobs. “Their actions can set the standard for other companies which is why advertising on Fox News is so inconsistent,” said Jacobs. 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GLAAD under fire for backing merger

BY ERICA DEMAREST

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) came under fire last week, following a turbulent media storm that’s left many second-guessing the organization’s leadership and goals. Amid allegations of mismanagement and trading corporate favors, some activists have called for President Jarrett Barrios to resign.

On May 31, GLAAD submitted a letter to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) endorsing the impending merger between telecom giants AT&T and T-Mobile. Although opponents say the controversial alliance will create a monopoly and drive up consumer prices, GLAAD lobbied on behalf of the deal. In a letter that reads like a press release for AT&T, Barrios said the merger would create “more access, faster service, and competitive pricing” that would augment online activism efforts.

GLAAD’s endorsement left many baffled. It seemed odd that a leading LGBT-activism group would take a stance on a corporate business deal, and many began to question whether AT&T’s recent donation of $50,000 to GLAAD motivated the endorsement.

Sirius XM OutQ radio host Michelangelo Signorile invited Laurie Perper, a former GLAAD board member who once served as vice president of external affairs for AT&T, to his OutQ talk show June 7 to help clarify GLAAD’s support. Perper, who resigned from her co-chair, to his talk show June 7 to help clarify GLAAD’s support. Perper, who resigned from her co-chair, to his talk show June 7 to help clarify GLAAD’s support. Perper, who resigned from her co-chair, to his talk show June 7 to help clarify GLAAD’s support. Perper, who resigned from her co-chair, to his talk show June 7 to help clarify GLAAD’s support.

The brand name has been so tarnished at this point that it can’t be revived even if you could find a way to go in and replace the board and find a way to go in and replace the board and find a way to go in and replace the board and find a way to go in and replace the board.

Jarrett Barrios.

Perper claimed Barrios was an ineffective leader who seriously jeopardized GLAAD’s fundraising efforts. She said his poor management led to the resignation of more than a dozen board members and senior staffers, and she claimed Barrios traded favors with Troup Coronado, a GLAAD board member who once served as vice president of external affairs for AT&T. Perper’s allegations made waves in the blogosphere, with writers at The Atlantic, Queerty and the Bilerico Project weighing in.

“Laurie’s claims should not be reported as facts,” GLAAD Communications Director Rich Ferraro told Windy City Times in an email. “In fact, they are verifiably incorrect.” The organization released a press statement June 7 that attempted to debunk Perper’s allegations, calling them “factually inaccurate, uninformed and misleading.”

GLAAD released financial data that showed fundraising efforts improving over the past year. To negate Perper’s claims that corporate backing has dwindled, GLAAD highlighted its work with IBM and American Airlines and said 2011 corporate support was “breaking records.”

Still, many questioned the group’s allegiance to AT&T. Signorile asked Barrios to appear on his OutQ talk show June 8, but Barrios refused to be interviewed unless he could be accompanied by Gary Bitner, a GLAAD board member who heads one of the largest public-relations firms in Florida. Signorile rejected interviewing the pair, saying Bitner would “coach” Barrios.

Ferraro claimed that was never the case. He later changed his interview last week, but Barrios denied having seen the letter that was filed, and did not recognize the signature.

Perper mentioned the Jan. 4 letter in her OutQ interview last week, but Barrios denied having ever seen or approved it. He later changed his story, admitting the letter did come from his office and he did approve it—albeit accidentally.

“We made a mistake,” Barrios told Bilerico. “I authorized my assistant over the phone to sign and submit [the letter]... When I realized she had inadvertently submitted an anti-net neutrality letter, I withdrew it. At the time, I had never seen the letter that was filed, and did not recognize the signature.”

GLAAD released a statement June 3 saying it does not endorse AT&T’s net neutrality position, but still supports the AT&T and T-Mobile merger.

Regardless of the group’s stance on AT&T, many are left marveling at GLAAD’s apparent disorganization. Adam Polaski of Bilerico said, “For a media organization to be this off-message and leaving more questions than answers.”
NYC healthcare mandates LGBT cultural competency

BY CHARLIE DEWEY

On May 25, the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) became the first public healthcare system in the nation to mandate LGBT cultural competency training for all staff members.

All 38,000 employees of the HHC will now be required to participate in a training program called Reexamining LGBT Healthcare. The program was developed to begin to address recent reports that have indicated substantial disparities in healthcare for LGBT people as well as to take action on recommendations made by the Institute of Medicine and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

“The New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation stands ready to respond to the diverse needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender patients under our care and lead our colleagues across the country in cultural competency,” said HHC President Alan D. Aviles in the press release distributed by the HHC. “With this training, we reaffirm our commitment to serve LGBT New Yorkers—and all of our patients—in the most respectful and responsive way, while we provide safe, quality healthcare.”

The National LGBT Cancer Network worked with HHC to create a 15-minute and 60-minute curriculum. Both of which are anchored by a powerful video piece titled, “To Treat Me, You Have to Know Who I Am.”

“It’s about humanity and that’s the only way change is going to happen, when our people can walk into a health facility and know that every single individual they meet, starting with the very first person, will have some training in how to respectfully welcome LGBT patients into their facility,” said Liz Margolies, founder and executive director of the National LGBT Cancer Network.

The 15-minute curriculum addresses three key points: the importance of knowing who LGBT patients are, making sure that healthcare professionals do not assume heterosexualities of their patients and understanding that it is okay to feel awkward and even make a mistake in adopting a new approach.

The most important point, Margolies said, is to realize that there is a mistake in thinking “I treat everyone the same.” Instead, she said that hospital staff needs to follow a policy of “treating everyone the way he or she wants to be treated.”

“The default assumption, the ‘I treat all people the same,’ ultimately comes down to I treat everybody like they are heterosexual and that’s not okay,” said Margolies. “When I treat everybody the same means I allow for a broad range of gender and sexual expression and relationship forms then it’s fine to treat everyone the same, but that’s not what that means today.”

The 60-minute curriculum, which is not mandatory, delves deeper into disparities experienced by LGBT people as well as individual and system wide changes that can be made to increase cultural competency in the healthcare environment.

Margolies hoped that other hospital systems will follow HHC’s lead and adopt the LGBT cultural competency program that her organization has developed.

There are many indications that HHC will not be the only hospital to take action on the recommendations for decreasing disparities in healthcare for LGBT people. Recently, the Joint Commission, the largest organization that accredits hospitals in the country, announced that to earn accreditation a hospital is required to have a non-discrimination policy for LGBT people.

President Obama’s executive order on hospital visitation is also changing the landscape of patient and family rights in the healthcare environment.

The Cook County Health and Hospitals System, which employs more than 6,000 people, does some LGBT competency training, but acknowledges it is not system wide. Sonja Vogel, public affairs for the 3rd. Street, 3rd. Hospital of Cook County, said that she expects to see LGBT competency training increase as the organization has recently hired a new director of Multicultural Affairs, Miriam Gonzalizes, who is planning on developing LGBT competency training on a broader level.

Gonzalizes will most likely work with the Ruth Rothstein CORE Center, the HIV and Infectious disease center, to develop the training.

“The Ruth Rothstein CORE Center already do a lot of outreach with the LGBT community,” said Vogel.

Joann Montes, customer community relations coordinator for the CORE Center, explained, “In the past we’ve had some training on cultural sensitivity around LGBT issues. These were delivered by the AQU and Center on Halsted addressing access to care for the LGBT community. It was open to all staff but targeted our nursing staff.”

The organization is in discussion with the Center on Halstead about enhancing their training program: “In conjunction with our Consumer Advisory Board, we will be assessing our cultural sensitivity and competency with assistance from the Center on Halsted and offering more training as needed. Because we are in the planning stages of this project, we are still to decide whether we will be making this voluntary or mandatory for staff.”

In addition, the Chicago Department of Public Health is also working to fill a vacant director position for their LGBT Office of Health. Jose Munoz, deputy commissioner for community affairs of the Chicago Department of Public Health, said, “It is a priority of the commissioners [Dr. Bechara Choucair] to get the position filled.”

The LGBT Office of Health does community engagement as well as trainings upon request both internally and with providers. In the past they have worked with universities, particularly with first year medical students, with clinics and health systems. Munoz said that the office is also involved with the Chicago Trans Coalition and works closely with Howard Brown.

Following the announcement by the HHC, Margolies and Scout, Ph.D. director of the Network for LGBT Health Equity, conducted a successful webinar titled “LGBT Cultural Competency Strategies” for members of the Institute for Diversity in Health Management. Scout said he was impressed with the number of participants from the Department of Health in Illinois; thirty people were on the call from that office.

He said about the HHC mandate, “It’s not business as usual for the healthcare system. They are finally catching up with the 21st Century.”

Scout also noted how little choice LGBT people often have in an emergency situation in deciding where to go for treatment. It is imperative to an LGBT individual’s health that he or she is treated with respect every step of the way or there is a greater chance that in the future that person will not participate in his or her follow up care or will avoid seeking treatment for a future illness or emergency.

In order to really see change occur a cultural shift is necessary, HHC’s decision to mandate LGBT competency training is an important step in the process. It opens the door for many patients to feel comfortable in disclosing their full health information and to speak openly with their doctor about their needs.

“It’s not about sensitivity. It’s about respect. It’s about humanitarian response to a human being in general,” Levern Jackson, family nurse practitioner, says in the video.

Lesbian Syrian blogger a fraud

Many followed the “saga” of the Syrian woman behind the blog “A Gay Girl in Damascus,” who was supposedly kidnapped last week—but it turns out that it was all a fraud.

According to the Washington Post, Tom MacMaster—a 40-year-old U.S. man from Georgia working on his master’s degree at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland—had been writing the blog for years under the pseudonym “Amina Arraf.”

On June 6, a post on Arraf’s website supposedly written by her cousin said armed men grabbed Abdallah while she was on her way to a meeting. “Amina was seized by three men in their early 20’s,” and “Abdallah thought ‘One of the men then put his hand over Amina’s mouth and they hustled her into a red Da-Cia Logan.’”

Thousands went on Facebook and Twitter to demand her release.

After “news” of Arraf’s supposed arrest, fans found evidence that led back to MacMaster.

On June 12, MacMaster, a Middle East peace activist, apologized on the blog. “While the narrative voice may have been fictional, the facts on this blog are true and not misleading as to the situation on the ground,” he wrote. “I do not believe that I have harmed anyone—I feel that I have created an important voice for issues that I feel strongly about.”

The BBC reported that MacMaster said, “I really felt a number of years ago, in discussions on Middle East issues in the U.S., often when I presented real facts and opinions, the immediate reaction to someone with my name was: ‘Why are you anti-American? Why are you anti-Hezbollah?’”

“So I invented a name to talk under that would keep the focus on the actual issue.” He added that the popularity of the blog surprised him.
Gay nonprofit 1VU abruptly folds

BY TERRENCE CHAPPELL

After much anticipation, fundraising, and community outreach, One View: Uniting People (1VU,) a gay nonprofit with a green focus, has suddenly dissolved.

Co-founded by Stephen Crawford and partner Billy Lullo in July 2010, 1VU’s mission included building a monument to LGBT military veterans in Space Park, 815-817 W. Roscoe. However, with 1VU’s recent reported dissolution, Americans Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER) took over an already-planned Memorial Day event in the park as a tribute to LGBT veterans. No monument was erected by 1VU and no one was in attendance from 1VU.

Although LGBT veteran Marquell Smith did not attend the Memorial Day service at Space Park, he had been excited to learn about 1VU, its mission, and its plans to honor LGBT veterans. Crawford was unable to supply exact figures for how much was raised at any of the fundraising events. He does note that with approximately 120 attendees, the charity boat cruise was the most successful fundraising event for 1VU. Only one person purchased a $35 priced dog tag and “that person will be reimbursed,” said Crawford.

“I am deeply saddened that the organization ended the way it did. Unfortunately, the people who are suffering here are the people we were benefiting,” said Crawford.

Crawford said that, as a grassroots and volunteer-based organization, “1VU did not have a whole lot of funding to work with” and that “no one took a salary.” A portion of the money raised from fundraising events was put towards 1VU’s operational costs, according to Crawford.

Money raised from this event will be used to cover the expenses of the 2011 Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame induction ceremony, which is scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 8, at the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington. The ceremony is free and open to the public. In addition, a portion of these funds will be earmarked to support the Hall of Fame’s website, http://www.GLHallofFame.org.

Jim Darby (left) said that he was “sorry to hear of 1VU’s recent” demise.

Jim Darby, AVER’s local president, found out a day before the event that 1VU dissolved and would not be erecting the monument. Though taken back by the sudden news, Darby continued with the Memorial Day ceremony to honor LGBT veterans. In moving forward, Darby and his group have plans to erect a monument honoring LGBT veterans at a famous, national cemetery. Darby was “very sorry to hear of 1VU’s recent dissolution status.”

1VU was recognized as an incorporated nonprofit under Stephen Crawford July 29, 2010, according to Secretary of State Jesse White’s website. There is no record of 1VU as a registered charity under the charity database of Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan’s website. Illinois Attorney General’s office spokesperson, Robyn Ziegler, confirmed with Windy City Times that the agency has never registered with that office.

Since its incorporation, 1VU has carried out fundraising efforts including a Halloween party at Parlour, where the bar donated a portion of proceeds from to 1VU; a $35 charity boat cruise for last year’s Air and Water Show; and most recently $35 dog-tag sets and $50 engraved versions with the names of service members on the back. At the time, buyers had the option to have their tag sealed inside the monument that 1VU had planned to build.
The futures of the LGBT and HIV/AIDS communities: Leaders weigh in

After looking at the LGBT and HIV/AIDS communities’ pasts in last week’s issue, Windy City Times asked the leaders of various organizations about their views and hopes for the future of LGBT individuals as well as the local HIV/AIDS demographic. Here is what they had to say:

—Bernard Derrkas, CEO of Equality Illinois: “Our community has much to celebrate, including the recent enaction of civil unions. However, we still have a long way to go. From transgender inclusion to federal recognition to full marriage equality, we have a lot of work to do before we have full equality. And this work has to be done by every single supporter of LGBT equality. All the progress we’ve made recently has been because individuals reached out and shared their stories with co-workers, neighbors, families and friends. We have to keep building on that work.”

—Modesto “Tico” Valle, PFLAG’s Woodstock/McHenry County chapter: “I am angered when I see HIV portrayed in magazines as a disease that can be easily and readily controlled with the right drug or combination of drugs. The men in the ads are strong, sexy, virile, and oh, so together. Fortunately, the college-age demographic with whom I work are taking HIV prevention seriously, lauding the fact that our campus (McHenry County College) now offers free HIV testing monthly, courtesy of Open Door Clinic in Elgin. I’m hoping that we’ll see a cure for HIV/AIDS within 20 years. Until then, practice safe sex. Be smart. Don’t break your parents’ hearts.”

—Jamal Edwards, Howard Brown Health Center CEO/president: “Howard Brown Health Center (BBHC) has been a pillar of the LGBT community for nearly 40 years as a community health center, research pioneer and human service provider. Even before the first confirmed HIV diagnosis and the HIV/AIDS epidemic, BBHC has been a leader in serving the unique health and wellness needs of the LGBT community, locally and nationally.

“Over the past 30 years of collective service in the fight against HIV/AIDS, we have learned many things about healthcare, such as the importance of culturally competent and compassionate primary care and research plays in preventing all types of disease and improving health outcomes. That’s why, as we look forward, BBHC will be taking strategic steps to increase its provision of comprehensive primary care (medical, behavioral and more) and wellness programs for all LGBT people, our allies and our families, and throughout the entire lifetime—from birth through aging.

“As more and more of us are being united or married under law and creating families; as the colors, languages and religious views of our community become more diverse; and, as more of us are aging proudly and beautifully, BBHC is excited about what the future holds for the LGBT community and is proud to be of service as the LGBT community’s lifetime.”

—The Rev. Stan Sloan, CEO of Chicago House: “Chicago House has had the great fortune to work with individuals in our community who have been non-existent to being available and life-sustaining. We see the future of HIV/AIDS continuing along this same positive trajectory, and we are building programs that help to further its potential.

“Employment programs, programs that help people ‘graduate’ from entitlements and supports, and ‘self-care management’ need to be our emphasis now, creating spots in the HIV/AIDS systems for those newly diagnosed and most desperately in need of care and support. Also, of course, we still look forward to the day even those programs are not needed ... when the cure is discovered and widely available.”

—Liz Thompson, assistant in the Department of Health Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Gender & Sexuality Center: “At UIC, we’ve had monthly testing and sexual health education through the Gender & Sexuality Center. My hope is that in the future, students see being tested as normative as their annual dentist visit; that the fear and stigma is lessened. I also hope funding is increased for all levels—prevention education, testing services and post-testing care.”

—David Ernesto Munar, AIDS Foundation Chicago president: “After 30 years, the fight against HIV/AIDS has reached a critical juncture. We now have the essential tools and technical know-how to make unprecedented progress reducing new HIV infections and saving lives.

“The recent high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS at the United Nations resulted in the nations in the world agreeing to a declaration to increase HIV treatments to 15 million people with HIV/AIDS by 2015, and our own country’s National HIV/AIDS Strategy aims to reduce new infections by 25 percent and ensure that 90 percent of HIV-positive people receive needed testing, care, treatments and support by that same year. Reaching these targets is doable. Our actions in the period ahead will define our generation in the face of the worse epidemic in human history. This crisis has caused too much suffering and loss to relent until we have successfully changed the story of the pandemic.”

—Andr Thayer, Gay Liberation Network co-founder: “Looking to the next 30 years, I believe that the most important factor affecting this country’s response to AIDS, and any reform struggle which demands significant resources from the public or private sector, is economics, and, particularly, class. The overall trends since the mid-1970s have not only been the United States’ economic decline relative to most other powers, but also a gradual decline in the rate of return on productive investment worldwide. Sure there will be expansions and contractions, speculative bubbles and busts, but the overall economic trend over the past four decades is downwards.

“And this affects AIDS and other issues how? Already we’ve seen the start of attacks on social service programs across Illinois; more direct attacks in places like Wisconsin and Ohio; and truly titanic struggles in places like Greece and Spain.

“The U.S. government shaming no signs of giving up its military domination of the world—spending almost as much as the rest of the world combined—there is now a bipartisan consensus that says that it is ‘necessary’ to begin direct attacks on nearly all social service programs, from Medicare to Social Security. We already live in a country where your life expectations and opportunities are increasingly governed by what class you are born into, and it looks likely this will accentuate over the next few decades. If you are among the tiny minority of LGBTs who are well-to-do, this may not affect you much, but for the rest of us, it very much will.

“Finally, as history has repeatedly shown, economic crises have a nasty way of giving birth to nasty, scapegoating political movements. The most extreme example of this was the rise of the Nazis, which virtually obliterated the epicenter of the world’s first gay movement in Weimar Germany. I’m not saying that anything like this is on the horizon right now, but the scapegoating politics, especially towards immigrants and public sector workers, shows that we can call it to be compliant.

“If we are going to ensure a scientific, compassionate and humane response to HIV/AIDS, we must be vigilant in preventing these irrational elements from gaining the upper hand in U.S. politics. One necessary lesson we must learn from the history of all such previous scapegoating movements, is that ‘mainstream’ politicians of both parties will not do this for us. In fact, their behavior is often directly responsible for enabling the rise of these irrationalist elements.”

