

WINDY CITY TIMES

THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN,
BI AND TRANS COMMUNITY SINCE 1985

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ROSS
TALKS
WITH WCT**

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THIRTY

For the twelfth year running, Windy City Times celebrates Pride by bestowing honors upon 30 individuals under the age of 30 who have, in their young lives, already made significant contributions to Chicago's LGBT community and beyond. This year, we actually increased the number of honorees to 33.

pages 50-55

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Photos on cover (left, from top): Marion Ross PR photo; Vito Russo photo; RJ Chaffin 1997 photo by Tracy Baim; Ongina photo by Norman Dillon; B. Scott PR photo

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TALK TALK

A discussion with Oprah Winfrey (left) was one of the highlights of a cable conference.

Photo by Jerry Nunn



Rihanna kept things spicy at her recent concert. See photos from her hot show.

Jerry Nunn photo



People made connections as dot429 hosted a networking brunch in Chicago.

Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

BREAKING NEWS

Go online to get the latest on what's happening in your world.

WILD AND CRAZY GUYS

Legendary comics Martin Short and Steve Martin kept 'em laughing in Chitown as part of Just for Laughs.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

This week's entertainment round-up includes items on Lady Gaga, Will & Grace and Joan Rivers.

plus **DAILY BREAKING NEWS**

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Move to undo Proposition 8 strikedown fails

BY REX WOCKNER

A legal attempt to "vacate" the federal court ruling that struck down California's Proposition 8, which amended the state constitution in 2008 to re-ban same-sex marriage, failed June 14.

U.S. District Judge James Ware rejected arguments by Prop 8's supporters that now-retired trial Judge Vaughn Walker, who is gay, should have recused himself from the case, or have been disqualified, because he is in a relationship.

Ware wrote: "The sole fact that a federal judge shares the same circumstances or personal characteristics with other members of the general public, and that the judge could be affected by the outcome of a proceeding in the same way that other members of the general public would be affected, is not a basis for either recusal or disqualification. ... Further ... it is not reasonable to presume that a judge is incapable of making an impartial decision about the constitutionality of a law, solely because, as a citizen, the judge could be affected by the proceedings. Accordingly, the Motion to Vacate Judgment on the sole ground of Judge Walker's same-sex relationship is DENIED."

Prop 8's supporters contended that Walker had a personal stake in the case because if Prop 8 dies, Walker could then marry his partner. But Ware didn't buy that.

"Requiring recusal because a court issued an injunction that could provide some speculative future benefit to the presiding judge solely on the basis of the fact that the judge belongs to the class against whom the unconstitutional law was directed would lead to a ... standard that required recusal of minority judges in most, if not all, civil rights cases," he wrote. "Congress could not have intended such an unworkable recusal statute."

Neither should Walker have been disqualified from hearing the case, Ware said.

"The single characteristic that Judge Walker shares with the Plaintiffs, albeit one that might not have been shared with the majority of Californians, gave him no greater interest in a proper decision on the merits than would exist



Pro-Prop-8 lead lawyer Charles Cooper. Photo by Rex Wockner

for any other judge or citizen," Ware said, in reference to Walker's same-sex relationship.

Beyond that, even if Walker wants to get married (which is not something he's ever talked about publicly), that could be an urge that waxes and wanes over time, Ware said.

"Under such a standard, disqualification would be based on assumptions about the amorphous personal feelings of judges in regards to such intimate and shifting matters as future desire to undergo an abortion, to send a child to a particular university or to engage in family planning. So too here, a test inquiring into the presiding judge's desire to enter into the institution of marriage with a member of the same sex, now or in the future, would require reliance upon similarly elusive factors."

"(R)ecusal could turn on whether a judge 'fervently' intended to marry a same-sex partner versus merely 'lukewarmly' intended to marry, determination that could only be reached through undependable and invasive self-reports," Ware said.

"The Court declines to adopt the principle that absence of disclosure (by Walker of any marriage desire) should warrant the mandatory inference that the presiding judge 'fervently' intends to marry and, thus, holds an interest in this case

that is substantially affected by the outcome."

In wrapping up his 21-page decision, Ware opined: "The presumption that Judge Walker, by virtue of being in a same-sex relationship, had a desire to be married that rendered him incapable of making an impartial decision, is as warrantless as the presumption that a female judge is incapable of being impartial in a case in which women seek legal relief."

Gay groups cheered Ware's ruling.

"We applaud the court for rejecting the pathetic attempts by Prop 8 backers to viciously malign Judge Walker," said Equality California Interim Executive Director Jim Carroll. "Because proponents of the marriage ban have repeatedly failed to present even a shred of evidence to support the insidious discrimination that Prop 8 fosters, they tried and failed to hide behind groundless, shameful arguments to discredit Judge Walker—arguments that fail to hold up under even the slightest scrutiny."

Lambda Legal staff attorney Peter Renn said: "The court decisively rejected an outrageous attack on the integrity of Judge Walker, not to mention judges in general. The motion was a sideshow designed to deflect attention from the fact that the proponents had every chance to prove that Prop 8 was constitutional, but could not do so. Prop 8 was declared unconstitutional because it is unconstitutional—not because the judge is gay."

National Center for Lesbian Rights Executive Director Kate Kendell opined, "This ruling will protect all judges from similarly desperate and unwarranted attacks from parties who lose their initial case and unfairly seek a second bite at the apple."

The lead lawyer defending Prop 8, Charles Cooper, said he will appeal Ware's decision.

"The ProtectMarriage.com legal team obviously disagrees with today's ruling," Cooper said. "Our legal team will appeal this decision and continue our tireless efforts to defend the will of the people of California to preserve marriage as the union of a man and a woman."

Meanwhile, in a separate ruling June 14, Ware rejected a request from Prop 8 supporters that all parties to the case return to the court their copies of the video recording of the Prop 8 trial.

That request stemmed from Walker's having shown snippets of the recording in public speeches about cameras in the courtroom.

After Prop 8 supporters objected to the showings, Walker gave his copy of the seemingly legally "sealed" recording back to the court. In his ruling, Ware declined to address whether Walker had done anything wrong in using the tapes, and he said he plans to give the recordings back

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NATIONAL NEWS

—Gay Liberation Front member dies

—Lesbian couple yelled at for kissing

—N.Y. Gov. Andrew Cuomo (left) submits marriage-equality bill

to Walker if no objections are filed.

The gay side's lawyers and several media outlets want the whole trial recording released to the public. Ware said he will hold a hearing on that request Aug. 29.

Walker's ruling that struck down Prop 8 as unconstitutional is on appeal to the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

The appeal has been delayed because the 9th Circuit is unsure whether the people who filed the appeal—the folks who had put Prop 8 on the ballot in 2008—have a legal right to step into the shoes of the state government and defend a piece of the state constitution that has been found in violation of the U.S. Constitution.

All of the actual defendants in the case—the governor, the attorney general, the county clerks of Alameda and Los Angeles counties, and the state Health Department—have refused to defend Prop 8.

Because of its uncertainty, the 9th Circuit has asked the California Supreme Court for its thoughts on whether the Prop 8 proponents have legal standing to appeal. The California Supreme Court has agreed to answer that question, but has not yet done so.

Should the Prop 8 proponents be found not to have any legal standing to have appealed Walker's ruling, the ruling will take effect and same-sex couples will again be able to marry in California.

The standing issue should be resolved late this year or early next year.

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Locals react to Prop 8 ruling

BY KATE SOSIN

A federal court has upheld a ruling by Chief Judge Vaughn Walker to strike down Proposition 8, the same-sex marriage ban in California.

Proponents for the same-sex marriage ban argued that Walker should have removed himself from the case because he had a personal interest in the outcome. Walker, who retired earlier this year, came out as gay in April.

According to a press release from Lambda Legal, Chief U.S. District Judge James Ware said that Walker's sexuality did not require him to take himself off the case.

Windy City Times asked some members of Chicago's LGBT community for their reactions to the ruling:

—**Dietzler, Join the Impact-Chicago:** "The idea that Judge Walker should have been disqualified from ruling on Prop 8 because of his sexual orientation is absolutely absurd. This just proves that proponents of Prop. 8 know they are losing and are grasping at anything they can."

—**John Knight, director of the ACLU of Illinois LGBT & AIDS Project:** "Chief Judge Ware carefully considered the arguments for recusal

and correctly rejected them. One of the most important reasons he offered is that the general benefit the entire nation reaps from the enforcement of our Constitution and from overcoming restrictions on our fundamental rights, such as the right to marry, easily overcomes any speculation about whether Judge Walker might benefit in the future from the ability to marry. As the court put it, "we all have an equal stake in a case that challenges the constitutionality of a restriction on a fundamental right."

—**Rosa Yadira Ortiz, president of Amigas Latinas:** "I agree with Chief Judge Ware's ruling that one should not presume that judges are incapable of making impartial decisions in cases where they, like members of the general society, may be affected. It is disappointing that assumptions of partiality—based on factors such as gender, sexuality and race—continue to persist. LGBTQ professionals rightfully expect to be critiqued based on the merits of their work and qualifications, not on who they are."

—**Modesto "Tico" Valle, CEO of Center on Halsted:** "We applaud Judge Ware's ruling on [June 14] refusing to vacate Judge Vaughn Walker's decision declaring Prop 8 unconstitutional.

To suggest that because Walker is gay he cannot rule on the laws impacting the LGBTQ community is very unjust. At their best, our judges do not exist to endorse the majority's whims; they exist to protect minority rights.

"This is why diversity among judges is so important: We need diversity among judges to ensure that all of our laws are treating all people fairly, all of the time. Ware also rightly concluded that—even if Judge Walker stands to be impacted by overturning Prop 8—does not necessarily mean he was biased when evaluating the arguments of Prop 8's attorneys. Walker called these arguments for what they are: unfair and fundamentally flawed."

—**Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois:** "I am pleased with this ruling. To force a judge to recuse himself only because he happens to be gay is ridiculous. I'm glad that reason prevailed today."

—**Anthony Martinez, executive director of The Civil Rights Agenda:** "Chief Judge Ware's ruling was appropriate, and I think for most people following the Prop 8 trial an expected one. Prop 8 proponents know they are on the losing side of history and failed to prove the

validity of their argument. This was a desperate attempt. Prop 8 is unconstitutional and that is the bottom line."

—**Camilla Taylor, marriage project director of Lambda Legal:** "We were glad to hear of the ruling but we weren't surprised. It was ludicrous to suggest that a judge should be disqualified just because he was in a relationship with a man for ten years. We don't suggest that a divorce judge should be disqualified just because he's happily married."

Chicagoans part of historic event with Obama

President Obama will be the keynote speaker at the LGBT Leadership Council Dinner on June 23 launching New York's pride celebration. The event—with actor Neil Patrick hosting—will take place at the New York Sheraton & Towers.

Similar to one of his heroes (Abraham Lincoln), Obama will be remembered for "his courage in further realizing the maxim 'all men are created equal,'" according to CommunityMatters.biz. The gala will also support Obama's re-election bid.

Chicagoans are playing a role in the event, as Wally Brewster, Bob Satawake and Chicago Cubs co-owner Laura Ricketts are among the co-chairs.



John Knight. Photo by Jay Geneske



Camilla Taylor.



Anthony Martinez.



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U.N. passes effort to address LGBT discrimination

BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The United Nations' Human Rights Council, meeting in Geneva, voted 23 to 19 on June 17 to approve a resolution that expresses "grave concern at acts of violence and discrimination, in all regions of the world, committed against individuals because of their sexual orientation and gender identity."

The resolution calls for the creation of a U.N. commission to document discriminatory laws, practices, and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity around the world. The study is to recommend "how international human rights law can be used to end violence and related human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity."

The commission is to submit its report in December, and the Human Rights Council will convene a panel to discuss the report.

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission called the vote a "ground-breaking achievement." And President Obama issued a statement noting that it is the "first time in history" that the U.N. has adopted a resolution "dedicated to advancing the basic human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons."

"This marks a significant milestone in the long struggle for equality, and the beginning of a universal recognition that LGBT persons are endowed with the same inalienable rights—and



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

entitled to the same protections—as all human beings," President Obama said in a statement. "The United States stands proudly with those nations that are standing up to intolerance, discrimination, and homophobia. Advancing equality for LGBT persons should be the work of all peoples and all nations. LGBT persons are entitled to equal treatment, equal protection, and the dignity that comes with being full members of our diverse societies."

The U.N. Human Rights Council is comprised of 47 countries.

Countries voting for the resolution were Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Hungary, Japan, Mauritius, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Uruguay.

Countries voting against it were Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Djibouti, Gabon, Ghana, Jordan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Moldova, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi

Arabia, Senegal and Uganda.

The countries of China, Zambia, and Burkina abstained. Two other members—Kyrgyzstan and Libya—were absent. (Libya was suspended from the Council in March.)

The resolution was originally presented by South Africa.

The U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Susan Rice, said the United States took a "leading role" in the resolution's adoption, "and we pledge to continue to fight discrimination in any guise and embrace diversity in every form."

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton issued a statement saying the U.S. worked with South

Africa and other countries to secure passage.

"The United States will continue to stand up for human rights wherever there is inequality and we will seek more commitments from countries to join this important resolution," said Clinton.

In an earlier victory at the United Nations, the General Assembly voted last December to restore a reference to "sexual orientation" in a resolution against the killing of vulnerable minority groups—a reference that had been removed only a month earlier. The Assembly then approved the amended resolution.

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GLAAD secretive about resignation of its president

BY KATE SOSIN

Under intense scrutiny over his endorsement of a corporate merger between AT&T and T Mobile, Jarrett Barrios, president of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), has resigned.

The news first broke on a Politico blog, which reported that GLAAD's executive committee voted to remove Barrios. However, GLAAD has refused to comment on the details, setting off a chain of rumors that Barrios has been pleading to keep his job.

Roxanne Jones, co-chair of GLAAD's board of directors, confirmed Barrios's resignation in an e-mail to Windy City Times.

"The GLAAD Board has received Jarrett Barrios' resignation letter and discussed this among other topics on our call," the statement said. "We expect at our next Board meeting set for Wednesday to reach a conclusion on all issues so that Mr. Barrios can begin to help The Board manage transition and bring on his successor."

The resignation follows a firestorm of bad press over a letter Barrios sent the Federal Communications Commission May 31, urging the approval of a merger between AT&T and T-Mobile.

"What our community wants in wireless phone and Internet service is exactly what Americans in general want: more access, faster service, and competitive pricing," said the letter, which was also signed by the president of the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. "The LGBT community has a long-standing commitment to all forms of social

justice. That is why we look at the deployment of faster wireless Internet options not only from financial and technological viewpoints but also in terms of how this improves society."

The letter raised eyebrows by many who questioned if AT&T bought Barrios' support for the merger with a recent \$50,000 donation to GLAAD.

GLAAD representatives declined to comment on whether or not Barrios had been forced to resign, or if the merger controversy spurred his departure.

Michelangelo Signorile, host of Sirius XM OutQ radio, reported that Rich Ferraro, GLAAD director of communications, had promised a statement on the resignation by June 19. GLAAD released no such statement, generating talk that perhaps Barrios had not resigned or had attempted to rescind his resignation.

Until recently, the board defended Barrios. On June 7, Laurie Perper, former GLAAD board co-chair, went on Signorile's show and criticized Barrios as detrimental to the organization's fundraising and advocacy efforts. The board denounced Perper's comments as "factually inaccurate, uninformed and misleading."

The statement went on to credit Barrios with a host of achievements for GLAAD. "All of this comes under the dedicated and dynamic leadership of GLAAD President Jarrett Barrios, whom we wholeheartedly support," the statement said.

Jones did not respond to follow-up inquiries on when GLAAD would officially announce the resignation.

As of early June 20, Kevin Boyer, co-chair of the Chicago GLAAD Leadership Council, said that he too knew very little about the resignation. He declined to comment further.

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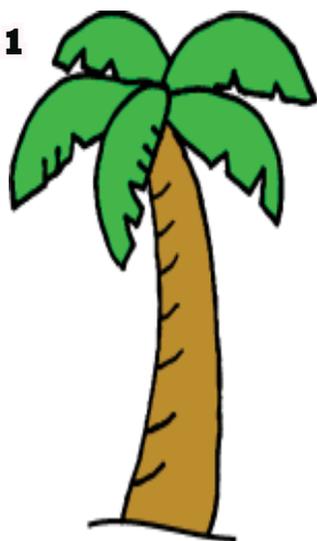
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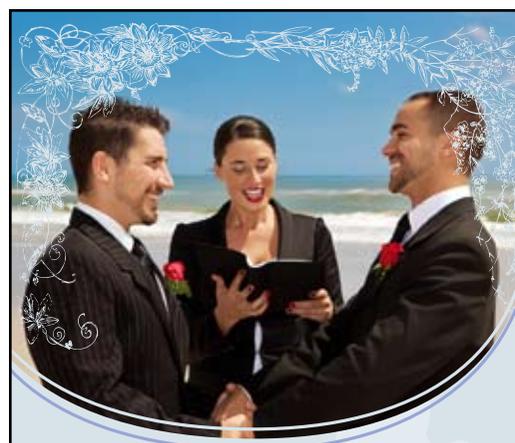


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Gay high schooler becomes prom king

BY ROSS FORMAN

Craig Cassey, Jr., is the epitome of a student-athlete, certainly a logical choice to be named prom king during this, his senior year, at Penncrest High School in Pennsylvania.

Cassey, 19, is taking all advanced-placement (AP) courses and is a member of the National Honor Society. He also is an AP Scholar and has been a part of his school's academically gifted program since second grade.

Cassey, who lives in Media, Pa., is a standout for the school's track-and-field team, where his specialty is the 800-meter race—and his best time is one minute, 55 seconds.

As a sophomore, Cassey led off his school's 4x800 relay during the state finals and ultimately helped the team run the 10th-fastest time in

the nation.

Cassey won the MVP award at the Chichester Relays, All-Delco (local league) this past indoor season, was team MVP and won the Larry Simmons Award, given for sportsmanship, integrity, leadership, and a love of track and field.

He is heading to Georgetown University in the fall to continue his track-and-field career.

Lastly, on May 7, Cassey was named the prom king at Penncrest.

"I believe I was elected because of my reputation in school for being positive, friendly, and accepting," Cassey said. "I can honestly say that I'm friends with practically all of my [classmates] and, as student council president, I have worked hard to help foster an accepting climate—not just for LGBT youth, but for everyone."

Cassey is gay, having come out before the end of his freshman year.

"I was shocked and ecstatic, especially since I won with a great friend and I truly believe my crowning speaks to the changing climate at my high school," Cassey said of the announcement, made at Drexelbrook, the Delaware Valley's premier Philadelphia wedding venue, corporate events center and banquet facility, located in Delaware County, Pa.

"I actually didn't know I won as I was standing on an outdoor balcony when they announced my name, so I heard from a friend and came running in to receive the crown."



Craig Cassey, Jr. with date Molly Mills. Photo courtesy of Cassey

Cassey was named prom king an hour before the prom ended. He was one of eight male finalists.

Cassey attended prom with a female friend, Brigid, who he has known for years—not his boyfriend of about four months, Carl Morelli.

"I did not take my boyfriend to prom due to circumstances which arose in the final three months prior to my prom," Cassey said. "My mother, who has been extremely supportive of me in many of my interests—and is progressing on her own journey of acceptance after my coming out—had expressed her adamant concern [about taking a male to prom] and after many heated conversations, I took the time to re-evaluate our situation."

"During this time, my mother led our school's largest fundraiser called Relay for Life, which benefits the American Cancer Society, as well as our school's after-prom party which both took place within a week of each other, leading to a lot of stress. My decision not to take Carl to prom was one made to maintain balance in my life and enable my mother to achieve her goals just as she has enabled me to achieve mine."

However, Cassey and Morelli danced together the day after the school's prom.

"My coming-out process was extremely gradual and relaxed in that everything was handled using one-on-one conversations and I did not use any shocking outlets for my coming out, such as Facebook," Cassey said. "While coming-out all at once as a celebration of your homosexuality is proper for some people, I found it important to take a slower pace in order to acclimate my teammates and friends with the idea. With less shock comes less conflict and, consequently, all of my peers have been very accepting."

Cassey said his classmates have been "extremely supportive." Many have congratulated and supported him, he said.

"While I knew many of my classmates were supportive, I never imagined that so many of them would verbalize their support," Cassey said.

Cassey said his middle-distance track coach has been a solid supporter ever since he found out, and has worked to ensure that the school's track team was a positive, accepting environment.

"While I cannot say with certainty that all of

Turn to page 11

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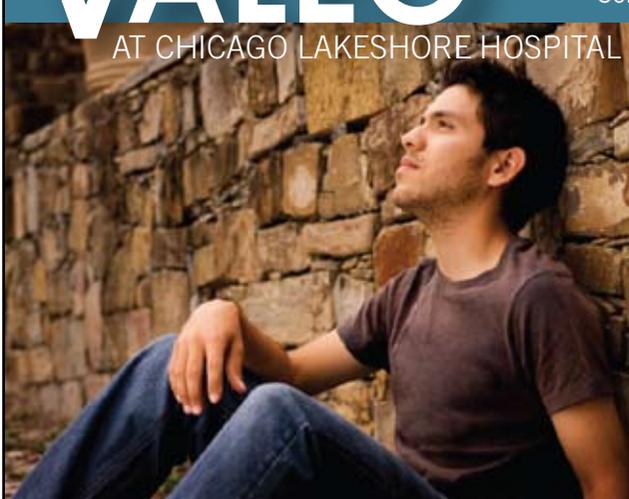
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International news

BY REX WOCKNER

French Parliament rejects same-sex marriage

France's National Assembly voted 293-222 against legalizing same-sex marriage June 14.

President Nicolas Sarkozy's ruling Union for a People's Movement party opposed the measure.

In January, France's Constitutional Court upheld the ban on same-sex marriage but said Parliament could change the law if it wanted to.

The court ruled that gay and straight couples find themselves in a "different situation" that justifies differing treatment under family law.

Polls suggest that some 60 percent of French people support letting same-sex couples marry. The nation has offered civil unions for gay couples for more than a decade, but the unions lack some of the benefits of marriage.

Brazilian activists meet defense minister

The Brazilian LGBT Association (ABGLT) met

with Defense Minister Nelson Jobim on June 14 to lobby him on gay and HIV issues.

ABGLT President Toni Reis said Jobim committed to drafting amendments to remove the words "pederasty" and "homosexual" from the Military Penal Code, and to working to get the amendments through the National Congress.

He also agreed to implement in the Armed Forces the recent federal Supreme Court ruling requiring that same-sex couples be permitted to register their unions and receive the rights of marriage.

Jobim also plans to set up a working group to review the military's policy of testing recruits for HIV.

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

See more world news online at <http://www.Windy-CityMediaGroup.com>

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PROM from page 10

the teachers [at the school] are 100 percent supportive, I can state that the majority have held conversations with me about my writing [on my] gay-themed blog. And they have congratulated and praised me for my efforts while thanking me for all that I have done. The administration has always been supportive and they are a large part of why our school is as accepting as it is today."

So, any negative reactions/responses to coming out?

"Aside from a few situations, I have endured very few negatives since coming out," Cassey said. "[Perhaps] because I strive to help everyone in my school, whether that means helping them with homework, connecting them with clubs, or counseling them when they're down, so I have built a friendship with many students. My extreme optimism and positive [approach], and staunch adherence to my own anti-bullying policy and fairness to all, has led to a situation where no one bullies me and hasn't ... for a long time. I believe that becoming a positive, proactive force in a community has disabled others' ability to bully me simply because they don't want to. Who wants to bully the nice kid who not only helped you study for a math test, but baked a cake to celebrate a classmate's birthday? Such actions aren't bribing students to not bully me; they are actions taken to help them and foster community."

Cassey's boyfriend is a high school junior, though he attends a different school, Sun Valley. The schools are apart 20 minutes apart.

"We have a lot in common, as we're both athletes, [plus] academically and artistically inclined, and we both love to laugh," Cassey said.

Clearly, Cassey has shined in a teen world that, quite often, can be filled with sadness and sorrow—or even worse.

So, to those struggling teens, Cassey said: "Stick in there and understand that, while it does get better, it can get better now! Learn to love yourself for who you are as self-acceptance can change your world and that will help you stand strong against any injustice you may be facing. And seek out support, whether in your hometown or online from The Trevor Project or bloggers like me—we love to talk and help."

Cassey is an inspiration, without question.

"I have yet to think of myself as an inspiration for many, merely an athlete who wants to make a difference," he said. "It seems the two

go hand in hand when one starts to successfully make a difference, so, for those who I am an inspiration to, it shows that my work and the work of others like myself is still needed in some way or another. It also means that we should hold ourselves to a higher calling. I am extremely flattered by being called an inspiration.

"My world has grown to include so many new people through my writing and online contacts which I am endlessly grateful for. Not only have I seen the beginning of my blog culminate [in] national media exposure, but, because of that, I have seen first-hand how my community reacts to an openly gay student when faced to acknowledge his story—and they have responded with acceptance and pride, both in their community and in my school. That is an experience I will never forget."

Cassey was interviewed live on MSNBC this spring, among other mainstream media outlets. And he was well aware of the Windy City Times and Outsports.com recent report that 27 sports people have come out in 2011.

"To have so many athletes come out in such a short time span is incredible and I can only imagine the impact that will have in the following months. That, to me, is beyond exciting," he said.

Cassey said he's looking forward to Georgetown in the fall, where he will vault onto a Division I college team. "It's quite the opportunity and I am very thankful for it," he said.

"I haven't heard of any reactions [from the Georgetown coaches to my sexual orientation.] I was going to hold off until I was actually at Georgetown to tell the coaches, but due to recent news coverage of my story, they may already know.

"I would be lying if I said I wasn't [a bit nervous]. I feel it's important to be aware of your situation and always acknowledge the risks one is taking, which are increased by being an openly gay athlete as opposed to a closeted one. But Georgetown University has a very active LGBTQ Resource Center which I hope to work with to ensure that my time at Georgetown is positive, from start to finish, and that the obstacles I face are those of running fast times, not running down homophobia."

Cassey said his long-term goals are to strengthen already-existing LGBTQ organizations to prevent them from dying out due to economic strains, and also to counsel more youth, among other things.

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Obama spokesman denies 1996 gay survey

Despite a statement by President Barack Obama's White House Communications Director Dan Pfeiffer June 17 that a 1996 survey response was not written by the then-candidate for Illinois state Senate, Windy City Times newspaper stands by the reporting on Obama's early support of gay marriage in at least two gay surveys.

The surveys were from a 1996 response to Outlines newspaper (which now owns and publishes Windy City Times) and IMPACT, a now-defunct gay political action committee. They are online and available at <http://bit.ly/gMBR4e> and also printed in the 2010 book *Obama and the Gays: A Political Marriage*, by Tracy Baim, publisher of Windy City Times.

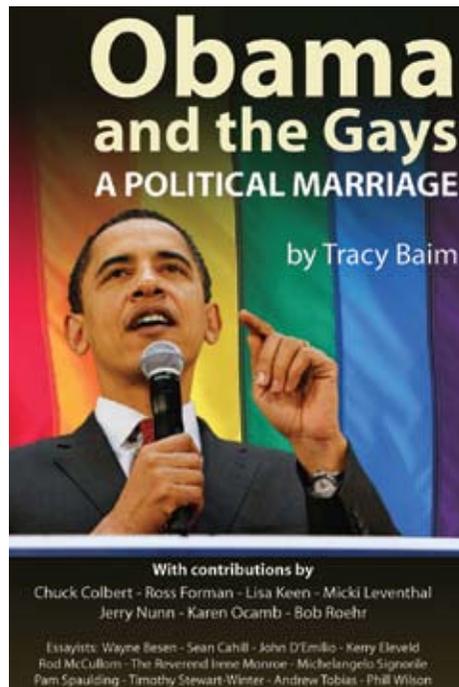
Pfeiffer, asked by Joy Gray of the Daily Kos about the surveys, during the Netroots Nation convention in Minneapolis, said, "If you actually go back and look, that questionnaire was actually filled out by someone else, not the president." This is the first time a claim has been made that Obama did not complete the surveys himself, even though his signature is on the typed one sent to Outlines, and the IMPACT survey appears to be completed in his own writing.

After a day-long firestorm about the denial, Shin Inouye, White House Office of Communications director of specialty media, issued the following statement about the comments: "Dan was not familiar with the history of the questionnaire that was brought up today, but the President's views are clear. He has long supported equal rights and benefits for gay and lesbian couples and since taking office he has signed into law the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell, signed into law the hate-crimes bill, made the decision not to defend section three of DOMA and expanded federal benefits for same sex partners of federal employees."

The answer did not clarify what Pfeiffer meant in his comments, and Obama never has challenged the reporting of the surveys, first referred to in 1996.

On June 20, in answer to gay press questions at the White House daily briefing, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney said he believed that Obama did, in fact, sign the 1996 Outlines questionnaire.

To Outlines Obama typed in the survey response, dated Feb. 15, 1996: "I favor legalizing same-sex marriages, and would fight efforts to prohibit such marriages." It was faxed from the law firm Obama worked for at the time. And it was reported in Outlines newspaper that he backed gay marriage, something his campaign never denied in 1996. He would have had a very



small campaign staff, so it was unlikely he had someone else complete the form. In fact he went to the trouble of typing full answers when the form was actually able to be completed as a Q&A. Even if someone else completed the form, Obama signed it, and never denied subsequent reports of its content.

In January 1996 he filled out the IMPACT questionnaire, and it appears to be in his own writing, and uses the first-person "I" throughout. While the IMPACT questions were a bit more complicated, Obama did say he would oppose any attempts to outlaw same-gender marriage, by supporting a resolution stating "the state should not interfere with same-gender couples who chose [sic] to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities and commitment of civil marriage."

The complete surveys are online at: <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/photospreadthumbs.php?APUB=wct&ADATE=2009-01-14&AGALLERY=obama>

More background is available here: <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/ARTICLE.php?AID=30274>.

Obama and the Gays: A Political Marriage is available at Women & Children First Bookstore and Unabridged Bookstore. It is also available through Amazon.com (link <http://tinyurl.com/ObamaGayBook>) and Kindle and iPad.

The website for the book is <http://www.ObamaAndTheGays.com>.

Tennessee sued over anti-gay law

BY REX WOCKNER

Gays, LGBT groups and elected officials sued Tennessee in state court June 13 over a new law that prohibits cities, counties and school districts from having laws or policies that protect LGBT people from discrimination.

The law says, "No local government shall by ordinance, resolution, or any other means impose on or make applicable to any person an anti-discrimination practice, standard, definition, or provision that shall deviate from, modify, supplement, add to, change, or vary in any manner from" state law.

The statute targeted a Nashville law that prohibited metropolitan government contractors from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity through their employment practices.

The lawsuit says, "HB600 embodies an animus toward gay and transgender people so strong that the Tennessee legislature was willing to repeal policies protecting students against bullying and harassment and to make other groups suffer as well, merely to prevent gay and transgender citizens from obtaining needed protections."

Lead attorney Abby Rubinfeld said: "They passed a law based on disapproval of gay and transgender people, which the Tennessee and U.S. constitutions do not permit. Fifteen years ago, in fact—in a case quite similar to this one—the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that 'if the constitutional conception of 'equal protection of the laws' means anything, it must at the very least mean that a bare ... desire to harm a politically unpopular group cannot constitute a legitimate governmental interest."