—Julia Rodriguez, Association of Latino Men for Action board president: “As a 50-plus Latino gay man, when I think about the first time, I really learned about HIV/AIDS, when someone I knew, my friend Luis, found out he was positive in 1986. I just couldn’t help think that this horrible thing that was happening to my friends and my community, that people everywhere wouldn’t find it in their hearts to look past their prejudices, ignorance and politics to do something to help; unfortunately, I was very wrong.

“Now years later, I still find myself asking the same questions. Why are people continuing to let prejudice, ignorance and political ideology guide the way they look at this disease and the people whose lives it still affects and the individuals who are impacted but invisible to society, like the undocumented or immigrants? With every new law that gets passed in this country...
AFC president gets national honor

BY ROSS FORMAN

David Ernesto Munar, president of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC), was filled with emotion at his latest honor, courtesy of the White House — although he is not even certain how his name got in the mix for the award.

This month, the White House announced Munar as one of nine Champions of Change in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The other honorees are Jury Candelaria, Christian F. Castro, Dee Dee Ngodzi Chamblee, Hadiya Charles, Dena Fonteno-Gray, Beri Hull, Clave Jones and Ron Simmons.

“It’s a tremendous honor and I’m thrilled the White House chose to commemorate this emotional milestone in the company of openly HIV-positive advocates from across the country,” said Munar, 41, who lives in Chicago’s Lincoln Square neighborhood.

“For me, this honor represents a new outlet to promote all the incredible hard work and accomplishments we are making collectively in Chicago to respond to the burgeoning epidemic. We should all be proud of the united and collaborative response by local agencies and governments to the HIV/AIDS crisis. While we have tremendous unmet need and hard work ahead, we can be proud of the systems we’ve put in place in these last three decades.”

Munar assumed the title of AFC’s president in January, replacing friend Mark Ishaug.

“This honor is a very nice addition to my resume and my agency’s homepage,” Munar said.

“I hope it generates renewed enthusiasm for AFC’s important work, events, and services.”

So how and why was Munar considered for the honor?

That’s a mystery, even to Munar.

“I’ve enjoyed a great working relationship with Jeff Crowley, Director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy, and his staff on issues pertaining to the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, so this may have contributed to my nomination, but I’m not entirely sure why I initiated this recognition or why I was selected over many other hard-working, dedicated advocates,” Munar said.

“This award is very special. My sister thought my name got in the mix for the award.

“I certainly never imagined any [honor] like this. It’s great to be recognized, but the work itself, on an issue so near and dear to my heart, is by itself enormously rewarding. This is icing on the cake.”

Hopefully Munar’s honor will shine further on AFC, he said.

NEA-GLBT caucus holding reception, dinner

The National Education Association’s (NEA) GLBT caucus will hold its Ichabod Crane reception Thursday, June 30, at Side track, 3356 N. Halsted, 6:30-9 p.m. This event is free for caucus members.

In addition, the caucus will hold its Robert Birle Memorial Dinner Sunday, July 3, at the Chicago Hilton, 720 S. Michigan. The reception is 6:7-8 p.m.; dinner and dancing will follow. Tickets are $75 each; see http://www.nea-glbtcdinner.com.

For more information, email csmillerr@pacbell.net.

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that moves the gay-rights movement further towards true equality. I am concerned that some individuals have forgotten that we still have members of our community who are fighting every day to get access to vital medications, good basic healthcare.

“Now, under the healthcare-reform laws, some members of our community (the undocumented) will no longer be able to access resources to prevent or treat this horrible disease. My hope — as our battle to get full equality at federal, state and local levels continues — is that, as a community, we remember that we still have an ongoing war to win against HIV/AIDS and its one whose victims are sometimes invisible to us and the rest of society.”

—Karen Sendzak, Gerber/Hart Library president; “Gerber/Hart Library and Archives looks forward to the end of AIDS. We look forward to the time when our repository, and others, will pull dusty books about AIDS from the shelves. We look forward to a time when we receive our last request from our last researcher who wants to study AIDS. We look forward to the time when the last lid on the final box of papers of an AIDS organization can be closed and won’t ever be open again. May the lessons that need to be learned from the history of this epidemic be learned so that the unbearable toll of human suffering never revisits the earth again.”

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Civil-union law a victory for trans community as well

BY JOSEPH ERBENTRAUT

For Chicagoan Vicki Byard, June 16 is a day she is anticipating gleefully. That day, she and her partner have planned to mark their new civil union before family and friends.

The union, Byard said, is particularly meaningful to her family because, as a trans-identified couple, she and her partner have struggled with a great deal of stigma from both inside and outside of the LGBT community. With their new legal recognition arrives a moment the couple, together for two years and the parents of two children (Kate, 11, and Alex, 14) who Byard adopted as newborns, can't wait to celebrate.

"To us, it's a really pivotal celebratory time," she told Windy City Times. "I feel that my family will be united in a way I've never had in my entire life to this point."

Yet, the moment is also bittersweet as Byard has felt frustration with the fact that little media coverage of the Illinois civil union victory has featured families that "look like hers," as she explained.

While her partners, Eli, identifies as a transgender man and she as a cisgender woman, qualifying them in the eyes of the law as heterossexual or different-sex couple, they do not identify with that designation themselves. Their discomfort with being "lumped in" with heterosexual or different-sex couple, they do not qualify them in the eyes of the law as a heterosexual man and she as a cisgender woman, has featured families that "look like hers," as she explained.

"There are aspects of our lives every single day that are impacted by the fact that we're a trans-identified family," she said. "It was incredibly disheartening to see even organizations that have worked very hard for this civil union law to be the most attention-getting debate in the community these days, it can become a focal point for that feeling," Silverman said. "It raises the question if we are missing a major opportunity to talk about trans people and how their families are just like anyone else's family by not including trans voices in the marriage equality discussion."

"But ultimately we rise and fall together," he added.

In addition to their civil-union ceremony, they will also be celebrating son Alex's eight-grade graduation before their friends and family the same weekend.

Hundreds of couples apply for civil-union licenses

BY KATE SOSIN

Within the first week since the Illinois Religious Freedom Protect and Civil Union Act went into effect in Illinois, more than 800 couples have registered for licenses in the state.

Official statistics for the entire state will not be available for months, but Windy City Times polled Cook County and the 12 other counties with the largest populations, to get a picture of just how many couples are registering for unions.

As of June 9, 471 licenses had been issued in Cook County, which issued 203 of those licenses in just the first day, June 1. By the following Monday, the county had issued 366.

No other county came close to matching Cook County’s most had reported at least 20 licenses obtained. DuPage issued 42 licenses, while Will County issued 41. Of the 12 other counties polled, at total of 346 licenses had been issued.

Lake County, which is the third largest in the state, issued just 24.

Many of the counties interviewed have also installed systems on their websites to allow couples to apply for civil union licenses online, and others are advertising similar programs coming soon.

Champaign is one county with an online system up and running, Champaign boasted a large number of couples registering giving its population, reporting 37 licenses.

Peoria, which also processed the state’s first same-sex divorce filing on June 1, has issued just 19 licenses. (See page 13 for more on said divorce.)

Of course, not all of those unions are same-sex. In Cook County, 18 of the licenses were between a male and female, Female same-sex couples got more civil union licenses than male couples in Cook County, with 245 licenses as opposed to 208.

In Cook, 303 of the couples reside in Chicago. Oak Park, which issued 15, and Evanston, which had 23, had the most in the suburbs.

According to Courtlyne Grew at the Cook County Clerk’s office, the county has also issued civil union licenses to couples in Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri and Kentucky. It is possible that not every license issued will result in a civil union. Couples have 70 days to tie the knot and send that paperwork to their county clerk’s office. Those offices have 45 days to report unions to the Illinois Department of Public Health. Consequently, official numbers won’t start becoming available for at least 115 days, mid-September.

BY ROSS FORMAN

There is great joy and great sadness for Mike McRaith who, on Monday, June 13, started his new job as the new director of the Federal Insurance Office (FIO), based in Washington, D.C. The office has bipartisan support, is widely accepted as a necessary step in the evolution of financial sector regulation—and McRaith said he’s “fortunate, honored and deeply humbled” to be appointed to the post.

However, that also meant saying goodbye to Chicago.

“On a deeply personal level, there was a great reluctance to leave the City of Chicago, to leave the friends, to leave the [LGBT] community that we are so lucky to have in Chicago. I’ve been through a lot with a lot of great people here in Chicago, so, my first reaction was, what a loss it will be on a personal level to leave Chicago.”

That means, for instance, missing Andersonville’s annual Midsummarfest, which, for McRaith, has long meant hanging with friends, drinking beer out of plastic cups and listening to Sixteen Candles.

“These were great days, great memories,” said McRaith, who has spent the past two years as the head of the Illinois Department of Insurance.

McRaith is the first person to hold this new job, and was appointed by Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner. McRaith will serve as a non-voting member on a new federal panel created to determine which financial firms present a risk to the financial system and be the U.S.’s public face in negotiating international insurance agreements.

The FIO was created in 2010, and McRaith is required to submit a report to Congress by early April for the 2012 Coady Classic.

“We’re very lucky to be gay for many reasons,” McRaith said. “One of the most important reasons for me is the great variety of people who we get to spend time with, interact with—that’s socially, athletically, in community programs, whatever and wherever. The [LGBT] community is such an integral part of who I am and not a day passes when I don’t feel grateful for just being able to live here and just have the friends who I do. There are so many great people in Chicago.”

There are great events, too, such as the count-

April for the 2012 Coady Classic.

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sons for me is the great variety of people who we get to spend time with, interact with—that’s socially, athletically, in community programs, whatever and wherever. The [LGBT] community is such an integral part of who I am and not a day passes when I don’t feel grateful for just being able to live here and just have the friends who I do. There are so many great people in Chicago.”

There are great events, too, such as the count-

...
Lesbian activist Mona Noriega on new post

BY KATE SOSIN

Less than a week after Mona Noriega became one of the first in Illinois history to get a civil union, the longtime lesbian activist celebrated her confirmation as the new commissioner of the Chicago Department on Human Relations June 8.

LGBT activists across the city lauded Mayor Rahm Emanuel over his decision to appoint Noriega, who co-founded Amigas Latinas as well as the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund Midwest Regional Office.

Windy City Times caught up with Noriega after her confirmation to talk about her plans as commissioner, her thoughts on the mayor’s commitment to LGBT issues and just how far the city has come in promoting diversity.

Windy City Times: So, I have to ask: You must have been surprised by this appointment?

Mona Noriega: Oh, yeah; I was surprised—absolutely. But you know once they asked me if I wanted to do it, I was like “absolutely.” But, yeah, I was, I was surprised. This is an honor. I’m honored that the mayor asked me to do this.

WCT: Tell me about your sense of the mayor and LGBT issues.

MN: The one thing that I’ve become more clear about the mayor is he really does value equality. The issues that are really important to me, I think he really [also feels they are relevant]. I don’t think it is just lip service: I think he really does value them—and that’s refreshing.

WCT: For people who are not familiar with the role of the Commission on Human Relations, can you explain why it is important both in the LGBT community and generally?

MN: The commission actually has a mandate to enforce the human rights ordinance and the Fair Housing Act, and those are both about addressing discriminatory behavior. LGBT is one of many categories that are protected classes, so it’s important not just to the LGBT community but all communities that might be victims of discrimination.

WCT: What about the job appeals most to you?

MN: Well, there’s an opportunity to work on issues of equality. You know, none of us are single-issue people. You know, who we are is multiple things and so I’m always happy to try to work on issues of equality. To have this opportunity to do it—oh my God, it’s amazing.

WCT: Is there anything within the commission you are looking to improve or change?

MN: Right now my first task is to understand how the commission works. The mayor’s mandate is that everybody look at their department and evaluate them for what they do and how to improve on efficiencies. How can we do it better? So I’m really in the process of just understanding what people do here.

WCT: What do you think are some key issues the commission needs to be taking on?

MN: Well, you know, right now the mandate is to look at what the commission currently does—which is about discrimination—and to see how we can do that better. It’s about all discrimination; it’s about the protected classes. So everybody here is committed to fighting discrimination and we do that through education, mediation, enforcing the law around those two ordinances.

We also address hate crimes. We offer support services to hate-crimne victims. We try to prevent hate crimes.

WCT: There has been some debate in past years about how effective the commission can be in preventing hate crimes. What does the commission do currently to prevent hate violence and is that something you are looking at improving at all?

MN: There’s the Intergroup Relations Unit—oh my God, it’s amazing.

WCT: Tell me about that.

MN: Well, you know, right now the Intergroup Relations Unit is to look at what the commission currently does—which is about discrimination—and to see how we can do that better. It’s about all discrimination; it’s about the protected classes. So everybody here is committed to fighting discrimination and we do that through education, mediation, enforcing the law around those two ordinances.

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First same-sex divorce filed in Illinois

BY KATE SOSIN

At the same moment that many LGBT couples were waiting in line for the first civil-union licenses in Illinois on the morning of June 1, one Peoria man was filing for the state’s first same-sex divorce. Citing “mental cruelty and irreconcilable differences,” Mark Bayer filed for a divorce from Dr. Nathan Fredrick, his husband of five years.

Bayer’s attorney, Joshua P. Haid, submitted the paperwork June 1 at 8:30 a.m., when the Peoria County Circuit Court opened for business, the first moment possible to file for a same-sex divorce in Peoria. Consequently, he is thought to be the first person to file for a same-sex divorce in Illinois history.

Haid released a statement about the split later that day, saying that Bayer was seeking alimony.

“This is about recognizing that partners in a same-sex marriage now have equal rights to partners of traditional marriage under the law in Illinois,” Haid said in the statement.

In 2006, Bayer and Fredrick eloped to Quebec City, Canada, because they could not legally wed in South Carolina, where they lived at the time, according to the statement. Two years later, the couple relocated to Peoria with Bayer’s son from a previous marriage because Fredrick, who is an emergency room physician, had been offered a job. Haid said that Bayer left his lifelong home in Myrtle Beach to support Fredrick’s career, putting his own nursing career on hold.

Bayer spent the next two years rehabbing two historical houses that the couple purchased consecutively. According to a 2010 article in the Peoria Journal Star, the couple sold the first renovated house when they saw a house across the street go up for sale, and Bayer stayed home to renovate the second property while Fredrick continued to work.

According to Haid, Bayer seriously injured his back during the second renovation and had to undergo multiple surgeries, forfeiting his nursing career. “Among the complaints in this petition is that Dr. Fredrick knowingly and willfully denied Mr. Bayer equitable career opportunities, financial security and emotional support,” the statement said.

Haid said that because Bayer put his career on hold to renovate the Bayer-Fredrick’s home and because Bayer is now unable to work, he is entitled to alimony, Haid would not disclose in what form or amount Bayer was seeking alimony.

“He is seeking the same spousal rights that anyone would be,” Haid told Windy City Times.

Illinois will likely see other same-sex divorces as the advent of civil unions allow same-sex couples to now dissolve marriages and unions they got in other states like Iowa, where same-sex marriage has been legal for more than two years.

In Cook County, Circuit Court Clerk Dorothy Brown released a statement June 1, stating that her office was prepared to handle same-sex divorces.

“Of course, we wish everyone joined together in a civil union a long and happy life together, but if there is a need for a dissolution, then we are ready with the necessary court forms,” said Brown in the release.

Haid would not say how long his client had been waiting to get a divorce, and Bayer declined to be interviewed.

Haid told Windy City Times that he and his client chose to release information about the divorce because he knew the news would be important to LGBT people. “The historical significance is that many of the rights conferred through marriage become very important when someone gets a divorce,” he said.

Despite the timing, Haid said that he and his client were not aiming to make history when they filed. “I think it just sorta came out that way,” he said. “I just had to be [at the courthouse] early that day.”

Brow in the release.

MCRATH from page 11

less street fairs and gatherings sponsored by such organizations as the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC)—as well as the groups’ personnel. The same holds true for the American Foundation For Suicide Prevention, an association near and dear to McRaitth; his former partner took his life about 15 years ago.

“The opportunity to be part of something that is bigger than the individual... I think that’s what makes our community so special, the awareness that we’re all in this together,” said McRaitth, who tagged AFC’s 25th anniversary gala, held in 2010, as one of his most memorable Chicago moments.

“That [gala] really stands out. The room was filled with people who had spent, in some cases, decades fighting HIV and AIDS, and also hundreds of people who lived through that era when gay men were dying weekly, or daily, in Chicago’s gay community. That evening was so unique and so empowering. It felt like the fight was won. So many of us, myself included, owe so much to the men in our community who died.”

Quinn attended the gala, among other luminaries, “and it truly was a great night and a reminder that the fight is won it,” McRaitth said.

McRaitth and former AFC President Mark Ishaug had been friends for 18 years, dating back to an intense Victory Fund training for gay and lesbian political leaders in the making.

“I knew [during] that [training] weekend he was going to be a superstar, and he proved me right,” Ishaug said of McRaitth. “Soon after I was named CEO of AFC I recruited him to the board [of directors] for his leadership skills, community connections, legal insights and fundraising prowess. But mostly I wanted him because he was smart and kind and determined to help us improve the lives of those living with, and affected by, HIV/AIDS.

“It’s been amazing to witness his meteoric rise in Illinois government and we are all so lucky that he is taking his skills and his passion to D.C., to have an even bigger impact. And how lucky for me personally to have such a friend and colleague in D.C. with me. AIDS United [where I now work] will be in touch soon, Mr. McRaitth.”

More Michael McRaitth:

—Gay sports: Has also played flag football and tennis in Chicago

—On Washington D.C.’s gay community: “It’s very different in that very few are originally from D.C. It appears to be as diverse, as warm and as welcoming as Chicago.”

—Things you will miss about Chicago: Bicycling along the lakefront, long runs along the lakefront while listening to music, the great restaurants, and listening to live music, such as 2010 Lollapalooza

—On Gov. Quinn: “He is really a good man and really cares about doing the right thing. I say that because it’s been an unmitigated privilege to work with Gov. Quinn. Civil unions would not have passed if not for his hard work.”

Macy’s salutes Pride Month!
Macy’s on State Street at Noon
Handbag Department, Main Floor
Men’s Impulse Department, 2nd Floor at 5:30pm
Wednesday, June 22

Show your Pride!

You’re invited to a special musical lunch hour presented by two-time Olympic figure skater and fashion icon on ice, Johnny Weir. Representives from Center on Halsted, a community that offers support networks and programming to meet the cultural, emotional, social, educational and recreational needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and friends, will be on hand to accept donations in support of their valuable organization. And, with any $100 Men’s purchase during the event, you’ll receive an autographed copy of Johnny Weir’s autobiography, Welcome to My World.

For more details, visit macys.com/events
Lesbian artist part of Walgreens initiative

BY ERICA DEMAESTE

Jacquelyn Kennedy was walking down West Pico Boulevard in her native Los Angeles in early 2010 when something caught her eye: a “For Rent” sign in one of the storefront’s windows. The artist and T-shirt designer had rented space in that same building almost a decade earlier and dreamed of opening her own boutique there. “There was never a storefront available because people would stay there forever,” Kennedy said. “When I noticed [the sign], I was like, ‘Oh, I need that space. I want that.”

Kennedy called the landlord, inquired about rent prices and submitted a deposit the next day. She gave her two weeks’ notice at the “nine-to-five” academic counseling job she’d held for the past several years, and went home to tell her partner, popular Latina comic Sandra Valls, what she’d done.

“I was like, ‘Excuse me?”’ Valls recalled, laughing. “She gave up this six-figure job… I didn’t have any doubts about Jackie, but in general in my life, I’m more of a ‘measure twice, cut once’ type of person. And she’s just like, ‘I’m going to make it happen because I’m going to make it happen! And that’s it. Just do it. Just believe.”

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Kennedy has a creative streak since she was a child. Constantly drawing and designing, she studied at the Fashion Institute of Design and Marketing (FIDM) and went on to earn a business degree (FIDM) and went on to earn a business degree. Kennedy switched from California State University. After working

“It is not happening. ‘And that’s it. Just do it. Just believe.

She launched Dewberries Boutique in July 2010. The hip, colorful store caters to women and the LGBT community. It carries a well-curated collection of predominantly “rainbow and billy” clothing, accessories and jewelry from local designers, and highlights Kennedy’s own Dewberries t-shirt line. The line features stylized illustrations of women with attitude; its hallmark image portrays a Black woman in a bikini, hand on her hip, rocking a huge afro. Dewberries are small blackberry-like fruits that grow bunch together and are often difficult to remove from the vine. “I incorporated dewberries with women,” Kennedy said, “and how basically whether we are mothers and daughters, sisters, partners or best friends, we’re either going to make each other, or we’re going to break. You’re going to have a good attitude, and you’re going to help your mom or your friend get to the next level with positivity.”

Kennedy regularly hosts community events in her Los Angeles boutique, hoping to create a positive, safe environment for women and members of the LGBT community. Once a month, a life coach visits the boutique to offer inspirational words on selected topics for Motivational Mondays. There are also monthly Women’s Wellness Wednesdays, which have included massages and healthy eating advice in the past. Also, every other Tuesday the boutique hosts a poetry slam.

Kennedy said the boutique has been a life-changer. “I’ve met so many people and had so many great opportunities since I’ve opened this storefront,” she said. “People are coming at me. I’ve had many… different opportunities that I wouldn’t have even ran into if I’d still been in the corporate world.”

This month, Kennedy is set to embark on her biggest opportunity to date. She is the first member of the LGBT community to be featured in Walgreens’ Community Corner initiative. A supplier diversity program that just entered its second year, the Community Corner showcases products from minority designers. It’s featured women, African Americans and Latinos in the past.

In honor of Pride month, Walgreens will begin selling in mid-June an 18-pack cooler bag designed by Kennedy. Perfect for toting beverages at Pride parades, the black bag will be available in nearly 100 stores for $19.99 while supplies last. It features a rainbow yin-yang symbol meant to promote inclusivity.

“I wanted to do something that was universal, yet really, really for the LGBT,” Kennedy said. “Now, when you look into the yin-yang, could it be anybody. There’s a little bit of boy and girl in all of us. There’s a little bit of masculine energy, but there’s feminine energy as well… I just wanted to do something that wasn’t so in your face, not so bold, but yet kind of bright.”

The bag will be carried in major cities such as Chicago and Los Angeles. A complete list of locations can be obtained from supplier.diversity@walgreens.com.

“The like other diverse supplier groups we’ve recognized through the program, the LGBT community is loyal and has strong purchasing pow- er,” said Walgreens Senior Director of Supplier Diversity Geatha Gisipe in a press release. “We feel confident that shoppers will be pleased to see the Pride bag at their neighborhood Walgreens and will recognize the opportunity to support a small, community-built business.”

For her part, Kennedy is thrilled to be the new face of the Community Corner, especially during Pride month. “Looking at me, you would never think I was part of the LGBT community, you know, with kids,” said the African-American mother of three. “People like me need to come out more so that other people can feel comfortable knowing that it’s okay… We need to be more visible.”

Sami Grisafe was playing in a key volleyball playoff match during her senior year at Redlands High School, but her mind was elsewhere ... where she was supposed to be at the time.

Grisafe was to be performing in the school's rendition of The Larrabee Project, so, when volleyball ended, with a victory, she literally ran to the theatre. And they had held the start of the show for Grisafe.

Grisafe's high school run is, well, not much different from her current gigs in Chicago.

She's the standout quarterback for the Chicago Force, in her fifth season with the women's tackle football team. Grisafe also has been a bartender at The Closet in Lakeview for three years and is an aspiring actress. Plus, she sings vocals and plays the ukulele for The Wick, a four-person, Chicago-based band that describes its musical genre as rock/soul, or, provoc-rock. Lyrically, the subject matter of their songs range from social struggles, such as addiction and suicide, to love and sex.

The Wick was established last November and has already recorded its debut album, "The Wick on Wax," which was released on iTunes this spring.

"I've always had an eclectic, dynamic day-to-day lifestyle," Grisafe said.

Grisafe played baseball in her native California for nine years, then became the first woman in California to play quarterback in a varsity Division I football game. She quarterbacked Team USA last summer in Sweden to the gold medal in the first Women's International Football Competition.

"Playing on the Force is like having 45 sisters; it's really a great support system," Grisafe said.

"The Force is more than just teammates; it's like my family, especially since my real family—my mom, dad and brothers, Kyle—are in California and I now usually only see them once a year." That includes Force owner/general manager Linda Bache.

"Linda has been like a mom to me. She's really helped me develop and grow up. She's been a huge influence to me and I'm very thankful to her," Grisafe said.

The Wick will be performing Wed., June 22, at Martyrs, 3855 N. Lincoln, starting at 10 p.m. "I love the band. We have so much fun together and have done so much in such a short period of time," Grisafe said.

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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Speaking trans: A primer for LGB folks

Pride, for me, is both a joyous time and a difficult reminder that what many of us mean when we say “LGBTQ” is really just “gay and lesbian.” As a transgender community organizer, I often feel resistance from many major gay organizations when it comes both to putting transgender people in visible and empowering advocacy roles and in adopting respectful practice. With Pride upon us, it feels like a good time to remember that gay people can still be great allies. Here are some of the things we can do to show up for our gender-variant people in our community.

1. Always ask: never assume. A lot of us assume that we know someone’s pronoun preference or identity at a glance. The truth is that we can’t possibly know. Asking is always better than messing up, even if it is a little awkward. A good way to navigate this is not to ask what someone’s pronoun is, but if they have a pronoun preference. This allows for people who are certain about their pronouns to say so, and it usually won’t put someone on the spot who is not certain or has never had to answer that question before. Note: it is polite to offer your pronoun preference in return. Note, again: using gendered words when talking about people you don’t know could also be rude (avoid “sir” or “ladies” et cetera, for strangers).

2. Asking/ talking about someone else’s body is generally, always rude. Some of us get so excited to learn about transgender issues that we forget common sense manners. This often results in foot-in-the-mouth questions like “did you have the surgery” and “do you feel like a girl in a boy’s body?” How would you feel if strangers asked you to describe your genitalia? Invaded, hmmm?

3. Don’t use the “T” word if you’re cisgender (cisgender=not transgender): Calling someone a “Hot ++ *++ mess” is wildly offensive to trans people, especially transgender women. That word is a slur that carries the weight of a history (and present reality) of unimaginably horrific violence and discrimination. It is also anti-gay slurs you hear that we don’t tolerate.

4. Correct yourself and move on: Yes, it’s a little awkward when we mis-pronounce someone. It’s more awkward when we fall all over ourselves to apologize. Think about a moment when someone messed up when talking about you. Maybe they assumed your parents are still togethe when they’re not or that you are straight when you aren’t or that just because you are gay, you’re not religious. It’s more painful when you over-correct.

5. Learn what issues are important to transgenders on your own: A lot of transgender people are put in the uncomfortable position of having to educate others about their identity. Take an hour one Sunday and learn about why bathrooms are contentious spaces for gender-variant folk, why healthcare is hard to access, why transgenders are disproportionately unempoloyed and subjected to hate violence or any number of things. Chicago is home to some of the country’s best-known transgender activists and artists. Learn who they are.

6. Don’t try too hard to affirm someone’s gender: A lot of people make the mistake of trying to make transgenders feel “more legit.” Everyone is complicated, so this rarely works the way it is intended. It feels funny to have someone actively try to make you feel more like yourself. Commenting on how someone’s “passes” or on what they can do to “look more like” the gender you think they’re aiming for is the equivalent of your mother telling you what she thinks your weight should be. It is presumptive and not necessary.

7. Don’t use the wrong pronoun just because you’re talking about them in past tense: It is never necessary to use someone’s old name or pronouns if they have asked you to use new ones. Sometimes when talking about transgender people in past tense, we think it is okay to use an old name/pronoun/identity/other gendered word, but this is generally considered disrespectful of how they identify now (and in some cases, has always been identified). If you are about to say, “when Johnathon was a girl,” think about saying “when Johnathon was a kid.” Even if you are talking about someone’s transition, use what they have preferred name and pronouns. It’s common courtesy.

8. Check-in now and then: Some people will tell you that they prefer one pronoun and later change their minds, or they will want you to use one pronoun and someone else to use a different one, depending on who they are comfortable with. If you think someone might want to be addressed in a new way, simply ask: “does he/she still feel like the pronoun you want me to use for you?” Asking in this way puts minimal pressure on someone else.

9. Correct others who use the wrong pronoun: It is sometimes awkward to correct the way that someone addresses you if you’ve already been using the wrong pronoun. It can be a great ally by correcting others for you (make sure you know their pronoun preference first). We all make mistakes so easy on the person you’re correcting. Just say “Hey. It’s correct now, please be called that.”

10. Put transgenders in positions of power: A lot of us learn about trans issues and decide that we should do things for transgender people. However, trans people are largely left out of conversations that deeply impact their lives. Advocating for transgender communities is great, but putting trans people in positions where they can advocate for themselves is far better.

A lot of people have different ideas about the best way to approach transgender issues, so look around for other resources like this one. Remember, transgender people and gay people are marginalized in some of the same ways. After all, the LGBTQ community shares an acronym for a reason: we’re all breaking old rules about gender.

Kate Sosin is a senior writer for Windy City Times.

Silly queer: Pride is for those with gay pride

Last week, I posted a question on my Facebook page: “A week from this Sunday is Gay Pride in Philly. Are you ready?” It was a simple question. I had no idea of the reaction or comments it would receive.

Some 50 comments later, I was left with mixed emotions, hence the title of this column.

A little LGBT history lesson is in order to put this in perspective. The first Gay Pride march was in New York City on June 28, 1970. We organized that march to commemorate The Stonewall Riots, which took place the year before. That represented to us that we could fight back against oppression and that we were proud of our community and, to prove that, we marched across the city from Christopher Street to Central Park’s Sheep Meadow. We had no idea if anyone would show up. Thousands did.

At about 23rd Street, I climbed a pole and I still could see marchers coming out of Christopher Street—some 15 blocks away. The chills that went down my spine—I felt them again when we entered Sheep Meadow and the people just kept coming—were my strongest-ever feeling of pride. Now, think of your first gay-pride march or parade. I bet you to had a similar experience—a feeling that you were not alone and a sense of community that is what gay pride is all about.

That simple sense of pride has now become global. In many countries, gay-pride celebrations are the only time gays try to assemble. Sometimes they go to jail. In Poland and Hungary, it takes 2,000 police to protect the marchers from protestors. In Budapest, the police erect an eight-foot chain fence the entire length of the parade to protect the marchers. In Moscow, the mayor refuses to give them a permit; when they dare march, there is no protection and they are beaten and jailed. For those marchers, it is not only a march of pride; it is a march of defiance. Many of us from the original march might be unhappy with the way some of the marches have lost their roots, but we still understand the need for those marches. It’s all about that one person feeling a sense of pride in his/herself for the first time and pride in their community.

As for me and the others from those early years, we are always to communicate that we are an email group that has taken on the air of a Gay Liberation Front meeting. Each time there’s one in my inbox, it brings a smile to my face. We’ll most likely debate almost any item in our community, but one thing we have given the world and have ourselves is pride. To all of you, I wish you happy Gay Pride!

Philadelphia Gay News Publisher Mark Segal is the nation’s most-award-winning commentator in LGBT media. He can be reached atemark@epgn.com.
FRI. 6.24 & SAT. 6.25

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FRI. 6.24
Festivities start at 3pm
North Stage
5:00pm Miss Foozie's Pet Parade
6:30pm Deborah Cox
9:00pm Ultra Nate
South Stage
6:00pm The Personnel
7:30pm Chicago Spirit Brigade
8:00pm Sixteen Candles

SAT. 6.25
Festivities start at 11am
North Stage
1:00pm Miss Foozie's Pet Parade
1:30pm 3:00pm 5:30pm Pride Drag Show
2:30pm Mya
4:30pm Xelle
7:00pm Crystal Waters
8:00pm Kim English
8:30pm Inaya Day
South Stage
12:00pm Lakeside Pride Show Band
2:30pm Chicago RedLine
3:00pm Chicago Gay Men's Chorus
3:30pm Chad Tucek & The Benchpress
5:00pm Rightfully Outrageous Twirling Corps (NWU)
6:00pm Rock Candy
7:30pm Windy City Cowboys
8:00pm Wedding Banned

MYA
DEBORAH COX
CRYSTAL WATERS
KIM ENGLISH
ULTRA NATE
INAYA DAY
XELLE

BUD LIGHT

104.3 KHITS
GO PRIDE CHICAGO
ConAgra Foods
GRAB
9REALAVUE
WINDY CITY MEDIA GROUP
DOI MAGAZINE
Windy City Times: your work in Africa led the new Commission to End Hunger. Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn appointed the passionate AIDS Action) in Washington, D.C. In addition, landed him on the global map, funneling into CARE International-Mozambique in 1990 healthcare, HIV/AIDS and civil rights for more zealously for social justice surrounding the Humanitarian Mark Ishaug has been working bwe, because there was basically, like, official was really an interesting time in 1987 in Zimba-rica for the first time, I remember thinking that about HIV and AIDS for 30 years, since the first MI: My first trip to Africa was in 1983, so al-most 30 years ago, and I actually … I’ve known about HIV and AIDS for 30 years, since the first case was reported in 1981. When I went to Af-rica for the first time, I remember thinking that with how it’s transmitted and, you know … it was possibly going to be a hot spot in the world. I actually remember coming back, really, really sick, in 1983, and one of my friends who was with me, her folks were doctors, and they were actually talking about the potential of HIV in Africa back then. And then I went to Zimbabwe in 1987, and it was really an interesting time in 1987 in Zimba-bwe, because there was basically, like, official denial in Zimbabwe and Mozambique that HIV and AIDS was a problem at all. I remember reading articles in the paper and talking to people from Zimbabwe, that said, “Oh, no, this is a European—this is an American problem, there’s never going to be HIV in Africa. This doesn’t affect … this won’t affect Africans, it will only affect white people.” I remember being so frus-trated because of course knowing by then many people, Black and white, from all over the world, who had become infected with … and were liv-ing with or had died of HIV and AIDS. It was so frustrating to me, back then, 25 years ago, to just … to watch the complete and utter denial of a disease that has now devastated the contin-ent.

WCT: You joined AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) in 1991 as a policy analyst and worked as policy director. At that time, how was the city of Chicago directly affected by HIV and AIDS? MI: Oh, horribly. I was working during grad school [as a waiter at Ann Sather restaurant owned by Tom Tunney, who is now an alderman] in Chicago, so from 1988 to 1991, I remember working there and just meeting hundreds of people that were affected by HIV and AIDS. And we saw in the mid-to-late ’80s just how Chicago was being ravaged by this epidemic. Organiza-tions like Chicago House and Test Positive Aware Network and Howard Brown and the AIDS Foun-dation, in the mid-to-late ’80s, were trying to do so much for the hundreds, if not thousands, of people that were dying, when there was so little to offer them. I know it sounds like a cli-ché, but when I started doing this work, we were really helping people die with dignity. There was one drug, maybe two, and they were somewhat life-extending, but they were not life-saving in any way. So it was a very … it was a very dark and depressing time.

On the other hand, it was also a time of great hope and great inspiration because individu-als were rallying to save their own lives and to save their friends and their brothers and their sisters and their loved ones. And ACT UP was an unbelievable force for change, and what the folks at ACT UP!Chicago did to raise awareness, to demand government support, to push the pri-vate sector, to raise media awareness, to get the American Medical Association (AMA) to change its policies … just so much exciting stuff that really did change the course of the epidemic.

So that time, 20 years ago, was full of contra-dictions. Because it was about death and dying, but it was about life and great hope. It was … “The sky is falling, but everything’s going to be great.” It was a difficult time.

I also started at the AIDS Foundation right after the Ryan White Care Act was passed and one of the first things I did, new on the job (I had only been there a week or two), was lobby for the first Ryan White Care Act appropriation in Washington, D.C. So it was a very, very exciting time, in the spring of 1991, to be on the Hill, fighting for what would be that hundreds of millions of dollars for emergency AIDS relief in places like Chicago, San Francisco, Boston, New York, and L.A. And we were successful, our first year out. We went from no appropriations to hundreds of millions of dollars. Desperately needed and not enough. … So that’s how I started my career in HIV, 20 years ago. And so ironically or coincidentally now, I’m in D.C., most of the time, fighting for health-care reform; and fighting for Ryan White appro-priations; and figuring out new and smarter and more efficient ways that we can care for people and to prevent new infections.

WCT: That’s an amazing body of work in 20 years. Do you think that because Ryan White was a straight little boy, that maybe Congress was more willing to listen, instead of it being a gay person that they were speaking to? Do you think there was some discrimination or compassion because he wasn’t gay? MI: Well, I mean, Jeanne White and Ryan White really changed the course of this epi-demic. He was the inspiration for millions of people. I mean, obviously the inspiration for key individuals like Elton John and others. Elton John will even say that he wasn’t involved in this work until he met Ryan White, and Ryan White changed his outlook on life, and so Ryan and Jeanne have just been an inspiration to mil-lions. And we literally wouldn’t … it’s possible that we wouldn’t have the [Ryan White] Care Act today, and the billions of dollars that we have for treatment and drugs, if it weren’t for his in-spirational life.

It was really easy then—and it’s still easy now, in some ways—for people to compartmentalize their compassion and/or their fears. HIV was, and in many ways still is, in many parts of the world and in the United States, a stigmatized disease. So clearly, Ryan White, a boy who was infected through a drug transfusion, as opposed to unsafe sex, unclear needles, or prostitution, or any of the stigmatizing quote-unquote be-haviors associated with HIV, drug use, et cetera … yeah. We were lucky that Ryan White’s story and his sheer force of personality inspired so many people. It’s … it was just the reality of the times. It says a lot both about the discrimi-nation that so existed in this country 20-plus years ago. It also showed the enormous heart and compassion that people can have for people that are sick and dying. It’s truly a double-edged sword.

WCT: Are there any distinct incidences that stand out to you in the past 20 years, that you look back upon and say, “Okay, I was involved in this series of events and it definitely made an important imprint” in regards to fighting the epidemic? MI: A couple of things. You know, clearly on the care and treatment side. You know, this [interview] is not just about me, this is about the AIDS Foundation and the sector, but I think our mobilization around the Ryan White Care Act and our fierce and effective lobbying for the Ryan White Care Act is just … it’s a huge success. I think that the advocacy to get the drug compa-nies to invest in better treatments, to discover better treatments, to make those accessible … I mean, just a generalized advocacy, I think, of the AIDS movement really has inspired many others, and women’s groups, and those suffering from other life-threatening or chronic diseases. So I do think that our voices and organizing of people living with HIV has really changed the landscape in America. So that is, of course, one of my proudest accomplishments.