In that ruling, the Supreme Court struck down Colorado's Amendment 2, which barred any laws anywhere in the state that protected gay people from discrimination.

Plaintiffs in the Tennessee lawsuit include Nashville Metro Councilmembers Erik Cole, Erica Gilmore and Mike Jameson; high-school student Shirin Pankowsky (founder of Martin Luther King, Jr. High School's Gay/Straight Alliance); Marisa Richmond, president of the



Shannon Minter. Photo by Rex Wockner

Tennessee Transgender Political Coalition; Wesley Roberts, a teacher and GSA co-sponsor at Hume-Fogg Academic Magnet School; the Tennessee Equality Project; and the Tennessee Transgender Political Coalition.

"The state legislation was disguised as an effort to ensure consistent business regulations across Tennessee counties," said Jameson. "But that was a Trojan-horse pretext for getting this passed. Every county has unique zoning regulations, unique employment regulations, and so forth. Why is it only now, and only on the issue of discrimination, that we suddenly need uniformity?"

The National Center for Lesbian Rights and Morrison & Foerster also are representing plaintiffs in the case.

"Under the very thin guise of protecting businesses and commerce, Tennessee passed a law specifically intended to encourage discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members of the community," said NCLR Legal Director Shannon Minter. "This law is part of a larger, national strategy to attack cities and counties that attempt to protect their citizens from discrimination based on characteristics that bear no relationship to job performance, talent or one's ability to contribute to society."

The lawsuit says the law violates equal-protection guarantees of the U.S. and Tennessee constitutions.

—Assistance: Bill Kelley



Map of Tennessee. Photo from Tennessee-Map.org

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Roger 'RJ' Chaffin dies

Longtime community activist, volunteer and businessman Roger "R.J." Chaffin, 59, died June 17 after a short illness. A memorial is being planned.

Inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 1997, Chaffin was involved in a wide range of causes and helped raise thousands of dollars for many AIDS and gay groups. He was a well-known business activist with the Northalsted Area Merchants Association (NAMA), as owner of the now-closed RJ's Video and Rajin' Rae Jean's. He was NAMA president from 1998-2004.

Chaffin, a native of Ohio, is most associated with International Mr. Leather and its Leather Marketplace, an event he directed for 18 years, including this past Memorial Weekend in Chicago. He is interviewed in the new book *Leatherman: The Legend of Chuck Renslow*, about his IML and gay community work.

Chaffin was also involved in media, as co-producer of 1989's *Crimes of Hate* documentary on gay-bashing and as a long-time employee of *GayLife* newspaper. He started as a delivery person for the newspaper in the mid 1970s when it was owned by Grant Ford, and continued his employment there when Chuck Renslow purchased the paper around 1981. He did layout and paste-up for the paper, and eventually was a writer, entertainment editor, reviewer and business manager. He also worked for other Renslow businesses.

One of the large benefits he was associated with was the Circus Vargas Big Top that raised tens of thousands of dollars for AIDS groups in the 1980s and early 1990s. Chaffin produced the souvenir programs for Circus Vargas and other benefits, and at the circus he also starred as one of the Flying Rotundas on a dare and fundraising activity.

The Hall of Fame website reports that Chaffin

and his then-partner were profiled in a three-part 1977 *Chicago Sun-Times* feature on same-sex relationships, which included photo coverage of their ceremony at Chicago's Good Shepherd Parish Metropolitan Community Church. His friends stated: "We know that R.J. was a trendsetter of what we now enjoy as civil unions in Illinois. He was always a trailblazer," according to a statement on Chaffin's death.

"In 1983, he opened R.J.'s Video in the 400 block of North Clark Street when that neighborhood was still an anchor of the city's gay entertainment community," the Hall of Fame notes. "It became the city's first video store to offer a wide selection of general-interest gay and lesbian features, besides providing a comfortable venue in which to rent adult-oriented films. He briefly operated a second video store in Andersonville and then consolidated activities into a single, expanded location (in partnership with Chuck Cox) on North Halsted Street. As a businessman, he has sponsored Metropolitan Sports Association teams and the Righteously Outrageous Twirling Corps (ROTC). His honors include *Gay Chicago Magazine* citations for business achievement in 1986 and (with Gary Chichester) in 1988, one by *The Leather Journal's* 1992 Pantheon of Leather, and a Chicago House award.

"Other business ventures have been Gay Mart (1993-'95), with Cox and Shelly Rosenbaum, and *Holidaze* (1995-'97), with Steve Hyde. The latter store later changed to *Ragin' Rae Jean's*. Alone and with partners, Chaffin has raised thousands of dollars for Chicago House, Howard Brown Health Center, Horizons Community Services, Open Hand Chicago, and other charitable organizations."

Chaffin and Chichester formed *Back Door Promotions* in 1985. They did for-profit events but also many AIDS benefits. Chaffin also volunteered for NAMES Project/Chicago and national



RJ Chaffin at his 1997 induction into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame. At left is Clarence Wood, then head of the Commission on Human Relations, and at right is Mary Morten, then CHR LGBT Advisory Council director. Photo by Tracy Baim

NAMES Quilt displays, three national gay and lesbian marches in Washington, D.C., and many Pride Parades in Chicago. Chaffin also produced Chicago House's 1988 Labor of Love Weekend and played Santa Claus at all four of the group's Holiday Fares.

"R.J. gave me my first job writing for the gay press in 1976 for *GayLife* newspaper," said Richard Cooke. "He was a gentle kindly giant amongst men, both in girth and nature. It's hard to picture a gay Chicago without him."

"I'll always remember and honor that guy as the 'supreme community volunteer,' always offering a helping hand, service and commitment to the community," said Lori Cannon. "He was a special guy."

Chaffin also served on the boards of Strike

Against AIDS, the Chicago AIDS Benefit Committee and NAMA.

Chaffin will be missed by so many. He was the beloved son of John and the late Mary Chaffin of Marion, Ohio. Dearest brother of David (Margaret) of Shelby, Ohio; and Mary Kay (Ted) Lyons of Prospect, Ohio; life-long and best chosen brother of Gary Chichester. Beloved uncle, friend and colleague of many.

Services are being planned and will be announced in the future. In lieu of flowers donations may be made in his name to the Roger "R.J." Chaffin Memorial Fund at North Community Bank.

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Heartland Alliance gets grant to support LGBT refugees

BY KATE SOSIN

The federal government has awarded Heartland Alliance \$250,000 to create the country's first LGBT refugee resource center. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) announced June 15 that the Chicago-based organization will be charged with creating a national strategy for resettling LGBT asylum-seekers.

"The Obama administration has issued a clear mandate that comprehensive human rights include the elimination of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity," said ACF Acting Assistant Secretary David A. Hansell in a recent press release.

Dr. Sid Mohn, president of Heartland Alliance, called the news "historic," not just for Heartland but for LGBT people internationally.

"This marks the first time that the U.S. government has identified that there are LGBT refugees and that LGBT refugees need to be served in an inclusive, respectful and fair fashion, Mohn said. "So I think it's one of those markers in LGBT rights."

The one-year contract between Heartland and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), a division of ACF, charges Heartland with publishing a report on LGBT refugees in the U.S., creating a resource website, and drafting trainings for refugee services providers on LGBT issues.

Ultimately the project will result in two pilot



Dr. Sid Mohn.

resettlement projects for LGBT refugees. The locations will be determined once Heartland completes its research.

"The current resettlement network has limited understanding of the LGBT community," said Eskinder Negash, ORR director, in recent news release. "In addition, no information exists in the context of available resource materials specifically for LGBT refugees. The need for these services is critical to ensure their successful resettlement in the U.S."

Heartland had been instrumental in convincing the federal government to create an LGBT refugee resource center. The organization met with White House officials just after President Obama took office and made recommendations on policy priorities.

Negash praised Heartland for its refugee advocacy in the release and said the organization was a clear choice for creating the new center.

"Heartland Alliance has taken the lead in promoting education, awareness and resources in support to resettlement for LGBT refugees, and has developed a great deal of expertise in this area," said Negash. "Furthermore, their focus on treatment of survivors of torture has well positioned Heartland to develop materials and resources that will be adapted to the specific needs of the LGBT refugee population."

Heartland Alliance has been working with LGBT refugees for more than 15 years. The organization also produced the first national model for HIV-positive refugees and has been active on immigrant and refugee cases for 125 years.

The contract will require Heartland to hire at least two new staffers for the year.

It remains unclear just how many LGBT asylum-seekers will be affected by the new policy because statistics on LGBT refugees had not pre-

viously been recorded.

"We know that every year there are 300 minimally," Mohn said, adding that those numbers are based on information from lawyers who represent asylum-seekers. "That is really just the tip of the iceberg."

As of 1980, the United States grants asylum to people whose governments either endorse or ignore their persecution.

Mohn expects that asylum-seekers will come from parts of Africa, the Middle East, central and south Asia, as well as Latin America. Still, he said, refugees will likely hail from all over the world.

QponChicago.com launches for LGBTs, allies

CHICAGO — QponChicago.com is a new website focused on deals by and for the LGBT and allied community of the Chicago region. The project launches this month in marketing partnership with Windy City Times, Chicago's award-winning LGBT newspaper.

QponChicago.com will feature daily deals on a wide range of products and services, including restaurants, spas, travel, entertainment, health, beauty, pets, and much more.

Suzanne Arnold and Tracy Baim, the founders of QponChicago.com, have a long history of involvement in Chicago's LGBT community, including through media and sports programs. They both served as leaders of the Gay Games VII board in 2006. Arnold has been a leader in numerous sports leagues, and Baim is co-founder and publisher of Windy City Times.

"We wanted to create a one-stop place to find the best deals for the LGBT Chicago area, and that includes deals from great places all around the city and suburbs, in addition to special travel-related deals in other cities," said Arnold.

"There is probably no continent that doesn't have a situation of danger for LGBT individuals," he said.

While much media attention has focused on hate violence against LGBT Puerto Ricans recently, Mohn said they will not be eligible for asylum. Because Puerto Rico is part of the country, U.S. protections for LGBT people should apply there. In order for LGBT Puerto Ricans to be relocated to another country, they would have to argue that the United States is turning a blind eye to their persecution.

QponChicago.com uses the innovative "QR Code" technology for each coupon, and it allows those purchasing coupons to receive the unique QR code for their coupon purchase through an email alert. They can elect to have the QR code sent instantly to their phone, to save on carrying the printed coupon.

The website also allow businesses to sign up and monitor sales of their coupons, and post new deals. They can void coupons through a QR reader or through the website.

"Our goal is to make this a win-win for businesses and consumers," said Baim. "We want to drive traffic to LGBT and allied companies, and we want to help consumers by offering a range of LGBT-friendly choices. There is power in the 'gay dollar,' and this will complement a company's existing advertising plans with a no-risk coupon program."

The QponChicago.com website was developed by Lisa Hernandez and Martie Marro of LoveYourWebsite.com, a community-based business that works extensively with LGBT non-profits and small businesses.

For more information, see <http://www.qponchicago.com>.



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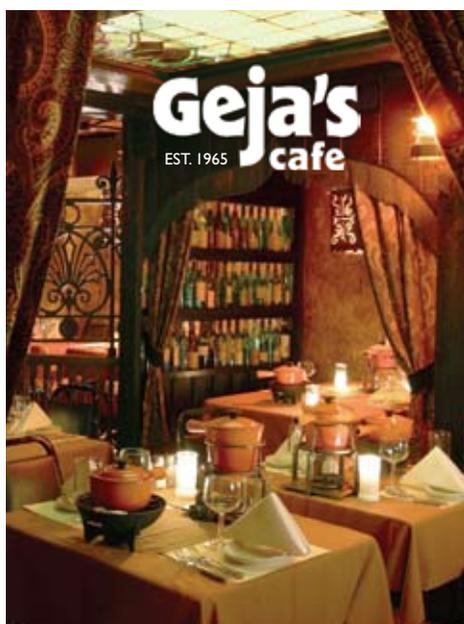
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QponChicago.com at Windy City Gay Idol, from left: Suzanne Arnold, Joanne Siebers and Leslie De Monte. Photo by Constance Ruholl



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Anita Alvarez holds Pride celebration

BY EMMANUEL GARCIA

Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez was in a festive mood June 14 as she celebrated her 2nd Annual Pride Celebration and Awards Ceremony at the Center on Halsted.

The awards ceremony honored LGBT trailblazers Circuit Court of Cook County Judge Patricia Logue and Chicago House CEO the Rev. Stan Sloan with the State's Attorney's Pride Awards. The Chicago Spirit Brigade kicked things off with a high-spirited routine. WGN reporter Dean Richards introduced Alvarez to a full house at the

Hoover-Leppen Theatre. During her presentation Alvarez said she had told her staff that she would not rent any floats for any other parade but the Pride Parade in June.

Logue described her tenure at Lambda as very fulfilling, as it has given the LGBT community the legal rights "to be out, to be safe in school, to serve our country, to be intimate without intrusion, to have secure parent child relationships, to keep jobs after testing positive, to be protected by civil rights laws and not have those laws repealed and much more," Logue co-founded Lambda Legal's Midwest Regional Office

in 1993 and has been a litigator in a number of cases that have set positive precedents for the LGBT community.

Sloan said he was humbled by sharing the award with Logue, who is his personal "hero," but also stressed the importance of employment opportunities for those living with HIV/AIDS. "Our [Chicago House] real emphasis is employment, employment, employment. Let's help create some flow to the system where people can graduate out of case management, where they can graduate out of our housing, and help create some slots for people who are newly diagnosed and most in need," said Sloan. He also publicly acknowledged longtime activist Vernita Gray, who was in the audience.

Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago President John Litchfield accepted and awarded Loyola student Padraig McCoid with the LGBT Pride Celebration Scholarship. McCoid will be doing an externship for the state's attorney's office in the fall.

The cocktail reception—which included a blue raspberry lemonade cocktail called the "Anita-Tini"—featured a live jazz band, cocktails and heavy appetizers. Alvarez's LGBT advisory council organized the entire event while Walgreens Co. sponsored it. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; more online at <http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com>



From left: Pat Logue, Anita Alvarez and the Rev. Stan Sloan. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com)

Renee Hanover memorial July 16

A memorial has been set for long-time Chicago lesbian activist and attorney Renee Hanover. The memorial will be Saturday, July 16, 1-3 p.m., at 1900 S. Prairie Avenue in Chicago near South Loop. Hanover, 84, died Jan. 5.

All are welcome to celebrate Hanover's life. Memories of Renee and her times will be shared by many. RSVP to her daughter Nancy: nhanover@mac.com if you plan to attend. Also, please let her know if you wish to speak for two to three minutes about Hanover during the event.

Hanover opened what is believed to be the first law office in the U.S. focused on women's issues and was also believed to be the first "out" lesbian attorney in the county.

Hanover was inducted into Chicago's Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 1991. Her tremendous contributions to Chicago's LGBT and mainstream communities includes work on dozens of nonprofits, defending gay men against police entrapment, fighting to desegregate beaches in Chicago, helping overturn

the Chicago anti-cross-dressing law, representing African-American lesbians protesting heavy carding at white lesbian bars, representing the Black Panthers, and much more. She was a colleague of legendary Chicago lesbian Pearl Hart.

Hanover was one of Chicago's most cherished lesbian activists. She worked inside and outside the system to save and change the lives of tens of thousands of people.

With her senior colleague, attorney Pearl M. Hart, she helped overturn the Chicago "zipper" law banning cross-dressing and worked on numerous cases of gay men arrested by police in public spaces.

Hanover, a powerful presence in any meeting, was a traditional anti-war leftie, always challenging the government. Starting in July 1961, she helped organize a "freedom wade-in" at the South Shore's Rainbow Beach to help desegregate Chicago's beaches. It took three years, but eventually she and her allies won.

See more details at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/ARTICLE.php?AID=30130>.



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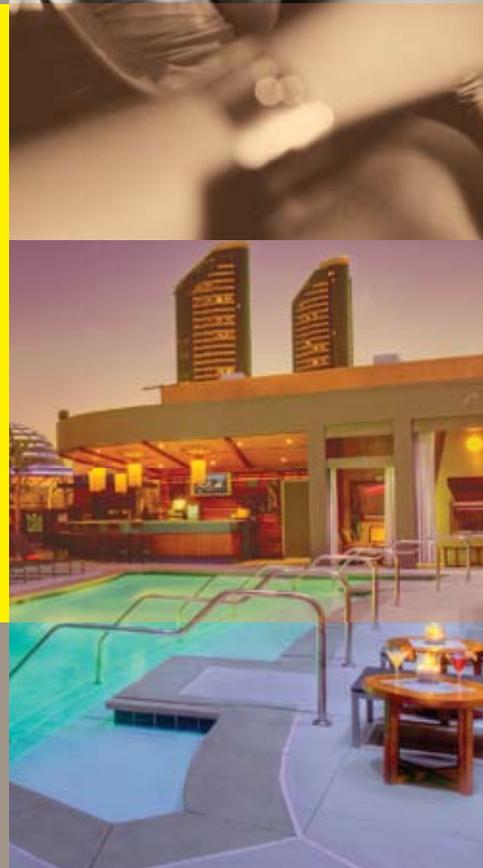
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Harris Bank hosts Pride breakfast

BY KATE SOSIN

Chicago-based Harris Bank hosted its fourth annual Pride breakfast June 17 at its downtown headquarters. More than 30 people attended the early-morning event, which featured presentations from LGBT bank leaders and gay Chicagoans.

The bank celebrated its perfect rating from the Human Rights Campaign, which ranks businesses based on workplace environments and protections for LGBT employees.

"I'm proud to say that all of our policies and benefits are inclusive," said Marjorie Paddock, the bank's director of diversity.

Harris has its own affinity group for LGBT employees, called "Lion's Pride," as well as a transgender policy.

According to Paddock, the bank has sponsored the work of Equality Illinois, Center on Halsted, Howard Brown Health Center and About Face Theatre. In June, Harris volunteers served meals

to elders at Center on Halsted.

Mona Noriega, Chicago's new commissioner on Human Relations, gave a keynote address during which she praised Mayor Emanuel for his LGBT advocacy and talked briefly about her new position as commissioner.

"I have to say, it's very gratifying to find people who value diversity," Noriega said of the city government. "[The mayor] values some of the same things that I value."

Kurt Dahl, who works for Harris, was presented with an "Employee of the Year" award for his efforts in making Harris a better workplace for LGBT people. According to presenters, Dahl won domestic-partner benefits for Harris employees and helped found the Lion's Pride affinity group.

Longtime community activist Angel Abcede was also honored for his work teaching high school students about HIV.

Lakeside Pride Music Ensembles performed at the event and then gave a talk on Chicago gay



Attendees at the Harris Bank event. Photo by Kate Sosin

history as well as the history of LGBT music ensembles.

All attendees received rainbow Harris pom-poms, which bank leaders said, they will carry this year in the Pride parade on June 26.

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Chicago House's art auction June 23 downtown

Chicago House's 25th-anniversary Pride weekend begins this year with an annual art auction and cocktail party to benefit families affected by AIDS, at Room & Board, 55 E. Ohio, Thursday, June 23, 6-9 p.m. Local Chicago artists, designers and architects will participate in this unique event, an annual tradition for art enthusiasts and Chicago House supporters.

Among the items up for auction will be contemporary art, including one-of-a-kind birdhouses, and retail gift baskets from The Shops at North Bridge. Bidders can get a sneak peek this year, with artwork on display in the Room & Board showroom starting June 18.

Tickets are \$70 in advance and \$85 at the door, and include eats from J&L Catering, desserts from Sweet Miss Giving's Bakery and cocktails by Grey Goose. For information and tickets, call 773-248-5200, ext. 303, or visit <http://www.chicagohouse.org>.



Birdhouse auction in 2010.
Photo by Steve Starr

Latino Commission on AIDS hosting June 23-25 training

The Latino Commission on AIDS (the Commission) will host "Tratamiento Ahora" ("Treatment Now") Training June 23-24 at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, 200 W. Jackson.

This free training will provide participants with the skills and tools needed to integrate HIV/AIDS treatment information, in Spanish, into their existing services. The target audience includes health educators; case managers; service providers; nurses; social workers; peer educators; and people living or affected by HIV/AIDS.

For more information, contact Christian F. Castro at 323-304-5161 or cfcastro@latinoaids.org.

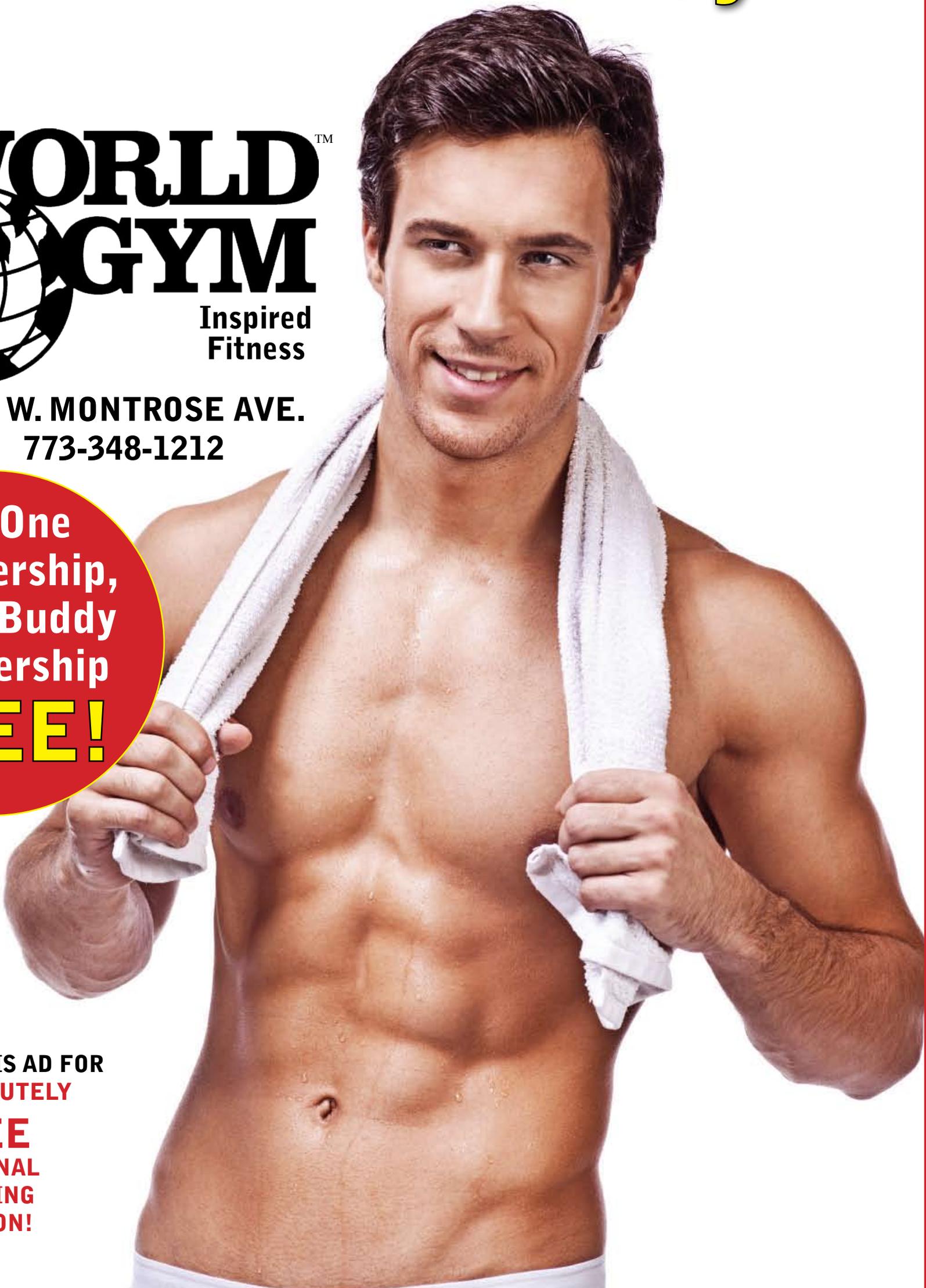
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Out attorney is Elgin college trustee

BY KATE SOSIN

John Dalton may have been unsuccessful in his attempt to become the first openly gay judge elected outside of Cook County last November, but the Kane County attorney made history May 2 when he was seated as a trustee of Elgin Community College (ECC). Dalton said that the achievement might make him the first openly gay elected official in his county.

Dalton prevailed in April elections as part of the "Three for ECC" slate, which also included veteran trustees Ellie MacKinney and John Duffy.

According to Dalton, he has "hit the ground running," preparing to help to settle contracts with faculty under threat of strike and even confronting anti-gay protesters on campus. While he acknowledges the significance of his election as a gay man, he also said, he has no plans for renovation.

"I didn't run to institute some profound

change," Dalton told Windy City Times. "I ran to keep [the school] going in the right direction."

Dalton does boast a strong record of LGBT advocacy. On June 17, he will receive the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Award for Community leadership from the Illinois State Bar Association for his fight for LGBT equality. Dalton has lobbied for civil unions and fought to get same-sex couples domestic partnerships before they were common. When he learned that gay students were being bullied a couple years ago, he lobbied local officials to let him write LGBT protections into District U-46 handbooks. He also helped win recognition of three Gay Straight Alliances in the District.

"Young people should have someone to look up to in their own community," Dalton said. "They shouldn't have to travel to a gay enclave like Chicago."

Of the climate for gay students at ECC, Dalton said that "the consensus is that it's not terrible but it could be better."



John Dalton.

He met members of the campus's LGBT organization—Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Students and Supporters—at a recent counter-protest to Heterosexuals Organized for a Moral Environment (HOME), an organization the Southern Poverty Law Center designated a hate group. Dalton walked up to the HOME activists and introduced

himself as the first openly-gay trustee of the college.

"I told them that I supported their right to be there but that I disagreed with everything they stood for," he said. Dalton said the HOME activists seemed "a little surprised" to meet him.

Dalton steps into the shoes of Dr. Phyllis Folarin, who retired from the ECC board after 12 years of service. Folarin served as both chair and vice-chair of the board at different points and represented ECC at state and national associations for college trustees. In taking her place, Dalton inherits half a million constituents across portions of five counties.

ECC is in the midst of significant change. On April 14, the board settled contract negotiations with faculty, just four days before they were set to go on strike. Construction at the school is underway on a new library and career center. Enrollment at ECC has jumped sharply in the past few years as well. Dalton said those issues put him on the job well before he was seated.

"I feel like I've been a trustee all year," he said.

While Dalton is quick to point out that Elgin has a significant gay population, his win may signal a growing acceptance towards LGBT residents in the community. Dalton thinks that when he and his husband, Rich Jacobs, moved to Elgin, some neighbors were uncomfortable at first. Things have changed since, he said.

Still, he added, he his candidacy was independent of his personal life.

"I ran as that guy who just happens to be gay," he said. "Your orientation is not a qualification for office."

Dyke March on South Shore June 25

The Annual Dyke March Chicago will take place in Chicago's South Shore community Saturday, June 25. Complying with a 2008 decision for the March to remain in the same neighborhood for two consecutive years, 2011 will be the second year for Dyke March in the South Shore.

Participants should gather at the parking lot at 7054 S. Jeffery at 2:30 p.m. Step-off will be at 3 p.m. The march will proceed North on Jeffery, and will continue into Jackson Park, ending at Grove 16 near Lake Shore Dr. and Hayes Dr. (63rd). A rally, with speakers and a variety of entertainment, is planned at the end point.

For more information or to volunteer, e-mail dykemarchchicago@gmail.com or visit <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=14233764762>.



Chicago Dyke March 2010. Photo by Mel Ferrand



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Gay man talks about heading StreetWise

BY ROSS FORMAN

StreetWise is not just a magazine sold by the homeless on the streets of Chicago. It's much more than that, and the daily focus of Jim LoBianco, 38, a Chicago native who was named the executive director for the social services agency Jan. 1.

"The biggest misconception about StreetWise is that it's some glorified form of panhandling, but that couldn't be further from the truth," said LoBianco, who was born and raised in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood and has been back living locally for about 10 years. "For those clients who participate in the vendor program, selling StreetWise is not an easy endeavor by any stretch of the imagination. It's a lot easier to shake a cup [and beg for donations]."

Still, the agency has about 200 clients, men and women, who make a concerted effort to budget their money, buy the magazine at its wholesale cost from the agency, and then go out onto the streets and attempt to re-sell it, LoBianco said. "There is nothing panhandling about that endeavor [of selling StreetWise]; they all want to hang on to the dignity of employment."

LoBianco, who graduated from Quigley North High School and previously worked for Mayor Richard M. Daley, joined the social service agency last summer as a contract consultant with an eye toward taking over the executive director position.

"Even for me, I think the biggest surprise was the depth of social service that StreetWise provides," LoBianco said. "Even I was fairly uninformed before I came on as a consultant. The agency has a lot of areas of focus, including its social service division, work-force development, housing stability and financial literacy."

About 80 percent of its clients are housed, and those who are homeless when they come to the agency for help, they find housing outside of the shelter system within six months. "The agency has a really impressive success rate of moving people on, out of crisis, onto long-term stability," he said.

StreetWise, about three years ago, went public with its financial crisis—and Bruce Crane stepped into the role of executive director with the expectation that he would help get the business orders of the agency in line and then, once things had stabilized and the agency was back on a solid fiscal ground, he would be replaced by a long-term executive director.

Crane recruited LoBianco to consider StreetWise and, by the end of 2010, the marriage seemed perfect.

"After about four months [as a consultant], everyone felt it was a good fit—and I was happy to accept the position," LoBianco said.

LoBianco is single, gay and back living in Rogers Park.

"As executive director of a non-profit organization, I'm basically the chief cook and bottle washer," he said, laughing. "My primary focus is on fund-raising and assuring a long-term stability of the agency. We're lucky ... Bruce and the new board [of directors] have really done a great job stabilizing the agency. StreetWise has no debt; it has cash in the bank, which is a fantastic position to be in for a non-profit. It's my job now to continue to grow the agency, both financially and programmatically."

His role also includes marketing and public relations, among other aspects. Such as beating the stigma associated with StreetWise.

"Although StreetWise has been around for 20



Jim LoBianco.

years, people [just] know it as the magazine and many people know it as nothing more than the magazine when, in truth, the magazine is just a program within the agency," he said. "So, telling the entire story of StreetWise, so people can truly appreciate the full width and breath of what the agency does, is important. It's also important to highlight the programmatic oversight of the services that we deliver."

LoBianco started doing social work in Chicago about 20 years ago. He's been working with the poor and homeless since high school—when he helped at the soup kitchens in the Uptown neighborhood.

So, is selling StreetWise a challenge? LoBianco responded that, without question, it is. Then again, he said almost all fundraising in this economic climate is challenging.

LoBianco noted that the agency's clients are now, due to the economic woes many are facing, boasting higher levels of education. Over 70 percent of the agency's population has a high school degree or a GED, and 20 percent have a college degree or some college experience.

StreetWise is their resource while in crisis.

LoBianco has a three-year vision for the agency, but said he easily could work there much longer.

He said his sexual orientation has not been an issue at the agency, and he noted that one of its clients recently confessed to LoBianco that he, too, is gay. LoBianco has been out since he was 17.

LoBianco was the deputy chief of staff to Daley, and was asked to serve as the city's point person/coordinator for all of the city's involvement/activities with the 2006 Gay Games in Chicago. He worked closely with the Chicago organizing committee and the Federation of Gay Games for such major decisions as canceling the marathon due to the heat and humidity.