I think our work around needle exchange and making access to clean needles available in Illi-nois and many other places is a huge contribu-tion to the fight against AIDS, and a very tough battle that we waged in Illinois for years, almost a decade. You know, when the science was in-controversible, we still couldn’t get lawmakers
to agree to support something that in fact would save lives and save money and not increase drug use, because of the overuse of stigma, because of... people were either putting their heads in the sand and not dealing with the fact that clean needles save lives, but just focusing on the stigmatization of drug use. But that, I think, was a major accomplishment in really turning the tide.

Also, the work of many of my colleagues in Chicago around prenatal transmission, prevention (people like Katrina and Brown from PACES and Maringe Cohen and many others) has been one area of advancement in treatment and prevention, where we're basically eliminating mother-to-child transmission in America and really have the potential to do it across the world.

And of course being at the advent of just these amazing antiretrovirals and other therapies—again, which I had nothing to do with—but I am just so excited that we have such amazing therapies that are reducing viral load, making the virus almost undetectable.

The other thing that I'm really excited about... again, I played a small role in this—it's been mostly Jim Pickett at the AIDS Foundation and others—but I have played a role in microbicide advocacy, including rectal microbicide advocacy, for many years now. Not as a leader, but as a supporter of Jim Pickett and others that are doing this work. But I think we're really... we're moving the needle on prevention technologies. It's not just the condom; it's also the microbicide and it's the rectal microbicide, and so on.

For me, the bottom line is that because we've had such success over the last 20 years and there are so many potential successes on the horizon, especially in HIV prevention and the use of biomedical interventions, that I just have such great hope that we really are going to end this epidemic in America in my lifetime. And that's what keeps me going. That's what energizes me and that's what gets me out of bed every morning to do this work.

WCT: You are quick to recognize all of your colleagues in this effort to eradicate HIV/AIDS. Do you feel that support throughout the community is a major key to ending this epidemic?

MI: It really is about the collective. I mean, what inspires me about doing this work is that I feel like I have thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of colleagues. I might only work with like 70 at AIDS Foundation, but I think about the thousands of people that I get to work with every day. Through all these different organizations, not just HIV but sort of broader healthcare and advocacy groups.

I think the future to ending this epidemic are all of us who are doing this sort of AIDS-focused work to do it through a much broader coalition, connecting with the domestic violence groups in a much deeper way because of the intersection of HIV and domestic violence, and working closely with all the other disease-specific entities. Folks looking at diabetes, and folks working to fight cancer, and folks working to fight heart disease... everything that affects our clients today we didn't even think about 20 years ago. We were so busy fighting AIDS [back then] and now we're helping people live with HIV and a whole host of other chronic medical conditions. So I just think it's... it's a really exciting time, and if we could all collectively focus our energy on making sure that healthcare reform is implemented in 2014 and if we all work together on the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, I really do believe... again, it's cliché: we sent a man to the moon, there's no way we cannot end this epidemic.

WCT: There are an estimated 600,000 people living with HIV that are not receiving the life-saving access to care they need. And I'm wondering if you're also drawing this correlation that a lot of us seem to be: that now that we have all of these drugs, people are a little bit more lax about prevention, possibly because they have these new life-saving drugs that can be used following diagnosis?

MI: Well, I think the rise in... or at least the leveling of... new infections in this country between 50,000-60,000 per year... the reasons are complicated. Yes, I think there is some, what is called "behavioral disinhibition," because people don't see their friends, especially their young friends, becoming emancipated and dying, and so there's less fear, in part because the drugs are so successful and people can be living on medications for what appears to be a long, long time.

But I think it's deeper than that. I think stigma is driving the epidemic for sure, homophobia is driving the epidemic, violence... violence against men and violence against women is driving the epidemic. And lack of access to care. People are much less likely to become infected or to transmit HIV if they have quality healthcare. But in many places in this country, it's really hard to get an HIV doctor. Not just in the South and in the rural areas, but in many urban areas as well. [...] We know from our own experience in Chicago and throughout the country that even if there are AIDS docs, there's not often access to these clinics and to the medications for people. There could be cultural competency issues, there could be issues of hours that they're open, when people can't get there, there's issues related to child care. There's a whole host of issues, both enough resources, and especially not enough resources in primary HIV prevention, targeted to the communities and individuals who need this the most. We had eight years of a [George W. Bush] administration where the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control] couldn't even talk about... gay men... WCT: Condoms.

MI: [...] and condoms. So you have a website that talks about condoms. Researchers that can't put in proposals targeting men who have sex with men, because... it won't make it past review. We had almost a decade with a deeply chilling effect on how we talk about HIV and how we reach those most at risk.

WCT: How do you feel that President Obama and his administration are doing in fighting this epidemic?

MI: Well, overall, I am delighted. We have a National HIV/AIDS Strategy—which we never had before, for 30 years—and the Obama administration released its National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan with very specific goals and objectives for the next five years. And most importantly, we have a president that fought for and won access to healthcare through the Affordable Care Act. And this healthcare reform is the game-changer for people with AIDS. Our folks who have heretofore been denied care, because they don't qualify for Medicaid-like programs, in 2014 will have access to Medicaid, and will have access to a source of financial support to pay for their primary care and for their drugs.

So, yeah, there are things that the administration probably could be doing better, we all could be doing better, but I think when you look at the investment in Ryan White, the lifting of the ban for federal funding on syringe exchange, the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and the Affordable Healthcare Act... this is it. It's not perfect, but it's key... all of these things combined are key to ending the epidemic. No president in the 30-year American history... has done all of this in two years.

WCT: I read a story recently from AIDS Connect that you wrote about a woman who stuck up her middle finger at you and said, "I hope you die."

MI: Hmmmm... yeah.

WCT: And this happened roughly 20 years after another person did the exact same thing to you, at a healthcare rally. How do you gracefully move past that? Your response was, "Well, I'm going to die eventually, but not anytime soon, I hope." That reaction was much more dignified than her attack on you.

MI: Yeah, well, that was a really... it was... it was a moment for me. I was at a healthcare reform rally, and I was wearing my T-shirt that said, "Healthcare is a right." It was really inspired, on this really beautiful summer day, thinking that people would come and join us. And while we had a nice crowd and some press, the woman walking over to me really was a wake-up call. I didn't know it then, but those folks were the beginning of the tea party movement—the very folks that are trying to dismantle healthcare reform and undo all of the progress we've made. But, yeah, just the irony for me was the 20-year espansion where, you know, somebody shouting at me that when I was involved with ACT UP, and then 20 years later shouting at me when I was CEO of the AIDS Foundation.

But what it mostly speaks to is the need to just keep up the fight. And to keep vigilant, and to keep diligently raising the issues and raising hell and raising our voices until we have health care for all, and until we are living in a country without HIV and AIDS.

So, yeah, you know, you can't get mad—or I can't get mad—about this stuff. I can only get motivated.

WCT: Those are the game-changers, right there. Getting motivated, giving in... you have to choose one. So Gov. Pat Quinn appointed you to be one of the 22 statewide leaders on the new Illinois Commission to End Hunger. Can you tell us a little bit about this venture in Illinois to improve food security and nutrition through education, better coordinating services and increasing access to programs?

MI: We had our first commission meeting [recently]. I'm just thrilled about this opportunity. It's being chaired by the executive director of the Chicago Greater Food Depository and the deputy governor, Cristal Thomas, and it includes all these powerhouses, from Sargent Shriver Center on Poverty Law, to Grace Hou, who's the deputy director of human services for the state of Illinois, and all these advocates for women and children and the hungry. It's a really diverse coalition of people that are committed to ending hunger in Illinois. And I'm involved because I know that you cannot address chronic health conditions like HIV/AIDS and everything else unless you have the basics in your life to address your healthcare concerns. And for me, that is food and shelter. So, for my whole career in doing this work, I have been an outspoken advocate for AIDS housing and housing in general—for everyone—housing for all. I have always been a big, big supporter of food and nutrition programs. It's something that most of us just take for granted, that we get to get up every morning, or at least I do, and have an amazing breakfast, an amazing lunch. I've never, for one second, been hungry.

And so for me, it's a passion: I have a passion for music, I have a passion for endurance training, I have a passion to end AIDS, and I just believe if we cannot ensure that everyone in our country—and really, the world—but in Illinois and the country, cannot have a decent, Mark Ishaug. Courtesy of Ishaug

June 15, 2011

WINDY CITY TIMES

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Remembering Diana

In 1997, Chicago photographer Mark Brown donated images to Chicago House of Princess Diana. The Sept. 17, 1997 press releases stated:

“While a student at the University of London in 1987, Mark Brown shot several photos of Princess Diana outside the Canterbury Cathedral in Canterbury, England. Since returning from England, Brown has kept the photos in his personal collection. However in the wake of the Princess’ death, Brown has decided to use them to benefit one of Diana’s favorite causes. Two of Brown’s favorite images from the shoot are current for sale with the proceeds benefiting Chicago House, a not-for-profit organization that provides housing to underprivileged people living with HIV/AIDS. Earlier this month, Brown’s Princess Diana photos were part of a silent auction at Chicago Houses Art of Caring gala where they raised $1000 each.”

Princess Diana was well known for fundraising and visibility efforts on HIV and AIDS.

Pictured are Mark Brown’s Diana photos, and an image of him with one of the photos. Courtesy of Mark Brown. See www.markbrownphotography.com
Shaine Wynsma was living in Grand Rapids, Mich., in the late 1990s, halfway through what would ultimately become a four-year relationship. Wynsma, who grew up in nearby North Muskegon, found out that his partner had, in reality, been involved in an open relationship.

“He had just forgot to let me know,” Wynsma said. “At least that’s what he told me when I confronted him about it.”

So Wynsma knew, since they had stopped practicing safer sex, that he had to be tested, immediately—and he bought one of those at-home HIV-testing kits, which were popular at the time.

Wynsma sent in a blood sample and eventually called for the results from an empty back office of the service bay at a car dealership where he was working.

The woman said the results were positive.

Wynsma was speechless, alone, in a dusty, dimly lit office in the back of a garage at work, not able to tell anyone. “My survival instinct kicked in and I just asked, ‘OK, what do I do next?’” said Wynsma, who wanted to have another test taken, just to confirm her report.

“She also said that I seemed pretty upbeat for someone who was just told they were HIV-positive. I told her that I have had some circumstances in my life that just left me shattered and I learned to just pick up the important pieces and build off of them,” he said.

Wynsma immediately told his boyfriend and then went to a nearby clinic for another test of his blood.

The next two weeks were excruciating, he said.

The clinic confirmed that Wynsma was HIV-positive.

“My boyfriend never got tested and [our] sex life became nonexistent [at that point] and he even told me not to tell anybody because it would make people think he had [the disease, too],” Wynsma said. “That hurt and made me feel 100 times worse than finding out alone in that office. Like I said to one who was trash and worthless and did something wrong, when it was him [who] I was faithful to and clearly the one who infected me.

“I never told my family; they would not have known how to deal with it very well then. It was definitely the beginning of the end for that relationship with my boyfriend. However, the two stayed together for two more years, which he now admits, “that [still] confounds me to this day.”

Ultimately, after a major verbal blow-up between the two, Wynsma packed his car and left. He moved the Chicago about 11 years ago.

Now 38, Wynsma lives in Wrigleyville and is self-employed as a personal trainer and his business is, appropriately named, Shaine Fitness.

“He’s healthy and happier than ever, but single, which does make him sad, he admits. “I am positive. I understand that people need to protect themselves, and they should, so I do not belittle anybody for taking that action.”

“One can argue that it should be the first thing you talk about. But, on the other, my thought is, if sex is not going to happen, then it is none of their business. I have to protect myself as well and that includes emotionally. I had a friendship end because they felt they needed to be told. It has never been violent, though. [But] I have heard stories of people freaking out when they have been told, verbally abusing, shoving and then talking about behind their [partner or ex-partner] behind his back. Thankfully that has never happened to me.”

Wynsma added: “I have done a lot of work to realize that being positive doesn’t make me a bad person, or filthy, and at times I have been really insulted by some people’s ignorance. It was just a lack of judgment at a young age. That has been the biggest impact, realizing how much work, even in the gay community, there is to erase the stigma of HIV.

Wynsma has been dedicated to helping find a cure for HIV/AIDS for years—very dedicated, in fact. He has participated in the annual Ride For AIDS the last four years—and his fifth time on the two-day, 200-mile bicycle ride from Chicago to Elkhorn, Wis., and back is set for July 9-10. The event is the largest grossing annual fundraiser for the Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN).

“When I first did the Ride, there were only 60 riders. It has since grown to about 300,” said Wynsma, who is in his third year as a co-chairman for the event. “Being a part of the growth of the event has been just as amazing as the first time I finished it. Marathon runners can relate to the satisfaction you get from finishing a high-endurance event; it is addicting and wonderful. I would love to see this become the premier event people do in the first part of the summer, just like the [Chicago] Marathon seems to be [every October].”

“Initially, my doctor told me about the Ride and I thought it would be a great challenge physically. I am not a big runner, but have always ridden my bike. Before the first Ride I did, a friend of mine, Greg Fanning, died. He was found in his apartment. He was Positive and struggled with some issues, [and yet] if he knew TPAN could help, he just might still be around. That’s part of why I ride—I want people to know that there is a place for someone who is positive, [perhaps] struggling with addiction problems, that there is a non-judging, safe and effective place to get help. The money I help bring in makes sure those programs stay afloat and the doors stay open.”

The other co-chairmen this year are Angie Frank, Rick Heitz and Matt Daniel, while Richard Cordova, Billy Struber and Rhett Lindsey (who now works for the AIDS Foundation of Chicago) have been key in production of the Ride.

The Ride, Wynsma said, “proves HIV is not a death sentence.”

“Someone who is positive doesn’t have to lie down, suffer and wait for death,” he said. “Riding 200 miles, in two days is no easy task, even for an experienced athlete and to see people both positive and negative take this on, and complete it, makes you feel like a superhero, and I know several, healthy negative people who wouldn’t even attempt this ride.”

Wynsma has, for the past several years, captained his Ride team. Naturally, it’s called, Team Shaine—and it has about 30 riders this year, up from 10 from their early 20s to late 40s, male and female, positive and negative members.

“The goal of the team is to bring in as much money as we can, have a blast doing it, and always support our teammates,” he said. “The team is incredibly good-looking, incredibly strong with a fun personality. We have a ball together. I can’t wait to ride in with them, in July.”

The co-captains on Team Shaine this year are Brian Harder, Bill Fischer and Paul Hirsch.

“My future vision for Team Shaine is to use it as a way for people to get involved with charity bicycle rides,” Wynsma said. “Providing training and fundraising help, I think it would be a great goal for my clients and anybody else to go for. Wynsma will be among many Ride participates this year sporting an orange flag on their bicycle to symbolize that, yes, they are HIV-positive.

“The purpose of the [orange] flags is to show how intermingled people are, people who are positive and people who are negative, and to show we are all in this together, fighting for the same result. Surviving and living,” he said.

And certainly not alone, dying or dead, stuck in a dark, dusty office with no voice.
Teddy Green keeping pace with AIDS

BY ROSS FORMAN

His title this summer with the AIDS Foundation of Chicago’s (AFC’s) Team To End AIDS (T2) endurance training program is site assistant, meaning, Teddy Greene does anything and everything needed.

“I’m a certified water boy out on the course,” he said, laughing. “Seriously. I am there to assist the coaches in whatever they may need. Running errands, running to help set up, and just being there to support those who need it with anything.”

Greene, 29, a Lakeview resident and hair stylist at Salon V, has run the Chicago Marathon in the past and is now training for the annual Ride For AIDS in July. His second time doing the two-day, 200-mile bicycle ride.

“T2 is organized, efficient, and the friendliest staff that makes people jump over hurdles everyday,” Greene said. “T2 means the world to me. When I decided to start running three years ago, I needed something to push me and keep me motivated. The staff did that for me. Any questions I asked were answered quickly, any slight injury was put at top priority, and any doubts I had [about not finishing that first marathon] was out the door before I started at the actual marathon in 2009.”

Greene has completed three marathons in support of T2, with his best time (4:52) being in London this past spring.

“I will continue running and supporting T2 until my body says, ‘No more of this crazy stuff!’” Greene said. “I remember saying last year, I will run a marathon any day instead of doing the Ride For AIDS again.” Funny thing, I’ll be riding again this July.”

Also, Greene is a co-captain for the bike team known as RichKids Riders.

“The ride is just another mental challenge to push through,” Greene said. “There is no reason why anyone cannot complete the Ride For AIDS. Anything is possible when you put your mind to it, especially when you have friends and the wonderful support TPAN gives during training and the day of the ride.”

Greene, who is single, has been working at Salon V for four years. He has been living in Chicago for more than seven years and is originally from Tallahassee, Fla.: “I definitely owe it to this city. Chicago has made me into the person I am today. This city gives me passion and allows me to dream big and accomplish goals that I set for myself.”

Greene has been HIV-positive for almost four years.

“I can’t forget the day I learned I was HIV-positive. I was in shock,” Greene said. “I was in a committed relationship for about three years at that point, and thought the trust we had for each other was strong enough to not cheat on each other. I was wrong. Not only did I find out I was cheated on, I found out I was living with the disease that I promised my mom and dad I would never contract. I still remember saying, “That won’t happen to me; I won’t get HIV.”

“However, Greene is now healthy and happy, two years after starting his medication. In fact, a doctor at Howard Brown Health Center recently told him, ‘You’re healthier than the average person.”

“The emotions of living with this virus have definitely been hard,” Greene admitted. “I’m not worried about death any sooner than before.

“I’m not worried about being able do anything I desire to do. I am, though, worried about the stigma this virus still has. I hate thinking that people look at me like I have, ‘the gay disease.’ I hate when people cry when I tell them [that I am HIV-positive] because I am OK living with this.”

Greene is a spokesman for AFC, thanks to a five-minute video made and produced about Greene. All T2 marathon runners saw the Greene video at marathon training opening day in late April.

“Since finding out [that I am HIV-positive], I feel like I have been given a second chance at life, been given a chance to prove to myself that I can do anything, given a chance to change the world,” Greene said. “With the people and friends who I have met over this journey of fundraising [for HIV/AIDS] and endurance sports activities, I couldn’t have done it without any of them. By doing these things, it’s given me power, confidence and strength to believe I have anything I want to do, and anything I set my mind to. HIV has changed my life for the better. Does that mean I like living with this disease? No, of course I would rather not be HIV-positive, but I stand behind myself and scream out loud that the disease won’t beat me down.

“I am proud. My friends support me; my family supports me, my co-workers support me; my clients support me; my community supports me. I am fortunate to have such a wonderful group of people in my life. “I’m faced with the disease every day when I take my meds, but it doesn’t make me one bit because I am a better, stronger person because of it.”

Greene admitted he was in “awe and shock,” not to mention “nervous” when T2 representative Dan Lakin asked him in 2010 to be a part of the video.

“The Ride For AIDS and the T2 gives me passion to finish strong, gives me support that I can accomplish the feat, gives the community around me, meaning, those living with the disease, have the chance to get their meds, housing and support they need through the fundraising efforts I defeat everyday,” Greene said.

To support Greene’s fundraising for the annual Ride For AIDS, go to: http://bit.ly/Teddy2ndRideforAIDS

Teddy Green. Photo by Alberto Perez

It’s got a smaller budget, a smaller board, fewer staff, and it has many, many fewer resources. But I felt like I had an opportunity here, especially with the National AIDS Strategy and healthcare reform, to do something just a little bit different.

But you know, I have to say: I never would have stepped away or stepped up to this challenge if it weren’t for David Munar, my deputy director, who was able to—and did—step in as CEO. We didn’t miss a beat. So I didn’t know when I was going to leave the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, but I knew that I could leave because I had worked closely with David for almost 20 years, and I believed—and then the board believed; the board hired him, I did—not that he was the right person at the right time to lead the organization and take it to the next level.

So I am so proud of so many things at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, but among the things that I’m most proud of is David. Our relationship, and his willingness to … he was both a great teacher and mentor to me, but he was always wanting to learn, every single day, so that when the time came for him to step up, he could do it, and here he is now.

WCT: And here you are now.

MI: And here I am now. It’s funny how things work out. I had no plans. If you would have asked me a year ago, “Oh, well, are you going to leave the AIDS Foundation at the end of the year?” I would have said, “Are you insane?” But you just know when it feels like it’s the right time, and it felt like it was the right time. And I also think that the AIDS Foundation will be a better and stronger and even cooler place now that I’m gone.

WCT: Why do you say that?

MI: Because change is good, you know? Just like I think my arrival at AIDS United is going to be good for AIDS United and the sector. There is a regeneration and a rejuvenation when there’s change. You’ve just got to seize the moment.

WCT: Carpe diem. The world is a better place with you in it.

MI: Thank you. I just feel like the luckiest guy in the whole world, that I get to wake up in the morning, sometimes in Chicago, sometimes in Washington, sometimes in New York, that but that I get to wake up in the morning and to do this good work. It’s a privilege, and I feel that every single day. At the end, hopefully I’m changing the world a little bit, and hopefully I’m adding value to the fight, and to peoples’ lives, most importantly. But I don’t think for one minute that I am not privileged beyond words to be able to do this work.

ISHAUG from page 15

nutritious meal every day, we’re failing. And from my AIDS statistics work, there is no way we’ll be successful in keeping people healthy, keeping them on their meds, unless we make sure that they have food and nutrition. So I’m excited, and again, it’s about the intersections. I think one of the reasons they’re interested in me is that I come to the anti-hunger and food advocacy world from a different world. I’m coming from an AIDS world and from a healthcare world. So that’s exciting.

I’m always looking for the intersection. I’m doing a big project with the National Network to End Domestic Violence, helping build curricula for DV providers and AIDS providers. That’s the kind of stuff that really energizes me: looking at where we can intersect our worlds. Because people with AIDS don’t live in a silo, they’re not just people with AIDS—they’re people with everything else. So that’s where I’m at, and that’s where I’m going.

WCT: You are now with AIDS United. It’s a merger between the National AIDS Fund (NAF) and AIDS Action combining three decades of HIV/AIDS policy and advocacy. Was there a defining moment when you knew that it was time to switch over from a local office in Chicago to a national office?

MI: I tell people I woke up one morning and I was 47 and I’m like, “Oh my God, I’ve been at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago since I was 23. I’ve got to do something else!” I want to be clear: I love, love, love, love—I can’t say it enough times—the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. I really think it is the best—not one of the best; it is the best AIDS organization in the whole world. And I love it. I love the staff. I love the board. I love the community. And together with all these people, I really took the AIDS Foundation, I think, to a great place, doing great work with great impact.

I just felt that it was really a great moment for me to try to do something else on a national level, to have an additional impact, not a better impact or a bigger impact, just a different impact. To sort of bring these skills, and all that good energy, to the national arena, and try to help folks throughout the country collectively figure out if there’s a better, more effective way we can be doing our work.

And I was so lucky, just so lucky, to be offered this opportunity to run this new organization and try to do some really hard work in a really challenging environment. AIDS United is much smaller than the AIDS Foundation of Chicago.
GOINGS-ON

Windy City Times: Hello, Mrs. MacLaine.

Shirley MacLaine: Hey, Jerry. How are you doing nowadays?

WCT: For her time, maybe…

Shirley MacLaine: For her time, it was a minority. But even then she was always a minority. She was quite a person. She was a theater choice. She was a real actress. She was Aurora Greenway in Terms of Endearment. I won the Oscar for it and I am not sure that I was acting. I was just playing myself.

WCT: What movie role has been the most similar to you as a person?

Shirley MacLaine: Yes, it was. She was an extraordinary character. She was my favorite by the way.

WCT: Are you working on current movie projects?

Shirley MacLaine: I am going to do one in August. We are waiting for it all to come together. But my date is on August 22nd to start that. Then I have another one in November. I am writing another book. I like to work, well not work so much but I like to be creative. That is basically what I do.

WCT: That might be what keeps you young!

Shirley MacLaine: I am not so sure I stay young. [laughs] But I will tell you, once you decide that life itself is show business and everything you do is a theatrical choice, an act, there is no point in getting upset about anything.

WCT: Why wouldn’t you want your body to reflect that perfection? I think that is what a lot of these designers either because they didn’t want me to wear their dresses.

Shirley MacLaine: Yeah, I never have. I don’t know why. Well, it is and I think it’s true. More and more people that experience this way of thought are seeing that the soul itself is androgynous. It is a perfect match and balance of yin and yang. Those are the only two energies, as I say this is what I believe to be in a body that is both or I am in the wrong body and want to change it all of the time.

WCT: Pictures seem to be very important to you and you have a whole wall of life in your house. Do you have a backup in case of a fire?

Shirley MacLaine: Oh, sure I do. Of course I do and put them on digital because you never know what can happen. I don’t even like to think about that. They will be all right if anything happens.

WCT: In the book you write about different lifetimes, explaining homosexuality and transgender. That is an interesting idea.

Shirley MacLaine: Well, it is and I think it’s true. More and more people that experience this way of thought are seeing that the soul itself is androgynous. It is a perfect match and balance of yin and yang. Those are the only two energies, as I learned it, in the cosmos. So okay you have a soul with a typically balanced yin and yang then you wouldn’t want your body to reflect that perfection. I think that is what a lot of these people are doing. Then I have the audacity to say this is what I believe to be in a body that is both or I am in the wrong body and want to change it all of the time.

WCT: One of your fans wanted me to mention Sweet Charity and how underrated it is.

Shirley MacLaine: It was Fosse’s first picture. We had quite a history together. He found me in Pajama Game and then I brought him out to Hollywood to do movies. Lew Wasserman did not believe that he was going to be able to direct and thought of him as just a choreographer. I knew how he felt about Fellini and what a fan he was of some of the Italian greats. I just spoke to Nicole the other day about something that she is doing. To have a conversation with his daughter so many years later was really fascinating for me.

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Shirley MacLaine: Yes, it was. She was an extraordinary character. She was my favorite by the way.

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Shirley MacLaine: I am going to do one in August. We are waiting for it all to come together. But my date is on August 22nd to start that. Then I have another one in November. I am writing another book. I like to work, well not work so much but I like to be creative. That is basically what I do.

WCT: That might be what keeps you young!

Shirley MacLaine: That is probably it, absolutely.
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2011 VOTING GUIDE
Presented by Windy City Media Group

Single or taken? Single and loving friends!

What do you do when not singing? I write music; it never stops!

Who’s your gay idol? Still Ellen—her swag is amazing!

Most played on your iPod? “Beautiful” by India.Arie.

Fav part of performing? Definitely audience response.

Why should you be the next Gay Idol? Because...it gets better.

I'm a vibrant young woman who isn't afraid to let the Creaoke world hear my song.

Single or taken? Taken. What do you do when not singing? Study journalism at DePaul.

Who's your gay idol? My incredibly accepting and supportive mother, who comes to every show. (Hi, Mom!)

Most played on your iPod? It's like something by Adele at the moment.

Fav part of performing? The feeling of being onstage performing for an audience.

Why should you be the next Gay Idol? I believe I have shown the vocal talent, versatility and dedication to deserve this year's title.

Single or taken? Taken. What do you do when not singing? I travel and do gardening.


Most played on your iPod? “Waterloo Sunset” by The Kinks.

Fav part of performing? The audience.

Why should you be the next Gay Idol? As a gay man I would love to represent the gay community. It would be an honor!

Single or taken? Single. What do you do when not singing? Strive to be filthy/gorgeous.

Who’s your gay idol? David Bowie.

Most played on your iPod? “Waterloo Sunset” by The Kinks.

Fav part of performing? The audience.

Why should you be the next Gay Idol? It would be a dream of mine to hold this title.

Single or taken? Taken. What do you do when not singing? I am unique, have fun, and I work as a certified nursing assistant and travel in my spare time.

Who’s your gay idol? Luther Vandross.

Most played on your iPod? “Spend My Life” by Tamia and Eric Benet.

Fav part of performing? Getting in front of the crowd and making them groove.

Why should you be the next Gay Idol? I'm a vibrant young woman who isn't afraid to let the Creaoke world hear my song.

Single or taken? Taken. What do you do when not singing? I believe I have shown the vocal talent, versatility and dedication to deserve this year's title.

Single or taken? Single. What do you do when not singing? Teach social studies.

Who’s your gay idol? Whitney Houston (pre-, intra-, and post-) drugs/ Bobby Brown.

Most played on your iPod? “Make Your Own Kind of Music” by Mama Cass Elliott.

Fav part of performing? The fear you get beforehand and the processes of working through that.

Why should you be the next Gay Idol? Because...it gets better.

Single or taken? Taken. What do you do when not singing? Run the Palm Court at the Drake Hotel. Come see me for tea!

Who’s your gay idol? Tim Gunn, for his impeccable style.

Most played on your iPod? Anything by Whitney!

Fav part of performing? The crowd having fun and singing along.

Why should you be the next Gay Idol? I love performing and it would be a dream of mine to hold this title.

Single or taken? Taken. In a relationship with someone truly special for over 3 years now.

What do you do when not singing? I am an actor.

Who’s your gay idol? Dan Savage because of his amazing “It Gets Better” campaign.

Most played on your iPod? “Bloody Mary” by Lady Gaga.

Fav part of performing? Definitely audience response.

Why should you be the next Gay Idol? I've always enjoyed being onstage and performing.

Single or taken? Taken. What do you do when not singing? Teach at North Park U, lead worship at Achurch4me? MCC, and coach people through P90X.

Who’s your gay idol? Tim Gunn.

Most played on your iPod? “Hardly a Hero” by Levi Kreis.

Fav part of performing? Inspiring others to be their best.

Why should you be the next Gay Idol? To use this opportunity to launch a performing career. I will not take this chance lightly.

Single or taken? Taken. What do you do when not singing? Freestyle Illustrator and indie singer/songwriter/producer.

Who’s your gay idol? Don’t have any.

Most played on your iPod? A lot of Adele, as well as Sarah McLachlan.

Fav part of performing? I like to look for different ways of conveying the feelings behind the song.

Why should you be the next Gay Idol? I'm always up for different ways to express myself as an artist.

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See us online at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com

WINDY CITY MEDIA GROUP WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS FOR HELPING TO MAKE THIS YEAR’S WINDY CITY GAY IDOL THE FIERcest ROUND TO DATE.

Thanks to the bars for helping us find such talent!
McNally seems to take the easy route out of the malaise that affects all the characters. However, so many AIDS deaths (and the general emotional disintegration of Chloe over-accommodating to paper over cracks in her troubled marriage.) I would have liked a more stark fear of mortality from John Arthur Lewis's take on haughty John, while Jill Connolly's quiet meekness as Sally doesn't plumb the depths of a grieving woman questioning the unfairness of her personal life. Christopher Marcum gets the right amount of tough-guy earthiness down for Sam, though he could work on his comic delivery.

Asking an audience to spend time with these often unlikeable characters with varying degrees of homophobia isn't exactly an exciting proposition in Lips Together, Teeth Apart. (It becomes more as more effortful instead of second nature. (We also need to get a better sense of Chloe over-accommodating to paper over cracks in her troubled marriage.)

The event, in its sixth year, serves as a fundraiser for a charity in the community; this year the beneficiary was Vital Bridges. Vital Bridges is a non-profit organization that provides food, nutrition, housing, case management and prevention services to people throughout the community who are suffering and impacted by HIV and AIDS. The organization recently announced that it will merge with Heartland Alliance July 1.

Open Hand Co-Founder/ Vital Bridges Food Program Coordinator Lori Cannon said, “We are grateful. We are the city’s only meals on wheels and groceries program for men, women, and children all living with HIV and AIDS. We started the program about 25 years ago when our friends were homebound, bed-ridden, and dropping like flies. We couldn’t save them; all we could do was feed them.”

Baird & Warner Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer Jim Schiefelbein said, “We need to support those who support us in the community. Times are tough and they are especially tough for people living with HIV and AIDS who are seeking their funding and food literally ripped from their mouths. We need to stand up as a community as we’ve done in the past and help those people out.”

Even though there was only a suggested donation of $10 at the door, the generous donations from attendees helped Vital Bridges with $1,114. Photos by Hal Baim.
BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The Chicago Landmark Project is divided, festival-style, into two “programs” of six short plays apiece, but in fact, the two parts taken together comprise a running time no longer than your average high-end night at the theater. Unlike most snapshot anthologies, however, the roster is not a simple medley of comedy sketches, snippets from plays-in-progress, group poetry-recitals and snapshot anthologies, however, the roster is not average high-end night at the theater. Unlike most snapshot anthologies, however, the roster is not a simple medley of comedy sketches, snippets from plays-in-progress, group poetry-recitals and

esprit de l’essor, esprit de la rue, and even in the larger picture of the global city, the spirit of a community preserved in the memory of the people who lived there. MSB

The Chicago Landmark Project’s “Division & California” (left) and “Logan & Milwaukee” (above).

As with most such pageants, the quality is far from uniform: some cultural references may lost on playgoers from outside the site under scrutiny. Jamil Khoury’s discussion of Arab-American relations is no less didactic for being conducted by two attractive women in athletic wear, as is J. Nicole Brooks’ analysis of urban decay as explained by a street artist to a West Coast tourist. The Red Orchid Youth Ensemble enlivens a lengthy sermon on the gospel according to L. Frank Baum, but adolescent fury cannot bridge the ellipses in Yolanda Nieves’ sly saga of family conflicts, and Robert Koon’s father-daughter confidences never lose sight of who’s guiding the conversation.

On the other hand, Brian Golden’s chance meeting between a pair of U. of C. eggheads—one “out,” one undecided—offers an opportunity for a deftly wrought exchange of academic double-entendres, and Laura Jacqmin’s two bakers at a farmers’ market forge a plea for unity—and a few clever songs—from the catalogue of wares for purchase, before Aaron Carter sends us home after our adventures with a ghostly reminder that even legendary fantasy-kingdoms had—and continue to have—their shadowy side. Hey, would it be still be Chicago any other way?

The Chicago Landmark Project’s "Division & California" (left) and "Logan & Milwaukee" (above). Photos by Amanda Clifford

CRITICS’ PICKS

The Front Page, TimeLine Theatre, through July 17. Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur’s classic 1920s Chicago journalism comedy gets a cracking good production that is so intimate that the audience practically gets to be on top the action. SCM

The Outgoing Tide, Northlight Theatre, through June 26. The seventysomething Gunnar has a degenerative disease and would sooner die than vegetate. What does his wife and son think? Thorny subject, intelligent writing, wonderful acting with John Mahoney at his acerbic best. JA

A Twist of Water, Route 66 Theatre at the Mercury, through June 26. Chicago’s historical legacy comes to the aid of lovers and families in what may prove to be Chicago’s next breakout hit, following in the wake of Osage County and Chad Deity. MSB

Watership Down, Lifeline Theatre, through June 19. Rabbits have always numbered among the most empathetic of folklore creatures, and never more so than in this classical myth transposed to lapin culture with all the heroic violence and glory intact. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan
THEATER REVIEW
Northwest Highway
Playwright: William Nedved
At: Gift Theatre Company, 4802 N. Milwaukee
Phone: 773-283-7071; $25-$30
Runs through: July 17

BETTY SHEN BARNIDGE

Once its inhabitants have assimilated into mid-

dle-class culture, a ghetto ceases to be a ghetto and becomes “The Old Neighborhood,” its pa-

cialism recalled with nostalgic affection by those safely distanced therefrom. These altered

ceptions do not necessarily reflect hypocrisy.

The decision to abandon the security of having

your life’s path pre-determined by others for the

uncertainty of making your own way among strangers is a choice fraught with trauma, but one

that must be confronted to achieve true adult-

hood.

The Chicago community whose foundation is

the highway of our play’s title is rooted in blue-
collar Irish/Eastern European values, spawning

Catholic school-educated clans of teachers, fire-

men, policemen and parents. Our thirtysome-

ers in AIDS-ravaged Africa; the production

won nine awards, including Best Musical.

The evening’s big winner was The Book of

McDormand (Best Performance by an Actress in

a Musical for her role in The Scottsboro Boys,

an exceptional people. And that our day will

died. Learn from it, and carry on the fight. Let

us everywhere, whom I love so. The Normal

Heart.

Among the many other winners were Frances

McDormand (Best Performance by an Actress

in Leading Role in a Play, for Good People), a

tearful Nikki M. James (Best Performance by

an Actress in a Featured Role in a Musical, for

The Book of Mormon) and Kathleen Marshall

(Best Choreography, for Anything Goes).

Lookingglass Theatre Company received a

Regional Theatre Tony Award. It’s the fifth

Chicago company to be honored. Tony winners

Laura Benanti and Katie Finnernan presented

the award.

Eve Ensler—who has a huge feminist/lesbi-

an following because of her work, The Vagina

Monologues—received the Isabelle Steven-

son Award. The award is named after the late

president of the American Theatre Wing.

Openly gay host Neil Patrick Harris was widely

praised, setting the tone for the even-

ning with a number entitled “Broadway ... It’s

Not Just for Gay’s Anymore!” Among other

things, he performed a song-and-dance num-

ber with Hugh Jackman.

Windy City Queercast creator Colman

Domingo was nominated in the category Best

Performance by an Actor in a Featured Role in

a Musical for his role in The Scottsboro Boys,

but lost to John Larroquette (How to Succeed

in Business Without Really Trying).
Cazwell: Not just another DJ

BY JOE FRANCO

Cazwell is often called a “gay hip-hop” artist but the man and his music are more than that. Windy City Times got a chance to chat with Cazwell June 10 about his new music video show, Boombox, which airs exclusively on here!TV, and about his music, his videos (including “Ice Cream Truck”) and his life.

Windy City Times: Hey Cazwell! How are you?
Cazwell: Well, I just flew in and they lost my luggage—so not great.

WCT: Well that’s a big bummer.
Cazwell: Eh. It happens.

WCT: Well, you’ve got a new show premiering soon, don’t you?
Cazwell: Yes, I do! I think it actually premieres tonight on here!TV.

WCT: How did you end up landing that gig?
Cazwell: Well, the producers of the show sought me. They sought me up and down. I think they narrowed their search to just 12 potential hosts. We had some meetings. I did my screen test and I aced it. I got the job.

WCT: Do you get any say-so or creative direction on the kind of videos you’ll be playing?
Cazwell: Yes! I work with here!TV and my manager. We’ll be featuring everything from alternative to rock to dance and some pop. What surprised me the most was the amount of effort it takes to get a video on the air. It’s not like I’m streaming YouTube videos. It can be difficult but it’s getting better.

WCT: Which artists will you feature?
Cazwell: Basically, I had no money and a small budget for time. It was for a friend’s movie, called Spork. I was like, “I don’t want to do this song. Can’t you just use one of my old ones? He just wouldn’t take no for an answer. So I had 45 minutes left before the deadline and it all came to me. My manager suggested I shoot a short video for it. Everything was shot in my apartment. The backgrounds were all spandex. It’s dedicated to the hot Latino boys in my neighborhood.