He is training to run the 2011 Bank of America Chicago Marathon in October, yet has not decided if he will participate in, or even attend, the 2014 Games in Cleveland.

LoBianco left the mayor's office to become the deputy commissioner of homeless services for the city, a post he held three and a half years. He was asked about the controversial circumstances surrounding his departure (an alleged DUI); however, he declined to comment.

"One of the things that I'm still lucky enough able to do, thanks to my background with the city is, I stay heavily involved in different social service issues and social justice issues beyond StreetWise," said LoBianco, who sits on a Chicago task force for homeless youth.

Gay homeless man turns things around

BY TERRENCE CHAPPELL

As music blasts throughout the party and cocktails flow from person to person, his energy defies gravity. His personality decorates each conversation—making each guest feel special. At 6'2" with a confident look, he's hard to miss. However, his loud outbursts of random, often overtly sexual comments, compliments to strangers and cringingly honest nature are what attract attention. To say that Jahwaan Bingham is the life of the party would be a vast understatement.

People want Bingham at their parties because he's fun and people want to be around him for that very same reason. However, what people don't know is that after the last shot is taken, after the last song is played and after the last guest has left the party, Bingham did not have a home to go to. He was homeless, depressed, lightly spiraled into drugs and, according to him, was "knocked of his pedestal."

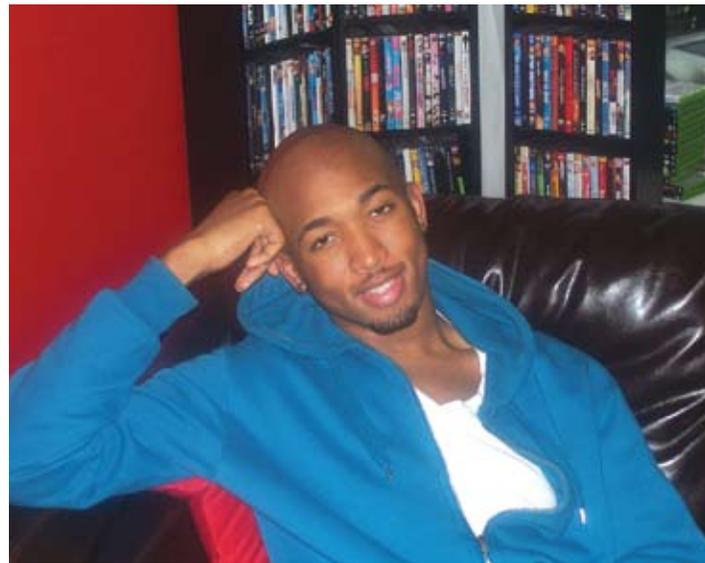
Bingham moved to Chicago from Battle Creek, Mich., at the age of 20 in hopes of liv-

ties. He threw parties of his own. He knew which bars to go to on which days. He knew the "right" gays. He knew where to shop and how to look. He created his own lifestyle of fabulous parties, good looking friends, a great job, and an apartment by the lake.

"The parties were great. It was fun. I got to experiment and learn things about myself. I kind of became a different person. Back then, I was known as this wild child party boy, very outgoing, always like to start a party. I slept around. I drank. I stayed out late. It was what it was," said Bingham.

Bingham's partying soon caught up with him. As he rose in popularity, his work ethic diminished. After several late arrivals, Bingham was forced to change departments at his job. Not even six months later, Bingham's new department moved its offices to California. Not in a position to move to California, Bingham tried to get his position back at his previous department but was denied based on his previous poor work ethic.

At the time, Bingham only had a high-school diploma—making it more difficult to find work. Bingham was able to collect unemployment but soon was not receiving checks. Unable to pay his rent, Bingham was evicted and bounced from one friend's couch to the next. He lost his job, his apartment by the lake, and what was once considered fabulous and fun became Bingham's enemy. Depressed



Jahwaan Bingham. Photo courtesy of Bingham

ing a new life outside of his usual suburban, lakeside home with his family. Growing up in a small town where there was only one gay bar made it difficult to explore and express his sexuality remembers Bingham.

"I wanted to actually live a gay life. I was bored and I wanted something bigger. So, my friend and I decided to move to Chicago," said Bingham.

With a job offer from Northwestern University and only one friend, Bingham moved into a high-rise in the city's Uptown neighborhood. In hopes of meeting other young gay men, the 20-year-old at the time attended an LGBT young men's social group event at a church in Wrigleyville. It was there that Bingham met Aaron Bowen-Shinder, a Chicago native and another young gay man. Bingham remembers observing Bowen-Shinder, his many interesting friends, all the parties he knew about, and just his overall exciting social life—a passport into the new gay life Bingham wanted to live.

"Aaron introduced me to the gay youth of Chicago—like house parties, going to events with him, and meeting other people. That's pretty much how it started. By the time I was 21, I had a pretty good network of people to go out with and just be me with," said Bingham.

Oddly enough, before moving to Chicago Bingham never heard of Boystown. Within a year, Bingham fully assimilated into Chicago's gay culture and community. He attended par-

and angry, Bingham engaged in unprotected sex, drugs, and continued partying.

"I didn't know much about myself back then. You lose yourself. You get sucked into this world of looking a certain way, acting a certain way, being a certain way. It became structured, almost mechanical. This is what you do when you go to a party. You go in, meet the host, you drink, you get drunk, you leave. In that time, you create this image where people think this is all what you are. People may like you, but they don't respect you enough to actually care about who you are," said Bingham.

Bingham's wake-up call was seeing other friends further spiral downward into heavy drugs, unprotected sex and overall poor life decisions. He remembers hearing a radio ad about educational opportunities at East-West University, and attended a seminar the next day. Currently, at 26, Bingham is pursuing a degree in radiology and works as a CNA at the Lakeview Nursing and Rehab Center. He soon saved enough money to rent a room in Buena Park but will never forget. Bingham is still the life of the party but is mindful to not make his life the party.

"You really do have to appreciate your own life first and understand what your purpose is. If you really care about yourself, you need to know how to always pick yourself up. I've learned to actually do things for myself and not wait for it to be given to me," said Bingham.

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Lesbian looks back at life of ministry

BY CONSTANCE RUHOLL

Before finding her calling, the Rev. Barbara Pescan, an out lesbian, followed her father from church to church looking for a choir to sing in. Her father was a fine tenor and when he found he needed a different theology, a different expression of beings and behavior, they ended up in a church in Akron, Ohio.

She found her interest in ministry through the kindness she and her family was shown during the time that her father was developing dementia. The Unitarian Universalist Church in Akron was very present for her family and very kind to them even though the central nervous system degeneration her father was going through made his behavior inappropriate at times. She was inspired because they never cut him or her family loose.

After his diagnosis and several months, she went to talk to her minister about doing some more leadership in the church. After a few months, he gave her the phone numbers of the three seminaries available at the time. Of the three, Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, Calif., spoke to her most clearly. She applied in 1977 and started school in September 1978.

Since she began in ministry she has learned many things about the church and about her own beliefs. Every church is different for her and every union church is different. In her Unitarian ministry there is no central office or central place that says this is how you ought to behave, this is what you ought to believe. They do not have a creed or a dogma. "Individuals and individual congregations are able to learn and

articulate what it is they believe," she says.

Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) churches have a congregational policy where congregations democratically decide what they believe. The congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association promote principles such as the inherent worth and dignity of every person. They value justice, equity and compassion in human relations as well as the acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth among other principles.

Pescan and her partner, Ann Tyndall, searched for work both singly and together as a co-ministry for over two years before Pescan was called for a half-time position in Oak Park, Ill., in 1984. As far as she knows, she was the first out lesbian called by a congregation in the UUA. According to Pescan, "That was a big deal; it has been a big deal for me. It wasn't that easy to get a church in the 80s even if you were Unitarian Universalist."

Presbyterians for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (PLGC) taught Pescan about creating a welcoming congregation. They taught her how to make it possible for gay people to feel welcome and to come to church. She worked on creating a welcome in the face of the fear and loathing of gay people. When she and her partner were looking for work they would be turned down and they and other gay people would be asked absurd questions like, 'What would we tell our people?' and 'Would we become a gay church?'

Pescan and Tyndall went to the UUA and helped create a program called Welcoming Congregation. The program helps people encounter their categorical thinking about gay people and lesbians. Beyond categorical thinking the pro-



Rev. Barbara Pescan. Photo courtesy of Pescan

gram started working on issues with women in the ministry and then extended to other groups including people with disability, and bisexual and transgender people. The program also addressed concerns regarding differences in race as well as economic and educational differences. They had to push the boundaries of what the church considers 'the inherent worth and dignity of every person'.

Pescan is proud of the work she has done in her years of service. She noted, "As we have taken our place in the pew and in the pulpit, people have begun to understand that they (LGBT individuals and many others that her work has targeted) will take positions on the board and do the work of the church and they will help us fulfill our mission. They will come and become part of the church, they will love the church and our faith and they will try to live it to the best

of their abilities."

Pescan is happily retiring after 27 years of faithful service to her position as minister and teacher. In addition, she is a published author. One work, published by Skinner House Books, is a meditation manual called Morning Watch; there is also a book of sermons published by the church called This Fierce Tenderness.

She is retiring to La Crosse, Wis., to be with Tyndall, her partner of 32 years. She is unsure of her plans at the moment but knows they could include more writing or interim ministry.

Pescan concluded by saying, "Our presence as individuals, as people has meant that people can no longer see gay and lesbian, bisexual and transgender people as a category. They see us in all our imperfect humanity and get to know us as individuals."

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Agency to take over Catholic Charities' foster services in Rockford

The Youth Service Bureau of Illinois Valley will take over foster-care services after Rockford's Catholic Charities branch said it would cease services after the state's civil-union law took effect June 1, the Huffington Post reported.

According to its website, the bureau "is a community-based not-for-profit child welfare agency established in 1976." It will take more than 300 cases from Catholic Charities, and will bring in the Catholic Charities support staff.

Windy City Times previously reported that, with state funding of \$7.5 million, Rockford

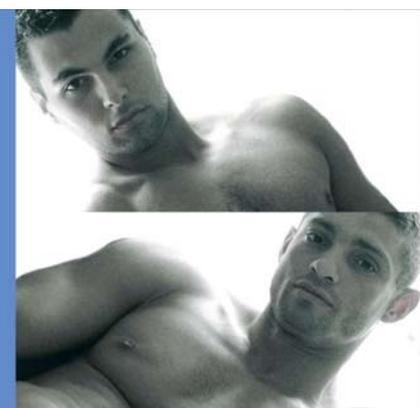
Catholic Charities handles about 350 adoption and foster-family cases in 11 counties in northern Illinois. Officials said that the agency would terminate 58 employees.

For months, the Catholic Conference of Illinois—the church's lobbying arm—sought an explicit exemption for religiously affiliated child-welfare agencies from providing adoption services to same-sex couples in civil unions.

According to Advocate.com, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services spokesman Kendall Marlowe said in a statement, "It is the intention of Youth Services Bureau, working in cooperation with DCFS and Catholic Charities, Diocese of Rockford, to hire existing caseworkers to maintain those relationships with foster children and foster families, helping make this transition as seamless as possible. Services to children and families will continue with minimal disruption."

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LGBT activists talk Edgewater gay history

BY KATE SOSIN

According to longtime gay activist Rick Garcia, nearly every piece of pro-LGBT legislation to be passed in Illinois has the fingerprints of an Edgewater resident on it. Of course, many of those fingerprints are Garcia's himself, who lives in Edgewater.

Panelists at a June 18 Edgewater Historical Society meeting all agreed; LGBT life in the neighborhood has long been exceptional.

"You've got a bunch of people who are committed to the [political] process," said Kit Duffy, who served as the first LGBT community liaison under Mayor Harold Washington. "It's different than other parts of the city." She went on to say that LGBT residents never took no for an answer.

Panelists said that many gay people moved to Edgewater because of low rent and because a host of empty storefronts meant ample opportunities for gay bars and businesses. The neighborhood quickly became a hotbed of political activism, led by its LGBT community.

According to the panelists, Edgewater LGBT activists not only produced and battled for life-changing LGBT legislation there. In many cases, they enlisted their communities in the fight for equality all over the city.

It was then-48th Ward Ald. Kathy Osterman who Garcia sought out when the famous "Gang of Four" needed help passing the Chicago Human Rights Ordinance. (The "Gang of Four" was the nickname the Chicago Tribune gave to the four activists who won the ordinance's passage in city council.) Garcia shrugged when Osterman asked him how many "yes" votes he thought they would have. He didn't know.

"She said, 'if you can't count, you better get out of the political business,'" Garcia said, laughing.

Osterman taught the team to count votes and jumped into the fight for the ordinance, which outlawed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Years later, the City inducted Osterman into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame for her role in getting the ordinance passed.

However, it wasn't just Osterman who turned the tides for the ordinance. Opposition to it



Rick Garcia makes a point as state Rep. Kelly Cassidy listens. Photo by Kate Sosin

went far beyond politics.

Most aldermen who opposed the ordinance did so for religious reasons, said Laurie Dittman, who was one of the "Gang of Four" with Garcia, Art Johnston and the late Jon-Henri Damski.

The team found unlikely allies in two Edgewater nuns who followed Garcia from Epworth United Methodist Church to City Hall to lecture unsupportive aldermen, starting with 14th Ward Ald. Ed Burke.

"We had to get 26 votes and take care of the Catholic problem," Garcia said. "Nuns from Edgewater helped to take care of the Catholic problem."

To put pressure on aldermen who were facing election, LGBT activists started to register gay and lesbian voters. Norm Sloan, an Edgewater resident, registered most of them on an ironing board under the El tracks. The volunteer registrar produced 10,000 new gay voters, and the ordinance passed in 1988 under Mayor Eugene Sawyer.

Part of what set Edgewater apart, said state

Rep. Greg Harris, is that the community has historically been led by women.

"This ward developed a matriarchy in its political establishment," he said. "The majority of support that we had were always women."

State Rep. Kelly Cassidy said that it was the women's-rights movement that produced strong female leaders in the 48th Ward because women

Greg Hinz, political editor of Crain's Chicago Business, moderated the panel.

The Edgewater Historical Society hosted the panel as part of their summer exhibit on LGBT history, "Edgewater Pride: Oppression to Expression, A Celebration and Chronicle of the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender Communities." The exhibit runs through Sept. 25 at the Edgewater Historical Society, 5358 N. Ashland. More information is available at <http://www.EdgewaterHistory.org>.

Teachers' union, Temple Shalom to debut in Pride Parade

Out of 240 entries, the Chicago Teachers Union's (CTU) inaugural float will premiere near the very start of the Pride Parade at number 16.

Hailing under the banner "Teaching Pride Around the World," the CTU's GLBT Rights Committee invites all supporters to march with them in this historic event. Participants in the CTU float and marching contingent will receive a free CTU rainbow T-shirt to commemorate their participation.

Dennis Bales, GLBT Rights Committee Chair, said, "We are thrilled that not only will the CTU have a float after too long of an absence, but that teachers in Chicago can march proudly as we finally come out from the horrible past where we were forced to hide, ultimately harming ourselves and our students."

For more information about CTU, contact Bales at dennisbales@hotmail.com or Erik Kutz at 312-329-6291 or erikkutz@ctulo-cal1.com.

Also, because of a grant from the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ), Temple Shalom of Chicago, 3480 N. Lake Shore, will have the unprecedented opportunity to participate in the Pride Parade with its very own float.

The URJ grant is one of only 20 given to congregations across the country to be used for the development of community outreach. According to a press release, its staff—including senior Rabbi Aaron M. Petuchowski, Rabbi Shoshannah Conover, Rabbi David Sandmel and Cantor Aviva Katzman—"proudly officiate and endorse same-sex Jewish weddings."

faced their own battles for reproductive justice at the time.

Garcia said that until recently, straight men tended to be less comfortable with homosexuality and were therefore less supportive politically. Edgewater's female aldermen were on step ahead of others on the city council.

Greg Harris pointed out that while progress has been made, the fight is far from over, especially for young LGBT people.

"We all talk about how great and how liberated we are," said Harris. But, he said, 21,000 youth remain homeless in Illinois, "most because of their sexual orientation."

Duffy, who served as the city's first LGBT liaison under Mayor Harold Washington, said that the battles once waged by LGBT activists are changing. When asked how elders would keep pace with LGBT youth movements, Duffy said it's up to youth to lead and elders to support.

"I think we have edged past the era of identity politics," Duffy said. "There's going to have to be this broad realignment."

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Bisexual woman starts network, will meet Obama



"I Am Visible" banner. Image courtesy of Adrienne Williams

BY ERICA DEMAREST

When Adrienne Williams lost her job a few years ago, she fell into a funk. The former information technology specialist decided she needed a project, something that would lift her mood.

"Reflecting on my life," she said, "basically at the heart of the economic crunch, I just felt like, 'OK, what's going to get me to be happy? What do I want to do?' I was tired of the freelance thing... I just felt like I wanted to do something that was meaningful for me."

An out bisexual woman, Williams had long felt there was a dearth of bisexual content in the media, so she decided to fix that. Using skills she honed managing other people's websites, Williams created the Bi Social Network. Originally intended to be an online magazine, the network quickly morphed into a thriving social media hub, drawing fans from around the globe.

With more than 1,500 registered members and an additional 12,000-18,000 readers per month, the Bi Social Network is the largest and most comprehensive online community for bisexuals.

The site features blogs, online forums, a radio show, videos, photos, news and editorials. It focuses its attention on relevant entertainment items, such as the shows True Blood and Grey's Anatomy, which feature bisexual characters.

Much to Williams' surprise, bisexuals aren't the only ones who have noticed her. She's been invited to attend President Obama's third annual LGBT Pride Month reception at the White House, scheduled for June 29.

"I didn't think by any means I would be a part of it," she said. "I'm so new. I've been a part of the LGBT community for years, but the site is only about two-and-a-half years old... There are other people who've been doing it a longer time than me."

The White House press department confirmed the reception's date, but was unable to release further details by press deadline. Williams received a paper invitation in the mail. With gold leaf writing and an embossed seal, it reminded her of a formal wedding invitation ("It has really nice penmanship, I will say that.").

This will mark the lifelong Chicagoan's first trip to Washington D.C. Although she is excited, Williams is not letting the impending trip distract her from the Bi Social Network. She regularly hosts "Bi Talk" Radio and manages the site's "I am Visible" campaign, a yearlong project designed to give bisexuals a platform for expression.

"In every community, whether it's gay, lesbian or straight, there are some kind of self-doubt or identity issues," Williams said. For bisexuals, it's often hard to find understanding. "People say, 'When are you going to go this way? When are you going to go gay? When are you going to change over?'"

Through personal videos, blog posts and essays, bisexuals from around the world talk about what it is to be bisexual in the "I am Visible" campaign. Williams hopes the site will educate non-bisexuals and feel liberating for bisexuals: "I want them to say, 'I'm bisexual, and that's it.'"

Anti-drug rally takes place in Loop

BY TERENCE CHAPPELL

HIV/AIDS-focused institutions, community organizations and faith-based groups hosted a rally June 16 to end the war on drugs—a policy some believe targets and disproportionately affects minorities.

Crowds of volunteers, activists and other supporters all gathered at Loop's Thompson Place Plaza outside for the rally, which featured special guest speakers. According to the Illinois Disproportionate Justice Impact Study Commission, there are racial disparities in sentencing. The study found that statewide, among defendants with a Class 4 possession (low-level) charge, African Americans were sentenced to prison at a rate almost five times greater than whites—19 percent of African-American defendants compared with 4 percent of white defendants.

Speakers wanted a new, more humane approach to the war on drugs that would offer treatment to drug addicts (instead of incarceration), prevention funding and education. Guest speaker and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle noted that the war on drugs has failed to end drug use and has instead "devastated lives, families, and communities." With the alarming incarceration rates of minorities in regards to drug use, Preckwinkle said that immediate action has to be taken on those the policy affects the most.

"For too long, we have seen drug use as a criminal justice issue rather a public health

issue, which is what it is," said Preckwinkle. "African Americans of Cook County are eight times more likely to go to prison for low-level drug offenses than those of other groups. My priority is to reduce the prison population and address this problem directly. Rather than continue this cycle of arrest, detention, and imprisonment, we must shift our focus to prevention and intervention."

Volunteer and activist Br. Michael C. Oboza was at the rally passing out information to people. As a member of the LGBT community, Oboza feels that the war on drugs policy is especially important for the LGBT community.

"A lot of LGBT people see drug use as self medicating but it really just poisons the community. For some, partying involves alcohol and drug use and can soon become their identity" said Oboza.

Special guest speakers included Father Pflieger of St. Sabina; Rev. Al Sharp of Protestants for the Common Good; Rev. Patricia Watkins, County board president Toni Preckwinkle, Pam Rodriguez of TASC Inc.; Tio Hardiman of CeaseFire; Mike Rodriguez of Enlace; Rev. Hatch of New Mount Pilgrim Church; Rev. Morris of Community Renewal Society; Rev. Doris Green of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago; and Ed Shurna of Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. The rally was hosted by a number of organizations and institutions including New Day Network, Roosevelt University's Illinois Consortium on Drug Policy and the Mansfield Institute for Social Justice and Transformation, John Howard Association, Protestants for the Common Good, Enlace, TASC Inc., Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, CeaseFire, the Chicago Justice Project, and Community Renewal Society.



Crowd at the anti-drug rally. Photo by Terrence Chappell

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Gay Chicagoan on coming out, marriage and losing 200+ pounds

BY ROSS FORMAN

Darryn Dunbar has had quite a journey over the past 10 years, so spending a “pretty chill” Father’s Day with his daughters, Molly and Lilly, was just fine with the Lake View resident.

Dunbar, 42, was married to a woman for 19 years before coming out in December 2003. He’s now single, divorced and an Instructor of Nursing at Truman College (City Colleges of Chicago). He also works part-time as a nurse clinician for Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center and is one of the rare male certified nurse midwives in the United States, at North Shore University Hospital in Evanston. Dunbar is one of only three male midwives in the state of Illinois.

Dunbar, who is from Peoria, received his undergraduate degree from Illinois Wesleyan University and his graduate degree in nursing from the University of Illinois-Chicago.

Currently, also been involved in marathon running and the annual Ride For AIDS—a two-day, 200-mile bicycle ride in July.

Also, he’s lost about 225 pounds.

“It’s been a challenge, to say the least,” going from a married dad/father of two to a single, gay man with two kids, Dunbar said. “While I have



Darryn Dunbar. Photo from Dunbar

some friends who are gay dads, the numbers are few. Our collective lives with our kids and our family situations are very busy, thus making it hard to be close and support one another, though we do it from afar.

“Many, if not most of my friends, know my kids. Some are integral parts of my kids’ lives. However, there are a handful [whom] I have encountered who ‘don’t get it’ or are less understanding when I cannot do things because I am doing things with my kids on my weekends with them, or if they have school events that I am attending. By and large, I have a large circle of loving and supportive friends who adore my kids. But I still feel like I’m in a weird space at times as a single, gay, divorced man with kids, but that’s me.”

Dunbar’s children are Molly, 13, in seventh grade; and Lilly, 8, a second-grader. He came out to Molly when she was 8, and she’s endured only one negative experience—at school—when some classmates heard her dad was gay. Lilly has known dad is gay practically her entire life and not experienced any negative responses.

“For me, Father’s Day was a time to reflect and reminisce on what fatherhood has been for me,” said Dunbar shortly before the holiday.

“There are times when it feels like my kids are still young, however, it’s hard to believe that I have a daughter who will go to high school

in another year. They grow [up] fast. I like to think back and remember other Father’s Days, from when the kids were really young. Since I always have the kids on Father’s Day, it’s also an opportunity to have what I call a, ‘homerun moment.’ One of those [times to] do something we’re going to remember for a while. Such as, a trip to the beach, a museum visit, a theatre production, a special meal out ... something out of the ordinary to celebrate the day with my girls.”

Father’s Day always was emotional for Dunbar, especially the goodbye, when Molly and Lilly leave Dunbar’s watchful eye and witty personality.

“I have always been a very proud father ... and Father’s Day is a great time and way for me to express that pride.”

He’s also now proud to be gay, although that wasn’t always the case.

Coming out was “scary and lonely” at the start, he said. Only his therapist knew the first few months until Dunbar found a support group for gay and bisexual married men, M-Group Chicago in Oak Park. “It was there I learned that I was NOT the only person struggling with being gay in a straight marriage,” he said.

Dunbar admits he always knew he was attracted to men, even before getting married, “though I did not always correlate that with being gay.” Dunbar wanted a wife, children and the seemingly-normal married life—if only because he didn’t have that while growing up, he said.

“I had a rough childhood on several angles,” he said. “To me, getting married meant I could create my life in a way that I wanted it to be rather than living it because of other’s choices and decisions.”

“The beginning of my significant weight-loss journey and beginning to lose what I found to be one of my protective mechanisms for admitting my homosexuality was what helped me make the connection that being attracted to men did in fact make me gay. I stayed morbidly obese to keep men from making advances to me so I wouldn’t have to deal with that. Looking back, that didn’t matter, I was still prospected on a few occasions, though [I] did not partake. In fact, it freaked me out each time. After all, I was a married man.”

Dunbar said his anchor since coming out was the friends he’s made and friendships he’s developed, particularly in the gay community.

“If it weren’t for them, sometimes I really wonder how I would have made it through certain times,” he said. “If there is one thing I am blessed with in this world, it is a wide circle of friends. I’m no wallflower and tend to make acquaintances and friends pretty easily. That personality characteristic has really benefitted in the rough times. There are so many people who I am thankful for; I hope they know how thankful I truly am for being there for me and my kids.”

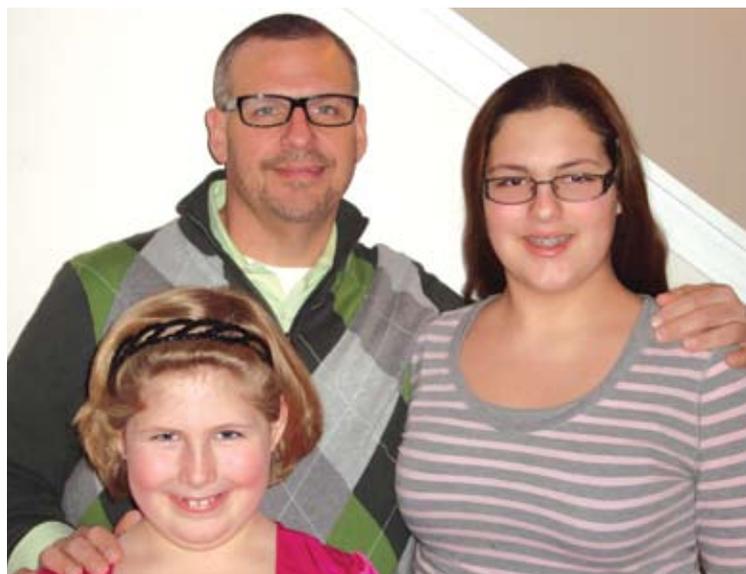
Dunbar was happily married—or so it appeared. He had the wife, kids, house in the suburbs, two dogs, minivan, good job and a six-figure income. However, deep down Dunbar said he was “completely miserable with myself.”

It was mainly because he had not come to grips with being gay.

“By 2003, I had ballooned to nearly 500 pounds,” Dunbar said. “Much like others who struggle with being overweight and weight loss, my weight gain and loss chart looked much like an unhealthy financial graph more than anything else.”

Then, in July, 2003, Dunbar had gastric-bypass surgery after weighing 484 pounds on the day of the surgery.

“It has been a successful tool in helping me



Darryn Dunbar and his family. Photo courtesy of Dunbar

manage my morbid obesity,” Dunbar said. “I’m still a husky guy, but [weighing about] 250 is a much healthier place for me to be than where I was Before the surgery, I was diabetic, hypertensive, with high cholesterol and on my way to an early grave if I didn’t do something vastly different.”

Dunbar got down to 286 pounds and stabilized at about 300 pounds for a while. However, a cycling injury in 2008 affected his ability to exercise—and he tacked on 30 pounds by the summer of 2009.

Committed, Dunbar was determined not to gain any more weight.

He is now at his lightest weight ever.

He’s still shooting to drop more—perhaps hit 242 and, possibly, maybe even under 200.

“I’m just going to keep doing what I’m doing because it’s working and I’m bringing the weight down slowly and sensibly while building muscle at the same time,” said Dunbar, who works out regularly with Chicago-based personal trainer Michael Grimes.

Despite his weight, Dunbar has been active athletically. In 2004, for instance, he started running. That September, weighing 350 pounds and wearing a pair of size XXXL running shorts, he completed his first 5K race.

He joined the National AIDS Marathon training program in 2006 and completed his first full marathon that October, and then another two months later.

“I trained for the 2007 Chicago Marathon and ran as far as I was allowed (about 15 miles) until the marathon was stopped [due to] excessive heat,” said Dunbar, whose running resume also includes four half-marathons and one 15K race. “Collectively, I have run over 40 shorter-distance races since that first one in 2004. I’m not about speed; I focus on finishing.”

“My marathon times are all over six hours and my half-marathon times are just over three hours. The success for me is completing the race. I went on to coach in 2008 and 2009 for the National AIDS Marathon Training Program and while I certainly emphasized doing one’s best, my line was always, ‘Get the jewelry,’ as in, finish the race and get the medal.”

Dunbar also has been involved with the annual Ride For AIDS. Last year, he trained and fundraised for the event; however, he needed surgery 10 days before the Ride, so he was unable to participate. This year, he is participating as part of the Medical Crew, attending to injuries and providing first-aid to riders along the course.

“Life is a journey...and I’m certainly not there yet,” Dunbar said. “There are many things I am successful with in life, particularly professionally. However, I’m still figuring out what it means to be a gay man. I’m not skilled at dating and haven’t had a [long-term] relationship with a man yet. I would say I’m a happy guy, but if I could make some things different in my life, would I? Yes.”

“I feel I’m more settled and ready to check out the dating scene now. Everyone says, ‘Stop looking and you’ll find one.’ Well, I’m not hunting per se, but if it were to happen, I’m game.”

“I plan to pursue a doctorate in nursing to

advance my current knowledge as well as solidify my place in nursing academia. Personally, I’m not sure whether a man will be in my life or not. I would like that, but that remains to be seen. As I’ve said, I have many good friends that I enjoy great times with. I’ve only travelled domestically, so I would like to expand that to international levels. I also want to become scuba certified which will meld well with my travel aspirations.”

Then there’s the Dee Dee LaMore aspect of Dunbar—his drag persona. After dressing as Madea, Tyler Perry’s character, for Halloween back in 2007, Dunbar was told that he was all too comfortable in heels and a dress, and that he should give drag a try—which he did. “I did a casual competition in February 2008 and took first place,” Dunbar said. “I looked pretty good and had the help of [the person] who became my drag mother, September Frost. Cee Cee La Rouge was also a big help to me and my relatively short ‘drag career.’ I have done events and performed at Sidetrack, Roscoe’s, Hydrate, and The Velvet Rope. Ms. Dee Dee went into semi-retirement in the spring of 2010, however, she was recently resurrected for a charity event back in April. I have a lot of fun when I dress up—and that’s all it is for me; I’m not interested in gender reassignment and often feel like I can get away with things in drag that would never fly if I were just me. Not sure why that is, but that’s been my experience. I will also say this: drag is a lot of work. It is expensive and the gigs don’t pay well. One has to be in it because they really enjoy it, or they are so good they’re doing it really often to be paid really well. That budget definitely operated in the red for me.”

Dunbar is a regular at Caribou on Broadway, usually with computer nearby, and he certainly loves his cocktails at Sidetrack.

Before being able to openly admit that he was gay, Dunbar told his therapist: “I’m lonely, depressed, can’t sleep at night and am watching gay porn every night after my family goes to bed. What is that all about?”

The therapist responded, “What do YOU think that is all about?”

Two visits and a month later, Dunbar said the words he still remembers, “I think this all means I am not straight!”

As Dunbar often says, it is what it is.

“Do I regret being married? Absolutely not. Do I wonder what it would have been like to not get married, come out and be a gay man in my 20s and 30s instead of figuring things out at 35 and really coming out—as in, [ending] my marriage and becoming a single gay man at nearly 39? I sure do,” Dunbar said.

“That said, I cannot imagine my world without my daughters, so those ‘I wonders’ and ‘What if’s’ pass quickly,” he added. “I am never without my kids in some way ... I have a tattoo of a lily flower and my other daughter’s name on my right calf. The lily was done in my three favorite colors: orange, green and purple. I did [it] Pride weekend in 2006, knowing the time would come that my kids would not always ‘be with me’ as well as to celebrate the Pride in who I was as a gay man and father.”



Birkenheuer's art. Image courtesy of Birkenheuer

Doug Birkenheuer: Photographer uses 'hands-on' approach

BY ROSS FORMAN

Doug Birkenheuer certainly deserves a high-five for his hand-i-work.

Birkenheuer, 43, who lives in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood, is the owner of Birkenheuer Photography, based in a near-650-square-foot studio in Roscoe Village. His latest project is "Hands On ..." He's starting with "Chicago," which shows hands from people of different cultures coming together to spell the city's name.

"Hands On ... ChiCAGO" showcases Birkenheuer's creative photographic lighting, beauty, flexibility and the expressive nature of hands.

"I never really thought of myself as being a commercial photographer, a wedding photographer, anything like that," said Birkenheuer, who is gay and has been living in Chicago since



Doug Birkenheuer. Photo from Birkenheuer

1994. He is originally from Cincinnati and graduated from the Antonelli School of Photography in 1988.

"I really thought of myself as an art photographer, or someone who works with models since I enjoy fashion, that sort of thing.

"I was breaking all the [photography] rules that I learned in school [when I first started], and it appealed to people."

So he's stuck with his passion and his eagle eye behind the lens.

He's always had side jobs to supplement his income, such as his work now at Sidetrack, but his passion for photography has never waned. To that, he's had solo showings dating back to 1991 and group shows since 1989. And his public works have included the 2011 Champagne Wrapture Snowball, a benefit for Chicago House & Social Service Agency; and the traveling Faces of AIDS Exhibit in 2000, among others.

Birkenheuer's "Hands On ... ChiCAGO" also was featured on the CBS show *The Good Wife*.

He moved to Chicago in 1994 and worked out of his apartment for the first five years until moving into his current location in 1998.

His work now also includes fine-art photography, with a reputation for capturing the human form in exquisite expressions of emotion and movement. Plus, he does individual, couple and group portraits and headshots.

Birkenheuer hit the jackpot with his "Hands On ..." project, though it wasn't completely his brainchild. Rather, Todd Mack from Four Sided Custom Framing of Chicago suggested Birkenheuer develop something with the name Chicago and the use of hands to spell the city.

A year later, "Hands On ... ChiCAGO" was launched. It's now available for sale at Four Sided's locations in Lake View and Andersonville, and through the Chicago Architecture Foundation.

Birkenheuer is, naturally, expanding his "Hands On ..." concept to different cities, such as his native Cincinnati, and different themes. For instance, there are "Hands On ... pieces" with Chicago's neighborhoods. There also is a "Hands On ... ChiCAGO" T-shirt for sale.

"I really love the Hands On ... concept," Birkenheuer said.

For more information on Birkenheuer and the "Hands On ..." project, go to: <http://www.BirkenheuerPhotography.com>.

LGBT coalition presents policy priorities to mayor's council

The Chicago LGBT Citywide Coalition, a coalition made up of 30 LGBT organizations, attended a meeting of the Advisory Council on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues. Six representatives from various organizations within the coalition presented a document entitled "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Policy Priorities for Chicago," according to a press release.

The coalition formed during the 2011 mayoral race to begin vetting candidates around issues that affect the LGBT community. The issues of most importance to the LGBT community were identified as education, HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ youth homelessness, transgender rights and public safety.

"This document represents almost a years worth of work," said Julio Rodriguez, board president of The Association for Latino Men of Action. "We are asking for the council's en-

dorsement and partnership moving forward as it relates to ensuring the new administration is held accountable to campaign promises made by Mayor Emanuel. We are very excited to welcome the new mayor and look forward to meeting with the Administration in the coming months."

"This document is a living document that has changed many times and will most likely change as we move forward," said Anthony Martinez, executive director of The Civil Rights Agenda. "These priorities relate to city policy that affects every Chicagoan, items like education, public safety and youth homelessness. We are trying to ensure that there is dialogue about how the LGBT community relates to these policy areas, and that action is taken to ensure that city policies are inclusive of LGBT citizens."

Once the presentation was over, the council stated its intention to review the document and vote on how it will proceed at its next meeting, to be held in July. The coalition will continue to hold meetings with elected officials to present the document and has requested a meeting with the mayor and his administration.

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Forum explores Truvada's use in fighting HIV



From left: Rico, Keith Green and Dr. Robert Grant at the talk. Photo by Kate Sosin

BY KATE SOSIN

When Gladstone Institutes released evidence that Truvada, a one-a-day HIV pill, might prevent HIV in addition to treating it, the news sparked both excitement and skepticism.

The AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF), the largest HIV/AIDS medical provider in the country, came out against the use of Truvada for prevention, despite the fact that Gladstone's Inicia-tiva Profilaxis Preexposicion (iPrEx) trial showed the drugs to be more than 90-percent effective in preventing HIV in those who took it daily.

Experts on the study sat down with Feast of Fun podcasters Fausto Fernós and Marc Felion at Center on Halsted June 15 to talk about what the study means and if Truvada could signal the end of the pandemic. Present were Dr. Robert Grant of Gladstone Institute, Keith Green, director of federal affairs at AIDS Foundation of Chicago, and a youth who participated in a similar study Green conducted in Chicago.

"In our wildest dreams, we did not think [Truvada] would be more than 90-percent effective in those who took it," Grant told the audience.

The findings also astounded Green, who halted Project PrEPare, a similar Chicago study, because he didn't want to continue administering placebos when he knew Truvada worked.

While the effectiveness of Truvada in preventing HIV is clear, the practicality of it remains uncertain. For one, Truvada is meant to be taken daily, which could pose a challenge to many not accustomed to the routine or whose lives don't always allow for consistency, such as youth living on the street. Additionally, Truvada is not without side effects including nausea, although that tends to go away over prolonged use, said Grant.

One barrier in getting people to use Truvada is stigma, Grant said.

"These pills, in particular, have been the one thing that folks want to avoid," he said, adding that fear surrounding HIV/AIDS contributes to fear around taking Truvada for prevention. "It strikes people as a misuse [of the drug]."

The drug could cost as much as \$10,000 a year, an impossibly high price for people without insurance. In Illinois, the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) which provides antiretrovirals

to those who cannot afford them, is already cash-strapped. Truvada used for prevention could compete with Truvada treatments, creating a kind of Catch-22 for service providers who want to end the spread of HIV but also serve those who are positive already.

"We really have an ethical dilemma," Green said.

Still, many insurance companies are interested in Truvada for prevention because even with the cost of the drug, prevention is at least half the cost of treatment.

Rico, the youth who participated in Green's Chicago study on Truvada said that taking the drug made him "more considerate" of his body and protecting himself. He said that he had been hesitant to participate in the study but decided to sign up when he learned of the impact it could have on his community.

Grant and Green did acknowledge that iPrEx study had its shortcomings.

"I started to look at Dr. Grant's work, and those people didn't look like our people," Green said, adding that a low number of youth and African Americans had participated. Grant agreed and noted that their efforts would seek the expertise of Chicago service providers whose work included a diversity of clients. Still he added, the drug seemed to work equally well among people of every race.

As for AHF's critiques of using Truvada for prevention, neither Grant nor Green seemed to give them much weight.

"This is a large corporation, actually that has revenues above 300 million dollars a year, so well above my pay grade," said Grant, who went on to say that he was not certain about why AHF was working to discredit the trial results.

Truvada is awaiting FDA approval before it can be marketed for HIV prevention. Grant said that Gilead, the company that makes Truvada, will likely be hesitant to market the drug for prevention and that it will be up to AIDS service providers to make the leap in making Truvada more accessible.

For some, that leap can't come quickly enough.

"We either pay now or we pay forever," Grant said. "We have a chance now to stop this epidemic."

a
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Promoter
Otis Mack

TEXT BY TERENCE CHAPPELL
PHOTOS COURTESY OF MACK

Raising 14 kids hasn't stopped Otis Mack from living his jet-set lifestyle of hosting parties, traveling, being fabulous and, above all, giving back as a mentor and father figure.

Mack balances a duo career as a case aide at the Children Home and Aide Society and as the founder of Heavy Diva, a boutique events and promotions company. As a case aide, Otis works closely with children and placing them in understanding homes with proper foster parents. Affectionately known as "Dad" among his children and even parents, Mack treats and sees his work as more of a calling rather than a career. He has been so dedicated to his calling that, over the course of 14 years, Mack has taken in 14 children as a foster parent and has adopted four.

"I had a great mother, so I know how to be a great woman," joked Mack about raising three girls. Even through the emotional challenges and other barriers, Mack soldiers on for his children and merits his good upbringing as one of the reasons why he is adept at working with children and helping them to navigate through their development and obstacles.

"I'm a strong man. I had great parents and I know what these kids need —and knowing that it takes love, understanding and patience to deal with the challenges. I guess I have the gift of patience because it takes a lot of it," said Mack.

When Mack isn't cooking, mentoring or taking in one of his "children," he is running Heavy Diva and traipsing across town as Olamay Bancock—his drag queen alter ego. Also known as "Chicago's Heavy Diva," Mack started his promotions company 20 years ago in hopes of reaching the young LGBT community through fun and entertainment. Mack sees Heavy Diva as a fun and social contribution to the LGBT community.

"I believe I'm a trusted voice in the community. I'm that guy who kids listen to and can trust, and can confide in, and won't try to sleep with them," said Mack.

Since then, Heavy Diva has thrown pride events around the nation including Dallas, Texas; Detroit, Mich.; Miami, Fla.; and Memphis, Tenn. Mack also makes it a point to organize a free fundraiser/show twice a year to support an organization whose mission centers on HIV/AIDS outreach, prevention and care. Mack sees these shows as a creative approach to keeping LGBT youth aware on what's going on the HIV/AIDS research landscape.

Currently, inspired by his travels abroad, Mack has organized the 4th Annual Strip Down in Chitown Sunday, July 3, at The Den, 1610 W. Grand. For \$20, guests will enjoy a provocative event that will feature an open martini bar and exotic dancers from around the nation. "Come and get your life," teased Mack about his edgy event. Rather Mack is in the field working to place foster kids with supportive and loving guardians or in bar entertaining guests as Olamay Bancock for a benefit, he knows his life is about giving.

"If I can help someone along the way, then my living won't be in vain," said Mack.



the stats

Name
Otis Mack

Age
50

Neighborhood
Romeoville

Favorite restaurant
Half Shell on Diversey

Relationship status
Single on Fridays

Pets
Two dogs (Chihuahua and terrier)

Hometown
Chicago

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VIEWPOINTS

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TIMES

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"Windy City Media Group generated enormous interest among their readers in this year's LGBT Consumer Index Survey. Out of approximately 100 print and online media partners who participated in the survey, Windy City was the best performing regional media in the U.S. Only survey partners with a nationwide footprint were able to generate a greater number of responses." —David Marshall, Research Director, Community Marketing, Inc.

 Community Marketing, Inc.

TRACY
BAIMPride and
prejudice

I am a child of the Chicago Tribune newspaper—and I do mean that in a pretty literal way.

My mom and stepdad (Joy Darrow and Steve Pratt) met as reporters at the Tribune circa 1968, when I was 5 years old and already enamored with newspapers. By the time I was 10, I was a frequent guest of Steve's in the Tribune newsroom, and at the Chicago Defender, where my mom went to work in the early 1970s.

These were the years of pretty inadequate and arguably biased reporting on gay and lesbian issues. A time when the Tribune (and many other newspapers) ran the names of people arrested in gay bar raids, when police harassed and entrapped gay men, when anti-cross-dressing laws were still on the books in Illinois and when the Mafia owned most gay establishments.

When the newspapers did cover "homosexuals," it was usually as "sick" people (as diagnosed by many reputable medical societies at the time) or they were over-the-top entertainers good for a laugh. It wasn't much better for coverage of women's issues, and my mom was forced out of the Tribune in the late 1960s when she dared push to cover harder news, not just puff stories. Few women reporters at the paper made it through the 1960s and into the 1970s, such was the sexism rampant in the newsrooms. It was not any better for people of color. And no serious gay reporter dared be out of the closet.

Things started to change slowly during the 1970s and 1980s, but even then, there were gay letter-writing campaigns or protests outside the Tribune Tower when gays were stereotyped as child molesters, columnist Mike Royko was accused of anti-gay rhetoric, or when the paper was seen as ignoring an important segment of Chicago. There were also pickets at the Sun-Times and broadcast media. As AIDS took hold, including inside the Tribune, the coverage began to change to a more sympathetic, even if stereotypical, approach.

By the late 1980s, the Tribune and Sun-Times both assigned "beat reporters" to cover the gay community part-time. That created more depth in local coverage, but there has always been a limitation of space to cover any one community of Chicago with any significant, ongoing stories. Now, the amount of news and entertainment coming from the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) communities of Chicago is almost impossible to keep on top of, even for news outlets dedicated just to these communities.

To see such a leap forward in the 48 years of my lifetime is almost unimaginable. Other groups working on civil-rights causes have seen their battle take so long that multiple generations working for hundreds of years could not have imagined the end of their rainbow. The LGBT community is lucky: we have benefited greatly from those struggles, and we have actually seen a progress unequalled in its success over just five decades (give or take) of significant work.

This progress is absolutely a result of the work for women's rights and the African-American civil-rights movement. There is no doubt that the dots connect back to these struggles. However, the progress is also attributable to something more dark and tragic: AIDS. Because the AIDS crisis devastated a generation of mostly gay men in this country, it forced many people out of the closet and into the streets. There was no time for hiding. Even though many in fact did

hide, enough soldiers came out fighting to cause a seismic shift in our county, and in countries around the world.

These soldiers were aided and abetted by lesbians and allies, many who were caregivers as well as activists and leaders of emerging gay and AIDS agencies. Once those closet doors flung open in the late 1980s, there was no pushing us back in. AIDS activists were tutored by women's and civil-rights rights activists, and vice versa. There were national and local protests by ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and other groups. Hundreds of thousands of people were outraged, and that in turn impacted our politics, culture, art, business, and even our sports.

Now, we are 30 years into the AIDS epidemic, and 40+ years into the modern gay-rights movement. We have seen a tipping point on issues such as same-sex marriage that our Stonewall Riot picketers, and the gay Mattachine Society founders, could only faintly dream could come to reality in even 100 years.

Yet, there are still many battles to wage, and many hurdles to clear. We are recognized as serious contributors to society and as voters with clout, but we pay an unfair "gay tax" because of unequal access to certain benefits and rights. Some of us are still beaten because of perceived difference, the transgender among us are at most risk for a variety of problems (job discrimination, healthcare access, hate-crimes, etc.), and there are still many laws in the U.S. that make us second-class citizens, and even criminals.

As we mark LGBT "Pride" this week, we do have much to celebrate. But our incredible progress, despite the work of so many people who have risked so much, is still tenuous, and short of full equality.

Tracy Baim is publisher and executive editor of Windy City Times. She is the author of Obama and the Gays: A Political Marriage and Leatherman: The Legend of Chuck Renslow. Contact: editor@windycitymediagroup.com.

REV. IRENE
MONROEPride
celebrations?
Haven't we
assimilated?

As we all know, June is Pride Month for LGBTQ communities across the country—and parades abound.

Unlike the revolutionary decade of the 1960s during which the air bred dissent, we LGBTQ people appear to be residing in a sanguine time — rebels without a cause, a context or an agenda. Many of us would argue that we have moved from our once urgent state of, "Why we can't wait!" to our present lull state of, "Where do we go from here?"

With advances such as hate-crime laws, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" repealed, same-sex marriage legal in some states, anti-homophobic a national concern, we have come a long way since the first Pride marches four decades ago. Also, with the AIDS epidemic no longer ravaging our community as it once did—an epidemic that galvanized us to organize—and with the religious right becoming more of a political liability than an asset to political candidates these days, our backs appear to not be slammed as harshly up against a brick wall like they used to be.

Some in our community contest that we are in a holding pattern while other argue that we are

ready to assimilate into mainstream society.

Boston Pride's new Human Rights and Education Committee (HREC) broached this topic by presenting a forum to discuss the impact of assimilation on LGBTQ communities and cultures.

In its flyer HREC wrote "2010 was a year of progress for the LGBT Community...Of course there is more to accomplish before we can consider ourselves truly equal and some of the questions we want to delve into are: What happens when we achieve full equality?

How do our cultural norms and practices stand up against assimilation over time?

Do we even want to assimilate into mainstream culture? How much? And can we do so without losing our LGBT identity?

Who are we if we blend into the mainstream fabric?

Do we want to be just like everyone else?

Does quality eventually result in a cultural demise?"

With the LGBTQ community being the fastest disenfranchised group to touch the fringes of America's mainstream since the Stonewall Riots in 1969, many who oppose the LGBTQ community driving forth an assimilationist agenda are waving a cautionary finger saying to us "not too fast now."

The cautionary finger waving is because not everyone in the LGBTQ community are accepted.

While we all rev up each June for Pride so too do the fault lines of race and class in our larger and white LGBTQ community. In addition to Gay Pride events, there will be segments of our population attending separate Black, Asian and Latino Gay Pride events. Oddly enough, the racial divide that is always evident at Pride events across the country shows us something troubling and broken about ourselves as we strive to be a community and movement.

The increasing distance between our larger and white LGBTQ community and these LGBTQ

communities of color is shown by how, for an example, a health issue like HIV/AIDS—which was once a problem for the entire LGBTQ community—is now predominately affecting communities of color.

The themes and foci of Black, Asian, and Latino Pride events are different from the larger Pride events. Prides of communities of color focus on issues not solely pertaining to it LGBTQ community but rather on social, economic and health issues impacting their entire community.

Also, cultural acceptance were just one of a few things LGBTQ communities of color still do not experience from larger Pride events, highlighting social exclusion and invisibility.

For example, Sunday gospel brunches, Saturday night Poetry slams, Friday evening fashion shows, bid whist tournaments, house parties, the smell of soul food and Caribbean cuisine and the beautiful display of African art and clothing are just a few of the cultural markers that make Black Pride distinctly different from the dominant queer culture. And after decades of Pride events where many LGBTQ people of African descent tried to be included and wasn't, Black Gay Pride was born.

While Pride events are still fraught with divisions, they, nonetheless, bind us to a common struggle for LGBTQ equality.

Driving forth an assimilationist agenda would eradicate that our gift and our struggle are that we are a diverse community. Also, our diversity as a LGBTQ community should not be diluted, but rather our diversity should teach us more about its complexity, and by extension teach the larger society.

Our diversity not only affirms our uniqueness and LGBTQ people, but it also broadens America's understanding that a democratic society is a diverse one.

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*DHHS = Department of Health and Human Services †IAS-USA = International AIDS Society USA.
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Vito Russo: A true pioneering film activist

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

When discussing pivotal figures at the forefront of gay activism, gay history, and gay culture, there are few individuals that have had more of a lasting impact than that of the late writer and activist Vito Russo.

Certainly, there are few, if any individuals with such a profound impact on all three areas. Russo, who died from AIDS complications in 1990, has for decades been renowned as the author of the seminal book *The Celluloid Closet*, a landmark work in which Russo detailed the history of gays at the movies. First published in 1981 and then republished with new material by Russo in 1987, the book has never been out of print since its publication.

Following Russo's death, his close friend Lily Tomlin and other friends and colleagues made good on a promise to Vito to realize his dream of turning the book into a feature documentary. Filmmakers Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman (who also helmed *The Times of Harvey Milk*, *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt* in which Russo appears—both Oscar winners—and the recent biopic of gay poet Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*) completed the movie (with narration by Tomlin) which was released in 1995 to widespread critical acclaim and it remains the essential starting point for any film enthusiast wishing to discover the history of gays and cinema.

But as author Michael Schiavi's densely researched, moving and entertaining biography of Russo, the recently released *The Celluloid Activist* reveals, there was much more to this passionate gay man than a love for movies. A fiery activist, an outspoken proponent of gay rights, an eyewitness to the Stonewall riots, a close friend of Bette Midler and other gay icons, a groundbreaking gay journalist—Russo was all these things and more. Schiavi spoke with *Windy City Times* about the subject of his book (which includes more than 200 interviews) as part of our continuing AIDS at 30 series.

Windy City Times: When I became a film critic it was because I was inspired by the idea of writing from a queer perspective—and Vito's book and the movie *The Celluloid Closet* were responsible for that. The first thing I thought when I heard about your bio was, "It's about time."

Michael Schiavi: I absolutely agree and I've been hearing that from the beginning of interviews throughout this whole process. People have been saying, "Why isn't there a biography of this gay rights giant?" and I totally agree.

WCT: I think what's crucial for folks to know when examining our history about Russo is his impact in some many areas. The press release for the book really gets it right when it reads, "His life as a cultural Zelig intersects a crucial period of social change, and in some ways his story becomes the story of a developing gay revolution in America."

MS: He more or less defined gay white male urban persona of the '70s and '80s truly.

WCT: Can you talk about the impact of one person that was so integral to all these organizations and cultural beginnings that we take for granted?

MS: Where does one even begin? That Vito was a co-founder of GLAAD [the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation], that Vito was a co-founder of ACT UP, that he was involved in GAA [Gay Activists Alliance] from near the be-

ginning. That he took GAA, which was the first organization that was exclusively dedicated to fighting for gay rights (they were actually the Gay Liberation Front first but it was not exclusively dedicated to gay causes). That GAA was the first organization to take on city, state and federal laws discriminating against LGBT folks—just gays and lesbians at the time. That Vito got into that organization and was one of the first people to say, "It's wonderful that we're out there doing all this politicking but the way to get people involved is through entertainment."

Because Vito was obsessed with the movies from childhood on, he realized that audiences react to films in political ways if they're taught how to do that. GAA had been having dances up to that point and Vito said, "What if we started having film screenings where people could see not only gay themed films—there were not that many at the time, this was 1971, '72—but also mainstream films through a gay lens with an all-gay audiences—as well as cabaret nights where people could sing love songs onstage to people of their own sex and not feel afraid?" Well, people started feeling more comfortable in expressing themselves and feeling that they had

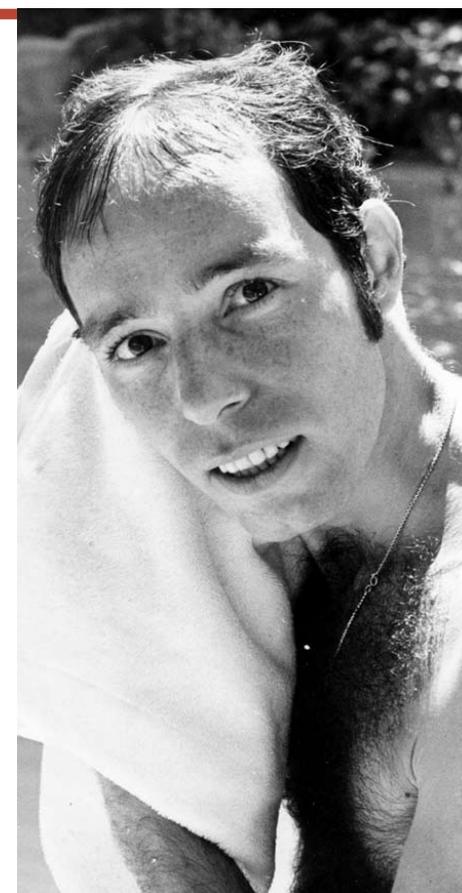
a stake in what was there on the screen and the stage.

All of that led Vito into doing the lectures for "The Celluloid Closet" which began in about 1973 which he started with a small 20-minute presentation for films like *Victim* and *The Children's Hour* and *Boys in the Band*—really just showing stereotypes—and this became quite popular and it was really the first time that gay people were looking at films politically and realizing that what was being put up on the screen about us had a lot about how we were being perceived in society. Within about three or four years, he had about an hour program and had begun touring it to various colleges and universities and then came the book of *The Celluloid Closet* which really invented the field of gay and lesbian media studies.

WCT: And along the way, there he was up in a tree the night of the Stonewall riots.

MS: That, too (laughs).

WCT: It's hard to imagine the culture that we live in now without the work of this one individual, which is stunning when you think about it. Well before his AIDS activism there are also his groundbreaking relationships—



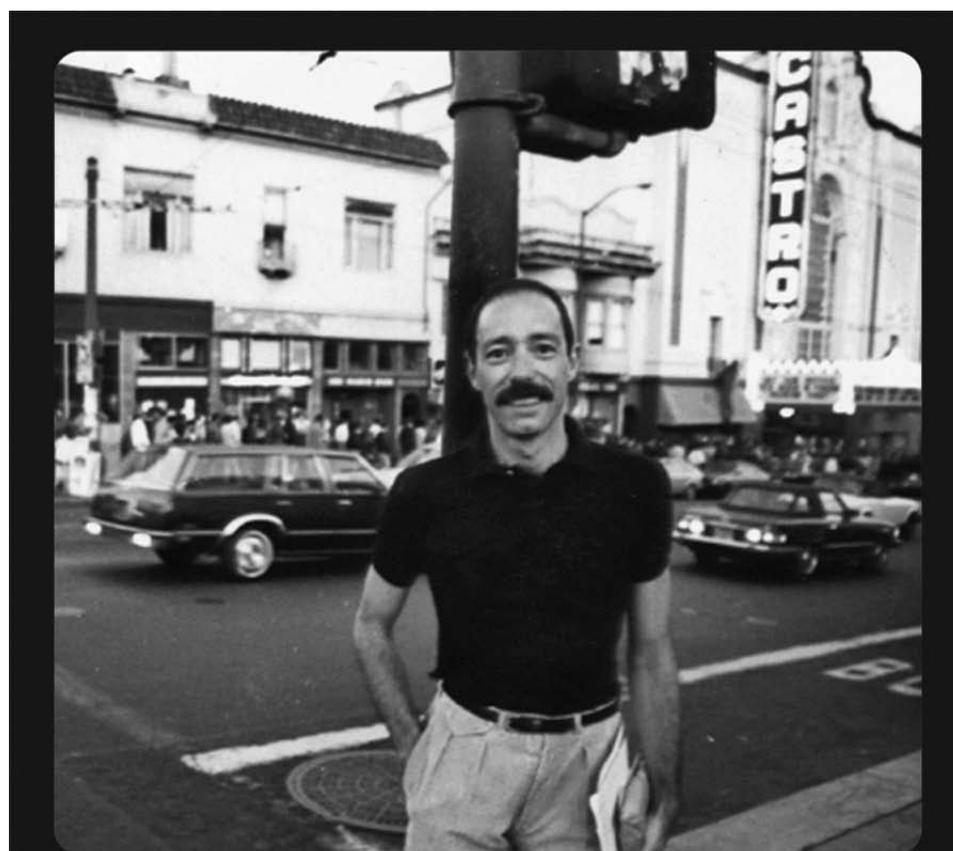
Vito Russo in 1975. From the new book about Russo.

he was one of the first to put in writing the love that gay men have for certain performers. I'm thinking of his close friendships with Bette Midler and Lily Tomlin.

MS: Lily was much more established when he met her than Bette was. Lily was becoming an enormous star through *Laugh-In* and he met her through a friend and they just became fast friends. They had the same kind of sardonic sense of humor and he fell in love with her blinding talent. She was certainly not out at the time; in fact she really was not out at all during his life. He didn't live to see her come out, which was a real tragedy—it would have meant so much to him to see that eventually she felt comfortable enough to be honest about it. But certainly, she was openly lesbian to him. Lily and Bette together allowed Vito to kind of help put *The Advocate* on the map in terms of celebrity profiles. The profile that he did of Bette in 1975 was the first time that *The Advocate* had a woman on its cover and that was eight years into its publication. It was also very, very rare for a major celebrity to do that kind of interview for the gay press.

WCT: So he was blazing trails again.

MS: Yes. And when he was doing interviews with Bette and Valerie Harper and Lily Tomlin



CELLULOID ACTIVIST THE LIFE AND TIMES OF VITO RUSSO

MICHAEL SCHIAVI



LEFT: The cover of the new Vito Russo biography. ABOVE: Author Michael Schiavi.



Russo and Bette Midler at New York's Gay Pride on Washington Square June 24, 1973. Courtesy of Arnie Kantrowitz



Vito Russo and Elizabeth Taylor at the Museum of Modern Art in New York on World AIDS Day, Dec. 1, 1989. Courtesy of Charles Russo



Russo and Lily Tomlin at the Human Rights Campaign New York gala Oct. 10, 1984. Courtesy of Charles Russo

and Sally Kellerman, and others and put them in the gay press it was an astonishing achievement at that time. Bette he met at the Continental Baths. I think he met her soon after she started there in 1970. He was entranced by her talent; loved the pop culture riffing that she did and became good friends with her. He would have her and Barry Manilow, who was doing her accompanying, down to his apartment on 24th Street to watch this rare Bessie Smith footage. I learned this from Vito's then-lover Steve Krautz. But his friendship with Bette was not as close as his friendship with Lily as the years went on. In later years, as I wrote about in the book, there were legal troubles because Vito was trying to screen the baths footage that he had taken without her permission and she got furious about that.

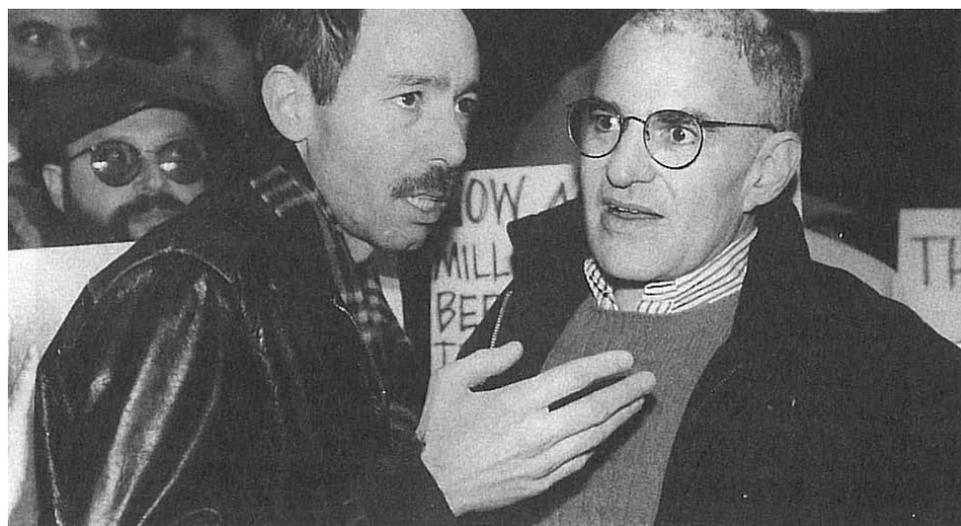
WCT: And rightly so (laughs). She had a point.