WCT: Wait. Those guys live in your neighborhood?!
Cazwell: Yes! Those guys are actually all friends of mine that I get to work with.

WCT: Is there anyone that you really would love to see on the show?
Cazwell: Wouldn’t it be amazing if Lady Gaga premiered a video on here!TV? The ratings would be through the roof. Sort of like back in the day when Madonna would premiere something on TV? The ratings would be through the roof. It’s not the best, though. There is way too much top 40 music being played in gay clubs. It’s so hard to differentiate between what is club music and what’s a top 40 song. Like Ke$ha. Her music is a super-fast beat but you hear it all over the radio.

WCT: Now I heard a rumor you were coming to Chicago in July. Where are you performing?
Cazwell: It’s not at all confirmed, but I’d like to. It’s a great music town. I’ve performed at Berlin and Hydrate a few times. I love Greg [Haus] at Berlin—good stuff.

WCT: Berlin plays your video for “Ice Cream Truck.” How did that video come together?
Cazwell: Basically, I had no money and a small budget for time. It was for a friend’s movie, called Spork. I was like, “I don’t want to do this song. Can’t you just use one of my old ones?” He just wouldn’t take no for an answer. So I had 45 minutes left before the deadline and it all came to me. My manager suggested I shoot a short video for it. Everything was shot in my apartment. The backgrounds were all spandex. It’s dedicated to the hot Latino boys in my neighborhood.

WCT: Wait. Those guys live in your neighborhood?!
Cazwell: Yes! Those guys are actually all friends of mine that I get to work with.

WCT: That must make for some fun...
Cazwell: What—orgies?
WCT: Oh, no!
Local filmmaker tries to get gay love story off the ground

BY CONSTANCE RUHOLL

I Am the Water, You Are the Sea is a documentary by Malachi A. Leopold about the love of two men that survived political upheaval and continental distance. In Leopold’s words, it is a story about breaking down various barriers, including those of religion, politics and hate. The documentary follows the story of Alex and Ali as they try to reunite after 33 years of longing separation.

Windy City Times: Where did the idea for the film come from?
Malachi A. Leopold: I’ve been working on I Am the Water, You are the Sea for two years. We were wrapping production on another documentary at the time (22 Years From Home, which airs on WTTW Sunday, July 10, at 1 p.m.) and I was looking for my next project. I had been working on a number of possible stories which, in one way or another, were addressing how the “West” views and behaves towards Islam and Muslims.

Given the rising tensions with Iran, and the efforts within Iran itself for reform, I felt a story about Iran could be great way to show what the everyday people of Iran are like, versus the constant crap we see about their political leadership—which is not representative of who Iranians are, what they believe and what they want their lives to be about.

I knew my uncle (Alex) had served with the Peace Corps in Iran, so I approached him about what they want their lives to be about.

WCT: Where does the film’s title come from?
MAL: The film’s title comes from a love letter from Ali to Alex—Alex talks about the letter and the film’s title in this video we posted here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvEYBw7DaZH.

WCT: What does filming his story mean to you?
MAL: In one sense, what this film means to me is that I simply get to continue doing what I love most—making a positive impact on the world around me. A few years ago I stopped asking myself what I wanted to do, and started asking what my life was about. And what I knew was that, regardless of what I actually did on a day-to-day basis, as long as I was aligned with my values, as long as my time was spent being about what was most important to me, then the details of the doing could really be anything from being a financial advisor (which I was for several years) to making movies—although I much prefer making movies.

This project also means that I can share with others my personal story of moving from a place of homophobia and intolerance to a place of support and advocacy for the LGBT community. In other words, as much as I want to create positive social change in the world, I have to be adamant about making sure I’m being the change I want to see, not just encouraging others to do it.

WCT: What about filming do you enjoy most?
MAL: On a personal level, I feel like I’m doing what I should be doing with my life; I’m very fulfilled doing this work. It’s not so much because it’s creative or about “making movies,” but really because I see my life as being about making the world a better place—and how I do that is through producing and directing films which further positive social change.

On another level—when it comes to the actual filming itself—I love the unique access a camera gives you. Access to people and places you would just never be allowed if you weren’t filming something. It’s so cool sometimes! I can only imagine what that moment is going to be like filming Alex and Ali seeing each other again for the first time in more than 33 years.

It’s one of those things you really have to prepare for, because the emotion of that moment—something that literally will and can only happen once in the history of the world—that moment can so easily overwhelm you. And instead of being focused on making sure you’re capturing the moment on camera with proper light and sound and angles and so forth, you’re dabbing your eyes and wanting to hug everyone around you. Moments like that are very challenging, because they’re so beautiful to witness, but my job being there is to capture it, not dissolve into tears. The tears usually have to wait until we finish a film.

WCT: How is the film being funded?
MAL: Like I say in my pitch video—at its heart, this is a love story, and I think the tenderness and beauty of it will really touch people. I think anyone can connect to the feeling of wanting something so bad, but having a hard time getting it. There is, of course, a natural, built-in sort of audience within the LGBT community because of the film’s themes and our social action efforts. But I am the Water, You are the Sea is about breaking down barriers—barriers of fear, intolerance, misunderstanding, hate. Barriers of politics, religion, laws. Barriers that, for me as I was growing up, were rather formidable. But I was able to change.

If you would like to help fund the campaign for I am the Water, You are the Sea, visit http://www.kickstarter.com by July 1.

WCT: Will the film be produced if you do not find enough funds from Kickstarter.com?
MAL: Well, yes and no. Look, where there’s a will there’s a way. I am determined to tell this story no matter what. But I truly believe there are enough people out there who will be inspired by this story and what it means, what it represents, and get us to our goal. If the “worst” happened—well, I guess I’d figure something out. But one way or another, I’ll be there to film the reunion. This is a story that has to be told.

WCT: How are you raising awareness about the project?
MAL: A combination of individuals within my network, outreach to media (blogs, TV, newspapers, magazines, etc), and connecting with organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign, Human Rights Watch, Immigration Equality and GLAAD as we build and roll out our social action campaign.

WCT: What kind of audience are you hoping to reach with the film?
MAL: Like I say in my pitch video—at its heart, this is a love story, and I think the tenderness and beauty of it will really touch people. I think anyone can connect to the feeling of wanting something so bad, but having a hard time getting it. There is, of course, a natural, built-in sort of audience within the LGBT community because of the film’s themes and our social action efforts. But I am the Water, You are the Sea is about breaking down barriers—barriers of fear, intolerance, misunderstanding, hate. Barriers of politics, religion, laws. Barriers that, for me as I was growing up, were rather formidable. But I was able to change.

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MOVIES

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If you would like to help fund the campaign for I am the Water, You are the Sea, visit http://www.kickstarter.com by July 1.
Ky Dickens on her ‘Sole’ ambition

BY TULLY SATRE

For a long time after the release of the LGBT documentary Fish Out of Water, award-winning director Ky Dickens was anxious to start a new project. “This is like when you go out and try to look for a boyfriend or a girlfriend,” Dickens joked. “You have to wait for it to find you.” Dickens said she knew the right film would eventually come to her.

Dickens’ ideas for a new project started last May. She recalled reading about a 9-year-old Dutch boy named Ruben van Assouw. Assouw was the sole survivor of Afriqiyah Airways Flight 771, which crashed on approach to Tripoli International Airport in the early evening hours of May 12, 2010. Struck by his amazing story of survival, Dickens was intrigued. She continued to look into other aviation accidents yielding a solitary “lone” survivors.

“The more I researched the more I found that many [sole survivors] were children,” Dickens said, “[who] just appeared to walk away unscathed from accidents where nothing was left.” At the time, Dickens was not set on the idea for a film, she was just curious.

Her career was already off to a great start. Fish Out of Water, Dickens’ first feature film, explored the seven Bible passages notoriously used to condemn homosexuality and arrest the LGBT community with a tool they did not have in the country, and more importantly, provided the communityobliterated, a great deal of damage is done.” Dickens said the publicity made the situation worse and only intensified her feelings of remorse and responsibility about the events that unfolded after the accident.

Although her conversation with Lamson, Dickens began to realize how a survivor’s trauma was often misunderstood. “I think that we’re all guilty of this to some degree,” said Dickens. “If you hear a guy just came back from war and you say, ‘you’re so lucky’ … Or someone who survived AIDS, while all of his friends died, or the only house standing in an Alabama neighborhood after a tornado … we don’t realize the damage of something dying with that person that day, too. When you witness an entire community obliterated, a great deal of damage is done.”

Dickens reached out to him. The Chicago filmmaker and the sole survivor met for lunch before Dickens headed into the desert for the five-day festival. “We started talking and had an ‘aha’ moment, said Dickens. The two bonded over similar experiences. In high school, Dickens was involved in a fatal car accident, which left her with guilt she still carries. Still unsure if she is ready to talk openly about what happened, Dickens recalled writing a paper about the accident for an English class. Without her consent, the paper was made public. Dickens said the publicity made the situation worse and only intensified her feelings of remorse and responsibility about the events that unfolded after the accident.

After the accident, Lamson was praised in the media as a hero and the product of a miracle, complicating his assimilation back into society with the resources they need, said Dickens. With no one to relate to, Lamson was indeed a lone survivor. On her way back from Burning Man, Dickens had six hours to kill before her flight. Though she barely knew him, she called Lamson to see if he would like to meet for breakfast. Lamson picked Dickens up from the airport. After passing several restaurants, Dickens asked why they had not yet stopped. “He said, ‘I am going to take you somewhere,’ ” remembered Dickens. “I immediately said to myself, ‘My mother told me not to get into a car with a stranger.’” They stopped at a field on the side of the road and Dickens was instructed to get out of the car.

“I thought, ‘This is it,’ ” said Dickens, “But then he started telling me, ‘this is where the plane went down,’ and then he looked at me and said, ‘I’ve never told anyone this…’ I’ve never come back here.” Lamson told Dickens he wanted to make a film with her.

“I told him if he put his whole self into it, then I’d put my whole self into it. It was kind of a dramatic moment,” laughed Dickens; that was when she knew she would be making her next film.

Having completed a successful bid for $20,000 on Kickstarter, production for Sole Survivor, is well underway.

Sole Survivor will be the second feature film for Yellow Wing Productions, Dickens’ Chicago-based production company. The film focuses on lone survivors of airplane crashes as they “embody the experience of all types of survivor because their experience is acute, public and dramatic.” The documentary follows George Lamson, one of nineteen sole survivors in a commuter plane crash. With Dickens, Lamson will embark on a journey across eleven countries, three generations and a myriad of cultures to connect with the thirteen other sole survivors of large-scale commercial plane crashes.

“I think there are two things that I like to do when deciding what project to work on,” said Dickens, “I like to find a story or topic that has not been covered in a specific way … and I like it to have a spiritual element.”

“There were many films that looked at spirituality,” Dickens recalled when she first began filming Fish Out of Water, “but no film that had looked through the unique passages. None of the stories in Sole Survivor have ever been collected in a book or for a film. This film penetrates questions about purpose and random chance.”

Neil Patrick Harris is the latest in a long line of gay actors to successfully portray the role of the straight, single, middle-aged Bobby with all the married friends in Stephen Sondheim’s Company. This most recent edition, taped before a live audience with the New York Philharmonic in April, is coming to movie theatres for just four dates—June 15, 16, 19 and 21—a rare chance for fans of musical theatre to merge with fans of movie musicals. Need I mention that both categories are chock full of Our People who shouldn't miss this rare opportunity to see, hear and gloat in all things Sondheim?

Harris is supported by an illustrious cast of well-known television and theatre actors (Martha Plimpton, Stephen Colbert, Kate Flannery, Christina Hendricks and Anika Noni Rose, among them) with the legendary Patti LuPone stepping into the role of diva Joanne, who memorably belted out “Ladies Who Lunch” (made famous by the previous generation’s legend, Elaine Stritch). Harris is a superb choice for Bobby—the irresistibly boyish bachelor doted on by his love interest (who offers dating advice via the song “Have I Got A Girl for You”)—and he has staged the show with revolving, modular set pieces; minimal but clever choreography; and orchestra playing Jonathan Tunick’s beautiful score. Sondheim’s sensational score is sung beautifully by Harris’ solid work at the center also are his supporting cast of the gifts of the heterosexual actors who have attempted the part. This oddly fascinating co-venture between a gay actor successfully essaying a straight role in Sondheim’s musical—aside from the joy of it finally being produced with the necessary resources—certainly offers up a snapshot of the transportable Sondheim who has staged the show with revolving, modular set pieces; minimal but clever choreography; and a host of scientists working on extending life well beyond its current expiration date. The film’s Chicago premiere opens at the Gen Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State, Friday, June 17. Wel ler will be present for post-screening discussions including WTTW-11, has scheduled a Pride Month screening (Saturday, June 18, at 2 p.m. in the Claudia Cassidy Theatre) of the documentary Two Spirits. Directed by Lydia Wible, the film, accompanied by computer multimedia, "explores the life and death of Fred Martinez and the ancient Native American two-spirit tradition" which accepts persons with integrated genders. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion moderated by Kevin Coxe, a communications professional and former drag performer. Panelists include Kohkum Kinetic, a transgender spoken-word artist and filmmaker; Kate Sosin of GenderQueer Chicago; and Avi Rudnick, of the Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois; and Dr. Dorene Wiese, president of the Illinois American Indian Association. The event is free and open to the public. http://www.pbs.org/independents/two-spirits/

—Thirty-three years ago Alex, a young Peace Corps volunteer in Tehran, was separated from his Iranian lover, Ali, just as the stage was being set for the Iran revolution. In the ensuing years the men have been in contact but have not seen each other since the fateful day of their parting. Now, local filmmaker Malachi Leopold, Alex’s nephew, has begun a Kickstarter campaign to help fund a documentary (and a feature film down the road) titled I am the Wa ter, You are the Sea that will explore both the couple’s reunion (scheduled for this fall), their love affair which began in 1967 and the issues that forced their separation in the first place—issues that continue to plague thousands of gay couples worldwide. You can find out more about the project and help Leopold realize his dream by contributing to the campaign (which is ongoing until July 1 in honor of gay pride) at http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/malachihepold/i-am-the-water-you-are-the-sea.

Check out my archived reviews at http://www.windycitymediagroup.com or http://www.knightatthemovies.com. Readers can leave feedback at the latter website.

Tracy Morgan goes on anti-gay rant, apologizes

Comedian and 30 Rock actor Tracy Mor gan has been accused of homophobia. Kevin Rogers reported on his Facebook page that, while attending Morgan’s stand- up act in Nashville, Tenn., Morgan went on a viciously anti-gay rant. Rogers alleged that “Morgan took it upon himself to mention about how he feels all this gay s**t was crazy and that women are a gift from God and that ‘Borin’ This way’ is bulls**t, gay is a choice, and he knows the reason he knows this is exactly because God ‘don’t make no mistakes.’

Morgan sent the following statement (through a spokesperson) to Windy City Times: “I want to apologize to my friends and to the gay & lesbian community for my choice of words at my recent stand-up act in Nashville. I’m not a hateful person and don’t condone any kind of violence against others. While I am an equal opportunity joker, and my friends know what is in my heart, even in a comedy club this clearly went too far and was not funny in any context.”

However, some were not satisfied with an apology, Human Rights Campaign Vice President of Communications Fred Sainz said in a statement: “Tracy Morgan exerted extremely poor judgment and did the right thing by apologizing. But that’s just not enough. He’s a role model and Morgan now has a responsibility to make amends for his horribly hurtful and dangerous ‘comic’ routine.”

The statement also cites a comment 30 Rock lead actress Tina Fey said to TMZ: “The violent imagery of Tracy’s rant was disturbing to me at a time when homophobic hate crimes continue to be a life-threatening issue for the GLBT community. It also doesn’t line up with the Tracy Morgan I know, who is not a hateful man and is generally much too sleepy and self-centered to ever hurt another person.”

Truth Win Out! Executive Producer Wayne Bean was fine with Morgan’s apology but wanted to know more: “We at Truth Win Out appreciate Tracy’s apology. We are glad that he recognizes that he hurt and offended people. However, questions, sadly, remain. “Where do Tracy Morgan’s anti-gay sentiments come from? … Does he understand why people—LGBT or not, in Tennessee and beyond—were so hurt by what he said?”

GLAAD issued a press release June 13 stating that it had met with Morgan. The release said that “GLAAD was pleased with GLAAD President Jarrett Barrios and members of GLAAD’s staff today, Morgan committed to meet this week in New York City with LGBT youth from the Ali Forney Center who have been hurt or left homeless by parental rejection as well as family members who have lost children to anti-gay violence.”

Morgan also will participate in GLAAD’s upcoming “Angly Your World” campaign to combat anti-LGBT bullying.

Morgan stated to GLAAD: “I know how bad bullying can hurt. I was bullied when I was a kid. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like to feel different. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to hurt anyone. My family knew what it was like to feel different. My brother was like. I’m sorry. And I didn’t mean it. I never want to use my comedy to
Peter Marc Jacobson: Gay producer works with ex-Fran Drescher on new show

BY CONSTANCE RUHOLL

Peter Marc Jacobson is currently working as an executive producer for the TV Land show Happily Divorced, starring Fran Drescher. The show is based on Jacobson and Drescher’s real-life relationship, including their marriage, divorce, and the life together that ensued afterwards. It is a witty family comedy that is sure to please a variety of audience members.

Windy City Times: Hello, Peter. During my research for this interview I found that you have produced and written several shows but you have also done some acting of your own. Were there any specific actors or shows that inspired you to begin an acting career?

Peter Marc Jacobson: You know, when I was a kid I was fascinated by sitcoms. I was a big fan of I Love Lucy and it all started from there. I moved to Los Angeles and started doing commercials, modeling and sitcoms. It was a great ground to learn.

WCT: After acting for so many years, what made you switch to producing and being behind the camera?

PMJ: You know, I drove myself nuts as an actor. I would always question myself and my abilities. It felt like I was doing it just to prove to myself that I could do it even though I wasn’t having fun at it. When I was acting Fran used to say that you should quit acting and go behind the scenes. With directing and producing you have more control. I was at peace when I started producing shows like The Nanny.

WCT: What was the first show you produced?

PMJ: The first show I created was a spin-off for Who’s the Boss. The show wasn’t picked up so I went back to acting. I also wrote a show called CCDP that was sold to Fox but they decided not to produce it. CCDP was a sitcom similar to that of Reno 911! Around that same time I sold The Nanny to CBS.

WCT: Besides your current projects, what production or show did you enjoy working on the most?

PMJ: When you’re lucky enough to have a show like The Nanny that becomes a hit in the ’90s on CBS and you have a great actress like Fran working for you, it really feels like a gift. How lucky am I to be able to do what I love and write for amazing actors. I can’t believe it was me that actually got to do it. It’s very strange to think of but wonderful at the same time.

WCT: The Nanny was co-created by both you and your then-wife, Fran Drescher. Was it difficult to work with your wife in a professional setting?

PMJ: We worked well together. Of course, we would yell and scream when we disagreed but we knew that the show had to be nurtured and we weren’t going to mess it up. It was our baby. She is brilliantly funny and it was a gift to work with her. The hardest part was that during the show our life together was breaking up.

WCT: It says a lot about your relationship that you are still able to continue working together even after the divorce.