MS: She definitely had a point and their friendship suffered for many years although at the end of his life when she was in New York filming *Scenes from a Mall* with Paul Mazursky she found out that Vito was desperately ill and she called him and had him brought out to the studios where she was filming and they had a

politically?

MS: Anger was such an integral part of Vito's persona so I'm sure that he'd still be pissed off (laughs), but always there would be enormous warmth and humor, too. I think if he were alive today he would be furious that the pandemic has been allowed to explode as it did in Africa, for one, and Asia as well. I think he would be livid at younger gay men, particularly, who grew up having all the information and often just choose to ignore it. Like the crystal meth culture; the partiers, people who more or less consciously disregard safe sex because they think AIDS to be a manageable disease and they have access to medical care that literally didn't exist when Vito was sick.

I think he would be furious at people who have always had information that he and his contemporaries did not have when they were all getting very sick and then dying. The kind of activism that ACT UP did in the late '80s was born out of such absolute panic and urgency and that doesn't really happen in the gay community these days—thank God—so I don't quite know what he would see or how he would try and shape activism today because the culture itself is so different.



Russo and Larry Kramer at the first ACT UP demonstration, on Wall Street, March 24, 1987. Photo by Lee Snider/Photo Images

very sweet reunion. That was only three months before he died so it was lovely that they could end on that note.

WCT: That is lovely. Switching tracks, let's talk about Vito's AIDS activism. In the book you talk about how he and Larry Kramer paired up because they were both apparently unhappy with the infighting that was going on at GAA and started ACT UP. But gay activism doesn't seem to have quite the same impact now that it did then. If Vito had survived, where do you think he would be today

WCT: Would he have been onboard for the gay marriage fight?

MS: I think he would have been rather torn. On the one hand he would have been livid and out there screaming with everybody else because there are actually people who think that gays shouldn't have the right to get married because our relationships are not valid and that would have enraged him to hear the hypocritical bullshit that you constantly hear from the right about, "We're not prejudiced about gay people; we're not trying to discriminate against gays;

we're just trying to protect marriage" and Vito would have been at the forefront decrying the hypocrisy of that. On the illogic of a statement like that he would have been extremely articulate and wonderful. On the other hand, Vito was never someone who believed in committed relationships particularly. He had no use for monogamy throughout all his relationships. Certainly he was in love with several of his partners but they were young men at a very different time when the notion of marriage really didn't exist. It was absolutely utopic to think that gay men would ever have marriage rights and he really wasn't interested in that for himself personally, ever.

WCT: Let's get back to Vito's creative driving force—his passion for movies. You write about his obsession with presenting these movie nights and you write about the importance of gathering gay people together for this shared experience. This is something else that has fragmented since his death. In discerning the importance of that, he was also on the forefront.

MS: For me personally there's nothing like that emotional moment of sitting in a film with an audience around you that "gets it" and certainly, I know that had more resonance in Vito's time when gays and lesbians had never seen a movie except in a potentially mainstream situation. So you're watching something like *The Children's Hour* or *The Detective* or some early '60s horror show where gays and lesbians are treated in such an awful way and you're surrounded by straight people who are either laughing at the screen or pitying those poor creatures up there and you feel completely isolated because you know that you're being talked down to by the movie itself. To be able to sit in an audience that is all gay, if the film is in some way denigrating you, you know you're surrounded by allies and there's nothing like the safety of that and the feeling of community that it gives. If it's something more recent that celebrates your culture or even just treating fairly or realistically your community—the family feeling of "We're all sharing this moment together" takes over. But that is not what the world is like. Even though there's much more visibility for us, and even though younger people are accepting us more, that's still relatively rare. And to have that experience on a screen in a large audience setting is a kind of safety and celebration that we desperately need. Vito knew the importance of that.

WCT: Are there films today that Vito would have championed? Would he have felt validated by movies like *The Kids Are All Right* or *I Love You Phillip Morris*?

MS: Phillip Morris he would have hated because that plays to every stereotype that he would like to have seen gone out of date with *La Cage*. *The Kids Are All Right*, I think he would have en-

joyed. The portrayal of a complicated but honestly portrayed lesbian relationship where you have two women who are trying to work through their problems I think he would have been very intrigued by. It's all handled with great wit and he would have loved Annette Bening's performance—that was kind of old style, flamboyant performance that sort of harkened back to the lesbian stereotypes of *Caged* that he loved. It's a shame that he didn't live to see films like that. He would have found them very encouraging.

WCT: Was he a personal hero for you?

MS: Without a doubt. I came across *The Celluloid Closet* on a library shelf when I was 17 and closeted and very scared and here was a book that combined my two favorite things—gays and film—and that he was Italian like me. I can't tell you how really hypnotic that was for me to find the book for the first time and realize that there was someone out there who was gay, who was writing about the movies and who was writing about them through the vein that movies are treating gays and lesbians badly. Hollywood had really shat on us and to know that there was someone out there screaming about this and the fact that he was doing this through such humor; such great, campy, bitchy, smart, tremendous humor was just riveting. I had never met anyone like that and when I was coming out as a teenager I wanted to meet gay men like Vito and it's one of the tragedies of my life that I never got the chance to do that.

WCT: The book and the film are still the primer for subsequent generations. On a side note, I want to mention that the cartoon that's included in the book about Vito after his death was drawn by my late, good friend, another AIDS activist, Danny Sotomayor.

MS: Really?!

WCT: Yes—and his executor Lori Cannon is also a close friend of mine. She didn't know about the inclusion of the cartoon but was so touched to learn of it.

MS: Oh that's wonderful! Thank you for spreading the word that way.

WCT: Are you aware of this forthcoming documentary, *ACTIVIST: The Times of Vito Russo*?

MS: Yes, I'm in it actually. Jeffrey Schwarz, who did documentaries about Jack Wrangler and William Castle and is about to do one about Tab Hunter, is the director. He's been working on it almost as long as I've been working on the book. The film is now in post-production and the film has a distributor and it's very exciting. Lily Tomlin and Armistead Maupin and Larry Kramer and other big names are interviewed in the film—it's a huge roster of people and he's hoping that it will be out this fall.

See out about *The Celluloid Activist*: <http://uwpress.wisc.edu/books/4731.htm>

Ongina educates on HIV

BY JERRY NUNN

Female impersonator Ongina ran the race with us for the first season of RuPaul's Drag Race on the Logo channel. She schooled us with Drag U right after and came to town twice to shake a tail feather at Spin Nightclub. There is a serious side to the performer and in this exclusive interview Ongina sounds off about AIDS, drag and love. Here is his story behind the makeup of Ryan Palao.

Windy City Times: Hi, Ong. Did you watch the finale of RuPaul's Drag Race at a party?

Ongina: No, I have full-time job so I worked late. I came home, waited for my husband and watched the finale together. It was a quiet night.

WCT: What do you do?

O: I am a visual merchandiser for a specialty retail store. I have been with the company for five years.

WCT: How long have you been with your partner?

O: Just since August of last year.

WCT: What did you think about Raja winning?

O: I like that she won because she is a lot closer to my type of drag. She represents an illusion that a lot of people should embrace the same as people that wear big wigs in pageants. I think they did a pretty good job of casting different types of queens this season. It reminds me of Nina Flowers and I being so different. I have known Raja for a few years since I moved to Los Angeles. She was one of the first few performers that I saw in LA. I fell in love with her.

WCT: Would you ever grow your hair out?

O: The thing is that I can and I have. I have even Japanese straightened my hair so it has been wavy and cut in different lengths with a shaggy style. It is curly, it's dead and feels like a Brillo pad. It is hard to manage. I would rather shave it and not have to mess with it.

WCT: How many hats do you have in your house?

O: I have at least 10 containers with hats in the closet. They used to be in the kitchen cupboards because I wasn't using them. My fiancé moved into a bigger apartment now with a walk-in closet.

WCT: So you are getting married?

O: I am getting married! He "put a ring on it."

WCT: Do you have a date set?

O: We are planning for Sept. 10, 2011.

WCT: So coming up soon.

O: It is coming up. We have just a few more months to plan it. It is going to be a reception dinner with friends and exchanging of vows, appreciating the love I found with him. I am very happy.

WCT: Congratulations on that. You did an HIV + Me project on Logo correct?

O: I am currently hosting webisodes called HIV + Me. It is a project where I talk to HIV-positive individuals and they talk about their stories of getting the news, people living with it, coming out to their friends and family. Basically every single person has a different story. I think that is very important for people to see these kinds of stories so they don't feel alone, isolated or not knowing how to deal with such big news when they find out they are positive. It also teaches people to be aware of the disease that is still part of our lives. It teaches if you are positive to take the necessary steps to get better. If you are negative it can educate you that it can still happen to anyone, gay, lesbian,

straight, bi, woman, man, child, fat, thin, tall, short, and cross-eyed. Everyone can get it and it is very important to tell people that it's okay if you are and if you are not then protect yourself so you stay negative.

WCT: You were diagnosed back in 2006?

O: Yes, it was 2006 in April. When it happened I took the news very lightly. I was basically ready for the news because I knew something was wrong with me, especially after Googling my symptoms and having unprotected sex. I put the puzzle together and realized I was sick because it was a mistake of trusting someone telling me that they were negative while they were positive. I got a phone call from the clinic after being tested and they told me I had to go back. I knew that would be the information that I would receive. I had to do what I had to do to stay healthy and live a long life that I wished and plan to do. I went through a few months of depression after finding out ... I was sad, depressed and isolated myself from my friends and family. I had to take it as a sign or rebirth for me and keep moving forward. You can't regret what happened and have to move forward. That is what I had to do.

WCT: That is the message you conveyed on the video on Logotv.com.

O: The videos are very well put together and executed. I get emotional at times when interviewing these people because every single person is different in their experience. They share personal information like I am sharing with you. It gets more than a little emotional sometimes.

WCT: Do you have a website?

O: I need a new webmaster so if you know of someone that can donate their time let me know. It needs to be updated. I am an avid Twitterer, Facebooker, so I have a fan page if people want to follow me and see what I am doing.

WCT: Do you help with AIDS fundraisers?

O: I try not to bite off more than I can chew because it gets a little hectic with a full-time job. With the first season of Drag Race I won that challenge and I was able to give back with the MAC campaign to the Harvey Milk High School. I try to give back when I asked to do volunteer work as far as my time. I do get asked to show up as Ongina to host a party, etc. When I can I do. I can't say yes to everything or I would probably lose my mind. I mainly do the work in LA because it is so easy to get around.

WCT: You travel a lot touring so how do you feel regionally that the perception of AIDS is these days?

O: It's sad because as a person who is HIV-positive and come out on national TV about my status, I still see fear in places that I travel. People sometimes share personal information with me in secret because they are not ready to inform other people about their status. Sometimes their parents or friends don't know about them. I always tell them, "When you are ready you will know and you will be okay." It is up to them when to tell people but I think the fear is still there that someone will think differently about them. It is the same fear that I had. I did do it in front of a million people watching Drag Race on season one but I did it in the heat of the moment of winning such an amazing prize. This was really close to my heart and I was a living example of why I believe so much in the MAC AIDS fund.

WCT: So there is still a stigma that you have seen?

O: Yes, there is. It's okay that people are afraid but one day like me they won't be afraid any more. Before I met my husband, who is HIV-



The one and only Ongina comes to Chicago June 25 at Spin. Photos by Norman Dillon

negative and very understanding of my status, we are very knowledgeable of protecting each other, it was difficult.

WCT: How do you stay healthy?

O: I am currently taking a once-a-day remedy Atripla. I am a hypochondriac so anything that is wrong with me I call my doctor immediately. I have a really close relationship with my doctor. I think it is important to have a doctor that believes in your wellbeing. It is key to living a healthy life. Also, getting the support from your family is important. It has been a liberating experience to come out of the closet again. This is me, Ongina and Ryan, either you love it or you don't.

WCT: I didn't think about it as coming out twice before talking to you.

O: It is coming out twice. The reason it was so hard is like "Hey mom, I'm gay! Oh and by the way I'm a drag queen and to top it all off I am HIV-positive." So you can see why there is so much fear and why people hide in the closet in many different ways. I guess I came out three times. I would hide my heels in my backpack and act like I was going out to the movies!

WCT: You are coming back to town this summer.

O: I love Boystown. Rob Hoffman and Jade have treated me like family at Spin Nightclub. This will be my third time going there. Now I get to come when it's not 12 degrees.

WCT: What date will it be?

O: June 25 for a Saturday night then join them for the Pride Parade on Sunday on their float. I will have to find the biggest hat because those floats are really busy with hunky guys dancing all over the place so I have to stand out. Maybe I will have another contest on who can make me the biggest hat and I will wear it. Third time should be a charm!

For webisodes with Ongie visit <http://www.logotv.com>.

Dance over to <http://www.spin-nightclub.com> for info about his Spin Nightclub appearance.

Champions of Change: HIV/AIDS – 30 Years of Activism on the Frontlines

BY BRIAN BOND

NOTE: Champions of Change is a weekly White House initiative to highlight Americans who are making an impact in their communities and helping our country rise to meet the many challenges of the 21st century. See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/06/06/champions-change-hiv-aids-30-years-activism-frontlines>

This month marks the 30th year of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, when the Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported the first case of which would become known as HIV/AIDS.

More than 50,000 people in the United States are infected with HIV annually, and today, more than 33 million people around the world are living with HIV. Two million people across the globe die every year from AIDS. Over 600,000, fathers, mothers, daughters, sons, aunts and uncles in this country have died due to this pandemic. Like others marking this milestone, some of the people who have been lost over the past 30 years are individuals that I had the privilege of calling my friends.

There have been many positive efforts in combating this devastating disease, but more work needs to be done. Last year, the President announced the first comprehensive National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States. This strategy focuses on combinations of evidence-based approaches to decrease new HIV infections in high-risk communities, improve care for people living with HIV/AIDS, and reduce health disparities. Also, the Administration increased domestic HIV/AIDS funding to support the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and HIV prevention, and to invest in HIV/AIDS-related research.

But as the President has said, "government cannot take on this disease alone." That is why, as part of the Champions of Change initiative, the White House invited nine inspiring HIV/AIDS advocates for a roundtable discussion to meet with Administration officials including Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP) Director Jeffrey Crowley, the HHS Assistant Secretary for Health, Dr. Howard Koh, and key staff from HHS, DOJ and HUD. The roundtable was intended to provide an opportunity for people living with HIV to reflect on their own lives and personal experiences as the Nation reflects on what has been achieved over the last three decades. It is also an opportunity for us to continue shining a light on this pandemic.

As someone living with HIV, this is very personal for me. We stand on the shoulders of many that are now gone, and those who continue to fight today. The "Champions" that we met with are living examples of both the progress and challenges we have faced over the past 30 years. We are making progress—the number of new infections has declined among infants born with HIV and injection drug users, but we are now seeing rising infections in gay and bisexual men. Re-engaging the public, particularly the LGBT community, in prevention education and fighting stigma is crucial.

This anniversary is an opportunity to recommit ourselves to raising awareness about HIV/AIDS. We owe it to those that are no longer with us, and those like these "Champions" and the thousands like them that are fighting every day. We also owe it to the next generation. We invite you to learn more about the work of these Champions of Change in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Brian Bond is Deputy Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement.

Michael O'Connor: I'm Still Here

BY JOHN J. ACCROCCO

With all the private and government organizations designed to help AIDS patients in America, why is there still a shocking percentage of people who fall through the cracks?

Chicagoan Michael O'Connor is an HIV+, African-American activist who has been part of several legislative efforts to provide more support to Illinois residents living with HIV/AIDS whom he feels are not getting the support they need. In his political career O'Connor has been part of lobby groups that attempt to raise awareness within the African-American gay community. "When was the last time you saw a demonstration about homophobia in the Black community?" O'Connor asked.

O'Connor was diagnosed with HIV in 2001 after collapsing in Springfield just prior to a lobby session before the Illinois General Assembly concerning an organization he was working with called Second Chance. Over the past decade O'Connor has experienced a myriad of both social and health issues. He had no support system when he found out his status, just enough friends to help him move his things into storage while he was in the hospital.

"When I became ill, a well-known HIV advocate offered his home to me while I recovered, but when I got to his house he informed me that I couldn't sleep on his couch," O'Connor said. "I had to sleep on the floor, because he didn't want the medications that I was taking to seep into the couch materials, he said it may smell up the livingroom."

A support system of friends and family is a vital part of coping and survival for HIV/AIDS patients, especially in the initial diagnosis period and it was clear that O'Connor did not have the support he needed. "It's been a lot of rejection," O'Connor says, "Certain friends and family just don't understand the disease and it's still a major taboo among the Black community, especially the gay Black community."

Though he earned a B.A. in Political Sciences from Chicago State University and is about to finish another degree from Roosevelt University, today's economic state-of-affairs show that even those credentials are no longer a financial guarantee. His illness does prevent him from working as much as a healthy person might but it does not mean that he is unfit. In his experience with HIV, O'Connor has felt himself the vic-

tim of discrimination in the professional world. "I was denied a job within a legislative district office that I volunteered in. I was denied that job after the person rescinded her offer, even though I was initially offered the position. I was then offered a job to work with a non-profit HIV support service organization where she was a board member," he said. "I suspect she thought I was better suited for that the HIV non-profit job because I was HIV+ even though I had quit my other job to be a part of the legislative staff within her district office. I suspect she didn't want to take any chances of me getting sick at that particular job."

Through a combination of discrimination, lack of support and lack of funding, O'Connor has found himself living in the Dearborn YMCA because he can't get his social security to come through for housing. Luckily he gets medical support through Medicaid. "If I would have waited on advocacy agencies I don't know if I'd still be here, I've done more for myself in these past 10 years and it worries me for other people in my situation," he said.

O'Connor is hopeful, having just taken his LSATs he is gearing up for law school after his graduation from Roosevelt in the fall. "I've made it this far," he said, adding that he remains hopeful and continues to want to make a difference.

Now in his 50s, O'Connor has been influenced by the large amount of GLBT history he's lived through in Chicago. He officially came out as gay at 18 and moved from the South Side where he grew up, to Boystown in the late 1970s. He lived in an apartment on the corner of Lake Shore Drive and Waveland Avenue with his first lover. "I used to have to show my I.D. just to get into my own building, there was still a lot of racism during the '80s in Chicago," he said. O'Connor began his activism during this period, participating in one of the first GLBT demonstrations in Chicago. He still keeps the banner though the Chicago History Museum has asked him for it.

O'Connor saw a vast majority of his friends succumb to the fate of the first wave of the AIDS epidemic throughout the 1980s and '90s.

"I stopped counting after I lost 40 friends," he said. "I have a phone book full of scratched out numbers, about 70 people now. A lot of my generation of gay men in Chicago were wiped out by the virus, if jail didn't get them. AIDS began to change my life then because I watched

a lot of the friends I grew up with dropping dead from it."

Even before he was diagnosed, O'Connor was an activist for several causes in Chicago. "I support a wide array of advocacy causes, GLBT, ex-offender, and HIV causes," he said. "I support these causes by actively involving myself. For example, I am the co-founder of the Rocks Coordinating Committee, a predominately African-American, GLBT pride, one-day HIV testing outreach event (one of the oldest and largest one-day HIV testing outreach events in the state of Illinois, held Pride Sunday at Montrose and the Lake). Additionally, I and a small group of volunteers led the first criminal justice legislative initiative which focused on ex-offenders recidivism, resulting in amended changes to the Illinois compiled statutes; specifically the criminal code section 720. ... Finally, I and Ben Montgomery, a recently retired legislative staffer for Congressman Danny K. Davis, co-authored the Quality of Life Endowment fund which resulted in the Red Ribbon Lottery legislation and led the statewide legislative lobbying and GLBT legislative education process. This is the first and only HIV state revenue enhancer of its kind in the United States. So far we've made well over \$3,000,000 from this lottery and it has been distributed to HIV supportive services organizations within the State of Illinois."

O'Connor has an impressive background in Illinois legislature but to him it is not enough. "There's still not enough activism among the African-American community, there's not enough accurate education about AIDS and certainly not enough resources for those living with it, do you know there's not a single trauma center on the South Side?" he said. "That has a pretty big influence on the care of HIV/AIDS. We used to get kicked out of bars in the '90s for handing out condoms!"

"My community needs to be held more accountable for urban African-Americans living with AIDS. We aren't doing enough to raise awareness and I fear it will get worse with the current economic situation. I know people who are getting turned out of their homes because their rental supplements are not coming through. Some of these agencies designed to help people are still waiting on their money from the government and therefore people who need it have to wait even longer. The apathy needs to end, because silence equals death. What needs to change is



Michael O'Connor. Photo by Tracy Baim

that the gay African-American leadership needs to start being tired of being tired and become more proactive in the community. Don't get me wrong though, I do see glimmers of hope, I do."

His advice to anyone who wants to help this serious cause is, "that person who wants to make a difference in the lives of those coping with HIV needs to stop being silent about the lack of HIV public funding in economically disadvantaged communities and among constituency groups where the disease is running rampant. Additionally that person could join organizations that assist HIV+ people in their daily lives. That person could challenge organizations and public persons that only give lip service to the issue. That person could join a number of Chicagoans who are challenging the institutions within their own communities and demanding organizational accountability and transparency as well as competent organizing leadership within the communities that are adversely affected by HIV."

Though O'Connor endures numerous health issues a year, he lives his life according to the words of the late gospel singer Alberta Walker, "I'm still here": "God is not through with me yet, I believe that is why I'm still here. And because I'm still here I feel I have an obligation to positively affect other people's lives by being a channel of advocacy to help those who can't or don't know how to empower their lives."

in brief...

Community HIV testing day in Englewood

The Englewood United Methodist Church, 6400 S. Stewart Ave. in Chicago, will host a National HIV Testing Day event called "Community and Faith Connecting to Sing Praises and Save lives. The event is Sat., June 25, at 4 p.m.

Rev. Harriette Cross, host pastor, welcomes people to the event, which will feature the Flora Robinson Chorale and Friends.

Participating Organizations (still in formation): Come Alive Ministry of Faith; Englewood Advocates of Grace for Lives, Education and Service (E.A.G.L.E.S. - East Side UMC; Englewood UMC; Faith UMC; Grace Calvary UMC; Greater Englewood UMC; West Englewood UMC; Pleasant Green M.B. Church, 140-46 W. 59th St.; Pleasant Green M.B. Church, 7545 S. Vincennes Ave., Rust Memorial UMC); Grand Boulevard Federa-

tion; Greater Westside Development Corporation; Making A Daily Effort (M.A.D.E.); 6th Legislative District; Southside HIV/AIDS Resource Providers (S.H.A.R.P.); Teamwork Englewood/

For Information, Call 773-846-9839 (Sylvia Jo)

Another HIV Testing day event will be held on Monday, June 27, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., at the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center, STEP UP - Get Tested. Know Your HIV Status, 1901 W. Harrison St., Chicago, <http://www.corecenter.org/>

Free onsite rapid HIV testing and results provided in 10 minutes. Contact: Peter McLoyd, 312-572-4649, pmclloyd@corecenter.org.

June 24 doc screening on HIV/AIDS

In an effort to overcome the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS, which disproportionately impacts the African-American and Hispanic youth communities, the Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus (CBGMC) and McDermott/Haymarket Center are banding together to present A Mirror to the

Heart: Breaking the Stigma of HIV/AIDS, a documentary highlighting HIV prevention activities and the personal experiences of youth who are taking leadership roles in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The screening will be held at 6:30 p.m., Friday, June 24, at McDermott/Haymarket Center, 932 W. Washington, Chicago.

Sponsored by the Illinois Department of Public Health Center for Minority Health Services and BASUAH (Brothers And Sisters United Against HIV/AIDS), the documentary will be followed by a discussion led by a panel of experts. Taskforce Prevention and Community Services will provide HIV testing. This free event is open to the public. To learn more, go to www.mirrortotheheart.com.

The panel discussion will be moderated by Christian Castro, the program director of the Latino Commission on AIDS, a program that assists Hispanic-serving organizations and coalitions to address the needs of the emerging HIV-positive population.

Others who will be on the panel will be Alan D.

Johnson, adolescent research director of the DePaul University School of Public Health; Stephen Armstead, OVAH! Program outreach coordinator for the Center on Halsted; youth activist and artist KOKUMO; Andre Darey; Leveon Perkins; Jermaine Perry; and Anthony Singleton.

Gina Lathan Whitener, the executive producer of the documentary, will also participate in the event.

The documentary encourages an open discussion about stigma, which is a leading barrier to successful HIV counseling, testing and treatment. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the numbers of youth contracting HIV/AIDS are staggering, especially African-American and Hispanic youth. In 2009, an estimated 8,294 men and women of all races and ethnicities age 13 to 24 received a diagnosis of HIV infection, representing about 19 percent of the persons given a diagnosis that year. African Americans were disproportionately affected, accounting for about half of all HIV infections. Hispanics accounted for about 15 percent.



A 'Flare' for HIV education

BY TERENCE CHAPPELL

Activists, leaders, local personalities, and organizations gathered for "United in HIV: Taking Control Through Unity and Advocacy" June 14 at Sidetrack—a tweet-up in celebration and unity for HIV/AIDS outreach, research, and, above all, knowing one's status. The event was in recognition of National HIV Testing Day, June 27.

Produced and emceed by performer Cyon Flare, the event was a tribute to the Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus (CBGMC) and Rae Lewis-Thornton for their HIV/AIDS-awareness initiatives among the Black and Black LGBT communities.

Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) Commissioner Bechara Chouair and members of his staff, including Assistant Commissioner for STD/ HIV/ AIDS Policy and Prevention Programs Christopher Brown, were at the event. Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez also stopped by after her own pride reception at the Center on Halsted.

Lewis-Thornton was diagnosed as HIV-positive in 1987 at age 23. She made the transition to AIDS in 1992. Since then, she has used her status and experience as an educational platform to advocate for HIV/AIDS testing and empower the LGBT Black community, in particular heterosexual women like herself. She has spoken at a number of institutions and universities, has been featured in publications, and has won the Chicago Emmy for "Living with AIDS," for Channel 2 in 1995. Lewis-Thornton, who was in the hospital hours before the event, was happy to be a part of the evening and said that even though the event was a step in the right direction, it's just the beginning.

"I hope that people will walk away from this event knowing that we are united, that we are one, and that HIV affects all of us. It can infect all of us and affects all of us. If we're really going to get a handle on this in the African-American community, then we will have to work together," said Lewis-Thornton.

CBGMC's Craig Johnson, who also works as a community health promoter at Rush University Medical Center, represented his organization at the event as a special guest speaker. Johnson sits on the policy and advisory committee for the CBGMC. He shared with guests the importance of getting tested for HIV, the commonality between gay Black men and Black women regarding HIV/AIDS, and breaking down the stigma of HIV/AIDS in the Black community. He worked with Flare and Lewis-Thornton on the event with a mission to bring together different groups of people that shared common ground on HIV/AIDS.

"We wanted to create an opportunity to bring all the audiences together for an awareness event specifically about HIV/AIDS. National HIV

Testing Day was such an opportune moment to host this event. There are about 12 awareness dates throughout the year that target different segments of the community. So, we wanted to use this event to bring everyone together and unite everyone for a common cause," said Johnson.

Flare worked closely with Lewis-Thornton, CBGMC, Sidetrack and other local organizations to organize United in HIV. Flare, who is HIV-positive, said that the event was born out of a personal vision. He was "very humbled" by the dozens of people who attended the event.

"I wanted guests to see people supporting getting tested. I wanted guests to see people supporting people who are living with HIV and AIDS. One of the things I see in the Black community is that it's very difficult to even say the letters HIV, or even have an open dialogue about it. The goal of this event was to create a safe space to get tested and to talk about HIV/AIDS," said Flare.

Flare expressed how "overwhelmingly wowed and humbled" he was over the success of the event.

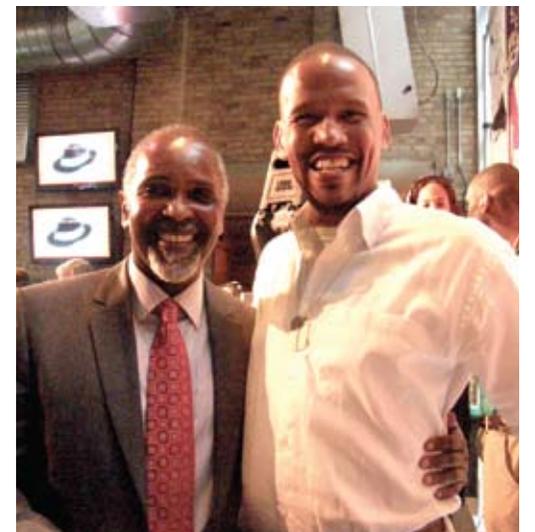
Art Johnston, co-owner of Sidetrack and co-founder of Equality Illinois, said it was important to host the event since HIV/AIDS is such a hot-button issue among the community.

"It was a pleasure for Sidetrack to host an event that touches so many parts of our community. We are seeing different people of our community that are coming together for this event in ways that don't happen enough. We are thrilled to be involved," said Johnston.

DJ Lora Branch spun top-40 music and classics, while Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN), a community partner for the event, carried out HIV testing for guests and offered on-site special services and counseling to those testing positive. Guests were encouraged to tweet the event to their followers by using #UnitedInHIV. There was a \$10 optional donation to benefit CBGMC and Rae Lewis-Thornton's HIV/AIDS efforts. More than 40 community partners sponsored the event including Center on Halsted, Equality Illinois, GO Pride Corporation, Windy City Media Group, Hydrate, 50 Faggots and a host of others.

"I think it's so important that people are aware and people take the proper steps to prevention," Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez told the crowd. "No matter what community you're from, we have to make sure we take care of our health and ourselves. We need to spread the awareness."

Both Flare and Lewis-Thornton plan to take what they learned from the past event and continue the getting tested tweet-ups in other markets.



Cyon Flare, Rae Lewis-Thornton, DJ Lora Branch and many more guests were at the June 14 event at Sidetrack. Photos by Tracy Baim

GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo by
Jonathan
L. Green

'SEXUALS' HEALING

Benjamin Sprunger and Patrick Andrews engage in some pillow talk in the About Face production *The Homosexuals*. Read more below.

THEATER

'Last' dance.
Page 38.

Photo from *The Last Act of Lila Kadison*
by Sean Williams



MOVIES

'World'-class.
Page 43.

Photo from *Exotic World and the
Burlesque Revival* from Red Tremmel



TELEVISION

One 'Voice.'
Page 56.

Photo of Tyler Robinson
courtesy of Robinson



NUNN ON ONE

Philip Dawkins' 'Homosexuals'

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Ask playwright Philip Dawkins what his new play, *The Homosexuals*, is about, and you'll get the basic answer: "A bunch of homosexuals."

Now in its world-premiere run by About Face Theatre in the Victory Gardens Richard C. Christiansen Theater, *The Homosexuals* isn't supposed to represent an entire group of people according to Dawkins.