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WCT: It says a lot about your relationship that you are still able to continue working together even after the divorce. On a lighter note, I’m sure you have answered this question hundreds of times but did Fran, your wife, really laugh like that or was it a character choice for her?

PMJ: Nope. [Laughs] That’s the way she laughs and that’s the way she speaks. When I met her in high school she stuck out to me. She has such a unique persona. When I met her parents they had no idea she had a funny voice. She has taken some classes to give her more variety for acting though.

WCT: Has the producing dynamic changed since the divorce, seeing as you were married for the production of The Nanny?

PMJ: The show is based lightly on our relationship but I think we work better now than we did then. It has definitely changed. When I wasn’t dealing with who I was I would get angry and work could be frustrating. It’s a much easier ride this time.

PMJ: Fran and I went to Paris on vacation when we were divorced. It still felt like we were husband and wife, and we discussed the idea. Fran had a meeting with TV Land and they asked Fran what kind of show she would like to do if she were to return to television. She said she wanted to do a show about her relationship with her ex-husband. She said that she wanted to do the show with me and they bought the idea at the meeting. We wrote the script and they bought ten episodes.

WCT: I understand that Fran is playing her character counterpart in the show. Why did you opt to choose another actor to portray your character counterpart? How do you feel about him playing you on the show?

PMJ: Well, A: I’m writing; there isn’t enough time during the day, and B: we discussed it for a while but John Michael Higgins came in and I would be stupid to pass him up. He is so talented and he makes me look good. We found him on the last day of casting. He’s so good that I’m thrilled to have him on the show. He and Fran have amazing chemistry. It seems like they are married and you just can’t fake that.

WCT: Happily Divorced premieres June 15. What kind of audience are you hoping to reach with the show?

PMJ: People who like to laugh. It’s not offensive; it’s a funny adult family sitcom with a twist. Some of the jokes on the show have double entendre so both adults and children will be able to enjoy it. I think they will enjoy a lot of it. If you’ve ever loved someone a lot but it just didn’t work out this show will speak to you. Many people will like it for different reasons. I hope that people give it a chance and tune in.

The TV Land show Happily Divorced, starring Fran Drescher and John Michael Higgins, Wed., June 15, at 9:30 p.m. CT.

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Dustin Lance Black on his new project, gay pride and more

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Oscar-winning screenwriter Dustin Lance Black (Milk) has a new project. The Courage Campaign has launched a nationwide video challenge with Black called “Testimony: Take a Stand,” in which they look for stories from everyday Americans regarding LGBT equality.

Windy City Times: I know this is two years late, but congratulations on the Oscar win. I have to ask: Where do you keep your award?

Dustin Lance Black: Oh, thanks—man—that seems like a lifetime ago. I actually gave the Oscar to my mom; she’s in Virginia.

WCT: Now on to the Courage Campaign. Could you talk about the “Testimony” project? It was launched on Harvey Milk Day [May 22].

DLB: Sure. I’m involved with the American Foundation for Equal Rights, or AFER; we’re the ones involved with the federal case against Proposition B in California, and it’s looking incredibly likely that it’s going to end up in the U.S. Supreme Court. I look at that and I look at the time between now and then … and I realized that we need to make it clear that America is trending towards equality.

There was a little bit of brainstorming about the most effective way to change minds and, with a little bit of research, it seemed that having gays or lesbians who feel unsafe to actually meet other gays and lesbians, so that they can dispel the myths about gay and lesbian people. So we thought, “Hey, why don’t we start to collect stories from across the nation—especially stories about diversity?” This diversity is not racial, but it’s religious, it’s geographic; it’s about what kind of job you hold, what your family looks like. We want to demonstrate that the [gay community] is everywhere, that we’re represented in every community and that we can defy preconceived notions about who and what we are.

Some of the ones we’ve received already have been very surprising. There are stories from religious communities, about people who are trying to reconcile their belief in God with their sexual identity. However, this moment has a bunch of white gays running it—and we do need to hear from other racial communities. We certainly have to reach out to Black and Latino communities and change minds.

Over the summer, we’ll share some of these stories on the Courage Campaign’s website and on the radio. Say we get a moving video from Bedford, Texas; I’d like to show that video back in that area of Texas so that people there know that there are others in the community who are suffering from inequality.

In the end, we’ll select three stories and I’ll go to those hometowns to shoot those as public-service announcements. The idea is to take this video project to some of the groups in some of those areas.

WCT: Are you more inclined to go with smaller towns, where some think more out-of-the-box?

DLB: The final three is determined by budget, but I also think that those three need to be incredibly diverse. So, I doubt that all three will be from a big city. There’ll probably be one that represents a metropolitan area, but these small towns need help. I hope, in the end, that the stories are incredibly surprising; I think that’s what’s going to be incredibly illuminating.

WCT: The campaign kicked off on Harvey Milk Day. If you had five minutes with Harvey, what would you ask him or say to him?

DLB: Oh, boy. If I only had five minutes, I would ask him what his next steps were going to be.

I think the man had such strength and such a strong conviction that we are equal. He, unlike so many leaders today, was able to shed that self-loathing many of us grew up with. He was unapologetic about who he was and how God made him. I think that’s why he was able to make incredible progress so quickly. He made bold moves in the face of people saying, “Don’t go there. It’s not time yet.” So I’m very curious about what he would’ve done next.

I know he wanted to march on Washington, D.C. In his last few weeks, he talked about taking the fight [for gay rights] to [then-President] Jimmy Carter. That propelled me to say, “Hey, let’s take this fight to the federal government.” However, I can only infer that, so it’d be great to hear what his actual strategy would’ve been. [Milks death] was such a great loss. We haven’t seen the likes of him since.

WCT: As you know, June is Pride Month. What are you proud about concerning the LGBT community?

DLB: I think we have a lot to be proud of right now, in terms of our progress in the gay movement. Finally overturning “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” is something to be incredibly proud of. Winning this case in California in federal court and being that much closer to an eventual federal decision that would give marriage to all Americans in all 50 states—that’s something to be incredibly proud of. Attached to that is the progress we’ve made in everyday Americas’ opinions of equality for gay and lesbian people.

Sometimes I have to step back and say, “Boy, we’ve come a long way in a short amount of time.” It seems that this new energy in the movement started at about 2008, and so many things have happened in that time and so many gay and lesbian groups have contributed.

That said, it’s not time to let up. Civil rights is this (constant) game of winning and losing: it’s this pendulum. We have to continue to tell our stories, and they don’t have to be depressing. It can be about how joyous it was to have your first kid or to be married or your first kiss or how surprisingly wonderful it was to come out to your parents.

Record and upload a video no more than two minutes long telling a story in support of LGBT equality by no later than 11:59 p.m. PT on Wed., June 15; see http://www.couragecampaign.org/page/s/dustin-lance-black-testimony-challenge. At the end of the contest, Black’s film crew will choose three; fly to three separate locations to film these stories; and share them with the country in a television ad campaign.

That’s the difference between us and other minority groups; Some of us are not immediately identifiable. We have to continue to tell our stories, and they don’t have to be depressing. It can be about how joyous it was to have your first kid or to be married or your first kiss or how surprisingly wonderful it was to come out to your parents.

On a bright, tree-lined lot in North Lawndale, a house decorated with LGBT-themed art sits waiting for the Pride crowds to come through.

No one is coming. It’s 3:30 p.m. on a Sunday, and a discussion about how the gay community can support transgender people should have started a half hour ago. The talk was slated as part of a monthlong gay and lesbian exhibit at Urban Art Retreat (UAR), but few artists even registered for the show and even fewer LGBT people came to see it.

Dianna C. Long, who oversees the daily operations at UAR, 1957 S. Spaulding, barely notices when no one shows up for the discussion.

“Every year that we’ve been in Chicago, we’ve done something for Pride,” she said. Every year, few come to see the exhibit. However, Long and her team have continued to curate the show.

UAR, a kind of artist’s oasis among the area’s gassy lots, draws people from all walks into its tangled gardens and paint-splattered walls. It attracts neighborhood youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, people with HIV, people with mental illnesses and people without money. The second floor of the two-story residence houses female artists, some who bathe for a place to stay and many who come from abroad.

In keeping with its mission to both cultivate and showcase the talents of under-represented communities, UAR has hosted shows themed around trauma survivors, housewives and feminism, artists with disabilities, outsider artists, people of color, and children artists. The organization holds classes and workshops for emerging artists as well as people who do not identify as artists at all.

The June Gay and Lesbian show exhibits both local and international artists. This year’s exhibit features nine artists, most of them little-known. They are Brian Skinner, Kathleen Elizabeth, Sandra Taylos, Simone Bouyer, Kate Bronwyn, and Chicago-based artists Kenya Molette, Cindy Hall, Dianna C. Long, and P. Anthony, who died of HIV a few years ago. The show will run through Saturday, June 25, in the Liz Long Gallery.

Long said that few LGBT people know about UAR, but the organization has worked over the past two decades to appeal to queer people.

“This is a very friendly place for lesbian and gay people to come,” Long said.

The phone rings incessantly at UAR. Mostly, it is tele marketers, Long said. However, every now and then someone calls needing advice on coming out as LGBT. A lesbian herself, Long spends hours on the phone on these days.

People with HIV also come to UAR for support. One day when Long was working outside in the garden, a young man came up to the fence and asked her for help. He just found out he had HIV, she said. He didn’t know where to go. UAR volunteers took him to get services at a local YMCA.

Long said that UAR is a unique space for queer people. For one, its events and activities are free. They’re also a queer-friendly alternative to the club scene. Long sometimes hosts gay gardening groups in the summer, and regular events tend to be alcohol-free, making the house a safe place for recovering alcoholics.

The next step Long said is figuring out how to support Chicago’s transgender community.

“I’m a big believer in saving yourself, but let’s give some help,” Long said. “So many trans people are not even in a position to do anything [to improve their situations].”

Long has wondered over the years why, when UAR, attracts such a diversity of communities, it tends not to see as many LGBT visitors. “We put together an art show, and usually it’s pretty easy to get people to respond” she said. Not so with the LGBT community.

Part of that problem could be location. For people who live and play in Lake View, UAR is more than an hour commute by CTA. Also, some people think North Lawndale is unsafe, although Long rejects that thought as stereotypical. UAR has collaborated successfully with some LGBT organizations in the past, including Affinity Community Services.

Long said that lack of involvement may mean a discontinuation of its gay and lesbian show next year because it attracts less attention than other shows. Regardless, Long said UAR will remain a queer-friendly space.

The Pride show will be open through June 25 between 11-4 p.m. each Saturday and by appointment. For more information, call 773-542-9126.

Show at the Liz Long Gallery at the Urban Art Retreat. Photo by Kate Sosin.
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Continuing a long tradition held by Mayor Richard M. Daley, Mayor Rahm Emanuel hosted his first LGBT Pride Month Reception at the Chicago Cultural Center June 9. Though Daley originally started the event to make up for not marching in the city’s annual Pride Parade (he refused to work on Sundays), Emanuel announced to loud applause that he would march in this year’s parade, slated for June 26.

As a congressman, Emanuel often walked in the Pride parade alongside his wife and three children. Laughing, he shared a story about his then-3-year-old daughter’s reaction to her first Pride parade: “The dads like to dance!” Daley marched just once during his 22 years as mayor.

Spirits were high in the Cultural Center, as guests mingled, networked and enjoyed complimentary Garrett Popcorn, wine provided by Barefoot Wines, and buffet-style food from Star of Siam. An estimated 1,000 people attended the free event, which was sponsored by Equality Illinois and State Farm insurance.

Mona Noriega, recently confirmed by the City Council as Emanuel’s choice to head the Commission on Human Relations, addressed the packed room, surrounded by politicians, appointed officials, members of the Advisory Council on LGBT Issues, and many more. The commissioner applauded Illinois’ decision to allow civil unions and said she hoped to work with Emanuel for similar advances. She and her partner Evette Cardona were among those having a civil union June 2 at Millennium Park.

Emanuel said LGBT Chicagoans shouldn’t just consider themselves part of a community: “You are family.” Barely audible over waves of applause, he stressed that with positions ranging from schoolteacher to doctor to police officer, LGBT citizens are an integral part of the city. “When you come from a Jewish home, family’s family, man,” he said.

The mayor honored Proud to Run, an annual 10K and 5K charity run that celebrated its 30th anniversary this year. The event, now hosted by Frontrunners/Frontwalkers of Chicago, started with just 40 runners and has grown to include more than 1,200 people. In 30 years, it has raised more than $300,000 for local charities.

Photos by Kat Fitzgerald (MysticImagesPhotography.com); more online at http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com
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BOOK REVIEW

A Single Year
by Dawn Mueller
$15.99; DM Publishing; 262 pages
REVIEW BY SALLY PARSONS

Why do we read memoirs? To get the inside dish from a well-known personality (Steven Tyler’s newest, Judi Dench’s, for example). Or to explore a landscape foreign to us, such as an insider’s view of the food industry (Medium Raw by Bourdain), or growing up in a nonconformist family of nomads (The Glass Castle by Walls). To our surprise, we often learn something about ourselves as well. This is especially true when the author is describing his or her emotional and psychological terrain.

Dawn Mueller delivers, in A Single Year, on two of the above hooks. She’s not a celebrity, but her struggle to understand her own sexual and intimacy needs makes a fascinating read. At times, it is touching, as when she reveals that, with each new woman she meets, if she can get that person to like her, maybe Mueller will begin to like herself again.

There’s plenty of self-revelation for the reader to identify with—the need for someone to care about and love you, the need to love oneself, the need to “… find balance between running around like crazy and sitting comfortably in my own skin.”

Mueller is someone many Windy City Times readers may have brushed shoulders with or actually know. She is a Chicagoman (North Side) and the year’s journey she recounts (circa 2005) takes place on the local scene, a bonus for the reader. In these pages, you will find her at Early Bird and Cupid’s Treasure, a Capricorn party, at Circuit, Sidetrack, T’s, and a Mountain Moving job at this one, with a few minor bumps. Very good at transitions. He did a pretty good job at this one, with a few minor bumps.

BOOK REVIEW

Transition
by Chaz Bono (with Billie Fitzpatrick)
$25.95; Dutton; 245 pages
REVIEW BY TERI SCHLICHENMEYER

The face in the mirror is yours.

Yes, you recognize that chin, the eyes that droop when fatigued, the mouth that’s etched with wrinkles, and the nose.

It’s you there in the mirror—the outside you—but inside, well, what you see isn’t what you know. In the new book Transition by Chaz Bono (with Billie Fitzpatrick), you’ll read what it’s like to feel like you’re in the wrong body, and how a tiny Hollywood darling became a man.

On the wall of his home, Chaz Bono has a picture of himself and his parents, taken when he was a toddler. They all look happy. Bono says, but he doesn’t remember that day, or much of his childhood.

What he does remember, though, is that he always felt like a boy, even though he was the daughter of Sonny and Cher.

Chaz Bono. Photo from Brenna McEwen

Bono says that, as a child, he dressed in boy clothes as much as possible and answered to a boy’s nickname. He played with boys at school and his best friend was a boy. Nobody thought much about it, he says. That’s just the way it was.

Puberty was rough and Bono came out as a lesbian, but something still wasn’t quite right. He didn’t identify with women, gay or otherwise, and distant feelings of masculin-
Paris Hilton talks about her ‘World’

BY JERRY NUNN

Paris Hilton is the Hollywood socialite who always winds up on the press. Her exploits have made her famous in the tabloids and on TV. Her appearances on The Simple Life with Nicole Richie and another show where she searched for a BFF left many viewers entertained and curious to know more—although it also left her a tightening rod for controversy among those who wonder what constitutes a “celebrity” nowadays.

The World According to Paris is her new endeavor—full of paparazzi, pets and popularity.

Windy City Times: Hi, Paris. Tell our readers about your new show and why you came back to reality television.

Paris Hilton: The World According to Paris is a look at everything I go through from the moment I wake up until I go to bed at night, every single day. And I really wanted to do a show to show who I really am because I feel like on the Simple Life and My BFF show I was playing a character and something I was doing for fun, but this is something that I’m really excited for all my fans to see.

WCT: Is it therapeutic for you to make a show like this?

PH: Well, I think I just learn that in everyday life. It was a good chance for me just to show who I am and that I’m a human and I go through the same things that everyone does. So I think when people watch it they maybe won’t see me as such a cartoon character anymore. They’ll see me as a real person.

WCT: Is it hard to open yourself up to cameras this way?

PH: I never thought I would cry on TV. I think I just always wanted everything for me just to show who I am and that’s not how life is. In life, people go through things and people get upset and things happen. And I wanted the fans to see everything as real as possible and what’s really going on. So even though it’s embarrassing for people to watch me cry it’s what really happens.

WCT: Do you regret doing the Simple Life?

PH: The reason I did it was that it was the beginning of reality television and I don’t think there was any other reality shows on TV at this point. So I had never been on camera before. I had never done a reality show, I was really new to it. And the producers told Nicole just to be a troublemaker and have fun and kind of play that character.

Then and they wanted me to play something like Clueless meets Green Acres, like, the dumb blonde character. I didn’t realize this show would go on for so many seasons. So I had to continue doing that character every season. Also, I think I was very shy and it was kind of easier to hide behind that character.

Now when I think about it, it was so long ago and the show was such a huge success and really it was entertaining so I don’t regret it because I think people really enjoyed that character. But now I’m an adult and I’m really ready to show who I really am. I’ve been through a lot in life, I’m not afraid to show who I am and to be honest.

WCT: Would you ever do other reality shows like Dancing with the Stars or Celebrity Apprentice?

PH: Yes. I’ve been approached every season by both of those shows but I would never do them.

WCT: Why not?

PH: I wouldn’t. I like doing my own show. I wouldn’t want to be with a bunch of other people on a show who I don’t know. Some of the people on those shows I really wouldn’t want to be associated with. But, I love Donald Trump. He’s been a great family friend of mine for a long time so I love his show. But the Dancing show I wouldn’t ever do.

WCT: On the first episode of the new series the paparazzi are chasing you everywhere. How do you deal with that every day?

PH: It’s just something I’ve learned to get used to. It’s been going on for so long. It’s just a regular part of my life. I just try not to pay attention because they’re going to be there. And rather than making myself go crazy and being annoyed about it I just say that it’s normal and I’m used to it.

I think the only hard part is when there’s so many of them, sometimes there could be, like, 30 or 40 of them and they’re all chasing me in their cars and they’re all trying to get through the red light and make sure they don’t lose me. So it gets a little dangerous sometimes you try to get behind and get it a little scary being in a car with them around.

WCT: What was it like having your mother on this show?

PH: Oh, I was so excited to have my mom as part of the show. She’s such a character. It’s so funny and always makes me laugh. So I just had to have her on the show. Plus, it’s my whole life and my mom and I are really close and she’s a big part of my life. So of course, she’s going to be there with me on it.

WCT: What did you do for Mother’s Day?

PH: For Mother’s Day, we all went to the house and then the whole family went to the Bova for dinner and just spent time with my mom.

WCT: How do you feel about Perez Hilton using your name?

PH: I am flattered.

WCT: Are you planning on releasing any more music?

PH: Yes, I have a recording studio at my house so any time I have free time I’m always in the studio writing and working. So I’ve been working on this album a really long time because I want it to be perfect and I recently changed the direction of the album.

It was more pop before but now I’m getting rid of a lot of songs and I’m going into a different direction, just house music so it’s going to be a lot more dance and club but it should be out really soon.

MACLAINE from page 23

switch that. In some ways that is quite courageous.

WCT: Speaking of that, I just met Chaz a week ago.

SM: I am very interested by what he is doing. I think his interviews are very insightful. What did you think when you talked with him?

WCT: I don’t think Chaz is super-comfortable with interviews sometimes, so it is very brave to put himself out there like that.

SM: He didn’t feel too uncomfortable with some that I saw so I was quite impressed.

WCT: You have a variety of fans, including many gay fans.

SM: What is the difference? People are people. I think they like my directness, everybody does, including old ladies!

WCT: [Laughs] That is refreshing to hear.

SM: When you get to be my age it is stupid not to be direct or say exactly how you feel, honestly.

WCT: Amen. So what are you currently working on?

SM: Well, today I went for a long hike with Terry, climbing up a mountain and I didn’t like it at all. So I am over trying to be thin. I am going to take it easy for a bit. I am going to take it easy for a bit.

WCT: Are you ever afraid of Arnold Schwarzenegger?

SM: Man, that is some story! Talk about theatrical, what? I can’t even imagine what he was thinking. Okay, stepping out of the marriage but good lord in their own house! To be having babies at the same time, that is the epitome of male power isn’t it? To say that your housekeeper is pregnant and your wife with your own sperm, wow! That’s an Austrian. [Both laugh.]

WCT: You came in for Oprah Winfrey but when are you coming back to Chicago?

SM: Oh, I don’t know. We will see what happens. When there is something there for me to do. I am having a good time doing my show around the country.

WCT: Tell our readers a little about your show.

SM: It is really good and the audience loves it. I tell old stories about old Hollywood. I find myself recalling things up on the stage that I didn’t voiced or talked about. What the hell? I just tell them what happened and what it really was like. I am having a good time with it. I miss the live audience.

WCT: People can follow the tour on your website, right?

SM: Oh, sure.

WCT: It has been 10 years for Life Is a Bowl of Cherries.

SM: [Laughs] Is it 10? I don’t know.

WCT: It was the tenth anniversary recently.

SM: Oh, yeah; that’s nice.

WCT: It has been such a pleasure talking to you while I am down in Mexico.

SM: Well, you be careful down there all right? I worry about anyone that goes to Mexico. I am kidding. I hope it’s wonderful.

WCT: You are more worried about me than my own mother. I am trying to encourage people to come down here.

SM: Wow, you have some job ahead of you. To find out why Maclaine’s over travel, politics and music pick up her latest book and learn more about her at http://www.shirleymaclaine.com.
Cameron Esposito plays it for ‘Laughs’

BY JERRY NUNN

Cameron Esposito is more than just a local one-trick comedian. The out lesbian has three performances at the Just For Laughs festival; teaches The Feminine Comique, the world’s only all female stand-up course; and is the producer of Lincoln Lodge, Chicago’s longest-running alt-comedy showcase. Grab Them Aghast, her debut stand-up album, was released last year. She recently appeared in the Bridgetown Comedy Festival in Oregon. We talked pirates, priests and presidents in a Nun on One interview.

Windy City Times: Hi, Cameron. Where is your last name from?
CE: Cameron Esposito: It is Italian; just ask my body hair.
WCT: Are you from the suburbs or the city?
CE: I am from the city. I live in Logan Square.
WCT: The first time I saw your stand-up act was in a little theatre opening for someone I interviewed named Elizabeth Keener. You have an interesting timing to your comedy.
CE: Yes, that is what people say. It is a slow burn...
WCT: Where does that come from?
CE: It is just the conversational nature of the way that my brain works. I really think of stand-up as a conversation but a lot people don’t. It

CE: No, I don’t. I am just doing this.
WCT: Good for you.
CE: Thank you. I am so happy to share it with Chicago and be able to do that because I live in Logan Square and my rent is really cheap!
WCT: How did you get involved with the Just For Laughs? Because it is a big deal...
CE: I have done it for the past two years with smaller gigs but Steve Heisler who does the programming for the Chicago festival used to write for Timeout Chicago and somebody I had known for years. He had seen me when I was really terrible at stand-up and somehow decided to keep seeing me. He really is sponsoring this part of the festival and asked me if I wanted to do an hour and I said yes, thank you very much.
WCT: And you have three different showtimes, right?
CE: Yes, the one that is a huge deal for me is the one at The Playground Theatre. It is an hour-long spot. I have my little face in the Just For Laughs pamphlet and everything!
WCT: That huge. We are talking Ellen DeGeneres did it one year...
CE: Exactly, it’s like Steve Martin on one page and then on another page... who is this? Oh, it’s me. The other performance I am hosting some musical performers that are in from LA. They are great.

Cameron Esposito. Photo courtesy of Esposito
will use the word gay onstage or lesbian or queer but sometimes I will just reference a girlfriend in the same way my male straight counterparts will reference a girlfriend. I think there is something really rad about being able to have you digest it, I am with a woman and we kiss each other. It is a luxury that I have been afforded by the work that so many people have done before me. For me it is about going in to wherever and normalizing your identity.
WCT: I couldn’t believe my friend last night didn’t know Lily was a lesbian. I said, “I think so. It’s a hunch of mine, along with Rosie and Sandra.”
CE: That is crazy! Homegirl is wavyy out, too. I am definitely a gay performer. Kate Clinton for instance primarily performs in front of gay crowds. When she was coming up what other option did she have? I don’t think it would be easy for her to go to Zanies and announce “Now for your lesbian entertainment of the night!” I think it is really cool that I can do that. It is important that people meet me and are not scared that I will take away their children.
WCT: What do you have going on after the festival?
CE: I am hoping to expand this show’s run at The Playground Theatre in August so look for that. Hopefully a Monday night run of the show. People can come every week if they want to.
WCT: Do you have a website?
WCT: What is the difference?
CE: I had my domain name was stolen for a while. Somebody was selling muscle mass builders and eczema treatment. They had my bio up there. It was really insane: “Cameron Esposito loves Muscle Milk.”
WCT: Thanks for joining us.

Cameron plays The Playground Theatre, 3209 N. Halsted, on June 15 and at the Lincoln Lodge, 4008 N. Lincoln, on June 17 and 18. For details and tickets visit http://www.justforlaughschicago.com.

BOOK REVIEW
Mind Your Own Life
by Aaron Anson
$16.95; Balboa Press;
274 pages
REVIEW BY SALLY PARSONS

Aaron Anson has a message and he puts it out there relentlessly in his book Mind Your Own Life: Trust your own intelligence to interpret your relationship with God (whom he often refers to as the Source). Do not allow others (the Church) to decide for you what this relationship should be. As you might surmise, Anson has had a rocky relationship with organized religion. A gay Black man born and raised Southern Baptist, he has experienced directly the stifling and hurtful atmosphere the Church can often engender toward those who don’t fit the mold.

Anson is driven to helping others create their own spiritual path. He is a proponent of the New Thought movement, for which he is a coach. New Thought, according to sacred-texts.com, espouses that “… a higher power pervades all existence, and that individuals can create their own reality via affirmations, meditation and prayer.” Anson sees his audience as both those who have shunned the gay community as morally or spiritually inferior (he wants them to rethink the origin of their biased thinking), and secondly, gay teens, who might find inspiring his message to think for themselves and realize they are loved.

Some call Mind Your Own Life a memoir. Anson does sprinkle his message with a few stories from his life but in a way that leaves you wanting more detail. Basically, the book presents his views against the Church, the government, and the spiritual life unexamined. Condensed, it would make a powerful lecture on the public speaking circuit.

I have to admit my bias here. Free thinker as I am, I can buy into his message of figuring out your own relationship with whatever you hold to be a higher power. However,
Milwaukee with Mo’Nique, more

Pridefest in Milwaukee, Wis., started with rain and fog all day June 10, although there were plenty of rainbows to be found in this annual event. With bands and entertainment acts playing on eight stages, along with booth after booth of items to browse, there was plenty to do on this three-day excursion. Dance fans could boogie all day at pavilion designated for clubbers or brush up on their LGBT history in a separate museum.

RuPaul’s drag queens from Logo TV provided intros from lip-syncing to comedy before the main event hit the stage. Mo’Nique’s friend, Ivy, performed a rendition of her stand-up act before the Oscar-winning actress/comedian—looking much thinner—strutted out to the screaming crowd.

Mo’Nique said that she felt like “Diana Ross in Central Park in the Rain” before launching into a tirade on the Bible versus homosexuality. The comedian was clearly pro-LGBT, admiring her gay brothers for tackling anal sex. This was a show for adults, with references to exploding blowjobs and a mouth that would make a sailor blush. She confessed that one of her young twins has a tendency to wear dresses and mentioned the support her family gives him.

She ended the show by performing a wedding ceremony marrying LGBT and drag-queen couples together on the stage; many onlookers had tears. For next year’s festivities keep your eyes on http://www.pridefest.com.

Among the many other performers at Pridefest were LeAnn Rimes, Chely Wright, Salt-n-Pepa and gay Israeli singer Ivri Lider.

Text and pictures by Jerry Nunn
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Got something to celebrate? Send us information on your civil union, anniversary, adoption, marriage or any other joyous moment in life to appear in our new section, and let Windy City Times join in your celebration.
Wednesday, June 15

Equity IL, at 6853 N Broadway and The Platypus Cafe, host 30 Awards ceremony with Equality Illinois at Minbars! Come and enjoy dinner, drinks, or both and 90% of all sales (excluding daily specials/before tax) will be donated to ESC to support our important work fighting for the LGBT rights in Illinois. 5 p.m., Minbars, 3341 N Halsted. Interfaith Annual Gala: Down Home Blues! Featuring The Guy King Band Join Interfaith House for their Annual gala event benefiting homeless individuals in Chicago. Featuring the Guy King Band and Encore, ChicagoPride.com’s Bill Fitzpatrick; 6 p.m., 773-533-9033, ext. 255. Bucky’s Guy’s Legends at 700 South Wabash (at State), http://www.interfaithhouse.org/Exotic World and the Burlesque Revue (2011) 1104 S. Wabash, 8th Floor, http://www.itvs.org/films/two-spirits/photos-and-press-kit

Thursday, June 16

Transgender Casting Call! Looking for trans men or women ages 18-21 to film in a television series to follow the struggles and triumphs of young trans people. Please bring a photo, tell us about yourself (age, job, where you live, a little background on yourself, relationship with your family, etc.). 549 W. Randolph, 3rd Floor, 773-473-4100, casting@thewindycity.com. 3 p.m., 773-473-4100, 549 W. Randolph, 3rd Floor.

Friday, June 17

CD4-Kickoff Party CD4-Chicago Rally to end the War on Drugs. Faith-based and community organizations will join together to talk about negative consequences of the war on drugs, 12 p.m., 312-741-2341, Thompson Plaza Park, http://www.redneedsites.org/event/3467399669. Guerrilla Girl Bar Sapphic Adventures, the guerrilla girls guerrilla girls, presents Guerrilla Girl Bar at A-View on the 29th floor of the hotel. Wear some rainbow colored clothing and enjoy the view of the lake. 8 p.m., Atrina Chicago, 16 E. Superior, http://www.sapphicadventure.com

Sunday, June 19

Free BBQ, 1:45 p.m., Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted, http://www.windycitymediagroup.com

No Secret anymore: The Times of Dr. Martin and Phyllis Lyon No Secret anymore reveals the inspiring public work and private lives of Dr. Martin and Phyllis Lyon, two legendary women known as thefounders of the modern lesbian civil-rights movement who in 1966 launched the Daughters of Bilitis, the first public organization for lesbians in America. 2 p.m., 3410 N. Lincoln, http://www.chibib.org


Tuesday, June 21

Queertopia: The Anti-Violence Project Based on true stories of youth in and around Chicago area: the intertwining stories of a Flaco, a transgender boy who fails for a straight girl and feels pressure to take “T” (testosterone); Teddy, a fierce queer person dealing with bisexuality and denim, and Laxi, a straight girl questioning all labels; 4 p.m., Harold Washington Library, 400 S. Dearborn, http://www.queertopia.org


CD Release Party for C.C. Carter’s new work FEELIN’ GOOD Songs of the 90s & ’00s; C. C. reimagines some of her old time classic poems and puts a spin on new works. 8 p.m., Jeffrey Pub, 7041 S. Jeffery, http://www.pow-wowglobal.com

Wednesday, June 22

30 Under 30 Awards Windy City Times will recognize 30 more outstanding LGBT individuals (and allies) who are under 30 years of age and have made some substantial contributions to the LGBT community, whether in the fields of entertainment, politics, health and/or other areas. 5:30 p.m., 773-872-7610, Center on Halsted, 3564 N. Halsted, http://www.windycitymediagroup.com
“I mean, every male secretly wants to have sex with Brad Pitt, but that’s a given.”—Adam Levine of Maroon 5 and The Voice reveals what men he finds attractive. Personally, I secretly want to have sex with Adam Levine!

Many gay men have strong, assertive mothers. OK, it’s a stereotype, but we gay boys love a strong woman—and we love our bawdy moms. This past week, Big Mama Masters came out of a store to find her car being hoisted onto a tow truck. When she protested, the driver offered to lower the car—for half the price the tow would have cost. She balked, the driver shrugged his shoulders and went about his business ... until Big Mama reached into the truck and took his keys out of the ignition. “You’re not gonna get very far without these,” she said, brandishing the key chain like a war trophy. When he approached her, she defiantly said, “Touch me and I’ll call the cops.” Leave it to the mother of Billy Masters to turn a parking violation into a civil-rights moment, a feminist crusade and possibly a race issue (well, the driver was wearing gloves). Where’s Johnny Cochran when you need him? Needless to say, the cops were already on route and while my mother didn’t get her way, I was never prouder.

That’s one of the important aspects of Pride that makes me ... well, proud. Let us not forget that the pride movement was started by people standing up for themselves. Admittedly, these stances don’t always happen under ideal circumstances. I’m sure some innocent passerby got hit with a stiletto heel outside of the Stonewall Inn, but then’s the breaks. It’s important to remember that amidst all the revelry that we have so many out and proud stories that I only have time to remind you to keep tabs on www.BillyMasters.com.

Saturday, June 18th

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Prizes & surprises!

Since this column is coming to you on the eve of Boston Pride, we go directly to the kick-off concert by The Go-Go’s and The B-52’s. It was a perfect pairing, and one which brought out thousands of people. (The girls commented on how huge the stage was.) This was as intense a show as you were gonna get from either band—striped raw and ready to party. The Go-Go’s could have been marred by Belinda’s defective ear monitor, but she’s a game gal and didn’t let it slow her down. She even brought out her openly gay son, James Duke Mason, to sing “Whole World Lost Its Head.” We’ll run video of that and some backstage photos on BillyMasters.com.

The talented and tasty Chris Evans has some concerns over the upcoming Captain America. It’s weighing on him so heavily, he wants to address it before the movie even comes out: “I’m losing my hair. The fear is that this can span 10 years so I can be doing this character until I’m 40. I’m supposed to be like this superior human. He can’t be balding. How horrible would it be if this superior man has male-pattern baldness?” I suppose it would show that no one ... not even The Captain, is perfect. But what about Chris’ perfect body? “That I can control. If I miss three or four days, I feel like shit. Last year, I got into running and I was like, ‘I’m going to start running’ and then I would run on the treadmill and feel great. But I’ll get too thin and lose weight so quickly.” Such a tragedy.

Adam Levine makes his thoughts about Brad Pitt known.

June 15, 2011

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Sky’s Gay Pride game June 23

BY ROSS FORMAN

The inaugural Family Gay Pride Outing at a Chicago Sky game is set for Thursday, June 23, when the Connecticut Sun come to town. Tip-off is set for 7 p.m.

The Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA) has reserved a block of 250 tickets for the game at a discounted rate ($12), and CMSA officials encourage attendees to bring their entire families.

“I encourage everyone to participate and bring the kids out for a great time,” said CMSA’s Sam Hamilton, an event organizer. “Not only will the kids benefit from having the experience of attending and watching a women’s professional basketball game, but, they will have the opportunity to spend time with other kids who also have gay parents or family members. This will help boost confidence and comfort levels and help them realize that they are not alone or different, and there are other kids with the same parenting/family structure.”

All who purchase a ticket through CMSA also will receive a free ticket to another regular-season Sky game. There will be an in-game raffle, held specifically for CMSA, and one person will receive a Sky autographed item. Plus, one person will win two courtside seats for a regular-season Sky game of their choice (based on availability).

“Though it will be a great opportunity for the kids, it also will be a lot of fun for the adults,” Hamilton said. “There will be vendors with alcohol and snacks like at any sporting event. Come out and support the team and show your gay pride.”

To buy tickets, use the promo code “CMSA” and visit http://tinyurl.com/cmsasky.

Mayor: June 25 is ‘Proud to Run’ Day

Proud To Run received a special recognition award from Mayor Rahm Emanuel and many leaders of Chicago’s LGBT community at the June 9 Chicago Pride 2011 Reception. The award was given to the organization, in part, for “[recognizing 30 years of outstanding contributions, through the field of sport, to Chicago’s gay, bisexual, and transgender communities, charities, and service organizations.”

Emanuel also proclaimed Saturday, June 25, Proud to Run Day in Chicago. Both the 5K and 10K courses—which both begin at 8:04 a.m.—start at Montrose Avenue, approximately three blocks east of Lake Shore Drive. The aerobic warm-up and stretch begin at 7:40 a.m. At 10 a.m., the awards ceremony and a raffle will take place.

Register for the race/walk at http://www.proudtorun.org. The fee is $30.

Sheila Simon in Ride for AIDS

Illinois Lt. Gov. Sheila Simon and her husband, Perry Knop, will participate in Ride for AIDS Chicago (RFAC), which Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) produces. This 220-mile journey, which will take place July 9-10, will raise awareness and funds for organizations that provide services to those living with HIV/AIDS in the Chicago area.

The ride has registered more than 350 riders and crew members and has raised more than $250,000. Producers say the grand total will far exceed that amount by July 9.

Opening and closing ceremonies will take place on the east lawn of Northwestern University’s Norris University Center in Evanston, rain or shine.

Information about RFAC and about making donations is at http://www.rideforaids.org.

Ex-football player supports marriage equality

Michael Strahan, the record-setting former defensive end of the New York Giants, has filmed a video with his fiancée for the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) as part of the group’s New Yorkers for Marriage Equality campaign. In the video, the Strahan feels “it’s unfair to keep committed couples from getting married.” The campaign, which raises the public profile of marriage equality in New York, can be viewed online at www.hrc.org/NY4marriage.

“Michael Strahan is part of an ever growing list of professional athletes speaking out for marriage equality. There are a lot of tough New Yorkers, but none tougher than Michael Strahan, one of the most feared and accomplished defensive ends in history. He’s our Super Bowl champion for New Yorkers for Marriage,” said HRC Senior New York Strategist Brian Ellner.

Strahan holds the National Football League record for sacks in a single season with 22.5. He was part of the 2008 Super Bowl champion New York Giants team and is currently a football analyst on Fox NFL Sunday.
Ray J. Koenig III and Clark Hill PLC

Ray is a legal authority on all of his practice areas, which include probate, trusts, guardianship, estate planning, and elder law, including the litigation of those areas. He is a longtime advocate for and member of the LGBT community, and is involved in several charitable groups, community associations, and professional organizations. Ray is a member of Clark Hill PLC, a full-service law firm consisting of a diverse team of attorneys and professionals committed to our clients and our communities.

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