"I think it would be pretty arrogant for me to speak for all homosexuals," Dawkins said about his play's all-encompassing title. "I would argue that it's something like *The Outsiders*. That can mean a lot of things but *The Outsiders* is brilliantly written about a specific group of people and I never question for a moment whether S. E. Hinton is talking about everyone who feels on the outside fringe of things."

The Homosexuals focuses on the character of Evan, played by Patrick Andrews, who arrives in a big Midwestern city and the group of friends he encounters over the course of a decade. But in an interesting twist, Dawkins has structured this play so that the plot's chronology goes in reverse like Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* and the Stephen Sondheim/George Furth musical *Merrily We Roll Along*.

"We meet our hero when he's 30 and then we meet him five other times going backwards in time two years each time," Dawkins said. "It's through him that we meet his circle of friends he meets in the city and then we get to meet him meeting those friends for the first time."

Also, since the drama is largely about gay men in a big city, there is a fair amount of coupling involved.

"I was in exploring friendship through the lens of sex and what that means," Dawkins said. "And so each of these friends who Evan engages with either push him or challenge him or help him or hinder him and it's either directly or tangentially motivated by sex."

As an About Face Theatre Artistic Associate, Dawkins is super pleased to have *The Homosexuals* premiere upstairs at Victory Gardens' Biograph Theater during Pride Month.

"I really love the intimacy of the space, and even in the back row I feel close to the action," Dawkins said. "During previews, I tried to sit in all the seats that I thought would be the worst and it's still so great."

"I happen to be a proud homosexual and our cast happens to be filled with proud homosexuals," Dawkins said. "That wasn't intentional but then we looked at our cast and went, 'Oh my gosh, look at all these fabulous homosexuals in 'The Homosexuals.' It's been fun to have this fabulous gay party. What is not Pride other than a fun gay party?"

Lest women feel left out of the fun, Dawkins is quick to point out that his play has a heterosexual female character and that the world-premiere production is directed by About Face Theatre artistic director Bonnie Metzgar.

"I think women's voices are definitely represented in this play and the women who I've had like my friends and cohorts and peers who have come to see it do not feel excluded," Dawkins said. "I mean, it's about friends who have sex. I think most women I know can understand friendship and sex."

The Homosexuals continues its run at the Victory Gardens Richard C. Christiansen Theater,



Playwright Philip Dawkins. Photo courtesy of Dawkins

2433 N. Lincoln, through July 24. (A review of the play will appear in next week's issue of *Windy City Times*.) Tickets are \$28. Call 773-871-3000 or visit <http://www.aboutfacetheatre.com> for more information.

Go 'Into the Woods'

As many educators know, several Broadway musicals available for production in schools also have "Junior" versions that have been cut down or cleaned up for elementary-age audiences.

If you've ever been curious to compare and contrast how the original and junior versions diverge, then don't miss *The Guerilla Project's* take on the 1987 award-winning Stephen Sondheim/James Lapine fairytale musical *Into the Woods*.

Planned as a fundraiser for the Catherine Cook School Performing Arts Program, audiences can see the full-length version of the musical at 7:30 p.m. June 24 and 25, while the Junior version is presented at 2 p.m. June 24. Performances are at The Catherine Cook School, 226 W. Shiller. Tickets for the full-fledged show are \$20, while the Junior version are \$15 for adults and \$10 for kids. Visit <http://www.catherinecooschool.org/>

intothewood.com for more information.

Navy Pier delays and an extension

If your summer theater plans included visits to Navy Pier, you're in for some delays.

The Pepsi Skyline Stage presentation of *Cirque Shanghai Extreme* has been delayed due to bad weather affecting the progress of the venue's roof renovations. The production is now set to officially open Wed., June 29, and run through Sept. 5. Call 800-745-3000 or visit <http://www.ticketmaster.com/shanghai> for more information.

Visa issues have delayed Chicago Shakespeare Theater's World's Stage presentation of *One Thousand and One Nights*. Ticket holders for the canceled performances may request a full refund or hold their tickets "on account" for a rescheduled engagement.

However, on the bright side for Chicago Shakespeare Theater, its production of *Murder for Two* has been extended through July 31. Visit <http://www.chicagoshaakes.com> for more information.

THEATER REVIEW

The Last Act of Lilka Kadison

Playwright: Nichola Behrman, David Kersnar, Abbie Phillips, Heidi Stillman, Andrew White
 At: Lookingglass Theatre, Water Tower Water Works
 Tickets: 312-337-0665;
<http://www.lookingglasstheatre.org>;
 \$34-\$62
 Runs through: July 24

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

One day before accepting the 2011 Regional Theater Tony Award, Lookingglass Theatre Company opened another in a chain of more than 50 world premieres over 23 years. Beautifully executed and well-acted, The Last Act of Lilka Kadison nonetheless is a small show for the company.

The four-person cast is quite small by Lookingglass standards and does not include any Lookingglass ensemble member or associate (although many are involved off-stage). There's no tumbling, flying, stilts, trap doors or mime as the company's signature physical style is set aside. The story, too, eschews myth, fairytales, the fantastic and classical literature, all of which have been repeated inspirations for the troupe. This one is a highly personal, individual story minus universal truths, epic adventures or metaphysics. It's four actors in naturalistic mode performing within a more-or-less realistic setting and context.

Briefly, 87-year-old Lilith Fisher of Los Angeles, born Lilka Kadison in a Polish Jewish ghetto, faces possibly her final illness and sees her long-dead lover, the engaging Ben Ari Adler, who insists she tell the long-hidden truth: that he fathered her only child as the Nazis invaded Poland, and she miraculously escaped to a

new American life. Her son does not know, and Lilith/Lilka indicates her late husband didn't know, which seems an impossibility.

That impossibility—the storytelling gap between her affair with Adler and her being 87—is the weak spot in this vehicle as it splits its narrative power between old Lilith and young, high-spirited Lilka. Despite a deliciously sardonic performance by Marilyn Dodds Frank as old Lilith, the story really wants to go back to Poland and the doomed romance between orthodox good girl Lilka and handsome, assimilated Ben Ari, especially as attractively played by Nora Fiffer and Chance Bone. Perhaps this 85-minute show needs to be a longer two-act play. It doesn't help that Lilith has only her nursing aide to whom to tell the truth, which makes the consequences minimal. A fine performance by Usman Ally cannot make the aide more than the device he is.

To be sure, there's considerable craft to the stagecraft, which tells a story within a story. The antagonist/leading man (Ben Ari) is a professional storyteller and puppeteer and, therefore, makes use of an elaborate toy stage, cut-out puppets and miniature stage effects straight out of the Redmoon Theatre playbook (and designed by Redmoon veteran Tracy Otwell). The toy theater sits within scenic designers Jacqueline and Richard Penrod's shadowbox-like proscenium stage setting, cluttered with the bits and pieces of Lilith's lifetime, and containing echoes of Otwell's toy theater.

A few life realities smack you in the face, especially with regard to aging, but mostly it's charming rather than exciting, wanting dramatic weight.

THEATER REVIEW

The History of King Henry the Fourth

Playwright: Stanton Davis adapted from William Shakespeare
 At: Oak Park Festival Theatre at Austin Gardens, Oak Park
 Phone: 708-445-4440; \$20-\$25
 Runs through: July 9

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Oak Park Festival Theatre got off to a cold and wet start for its summer cycle of Shakespeare history plays. On tap through July 9 is The History of King Henry the Fourth (Henry IV parts I and II combined), and Henry V from July 14 through Aug. 20.

With outdoor theater you have to take what Mother Nature gives you, which on opening night for Henry IV was a mild drizzle that ended midway through Act I. These were not ideal conditions to see director/adaptor Stanton Davis' world premiere condensation of the Henry IV plays, since the audience was warned beforehand that Geoff Coates' fight choreography would be slowed down for safety reasons.

However, even with better weather, this Henry IV would be disappointing.

Davis' adaptation gives short shrift to Henry IV Part II in terms of political machinations. And Davis' double pressing of the Henry IV plays add up to a long evening lasting well over three hours, possibly making some wish that Oak Park Festival Theatre had just staged Henry IV Part I.

Davis' direction and overall staging concept is also a bit sloppy. Several scene changes feature actors as dignified characters shifting scenery in a gangly fashion, while the overall look is an olio of ancient and modern styles (particularly in Lindsay Schmeling's costumes that look more like a jumble sale than a specific period).

Not every performance in Oak Park Festival Theatre's Henry IV is up to snuff, alas.

As the hot-headed rebel youth Hotspur, Adam Meredith just plays up his character's anger with volume instead of a palpable motivation to drive it. And in the crucial role of Sir



The History of King Henry the Fourth. Pic by Johnny Knight

John Falstaff, a padded-up Jack Hickey unfortunately lacks the natural bravado to make the lovable and boastful drunkard command the stage like he should.

Much better work comes from the dashing Prince Hal of Dennis Grimes as the heir apparent wasting his youth slumming with tavern lowlifes. Grimes makes for a dashing presence onstage and believably gets across the character of a golden bad boy who must step up to his preordained responsibilities when a northern rebel uprising threatens the stability of the realm.

Although the play carries the title of Henry IV, the king comes across as a supporting character in service to Prince Hal's storyline. Michael Sherwin may be a bit more diminutive than one would expect for the kingly role, but he certainly gets across the regal and parental anguish of a troubled monarch.

I admit the chilly weather may have adversely affected my mood in sizing up Henry IV. However, the weather probably also hindered the performers. Keep that in mind if you want to catch subsequent Henry IV performances.

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SPOTLIGHT



Originally just a sketch as part of Collaboraction's Sketchbook X, The New Colony's 5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche has now been expanded into a full-length comedy. Authors Andrew Hobgood and Evan Linder reteam with quite a few of the original cast members to show what happens when members of the Susan B. Anthony Society for the Sisters of Gertrude Stein deal with the threat of an atomic future in 1956. 5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche plays one preview 8 p.m. June 23, and then runs 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays through July 30 at the Dank Haus, 4740 N. Western. Tickets are \$10 on June 23, then \$20 for the rest of the run (with student discounts). Call 773-413-0862 or visit <http://www.thenewcolony.org>. Photo of Maari Suorsa, Mary Hollis Inboden and Megan Johns in The New Colony's 5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche by Saverio Truglia



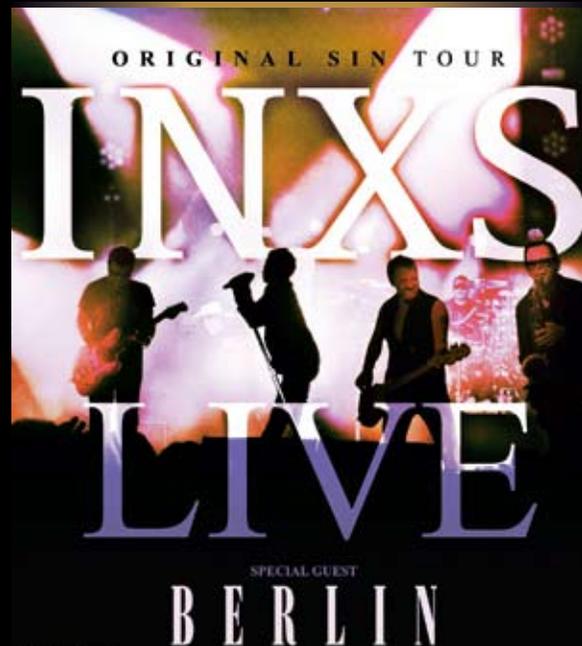
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THEATER REVIEW

Fifth of July

Playwright: Lanford Wilson

At: Infamous Commonwealth Theatre

Company at the Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark

Phone: 312-458-9780; \$20

Runs through: July 10

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The sheer volume of backstory that probably inspired the two prequels to this, the concluding chapter in Lanford Wilson's trilogy of the Talley clan, may give those unfamiliar with the characters' histories the uneasy feeling of outsiders at a family reunion, but if you listen closely, you'll find plenty of explanatory footnotes to the topics under discussion.

Our location is the Talley homestead in Lebanon, Mo., currently occupied by ambulatory-impaired Vietnam-vet Kenneth Talley, his dotty aunt Sally and his life partner, Jed. On this Independence Day weekend in 1977, Ken is suffering misgivings over the prospect of resuming his old job teaching at the local high school, while Jed is optimistically planting a garden. Obstructing their ruminations are a bevy of houseguests: Ken's sister June and her teenage daughter Shirley, along with childhood chums Gwen and John Landis, the latter of whom might be Shirley's summer-of-love sire. The immediate crisis is Gwen's pursuit of a career as a country-western warbler, to which purpose she has arrived with a stoned-out guitarist in tow and an offer to buy the property from Ken for conversion into a private recording studio.

Wilson's waifs might be fed and dressed more affluently than the drifters of *Balm In Gilead* or *The Hot L Baltimore*. However, even if you didn't know that Infamous Commonwealth Theatre had chosen "sacrifice" as the theme for its 2010-2011 season, it should come as no surprise that the prevailing mood is one of youthful idealism gone sour; that each of these post-'60s survivors



From left: Billy Fenderson, Stephen Dunn and Roy Gonzalez in *Fifth of July*. Photo from the company

comes to question their place in the new world order and their responsibilities to one another; or that the schemes of the selfish are ultimately thwarted and the futures of the unselfish guaranteed.

The regrets of a disillusioned baby boom generation following the days-of-rage thrill aroused abundant sympathy 30 years ago, but the challenge to actors in 2011 is to lend immediacy to a zeitgeist nowadays explored to the level of

shopworn cliché. An intensely focused cast led by Stephen Dunn as the war-scarred Ken (who projects nervous distress better than any actor now working the storefront circuit) is well up to the task, however, patiently engaging our emotions to render us profoundly grateful for the satisfying resolution that Wilson generously provides us.

CRITICS' PICKS

Dental Society Midwinter Meeting, At Play Productions at Theater on The Lake, June 29-July 3. Laura Jacqmin reveals the timely wisdom lurking within corporate culture, as reflected in the microcosm of the tooth industry, in this third-time revival of last summer's smash hit. MSB

A Doll's House, Infamous Commonwealth Theatre at Theater on The Lake, June 22-26. Ibsen's classic 19th century proto-feminist drama gets updated to the 1960s Mad Men era in this revival specially picked to be re-replicated for summer audiences. SCM

Fifty Words, Profiles Theatre, through June 26. The kid's away and 'rents will play. Michael Weller's violent, sexy, graphic drama examines the withholding of emotional and physical intimacy. The script is too telescoped but phenomenal acting carries the day. 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

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

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Amos Lassen - Literary Pride, ReviewsByAmosLassen.com

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THEATER REVIEW

The Cherry Orchard

Playwright: Anton Chekhov, adapted by Jean-Claude Van Itallie
 At: Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark
 Phone: 773-338-2177; \$30
 Runs through: July 23

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

How much of Jean-Claude Van Itallie's *Caffé Cino* aesthetic has been imposed on his translation of Chekhov's original text is uncertain, and how much of what we see on the Raven stage is director Michael Menendian's choice likewise, but there's no denying that in this production, *fin-de-siècle* Russia looks remarkably like our South in the years following the Civil War.

There's nothing fundamentally wrong with re-locating the classics. Wouldn't we recognize The Seagull's pampered elite more quickly if they were summering in the Hamptons? Wouldn't it be easier for us to sympathize with Uncle Vanya's weariness on a farm in Bucks County, or to identify with the Prozorov sisters if their dream was Manhattan instead of Moscow? In this case, too, the issues under scrutiny surmount geographical boundaries—hasn't the dissolution of large country estates/plantations following the emancipation of the serfs/slaves needed



for their maintenance *always* engendered difficult transitions as formerly affluent pillars of the community struggle to retain their status against encroaching poverty and their once-economically disenfranchised neighbors, now wavering between revenge and pity on their recent governors.

The anguish of a widowed dowager confronting the destruction of her property and foreclosure on her childhood home will be immediately apparent to modern playgoers recalling the rise of factories, corporate offices, tract homes and shopping malls on land previously dedicated to agricultural interests. So will the diverse response of the newly-independent citizens, who also have their counterparts in our own history: Yasha's palpable eagerness to elevate himself above his former peers, old Firs' dogged devotion to his former master, Yermolay and Varya's reluctance—even after three generations—to breach class boundaries by declaring their affections for one another.

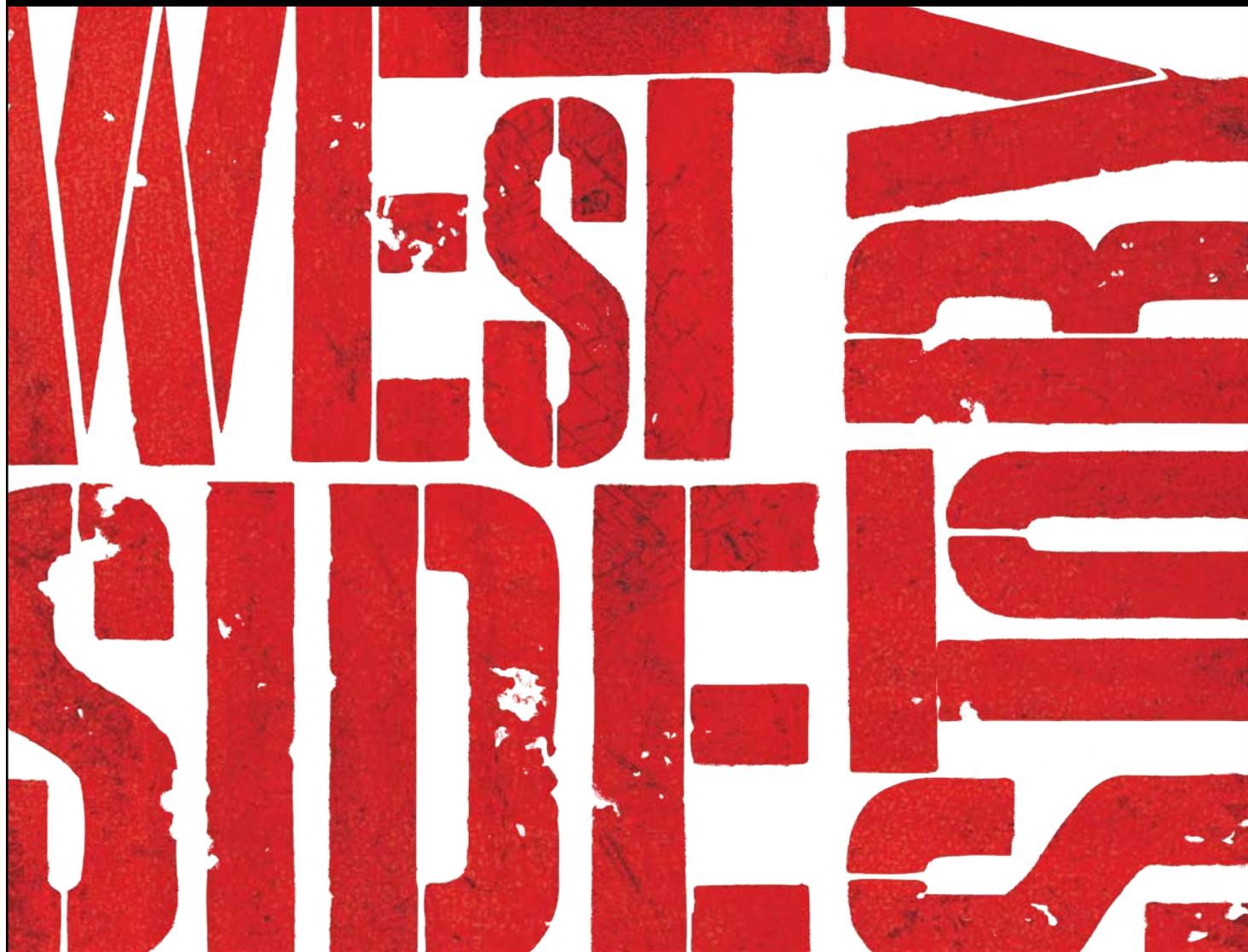
Stylistic elements departing from conventional interpretations—in particular, introspective exposition delivered full-front after the manner of soliloquies—may require some acclimation, and a few auxiliary presences never quite establish their place in the family portrait. Raven Theatre didn't earn its 25 years-plus following through scholarly enhancements, however, but instead on its reliable delivery of sturdy, coherent drama innovative enough to escape the classroom-classic doldrums, but never veering into muddy self-indulgence—skills amply demonstrated by an acting ensemble encompassing two generations of Raven regulars who readily engage us with deceptively-humorous intrigue gradually intensifying into suspense to make the most seasoned Chekhov aficionados hold their breath in anticipation of the outcome.



Left and above: The Cherry Orchard. Photos by Dean LaPrairie

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KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES

BY
RICHARD
KNIGHT, JR.

Poison at 20; film notes

All of urban America, it seems, is on board with Gay Pride celebrations in June. In addition to the parades and the ancillary events and parties, pretty much every form of mass media—especially television and movies—have hopped aboard the gay pride bandwagon.

It does my little homo heart good to see these mass marketers, big and small, pandering for our dollars. I'm especially thrilled, obviously, when said marketers make with the gay-themed special-edition DVDs and boxed sets. So I said yes—big time—to the Blu-ray release of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert from MGM. (It looks fab and is rather timely, what with the new Broadway hit version and all.) Also, I was especially moved by the local PBS broadcast of a tremendous new documentary focusing on our everyday lives called Out In America (on demand throughout the end of the month).

Then Zeitgeist's sparkling new, 20th anniversary edition of Todd Haynes' *Poison* arrived in the mail. Here was the virtual reminder as we celebrate Gay Pride, about how much has changed culturally and artistically since the movie's release in 1991—and how much we need to thank Haynes and other queer artists for their pioneering efforts. The film—which vaulted the career of out writer-director Haynes and his queer producing partner, Christine Vachon, into the mainstream (including their most recent project, the five-part HBO miniseries *Mildred Pierce*)—was a sensation when it premiered at Sundance, where it took the grand prize.

Poison, which had completion funds partially provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, was next given a publicity boon that both Vachon and Haynes remember with glee in a 20th-anniversary Q&A conducted at Sundance that is included on the new DVD (which has been gorgeously remastered). This was an at-



Above and below: Stills from the movie *Poison*.

tack by conservatives on the film's unapologetic gay themes and frank eroticism (which included a quick shoot of one of an actor's penis). The publicity storm that ensued helped to turn *Poison* into an art house hit.

The film, inspired by the writings of Jean Genet and his homoerotic silent short film *Un Chant d'Amour*, interweaves three disparate stories, told in three distinct visual and acting styles. "The whole world is dying of panicky fright" reads a title card at the outset, as the three stories interweave and play out to their bitter conclusions. These are a mock documentary about a young boy's shooting of his father and subsequent disappearance recalled by his mother, neighbors and classmates; a '50s-style drive-in horror homage about a scientist who mistakenly drinks a dreaded formula and turns into a leprous murderer, shunned by the population at large; and the sultry, color-drenched fantasy of a prisoner infatuated with his cellmate (played by James Lyons, Haynes's lover at the time and the film's editor), who he had witnessed being humiliated for being gay years earlier in a juvenile detention center.

Just as *Poison* was hitting theaters in 1991 it was followed by a succession of other unabashedly gay-themed movies—*The Living End*, *Edward II*, *Paris Is Burning*, *My Own Private Idaho*, *Swoon*, *The Hours* and the *Times*; there were

so many that film critic B. Ruby Rich dubbed this new movement from out, proud filmmakers as the advent of "New Queer Cinema." (All of these films focused mainly on gay men. Lesbians would have to wait until 1994 and Rose Troche's *Go Fish* for their own new queer cinema entry.)

Poison led the charge for these movies and is still a deeply unsettling experience (it's not exactly a movie one wants to see every week) while Haynes' metaphoric approach—a reaction to the AIDS pandemic—and the film's defiant, unapologetic insistence on presenting an unavoidable queer sensibility were groundbreaking, cinematically and culturally. Haynes has gone on to make *Safe*, *Velvet Goldmine*, *Far From Heaven* (his masterpiece), *I'm Not There* and the aforementioned *Mildred Pierce*. However, perhaps none of these films, or many others of their ilk, would have found audiences (gay and mainstream) if *Poison*—the cinematic equivalent of a Molotov cocktail—hadn't broken ground. LGBTQ characters abound in the movies and we have films like *Poison*, in part, to thank for that. Haynes' movie helped audiences (perhaps "forced" is a better word) to see the world through *Our Eyes* and that is certainly something to remember—with Pride.

Film notes:

—Local out writer-director Coquie Hughes will screen her latest indie feature *When The Lies We Tell but the Secrets We Keep* with a gala red-carpet premiere Saturday, June 24, at 8 p.m.

at the Portage Theater, 4050 N. Milwaukee. The film, which stars Andrea Dean (who co-wrote the script with Hughes) and Milton V. Parker, centers on the romance of two women with different lifestyles whose relationship is tested when a third person enters the picture. The film explores lesbian and gay themes in an urban setting with an "authentic street-level manner." The source material for the film is also debuting in novel form at the event. Cast and crew will attend the festivities, which begins at 7pm. <http://the-makingsofmvp.com>

—Out director-producer Crayton Robey's 2009 *Making the Boys*, his documentary history of Mart Crowley's seminal play and film *The Boys in the Band*, which has played to rave reviews in New York and Los Angeles, is coming to Chicago—at last—for a one-night-only, free screening on Thursday, June 30, at the Claudia Cassidy Theater in the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington. The screening is being co-sponsored by the Queer Film Society (the non-profit film group which I head), Reeling Film Festival, the Center on Halsted, and the Legacy Project, and is being presented in part thanks to funding from Sidetrack Chicago. I'll have a full review of the documentary in next week's *Windy City Times*.

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

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Filmmakers of burlesque movie seek support

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

For nine years, producer/director Red Vaughan Tremmel immersed herself in the world of burlesque while shooting her documentary, *Exotic World and the Burlesque Revival* (narrated by Margaret Cho). Her film chronicles former strip-tease dancer Dixie Evans' transformation of a goat barn in the middle of the Mojave Desert into the world's only burlesque museum.

To get this museum off the ground, Evans used her social security checks as a funding source so she could carry on the dream of another strip-tease dancer, the late Jennie Lee (who was the first labor-union organizer for burlesque dancers in the 1950s), who first conceived of this idea in the late 1950s. "Evans and Lee felt that the history of burlesque had been swept under the rug and that if they didn't preserve it, no one would," said Tremmel. Their dream continued with Lee's widower, Charlie Arroyo, stepping in to help Evans keep the museum alive.

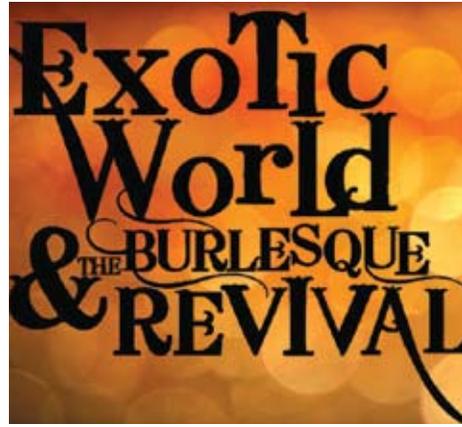
While touring the museum with Evans, Tremmel (who was drawn to this subject matter while doing research on another project) was compelled to make this film, noting, "I was not only convinced but impressed by the power the two women had to manifest their vision in the blazing hot, isolation of the desert."

Tremmel spent a number of years building relationship by observing and listening. Her goal was not a predetermined story but rather an organic unfolding of the story as participants shared what they felt was important about their lives. The film showcases the annual burlesque show, pilgrimages of young burlesque revivalists to the museum, interviews with the aging stars and footage of their past performances.

It was an intense shoot, as Tremmel and her crew spent 10 hours a day in the desert with temperatures above 115 degrees and extreme wind and to top that off the museum had no air conditioning. Tremmel noted that it was a challenge but the elements kept them grounded and in tune with their bodies and need for water.

Although there were many challenges Tremmel noted, "I have never worked on a project that had so many open doors. Any time there seemed to be a challenge, a solution or another way would present itself. I often tell people that the film is making itself—we are all just working on its behalf." She said that every member of her crew cried at least once and there were many funny moments with laughter and joy during the entire shoot.

Sneak peeks of the film have recently been shown to audiences at the 2011 Burlesque Hall of Fame Weekend in Las Vegas, Nevada where they received positive feedback from the audience and two standing ovations in a row. Tremmel and Director of Development Jessica Halem



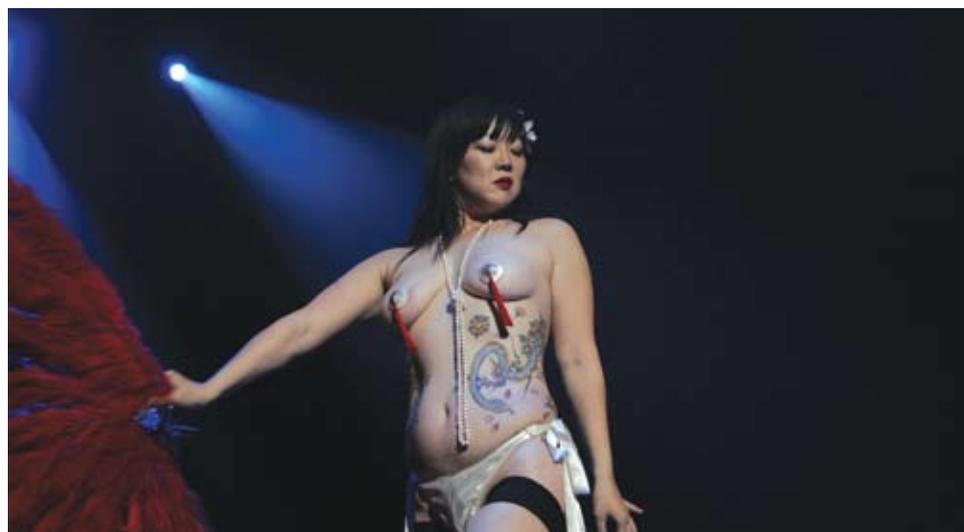
(both former Chicagoans) also showed the film to a small group of people here in Chicago last week with a post-show discussion following the screening. Halem, while touring as a stand-up comedienne, has been getting the word out about the production and fundraising efforts in her role as Director of Development.

To fund the actual shoot and some of post-production, they held *Gurlesque Burlesque* shows (produced by the Sissy Butch Brothers) in Chicago a number of years ago. Cho was invited to participate in those fundraisers after Tremmel met her backstage at a Miss Exotic World reunion where Cho was the emcee and a performer. They hit it off and, because of Cho's belief in the project, she enthusiastically agreed to help out at the fundraisers and to narrate the film.

The *Gurlesque Burlesque* shows were a huge success but they could not cover the entire cost of the film. To finish the post-production process and release the film to a wider audience, they launched a Kickstarter campaign online where people can donate any amount of money to help see this project to fruition. More than 200 people have backed the film and have raised half the funds needed to pay for music-licensing fees, archival footage fees, film-festival entry fees, sound mixing, color correction, mastering and other post production touch-ups. They need to raise \$25,000 by July 12 at 1:40 p.m. ET; otherwise they will not be able to release the film.

"This project belongs to so many people—the Chicago community, the worldwide burlesque community, etc. We are lucky that everyone involved with the film has seen it and loves it and has sung its praises far and wide—but we need more," Tremmel and Halem stated in an email, adding, "We hope everyone reading this will watch our trailer, check out the videos on our Kickstarter page and get involved!"

For more information on the documentary or to make a donation, visit <http://exoticworldthefilm.com> and <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/jessicahalem/exotic-world-and-the-burlesque-revival>. To find out more about Halem visit <http://www.jessicahalem.com>.



Margaret Cho in *Exotic World and the Burlesque Revival*. Image from Red Tremmel



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Jane Saks, Red Tremmel and Jessica Halem (from left). Photo by Tracy Baim

Former Chicagoan debuts 'Burlesque' film

BY TRACY BAIM

A few dozen Chicagoans were allowed to see a sneak peek June 15 of Red Tremmel's much-anticipated documentary, *Exotic World and the Burlesque Revival*, about the burlesque movement in the United States.

If the team behind the film doesn't raise an additional \$15,000 in the next four weeks (to cover music and other post-production costs), the film may not be distributed.

Hosted by Jane M. Saks and the Ellen Stone Belic Institute for the Study of Women and Gender in the Arts and Media, the screening featured a post-show discussion with Director/Producer Tremmel and Director of Development Jessica Halem. Both are former Chicagoans, and Halem headed the Lesbian Community Cancer

(now Care) Project for several years.

Those featured in the film include both octogenarians who performed in the 1940s and 1950s, and those who are trying to survive in the modern burlesque revival: Satan's Angel, Tempest Storm, Bambi Jones, Lottie the Body, Toni Elling, Ricci Cortez, Tura Satana, Mitzie St. Clair, Kitten Natividad, Dirty Martini, Julie Atlas Muz, The World Famous *Bob*, Alotta Boutte, Simone de La Ghetto and Miss Indigo Blue.

"Filmed between 2001 and 2010, *Exotic World and the Burlesque Revival* is the story of a goat farm in the middle of the Mojave Desert that became ground zero of the largest burlesque revival since the 1940s," the producers note.

What is most important is the decidedly queer and feminist perspective of this film. It is a fantastic documentary, and one that I hope makes it not just to film festivals around the world, but also to TV and DVD very soon.

The filmmakers would like support through the Kickstarter campaign. See <http://exotic-worldthemovie.com/> and click on the "Donate" button.

BOOK REVIEW

In and Out of Hollywood

Written by Charles Higham
\$29.95; Terrace Books;
306 pages

REVIEW BY TERRI SCHLICHMEYER

It was just an accident.

Nobody meant for it to happen. It was just one of "those things," only orchestrated when the Cosmos met and decided that it was Your Turn.

Which is not to say that it was a bad thing. For once, it was a good accident.

In the new book *In and Out of Hollywood* by Charles Higham, you'll read about an accident that launched a career, and the story of the man whose life was affected.

Born to affluence in 1930s England, Higham grew up largely raised by nannies. His parents split when he was but a baby; his distant father and stepmother were busy partying and his mother was someone young Charles barely knew. A few years later, after his father died and his stepmother sexually abused him, Higham moved back with his mother but she didn't really want him. He interfered with her new marriage and her succession of lovers.

Tall, wan and sickly, Higham shunned sports and college in favor of working as a clerk in a bookstore. He started writing poetry, and though his stepfather sneered at his talent, Higham was praised by other writers and was published. Still, he thought he might have a better life in Australia, so he and his new wife emigrated.

Not long afterward, they split. By this time, Higham had recognized and come to terms

with his own attraction to men; perhaps not coincidentally, his wife fell in love with a woman.

While at work for various newspapers in Australia and given "a remarkably free hand," Higham met and interviewed several celebrities and was fortunate to see them at their best and worse. Though he had always been fascinated by movies, he was equally fascinated by those who made them, and he brought his interest to his readers. In 1963, on behalf of the newspaper for which he was working, he was sent to Hollywood to interview stars, directors, and producers.

There, he discovered something that "put [him] on the map forever."

In 1942, Orson Welles had started a documentary in Brazil that was never finished. The footage lay in cans at RKO, owned by Desilu. And possibly as an accident (or possibly not), Higham saw the film.

And this book would be a thrilling adventure of treasure found and life lived, if it weren't so darn tedious.

As a biographer, Higham makes the life stories of others seem so much livelier than he makes his own. I have to admit that, yes, he shares plenty of anecdotes of brushes with Hollywood's (long-dead) best and (once) brightest, but the stories are presented abruptly and almost as an interruption of another thought, which serves to keep a reader either surprised or annoyed.

I took it as the latter. This book, in fact, felt fusty to me.

Want something else? Look for *Sex Lives of the Famous Gays* by Nigel Cawthorne; or *Dishing Hollywood: The Real Scoop on Tinseltown's Most Notorious Scandals* by Laurie Jacobson.

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BY DAVID BYRNE
WITH TONY PEREGRIN



Ellis.

At this year's Alt Q Festival, **Ellis** captivated the audience with her contagious laugh. Alone on the stage, she opened with the mesmerizing "Blackbird," from 2008's *Break the Spell*. Her latest outing, *Right on Time*, features her humorous ode to java, "Coffee Song." The title track's chorus beautifully compliments Ellis's guitar-plucking. The Minnesota-based singer-songwriter returns with a concert at Schubá's, 3159 N. Southport, on Thursday, July 7, with female folk quartet *Blame Sally* also on the bill.

Good luck trying not to snap your fingers to the rhythm of *Live at Enrico's* by **Josh Klipp and the Klipptones**. Backed by a trio of instrumentalists, Klipp revisits to his jazz roots with a great assortment of classics. Pianist John R. Burr has a key role here, flirting with the San Francisco crooner on "The Way You Look Tonight" and "I've Got the World on a String." Whether tackling up-tempo numbers like "I Won't Dance" or "Route 66" or the ballads "Bewildered," Klipp covers the material here seamlessly.

On his full-length solo debut, *Won't Stop Now*, Klipp hints to the desire to remake standards with "My Funny Valentine" and "Summertime." Can't get enough of Klipp? Check out his video to "Little Girl."

Acclaimed hit-maker **Linda Perry** is in a group again, with Tony Tornay in *Deep Dark Robot*. The duo's *8 Songs about a Girl* is out now. Perry shrieks over crunchy rock 'n roll, as heard on "I'm Coming for You!" and "Won't You Be My Girl?" The pair's shining moments are the set's slower numbers. "You Mean Nothing to Me" is softly sung and "Speck" is a quiet piano based ballad. Perry even evokes Tom Waits on "Can't Getcha out of My Head," by singing "feeling like a junkie that's jonesin' for a broken heart." The CD *8 Songs about a Girl* certainly follows love stricken emotions on a rollercoaster ride.

Swedish quintet **The Sounds** steps forth with its most electronic and pop effort yet with *Something to Die For*. The opener "It's So Easy" is slick while "Dance with the Devil" brings back some of the band's rock tendencies. On "Diana" lead singer Maya Ivarsson pleads for a woman to "stay with me tonight ... you always leave in the morning light." "Better off Dead" has a terrific, moody introduction, but it transforms into a catchy track. Fans of Blondie and sugary Scandinavian music should check out *Something to Die For* by The Sounds.

Need an alternative to Lady Gaga's *Born This*

Way or Kylie Minogue's *Aphrodite*? Look no further than *Make a Scene* by **Sophie Ellis-Bextor**. I find it criminal that this raspy-voiced vixen has yet to find the due respect on this side of the Atlantic. *Make a Scene* has four stellar collaborations that have already been released, highlighted by "Heartbreak (Make Me a Dancer)" with Freemasons and "Not Giving up on Love" with Armin van Burren. "Off & On" was originally intended for Róisín Murphy, but Ellis-Bextor claims this electro goodie as her own here. "Revolution" has a shout-out to

her signature hit "Murder on the Dancefloor." Available only via import shops, *Make a Scene* deserves chance either for a pride party playlist, long distance car trip or cardio routine.

This year's **Pridefest** boasts a familiar, crowd-pleasing mix of beloved local festival-circuit-touring cover bands like *Sixteen Candles*, *Rock Candy* and *Wedding Banned* intertwined with soul and dance divas Mya, Xelle, *Crystal Waters*, *Inaya Day* and *Ultra Nate* on Friday, June 24, and Saturday, June 25. For a complete schedule, please visit <http://www.chicagoevents.com>.

As I weed through multiple music press releases, it strikes me as odd that there is such a double standard when it comes to LGBT issues in the media. There are bands out there named *The Queers*, *Gay Blades*, *Lesbian and Gayngs*, which—as far as I know—have no queer identifying members. Even the most likely all-heterosexual British act *Gay for Johnny Depp* has a clever name, which was enough for me to shell out for an EP.

Having LGBT descriptors in the group's brand may serve as an attention getter, but it is unlikely you have heard of these bands otherwise. Sure, the LGBT market is a loyal one, but we have yet to see an out popstar win *American Idol* or top the charts stateside since Sir Elton John has claimed this feat with "Something about the Way You Look Tonight" backed with the reworking of "Candle in the Wind" in 1997.

When Adam Lambert came out, Gene Simmons told AOL that the *American Idol* runner-up should "shut the fuck up" and that "he's killed his career," because of the homophobia in the world.

Scissor Sisters is a festival headliner overseas. Yet in the band's native and puritanical America, the quartet tours in mid-sized venues, while respectably selling albums. However, Top 40 radio will not add this mostly gay group into heavy rotation.

So why would a blossoming act adorn a scarlet letter by having a queer-descriptor in its name? Maybe the bands want nothing more than to stir some curiosity, get a foot in the door or have a conversation starter, so much so that the intrigued will give their material a chance.

Whether or not we, as members of the LGBT community, find this flattering, let's hope there will be another out and proud chart-topper soon.

Soundtrack to summer: Recent albums by LGBT artists

- 8 Songs about a Girl by Dark Deep Robot
- The Mean Days by 8 Inch Betsy
- As American As Ones and Zeroes by Friend Slash Lover
- Tonight the Angels by Haberdashery
- See the Light by Jessica 6
- Live at Enrico's by Josh Klipp and the Klipptones
- Sing It Loud by kd lang and the Siss Boom Bang
- Glamazon by RuPaul
- Something to Die For by The Sounds
- Marker by TimPermanent

Comedian apologizes for anti-gay slur at Chicago's Just for Laughs



Jo Koy at his Just for Laughs show. Photo by Jerry Nunn

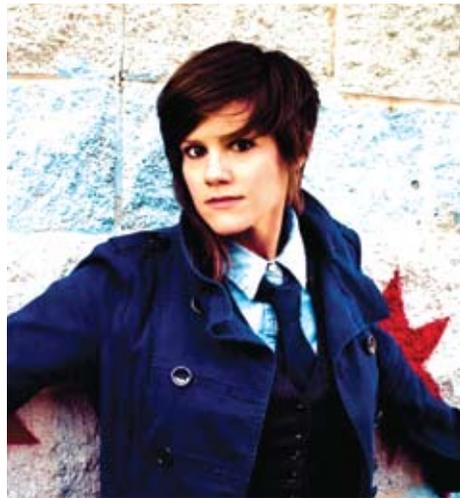
BY JERRY NUNN

Comedian Jo Koy has apologized after an anti-gay rant at a show he performed as part of Chicago's Just for Laughs comedy festival.

Koy posted on his website, "I sincerely apologize for the incredibly foul word I chose to use on stage last night in Chicago. It was a moment that I regret. I realize that words can be hurtful, which is never my intent. I'm truly saddened if I offended anyone with my poor choice of words, particularly the gay community. Homophobia is not funny."

Hot on the heels of Tracy Morgan's anti-gay slurs, Koy dropped in on Chicago to perform at The Vic Theatre, opening the festival June 15. At one point in his stand-up act he danced in a feminine fashion and said, "I made this dance extra gay since I am not gay." Later his zipper was open to the screams of several female fans in the front row pointing at his jeans. One male voice yelled, "I saw it"—to which Koy reportedly replied, "What are you looking at, fucking faggot?"

Tina Fey recently apologized for what her on-screen co-star, Morgan, said on his free time so this leaves one wondering what Chelsea Handler



Cameron Esposito sounded off on the Jo Koy show.

has to say to her largely gay following about her roundtable friend.

Local lesbian comedian Cameron Esposito emailed Windy City Times her reaction to the account: "I'm bummed to hear this, as I am whenever I hear 'faggot' thrown around at a show. In this case, it doesn't seem to be part of a joke; it was an off-handed insult.

"I frequently see comics use this word to either shock or shame audience members. It's not clever and the laugh (if there is one) comes from that shock or discomfort it has caused. A great comic gets laughs based on skill, not tricks. I'm constantly working to get there myself. Stand-ups spend their time on stage talking about what makes them angry, and the ways they feel

like an outsider in a mislead culture.

"It's an art based in cultural criticism. Watching a straight male comic get on stage and attack gay folks or throw around an insulting 'Faggot!' while also bemoaning the difficulties in his life, I think that the comic lacks any sort of perspective. I wish those comics would step it up. It's lazy, and disproportionately affects members of your audience in a way you can't understand.

"You may have felt uncomfortable when some dude in the audience talked about your zipper; I get hit on by dudes on the street and at shows all the time. It doesn't work for me, either. Yelling at the dudes normalizes behavior that I bet Jo Koy would be ashamed of offstage."

—Assistance: Andrew Davis

Jill Scott's new CD out

Grammy Award-winning R&B singer/actress Jill Scott has released her new album, *The Light Of The Sun*—one week from the previous date.

The album features such song as "So In Love," "So Gone (What My Mind Says)" and "Hear My Call."

The Light Of The Sun is currently available for pre-sale on iTunes. Fans can witness the Jill Scott Experience live at the New Orleans Superdome on the Fourth of July weekend where she headlines the Essence Music Festival alongside Usher, Kanye West and Mary J. Blige.

Sir Ari Gold releases CD

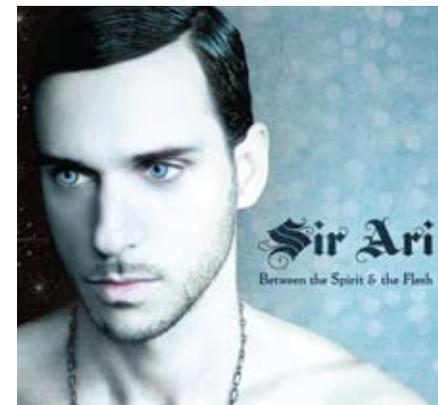
Openly gay pop artist Sir Ari Gold is out with his fourth album, *Between the Spirit & the Flesh*.

He has released two singles. The first is "Make My Body Rock" and the second is "Spar-

kle." The latter track—a self-empowerment anthem—features Sarah Dash of LaBelle. Visual artist and HIV/AIDS activist Duane Cramer directed the music video.

He told Advocate.com that the video for "Make My Body Rock" is a deconstruction of heterosexual marriage. Other songs on the CD include "Out Dancing," "New York Attitude" and "Over the Internet."

The CD is on iTunes and at <http://www.Ari-Gold.com>.



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MUSIC

God-des and She: Duo's on a roll

BY CONSTANCE RUHOLL

God-des and She are a hip-hop/pop/soul duo who grew up in the Midwest—and in the four years since their appearance on *The L Word* the duo hasn't had a moment's rest in their musical careers.

Windy City Times: How did the two of you meet?

She: We met in Madison, Wis. God-des was going to school there and she had already established herself as the MC God-des and she was working with another singer. I had a band called Doll and I was playing around town and we ended up doing a National Organization for Women's benefit together. Her singer was moving away and going to grad school for opera, and she asked me if I'd be interested in doing a side project because my band was my main focus. I like hip-hop. I didn't feel like I was that good at it yet but I wanted to try. We started working together and we had great music chemistry. Things just started happening and the rest, as they say, is history.

WCT: I hear you are campaigning for The Ellen DeGeneres Show. How is that campaign going?

She: I'm waiting, any second she is going to call us.

God-des: Yeah, we're waiting by our phone. We're waiting by the phone, by the email. We really believe it's just a matter of time before you'll see us on Ellen.

WCT: How did you land the gig on *The L Word*?

God-des: She and I were living in New York at the time and I was bartending at a bar in the East Village. A girl came up to me and said, "I saw you perform and you made me cry, you're

unbelievable." I said thanks and she said, "Have you ever thought about being on *The L Word*?" I was, like, "Hell, yeah—of course." She said she had a friend who is in charge of all the music for the show and asked if I wanted her to send her our music. I kept asking her if she was serious.

I was a little hesitant but she seemed sweet and genuine so the next day I got an email that she cc'd me on to her friend, Elizabeth Smith, about our music and then I also emailed her and said I was really looking forward to sending her our stuff. Sure enough, two days later I checked my voicemail from some real funky number. My stomach dropped to the floor and I called She freaking out. Sure enough we got on it, we had a great placement.

WCT: How have things changed since the show?

She: we've been full-time musicians since it aired so I would say it was good, I would say it was really good. It was a fun experience. We got a lot of work and a lot of exposure and over these years we've built up a fan base through hard work and grinding it out. Things are going along swimmingly.

WCT: How would you relate yourselves to the rest of the music industry?

She: I would say we're hip-hop/pop/soul. We really have our own unique style that we've created and it's hard to put it in a box. That's half the problem with industry people. They are like, "You're the best band we've ever heard but we don't know what box to check so we can't really mess with you." It's frustrating to have that told to you time and time again when they should just grow a pair.

WCT: How do you think you have progressed as artists since your first album?

God-des: I think we've progressed drastically.



God-des and She. PR photos

We've worked really hard and we've learned to create a unique style. It's not regular pop, and it's not regular R&B. We have all of these different musical influences that you can hear. A lot of the music or beats that we use aren't typical hip-hop. We've really just tried to do what we love and constantly learn and push the envelope. We work together to infuse our voices. We've got a lot more comfortable totally stepping out of the box. We don't care what sound people say we are we just do music that we love.

WCT: How would you define your personal unique style?

God-des: I would definitely consider myself an MC but I also consider myself a musician. I'm a drummer; I'm teaching myself piano and a little guitar. She's a guitar player and she can sing so many different styles. We are not just one-dimensional musicians.

WCT: Your new single on your third album, "Love Machine," is a very retro '80s groove track. How does the rest of the album com-

pare to that song?

She: I think the record is very eclectic. It's really all over the map. It's all over the place but all the songs are strong and we're very proud of all of them.

WCT: How do you feel about returning to the Midwest to perform in Chicago?

She: Very excited!

God-des: Holla! That's what I gotta say. Definitely excited.

She: It's where we're from. The Midwest is where we feel relaxed, that doesn't happen anywhere else in the country. It's a really good feeling. It feels like home.

God-des and She will be performing at Berlin, 954 W. Belmont, on Thursday, June 23, at 9 p.m. See <http://www.berlinchicago.com> or <http://www.god-desandshe.com>.



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JAMES MASON 27

James, 27, began his work volunteering as a peer advocate for the Broadway youth center. Soon he was offered a position as a young men's health specialist providing HIV testing and counseling to underserved youth as well as working as the lead facilitator of a program for young Black MSM called Eban. James has also contributed to other projects, including Fab and Condom Sense; in Condom Sense, he teaches local high school students how to protect themselves from HIV and other STDs.

Did you know? One of James favorite TV shows is Aqua Teen Hunger Force, and he loves fries.



LAUREN PETERS 26

Lauren, 26, has been active in politics since she was in high school. Graduating with a B.A. in political science from Michigan's Hope College, Lauren served as the president of the school's unrecognized Gay-Straight Forum. Lauren became more focused on gaining equality by working to train and elect more LGBT candidates to public office at all levels of government through her work at the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, where she served as the political manager. She then decided to focus on the Chicago area where she successfully managed the campaign for newly elected Ald. James Cappleman, the second openly gay alderman in the city. Lauren plans on continuing her work to elect more gay-friendly public officials in Illinois.

Did you know? Almost all of Lauren's family lives in southern Illinois.



PHIL REESE 28

Phil, 28, just completed his Master of Library and information Sciences program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He's now just begun his job as the manager of digital initiatives at the oldest LGBT newspaper in the United States, the Washington Blade, leaving behind his beloved adopted home state of Illinois. Phil's been an LGBT activist and media figure for more than a decade, beginning during his undergraduate years in Michigan. He is one of the co-founders of the UP Center of Champaign County, the LGBT community center there, and is a founding board member of the Civil Rights Agenda.

Did you know? Phil has been swimming since infancy (no joke) and could spend every day at the beach if he could just find a waterproof laptop.



MATTY ROSADO
24

Matty, 24, is a resilient young transgender woman of color who has survived much discrimination and hardship. Born and raised in Humboldt Park, Matty's service to the LGBTQ community began in the Paseo Boricua, where she did extensive volunteer work and gained a position as a health educator at Vida/SIDA. In 2008 Matty was crowned Queen of the Paseo Boricua Pageant, where she continued to work pro-actively to demand respect for Latina/o trans communities. Matty currently works at the Broadway Youth Center as lead facilitator for both the TWISTA and TYRA programs; serves as a mentor for other LGBTQ youth; designs and implements trans youth programming; and conducts training sessions to increase the cultural competency of trans and gender-related issues among providers.

Did you know? Matty can open beer bottles with her teeth.



REYNA WENCES
19

Reyna, 19, is a queer Chicago youth organizer, pro-immigrant rights activist and undocumented immigrant. She's a student at the University of Illinois at Chicago majoring in gender and women's studies and an active member of the Immigrant Youth Justice League (IYJL), a Chicago-based grassroots organization led for and by undocumented youth and with support of allies. She has worked on campaigns to stop the deportation of students and organized civil disobedience to pressure Congress to pass the DREAM Act. At the recent Netroots conference in Minneapolis, Reyna was named one of the recipients of the Freedom from Fear Awards, which honors courageous individuals.

Did you know? Reyna was terrified of aliens until she met Doctor Who.



JANE HERETH
26

Jane, 26, is the coordinator of support services at the Chicago Women's AIDS Project. Prior to working with women living with HIV, Jane worked with the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago's Sexual Violence Support Services, where she facilitated trainings and supervised volunteers on the Rape Crisis Hotline. Jane volunteers with the Night Ministry's youth outreach team, which serves many LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. She is also part of the Chicago Prison Industrial Complex Teaching Collective. Jane received a M.S.W. from the Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2009 and a B.A. in sociology from Grinnell College in 2006.

Did you know? A classically trained violinist, Jane recently picked up the mandolin and dreams of playing in a bluegrass band.



DILLIN DEE
17

Dillin, 17, has been a member of the About Face Youth Theatre Ensemble and the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance for two years. As a member of About Face, he was an understudy in Queertopia, a play that focused on oppression within the LGBTQ community. At the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance—a non-for-profit focused on creating student leaders, educating people on sexual orientation and gender identity issues and advocating policy change to be more inclusive of the LGBTQ community—Dillin has been the fundraising subcommittee chair. He was also chosen to represent the alliance in the 2010 National Gathering of GSA Networks and at the Federal LGBT Youth Summit.

Did you know? Dillin hopes to one day move to Japan, and is hoping to become a veterinarian in the near future.



TEDDY GREENE
29

Teddy, 29, has lived in Chicago for eight years. He is a hairstylist at Salon V, where he works hard to always inspire, create and change. This isn't the only way he achieves a piece of mind. Teddy Greene was diagnosed with HIV three and a half years ago. Since then he has involved himself in the HIV/AIDS community by training, running, biking for Test Positive Aware Network and now working with the Team to End AIDS Endurance Program. His passion to do something with the world of disease is shown through his fundraising efforts and attempts to spread awareness.

Did you know? He still sleeps with his childhood teddy bear—and, no, his name is not Teddy.



EDWIN CORBIN-GUTIERREZ
28

Edwin, 28, is the Anti-Violence Project manager at Center on Halsted. Before joining the Center, Edwin coordinated Strength in Unity, a health advocacy coalition led by The Association of Latino Men for Action (ALMA), and worked as a graduate research assistant in medical anthropology at Northwestern. Edwin was a 2005 Fulbright Fellow in Caracas, Venezuela, received his M.A. in performance studies from Northwestern and his B.A. from Emerson College.

Did you know? Edwin is training for his first triathlon and his second marathon to fight AIDS. People can sponsor him at <http://afc.aidschicago.org/netcommunity/eecg> or, better yet, join the team.



THIRTY

under 30



KOKUMO KINETIC

22

KOKUMO, 22, is an intersex/trans woman of color. KOKUMO uses film, theatre, music and poetry as her chosen mediums. She has a production company that amalgamates all of the aforementioned into "black queer activism." Currently touring her one-woman show, *The Faggot Who Could Fly*, she uses her life of sexual and mental abuse as a catalyst for personal and communal change. *The Faggot Who Could Fly* is KOKUMO's story of realizing her gender identity in relation to domestic violence and societal oppression. *The Faggot Who Could Fly* is a memoir and a start from this promising artist.

Did you know? KOKUMO is working on creating a television network for gender-spectrum people of color.



JOEY GRANT

27

Joey, 27, is a Chicago native and the founder of Mint Male Magazine and MintMale.com. Mint's purpose was to highlight the passionate and professional men in the gay community. After two years Mint is evolving into a multimedia site that will feature queer artists, videos, original web programming and a daily blog for Mint Male fans. Joey has coordinated dozens of events for several charities, such as GetEQUAL, HRC, Howard Brown and Toys for Tots. In addition Joey has worked on events featuring the arts, live theatre and fashion—all while holding down a full-time job as a hairstylist in Lake View at L'etoile Salon.

Did you know? Joey was on the Bozo show and made it to the grand prize game.



LINDSEY DIETZLER

28

Dietzler, 28, is a queer/trans activist and co-founder of Video Action League, which aims to transform, inspire and educate through the use of new media. His organizing began with local punk rock shows and evolved into acts of civil disobedience, flash mobs, rallies and conferences. Dietzler is a graduate of Columbia College Chicago, receiving his B.A. in cultural studies and minor in women and gender studies. Since then, he has worked with Equality Across America, GetEQUAL, Join the Impact Chicago, LGBT Change, The Civil Rights Agenda and The Yes Men in addition to the Video Action League.

Did you know? Dietzler is an avid cyclist and his bicycle is named Harvey Milk.



SUKARI STONE

15

Sukari, 15, a lifelong Hyde Park resident, just completed her freshman year with honors at Whitney M. Young High School. In February 2010 she joined the About Face Youth Theater (AFYT), a fabulous LGBTQA activist theatre group, and discovered her passion for the LGBTQA cause. Shortly after joining About Face, Sukari became a fierce advocate with the Illinois Safe School Alliance, an organization promoting safety and support for LGBTQ youth throughout Illinois. While working with the alliance, she has helped organize and facilitate several youth events, including summits and celebrations. This past year, she was one of the two student representatives on Gov. Pat Quinn's statewide Prevent School Violence Task Force. Sukari plans to continue to advocate for queer rights and equality outside and within the LGBTQ community.

Did you know? Sukari's favorite foods are grapefruit and potatoes—although not necessarily together.



NATHAN POLUM

26

Nathan, 26, graduated from the Chicago-Kent College of Law in 2009 and has since been working as an attorney at the Deratany Firm. Nathan has worked on numerous cases of significant importance to the LGBTQ community, including the case of a New York mother and her gay son, Michael, who received death threats from his classmates. Since starting work at the Deratany Firm, Nathan has represented numerous clients who have been harassed and discriminated against because of their sexuality and HIV status. Nathan is also a member of the Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago.

Did you know? Nathan enjoys spending time with his cocker spaniel, Stella.



MAX BEVER

25

Max, 25, is the director of community outreach for openly gay Ald. Tom Tunney in Lakeview. As a representative for the Boystown neighborhood, he facilitates several events and projects for the Chicago LGBTQ community, including the annual Pride Parade, Market Days and the upcoming outdoor Halsted walking museum the Legacy Walk. A former press aide and LGBTQ liaison for the governor's office, Max is also a member of Loyola University Chicago's LGBTQ Alumni Board and, while at school, helped to establish the annual Hate Crime Awareness Week.

Did you know? Max is involved in local theatre both as a published playwright and as a member of the gay-themed theatre company MidTangent Productions.

THIRTY

under 30

SIMON CHAVEZ

22

Simon, 22, started volunteering at the age of 17 as the benefit coordinator with Western Service Workers Association in California. He eventually came back to his hometown of Chicago, where he began to volunteer with the Center On Halsted. He started to volunteer with criminal court advocacy in Cook County, worked at Children's Memorial Hospital as a patient advocate and became a part of The American Foundation For Suicide Prevention and The Trevor Project, among other organizations. Simon is a crisis counselor on Center on Halsted's Anti-Violence Project Hotline, and leads the volunteer committee to prevent bullying and violence in schools. A pre-med student, Simon hopes to bring his passion for crisis intervention and violence prevention to emergency medicine.

Did you know? Simon rescued a retired racing greyhound named Noodles.



KEITH ECKER

29

Keith, 29, was born in the suburbs of Dallas. After receiving his bachelors from the University of Missouri's School of Journalism, he landed in Chicago in 2004, becoming an editor at a national legal magazine—but he eventually made the transition into comedy. He studied at the Second City, iO, the Annoyance Theatre and Chicago Dramatist, and has performed stand-up, sketch and improv comedy throughout Chicago. In 2009, he established Essay Fiesta, a monthly charitable reading series that features first-person, non-fiction narratives. The show has raised more than \$3,200 for Howard Brown Health Center and 826CHI. He is also a theater critic, a freelance writer and a founding member of the Chicago Story Collective, a theatrical group of essayists.

Did you know? Keith keeps a ventriloquist dummy in his hall closet. It's between a crocodile-shaped humidifier and a tackle box full of paintbrushes.



AAY PRESTON-MYINT

30

Aay, 30, has worked to promote independent arts and culture in Chicago since moving to the city in 2003. He has been a curator and organizer for several artists collectives across the city, including Bridgeport's Texas Ballroom, Rogers Park's Mess Hall and No Coast in Pilsen. Most notably, he has been an organizer, DJ and designer for Chances Dances—a queer dance party; safe space for gender expression; and platform for local activism, education and performance—since its founding in 2005. Aay is also an artist in his own right, and has exhibited extensively in Chicago as well as in San Francisco, Minneapolis and New York. A recent graduate of the Master of Fine Arts program at the University of Illinois, Aay's thesis work involving queer utopias and critical thought earned him the prestigious Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant in May 2011.

Did you know? Aay will eat almost anything once, makes the meanest key lime pie from scratch and hates amusement-park rides.



JONATHAN MITCHELL

27

Jonathan, 27, acts as a prevention specialist at Test Positive Aware Network, where he conducts HIV testing and counseling. He also facilitates a monthly group of more than 20 African-American MSM (men who have sex with men). Jonathan also sponsors SMART SEX prevention parties as well: He finds willing community members, hosts a BBQ at their residence and then facilitates an "HIV/AIDS 101" course. Jonathan is an aspiring blogger and YouTuber, and is planning on going back to school for photography and art direction in the near future.

Did you know? Jonathan has an obsession with plaid/flannel shirts—he has more than 40 of them.



SAMUEL HOEHNLE

29

Sam, 29, is an eastern Iowa native. He went to Coe College and graduated in May 2005 with a B.A. in political science and a minor in theatre. In 2006 he moved to Chicago to work with AmeriCorps. In the first year he worked with City Year Chicago, helping tutor youth and helping run an afterschool program. In Sam's second AmeriCorps year, he worked with the National AIDS Foundation AmeriCorps program and was placed at the Center on Halsted to work in the drop-in space. After AmeriCorps, Sam went to work for Howard Brown Health Center in the outreach department; he now goes to various venues around Chicago and suburban Cook County to offer HIV/STI testing and referrals. He plans to attend graduate school for public health.

Did you know? Sam placed third in a sweet corn-husking competition and vows to return to earn the gift certificate that was so wrongfully taken from him by a Wisconsinite.



ALEXANDER SEWELL

23

A native of Chicago, Alexander, 23, is a political science major at Roosevelt University, where he once held the position of SGA president. Alexander is previous member of the Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus, an HIV/AIDS advocacy group closely partnered with the CDPH. In addition, he has volunteered with several political campaigns, supporting Democratic candidates who share his progressive values. Alexander has been involved in voter registration campaigns and advocacy for civil-union legislation in Illinois with the Civil Rights Agenda. Alexander is a 2011 New Leaders Council Fellow; the New Leaders Council aims to train and support the next generation of progressive political entrepreneurs.

Did you know? Alexander's middle name is Casanova.



THIRTY

under 30



STEPHEN LEONARD

26

Stephen, 26, moved to Chicago from Metro Detroit in 2006. He has since grown into an independent singer/songwriter, hockey player and community advocate. He released his debut album, *With a Pen*, in support of Join the Impact Chicago in 2010 and has also produced and hosted an array of events and fund raisers, including the Mary's Spotlight Variety Showcase; the Love and Let Bea Arthur Bar Crawl; and a year-long, weekly acoustic concert series for LGBTQ and supporting acts at the Wild Pug. When off the stage, Leonard is on the ice with the Chicago Gay Hockey Association. His most memorable experience to date is being involved with organizing the Blackhawks and Stanley Cup's participation in the 2010 Pride Parade.

Did you know? Stephen has performed (music) at Steamworks. Also, he will have a song included in the upcoming movie *Eating Out: Drama Camp*, set to premiere on Logo in July.



ANDREW RIPLINGER

25

Andrew, 25, is a founding board member and the current executive director of Rafiki Collaborative, a Chicago-based non-profit organization that works to build the capacity of organizations and institutions that promote the health and well-being of communities in Kenya. He is also the international program coordinator for the Adolescent Community Health Research Group at DePaul University. Andrew also sits on the Jr. Board of Directors at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC), co-chairing its policy and education working group, and is currently training for his third Chicago marathon with AFC's Team to End AIDS. Andrew is currently finishing his master's degree at DePaul in international studies, with a special focus on climate change policy, international development and sustainability.

Did you know? Andrew got malaria on his first trip to Kenya in December 2007—but don't worry, he's okay!



ARLINE WELTY

29

Arline, 29, co-founded Chicago Books to Women in Prison 10 years ago while thinking about race and politics at the University of Chicago. Today, the bookish queers and prison abolitionists of Books to Women in Prison have sent more than 100,000 paperback books through bars. Arline enjoys literary criticism, *Bitch* magazine and presidential biographies. She is the communications manager at PortionPac, a local manufacturer of sustainable cleaning concentrates.

Did you know? When she's not reading and writing, Arline is totally monogamous with her Wustof Grand Prix chef's knife.



VIRGIL ROBERSON

28

Virgil, 28, is a Columbus, Ohio native who is the program outreach coordinator for "Our Voice Advocating Health" (OVAH!), a collaboration between Test Positive Aware Network and Center on Halsted. He has proudly contributed to the world of non-profit since the age of 15, and some of the organizations he has worked with include Church of Open Door, South Side Help Center, Taskforce Prevention and Community, Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus and New York City's Gay Men's Health Crisis. In his spare time, Virgil walks the runway within the ball scene for the "House of Infiniti" as "Jaylin (Tallboy) Infiniti." He also provides condoms as well as STD and HIV literature in his outreach efforts to bars and barber shops on Chicago's South Side.

Did you know? Virgil is the proud gay mother of seven gay children whom he loves dearly.



LULU MARTINEZ

21

Lulu, 21, is a student at Harold Washington College and is double-majoring in education and Latin American and Latino studies. Lulu is a queer undocumented youth and organizer with the Immigrant Youth Justice League (IYJL). Born in Tlalnepantla, Mexico, Lulu moved to the United States with her family at the age of 3. Before her involvement in the immigrant-rights movement, Lulu focused her time on animal rights and art. She is currently working to combine her passion in the arts and politics.

Did you know? Lulu plans on painting a mural in her bedroom this summer. She is also thinking of moving to Georgia to continue the fight for undocumented youths' right to access post-secondary education.

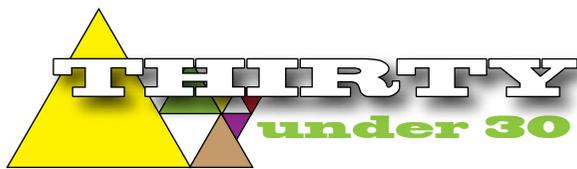
Did you know? Nathan enjoys spending time with his cocker spaniel, Stella.



ADAM SORKIN

As president of the LGBT student organization at Harvard Law School, Adam, 29, helped organize a national conference on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," as well as the first Democratic primary debate for Massachusetts governor that focused on LGBT issues. He led a protest against military recruiters on Harvard's campus that was covered in the national press, and his research was used in the third edition of the textbook *Sexual Orientation and the Law*. As an attorney at Schiff Hardin LLP, Adam served on the law firm's LGBT Diversity Committee; created the firm's first LGBT-specific recruitment materials; and persuaded the firm to recruit at an annual LGBT job fair and support LGBT non-profits. Adam currently serves as vice president of the Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago.

Did you know? Spring, summer and fall, Adam commutes by bike from his home in Andersonville to his office in the Loop.



MEESHA LOVE 22

Meesha, 22, is a native of Chicago, Illinois raised on the South Side of Chicago. Meesha first begin her work with UCAN's LGBTQ Host Home Program as a founding member of the Advisory Council consisting of youth and adults with an idea to better their community. The LGBTQ Host Home Program at UCAN partners with host volunteers who open their homes to LGBTQ young adults who experience unstable housing (homelessness). Meesha has also represented the Host Home Program at the national level in Washington, D.C., working to create a workplan for a national advisory council of LGBT leaders who meet annually to address LGBT youth homelessness.

Did you know? Meesha works at a nursing home near downtown as an activity assistant for senior citizens, where she enjoys spending time and making them laugh.



WILL LOPEZ 25

Will, 25, is originally from Florida. He recently graduated cum laude from Chicago-Kent College of Law and will be starting as an associate at Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP this fall. While in law school, Will was president of the school's LGBT law-student organization, the Chicago-Kent Lambdas. As president, Will organized the Chicago-Kent Lambdas LGBT Civil Rights Conference, which brought together more than 200 politicians, lawyers, professors, students and activists from around the Midwest to learn about topics such as Illinois civil unions, transgender rights and "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Will is also on the board of the Lesbian & Gay Bar Association of Chicago and has recently published a law review article on same-sex marital parentage.

Did you know? Will has two dogs, Mr. Darcy and Bennet, which are named after characters in Jane Austen's Pride & Prejudice.



PETE SUBKOVIAK 29

Pete, 29, is a policy coordinator at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC), where he works on several legislative and advocacy healthcare-access initiatives. He plans the annual Illinois HIV/AIDS Lobby Days, coordinates the Illinois Alliance for Sound AIDS Policy (IL ASAP) and the Midwest AIDS Policy Alliance (MAPA) as well as AFC's online advocacy efforts. He also works on expanding health care access and employment opportunities for the transgender community. His opinion editorials have been featured on the Huffington Post, Savage Love Blog, Bilerco Project, and several other online and print media. Pete sits on Congressman Mike Quigley's Health Care and LGBT Advisory Boards and is part of the leadership of the Citywide LGBT Coalition.

Did you know? A true Wisconsinite, Pete is a cheese-curd connoisseur.



ANTHONY GALLOWAY 29

Anthony, 29, is an independent public health consultant that specializes in HIV prevention and sexual reproductive health. He has worked with community-based organizations across the country in implementing CDC evidence-based community-level interventions in addition as serving in leadership roles on Pride committees. Currently, Anthony holds posts on the Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus, and the city and state HIV-prevention planning groups. Just recently he joined the Rocks Coordinating Committee to assist with the coordination of the Montrose Rocks Pride event. Anthony also is the chief creative officer for Art & Soul, a collective performance act for the LGBT community hosted at Circuit Nightclub. In 2004, Anthony was the recipient of the Creating Change award from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Did you know? Anthony enjoys attending and judging drag pageants.



JUAN CALDERON 25

Juan, 25, was born and raised in Humboldt Park, the center of Chicago's Puerto Rican community. Juan's experiences with Chicago's Puerto Rican Cultural Center, which date back to his enrollment in the Center's Consuelo Lee Corretjer Daycare, shaped his views regarding the importance of the community building, self-determination and LGBTQ health advocacy. As the youngest director of the project Vida/SIDA, Juan oversees the daily operation of many of Chicago's Latino prevention interventions, advocacy and LGBTQ services in Chicago's Near Northwest Side. Three years ago, he initiated a pageant to address homophobia and transphobia in the community and to create LGBTQ community ambassadors; now an annual event, this marks one of Calderon's greatest successes.

Did you know? Juan likes listening to musicians such as Shakira, Pussycat Dolls and Ruben Blades, and enjoys TV shows such as RuPaul's Drag Race and Family Guy.



JAMES HENDERSON 29

James, 29, was working in the nonprofit world before moving to Chicago more than six years ago. As the training manager at Chicago House and Social Service Agency for the last four years, James has worked on every aspect of building and implementing its social enterprise, Sweet Miss Giving's Bakery. He spends countless hours training and supervising classes of interns who are looking for an opportunity to get back into the workforce.

Did you know? When James is not at Chicago House or Sweet Miss Giving's, you can find him at the gym or preparing meals at home to dull the temptation to eat all the decadent sweets at the bakery. James also loves spending time with his beloved dog.



TELEVISION

Tyler Robinson of 'The Voice': Gay Mormon on show, Blake Shelton

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Tyler Robinson provided some soulful singing—and some unintended controversy—to the hit NBC reality-competition show *The Voice*. An out gay Mormon, Robinson was eliminated during one of the show's "battle rounds" when mentor Blake Shelton picked Patrick Thomas over Robinson—a decision some feel was steeped in homophobia (especially given other recent anti-gay incidents allegedly involving the country superstar), as some critics felt Robinson clearly outclassed Thomas.

As the show winds down, Robinson talked with *Windy City Times* about the show, Shelton and his surprise dream duet partners.

Windy City Times: First, I'd like to talk with you about the fact that you're a gay Mormon. How difficult is it to come out in that particular religion?

Tyler Robinson: It's different in every situation. I was lucky enough to have a mom who loves me even if I was a serial killer. She is one who loves unconditionally. When I came out to her, it was sort of an accident. We were sitting and talking as a family, and one thing led to another. My mom actually asked, "You like boys, don't you?" I said, "Well, yeah." That's when the hysterics began. [Laughs]

For about a year, we didn't have the same relationship we had before. For her, it was a big game-changer. Truthfully, being on the show and coming out on the show was probably the best decision I ever made because my relationship with my mom has never been so strong. Now, she's trying to set me up with guys now—which I think is hilarious. She's like, "My friend at school has a son who's gay, and he's really

cute..." [Both laugh.] I'm like, "Mom, I'm in L.A."

WCT: Now, how has the church reacted?

TR: I have only gotten love from everyone I went to church with when I was younger. I don't know if the church has a statement. I was written up in a Salt Lake City paper, and the article was fine; it wasn't rude at all. I think [anti-gay] comments come from people who just don't get it—but, yes, I've gotten nothing but love. I was truly surprised. I didn't go to church the past two years but I think a lot of them knew I was gay.

There isn't enough open dialogue [in the church], but I'm lucky to have an open-minded family. My stepfather wasn't raised Mormon and is from Boston, so when it comes to stuff like gay marriage he's very liberal. When it came to me, he didn't have a bad word to say—[although] I didn't know how he was going to react. When he told me he was OK with it, it was huge. They love the church but they also love me—and that's the most important part.

WCT: Let's move on to *The Voice*. How did you become part of that show? Was there a massive audition process?

TR: It was pretty long, but I had a friend who found out about the show. She actually auditioned in Chicago; unfortunately, she didn't make and she went back home to Sacramento. She called me and was like, "Hey, I tried out for this show called *The Voice*. The idea is really cool and I think you'd be a good fit for it." She told about a week before the auditions in Los Angeles; I didn't know how I was going to get there—I didn't have a job. The day before the auditions I decided to go, and I drove all night. They saw me and heard me sing; then they



Tyler Robinson. Photo courtesy of Robinson

said, "We'd love for you to come back tomorrow." So I had to learn two more songs and sing the next day. After that callback, I was interviewed on camera by a casting director. A few weeks later, I got a call and they asked me to be a part of the show.

WCT: There are so many people who feel that the wrong person was picked in your battle round. How do you feel about how things went?

TR: When it comes down to it, that's what I love about the show: It's really down to the coach you have. I don't think Blake made the wrong decision—I think he made the decision he was more comfortable with.

WCT: That's an interesting perspective, because the other mentors [Adam Levine, Christina Aguilera and Cee-Lo Green] went with you.

TR: Well, I didn't have any other choice [regarding my team]—Blake was the only one who swung his chair around for me. But I think there are bigger things coming for me; I've been talking with people. Maybe it'll be a single; maybe it'll be a guest spot on *Glee*.

WCT: There are also a lot of people who feel that Blake was being homophobic [in elimi-

nating you]. I've seen some very [strong] comments on the Internet.

TR: I can definitely attest that he is not a homophobe. He is truly one of the nicest, down-to-earth celebrities I've ever met. He doesn't even care about being a celebrity. He's so honest and he's a really good guy to be around. He's anything but a homophobe; he hugged me all the time. To call him a homophobe is really not fair to him; what he tweeted about [the allegedly anti-gay tweet that was a play on lyrics from a Shania Twain song] could have been misconstrued. He's like a big, friendly giant.

WCT: Looking at the rest of the contestants, who are you rooting for?

TR: I became such good friends with so many of the contestants. It's so hard to choose—you have Vicci Martinez, Nakia, Frenchie [Davis]. I think Vicci Martinez might be one of my major favorites; I just love her performance quality and her artistry. I love what Cee-Lo said about one of her performances: "It's like a war dance."

WCT: What type of music will be on your album?

TR: It's definitely going to be pop-soul—sort of like a male Adele, but a little poppier. It'll be in between Bruno Mars and Adele.

WCT: I do love Adele.

TR: Everyone loves Adele. I've never met anyone who doesn't like Adele.

WCT: I haven't either, come to think of it. However, I have to say I'm not the biggest Lady Gaga fan—at least with this latest CD.

TR: I am, although I don't like the second CD. I just love her—she's just the whole package. I rewatched her *Monster Ball* tour on HBO the other night. Her abilities to get at her audience are unreal. She's brilliant—I love her ideas and storylines.

WCT: Who would you love to duet with?

TR: Actually, I'd love to duet with a rap artist—like a collaboration with Nicki Minaj. I think it'd be really fun to do a song with her. I know it'd be cool to have this white, all-American boy on a rap album; I think it'd be groundbreaking and different. I listen to all rap music; I love the musicianship. I'd love to work with Kanye and Nicki, but I know it'll take time.

WCT: Sort of like Adam Levine being on Kanye West's "Heard 'Em Say."

TR: Yes. I love that song a lot.

One of things I like about Kanye West is his ability to produce and work with so many different types of artists. I think that's why I think he'd be willing to work with this white kid.

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Chefs and the City at Ritz-Carlton July 15

Vital Bridges—a non-profit organization that provides food and housing services to low-income men, women and children impacted by HIV and AIDS in Chicago—is hosting its seventh annual Chefs and the City fundraising event Friday, July 15, 7-9:30 p.m. at The Ritz-Carlton Chicago, 160 E. Pearson.

Guests will enjoy a night of delicious bites prepared by 30 of Chicago's most sought-after chefs, including Ryan Pitts, Stephanie Izard and Graham Elliott. There will also be a summer fashion show presented by Maria Pinto, creative director at Mark Shale, all while raising funds to support Vital Bridges and their initiatives.



Chefs and the City 2010.
Photo by James Atkins

There will also be a raffle, with tickets going for \$100 each (or 3/\$250). Prizes include a trip for two to Los Cabos, Mexico with airfare; tickets to the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen, Colo.; and gift certificates to 15 restaurants featured at Chefs and the City 2011.

The event will close with an exclusive VIP after-party beginning at 9:30 p.m. in the Pearson Room at the Ritz-Carlton.

Tickets are \$225 per guest through June 15, and \$250 each thereafter. A limited number of tickets to the after-party are available for an additional \$150 (with regular ticket purchase). See <http://www.vitalbridges.org> or call 773-271-5117.

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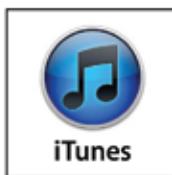
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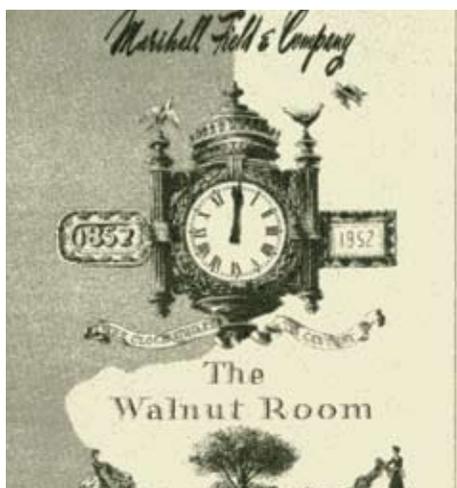
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BOOKS

Details of retail: The history of Marshall Field's



BY MARIE J. KUDA

If you ever told someone to meet you “under the clock,” then you are no doubt a long-time resident of Chicago. And if your friend was likewise, then you will have met under the old Marshall Field & Company clock at the corner of State and Randolph Streets. It has been a while since their name has been obliterated and their signature green bags gave way to Macy’s red. In the interim ownership of the city’s flagship store, its Michigan Avenue sisters, and several suburban siblings went from British owners, to Dayton-Hudson (later Target), to the May stores, until acquired by Macy’s parent company in 2005.

City and store: growing together

However, Gayle Soucek in her recent book, *Marshall Field's: The Store That Helped Build Chicago* (The History Press, \$19.95), maintains that since its founding in the 1800s the civic identity of the store and the city were inseparable. The philanthropy of the family extended to the Field Museum of Natural History, the University of Chicago and beyond. Soucek traces the merchant family history back to the Civil War days and forward. The rumored scandals are also reported—young Marshall Field II’s death of a gunshot from a denizen of the notorious Everleigh House brothel—and the poor business decisions that included taking a flyer on a wholesale house. That venture resulted in the Merchandise Mart, which wound up in the pockets of the Kennedy family.

The book is illustrated sans color with well-chosen photographs and graphics. It is a nostalgia trip for all who came downtown for the Christmas window displays, viewed the Trend House sample rooms, ate in the Walnut Room,

or savored Frango mints. In an appendix Soucek even gives recipes for making imitation Frango mints and the signature chicken potpies. Another half dozen recipes are sprinkled among photos of old Field’s menus and cookbooks.

Of course, hers is not the first book on the venerable store. On its 100th anniversary in 1952 Chicago historians Lloyd Wendt and Herman Kogan penned *Give the Lady What She Wants: the Story of Marshall Field & Company*. And one must note the delightful little book from the Chicago Architecture Foundation, which in addition to a 60-year construction history of the State Street store contains documentation of the architectural elements including color photographs of its Tiffany Dome. Soucek however, captures all the essentials, glitz and tradition, without getting bogged down by the personalities and architecture that are the strength of the other books.

The gay connection

Chicago glibetts are not mentioned in her book, but Field’s was a touchstone in most of our lives. As a kid from Pilsen I remember we did most of our shopping at Goldblatt’s on 26th Street. When I did go downtown in little hat and white gloves (mandatory in the 1940s) Field’s was out of our range. Later, I would bask in the ambiance of Field’s Men’s Store (shopping only on the 1st floor for good leather gloves, belts and handkerchiefs). But by the 1960s Field’s had become part of my courtship ritual—surprise her with a peek at the Tiffany Dome, then tea in the Walnut Room, over to the Art Institute, followed by a walk down Michigan Avenue to the Tribune Tower to explore the stone inserts from around the world.

Pulp novelist Valerie Taylor used to meet her soul mate, civil rights attorney Pearl Hart, for an occasional lunch in one of the Field’s restaurants. In a biographical sketch of Ms Hart published after Taylor’s death she recalls Hart telling her that as a young attorney in the early years of the last century she went on a spending spree at Field’s with her first real paycheck.

In 1934 Gertrude Stein visited Chicago to lec-

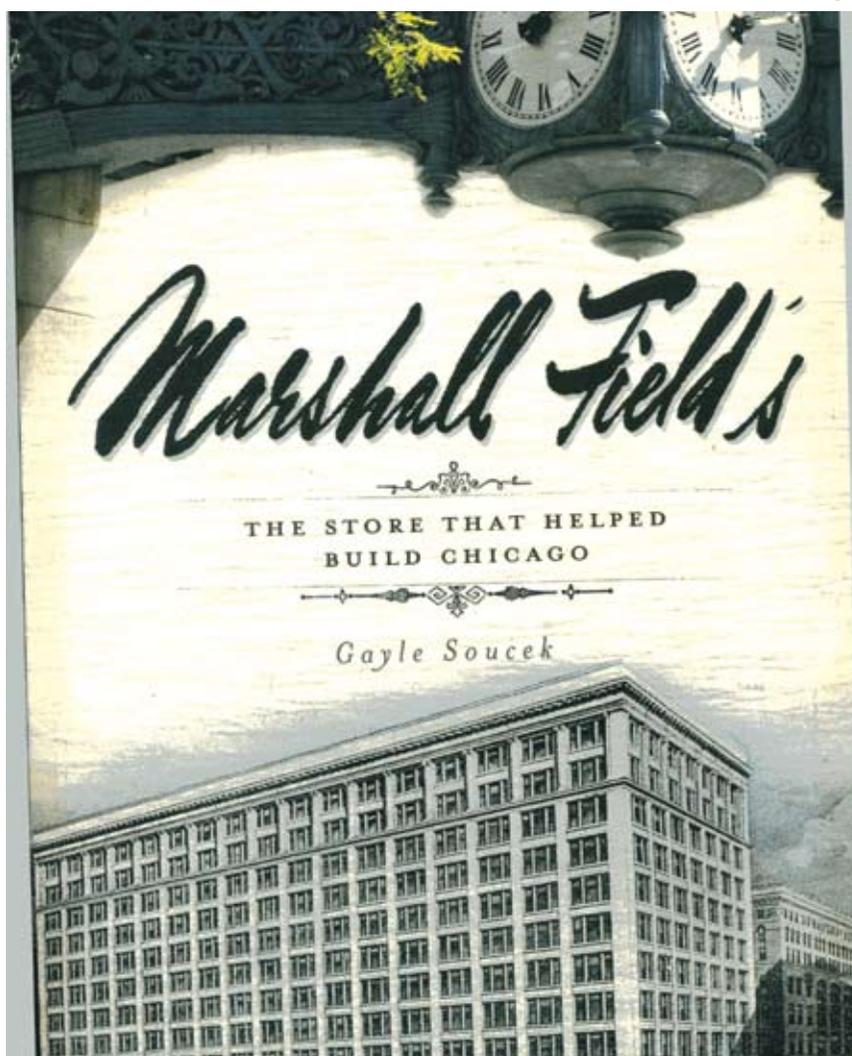
ture at the University of Chicago and to catch her opera *Four Saints in Three Acts* at the Auditorium. In her autobiography *Fanny Butcher*, doyenne of Chicago book reviewers, reported that when Stein “autographed books at Marshall Field’s the crowds were so great that the elevators couldn’t stop at the book-department floor. She was literally the talk of the country.”

Justin Spring in his book *The Secret Historian* (2010) notes that Sam Steward worked as holiday help in the book department in 1946 “. . . Field’s had long been well known in Chicago as a homosexual cruising ground and many of its employees (including Steward’s boss) were homosexual.” Steward had a sexual encounter in a freight elevator stopped between floors with young Roy Fitzgerald who worked in the Gift Wrap department. Fitzgerald would, of course, attain stardom as Rock Hudson and later become linchpin of the public’s awareness of AIDS.

End of an era

Gayle Soucek details the demise of the Field empire—including Oak Park, Oak Brook, Old Orchard, Water Tower and even the old Cloud Room and Blue & Gold Café at Midway Airport—and the futile fight Chicagoans put up to keep the Field’s name on the flagship State Street store. The merchant family created a business that lasted three times as long as the combined terms of the Mayors Daley. Change is inevitable, but memories persist. Soucek’s book is a history lesson and a module from which we can retrieve megabytes of the past.

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Cover and pages inside the book. Images courtesy of Marie J. Kuda



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BOOK REVIEW

Nina Here Nor There: My Journey Beyond Gender

by Nick Krieger
 \$15; Beacon Press; 202 pages
 REVIEW BY SALLY PARSONS

Nina Here Nor There is about Nina's journey toward self-defined identity and self-love.

The memoir is a journey that grabs your heart and stretches your brain into new ways of thinking. It deals with "top" surgery (removal of breasts) and opens a discussion of nuanced forms of self-identity, subtle distinctions in learning how to express who we are. While there are some descriptive details of top surgery and its aftermath, Nina Here Nor There is more about the emotional and cognitive shifts that lead up to whether to proceed with such a life-changing event.

Nina does her best, and succeeds quite well, at conveying how augmenting her physical anatomy with various items enhances her comfort level with her body. She explains, for instance, how using a "packer" allowed her to relate to her body below the belt. "... it made me feel comfortable and at peace." Yoga also brings her in touch with her body and she grows to rely on the practice more and more.

This, the author's first book, is full of humor and fascinating detail about life in the Castro, particularly among Nina's friends, several of whom are in various stages of preparing for or adjusting to top surgery. But, most of all, the book is about the author's trek from Nina to Nick.

Fresh from her travels, Nina finds the Castro a confusing place at first. Style signposts such as earrings, longish hair, underwear preference "...

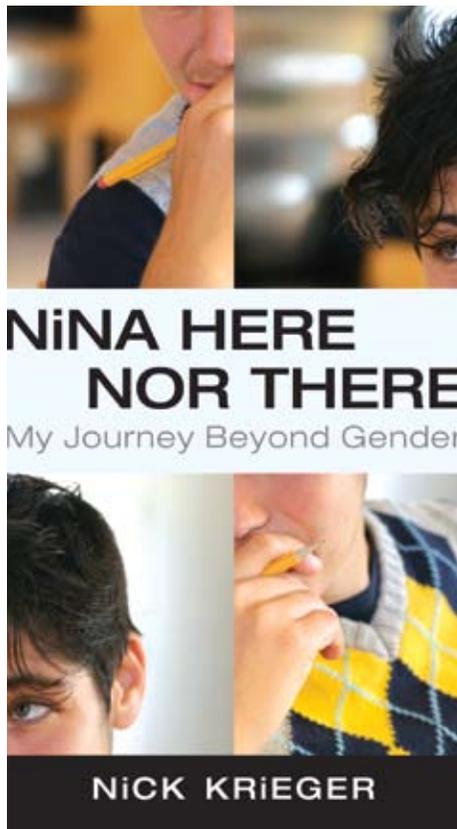
failed to indicate whether a person self-identified as man, woman, or something else entirely." There are language landmines as well. Words both help us make meaningful distinctions and close down possibilities at the same time. For example, Nina wonders why Bec (short for Rebecca) doesn't switch to a male name since she has had top surgery. Nina wonders if she should refer to Bec as "he" or "she?"

Nina Here Nor There is an easy read. You soon fall in love with Nina and her friends—Zippy, Melissa, Jess, Greg, Ramona and more—who provide her support, inspiration and philosophical argument.

Humor passages balance the gravity of the subject, as when, early on, Nina recounts how she weighed her breasts on a grocery store produce scale but confesses the measurement of four pounds each might be a little off as she had to hurry before anyone spotted her.

Nina starts her interior journey with an ill-formed idea of who she is. She converses with Jess about why they want to change their bodies. Nina reasons that, since she doesn't want to be a man, her flat-chest desire must be vanity, like cosmetic surgery. Jess counters it's about identity too. Nina: "I could tell she was waiting for me to agree or object, but I had no response, let alone an identity—if the gender pronounced at birth wasn't a given, I wasn't sure where to find one [identity]."

By the end of the book, Nina, soon to be Nick, is comfortable with her evolving self. In a mocking letter from a fake therapist to "Dr. Surgeon," she describes Nina: "... born female, Nina resembled a girl, then woman, then boy, and is on



terrains, and especially for the families and friends of those considering top surgery change or already experiencing its rewards and challenges.

You can follow Nick's journeys on his website, <http://www.nickkrieger.com>. In his bio at the website, Nick describes how he (as Nina) majored in "Biological Basis of Behavior" in college. Then Nina headed to Sydney to play soccer and basketball in the Gay Games, and traveled throughout much of southeast Asia. Nick got his MFA in writing at the University of San Francisco. His travel writing has won him several awards and he has been published in venues such as Curve, Town & Country and PlanetOut.

Gerber/Hart book group

Gerber/Hart Library will begin a new book group, the BTQ Book Discussion Group, that focuses on books pertaining to bisexual, transgender and queer topics. The schedule for the spring and summer of 2011 is as follows:

—Tuesday, July 12: Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides

—Tuesday, Aug. 2: Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out, ed. Lorraine Hutchins and Lani Kaahumanu

The BTQ Book Discussion Group will run 7:30-9 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month. The suggested donation for the group is \$2 for Gerber/Hart members and \$3 for non-members.

Gerber/Hart Library is located at 1127 W. Granville. For more information, call 773-381-8030.

her way to becoming, well, I have no idea. But whatever the ending, it will be happy."

Most touching is the developing breach we witness between Nina and her father, culminating in the complete break that Nina makes with him in a brave independent stance against his refusal to offer her support. Yet, her love for him is achingly apparent.

Nina's mom, on the other hand, rallies and comes to San Francisco to be by her daughter's side when it counts, even though she understands little about what is unfolding.

This book is a worthwhile read not only for anyone contemplating top surgery, but also for those open to understanding different cultural



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NUNN ON ONE: TV

Marion Ross: Icon on family and Audrey Hepburn



BY JERRY NUNN

Five-time Emmy nominee Marion Ross stars in the new Hallmark production *Keeping Up With The Randalls*. Forever remembered as Marion Cunningham on the television hit *Happy Days*, Ross has managed to stay in the world of acting for decades.

Her first film, *Forever Female*, was back in 1953, with Ginger Rogers and William Holden. After a successful movie career she moved into our homes on the television set with *The Brady Bunch*, *Happy Days*, and the *Love Boat* in the '70s. After numerous recurring roles on TV shows such as *The Drew Carey Show*, *That '70s Show* and *Gilmore Girls*, she recently appeared on *Grey's Anatomy* and *Nurse Jackie*.

With this role during a Randall family reunion she is none other than Grandma Dorrie, the sweet lady who accepts Alicia Crosby, played by Kayla Ewell from *The Vampire Diaries*, into the clan full of drama. In this intimate interview we talked family, retiring and getting *Lost* in Yonkers.

Windy City Times: Hello, Miss Ross. I just watched your film, *Keeping Up With The Randalls*, and you had such a sweet part in it.

Marion Ross: She's fun, isn't she? I almost have that kind of life here on *Happy Days Farm*, although we are not so competitive. We have all kinds of games going here. I call my place *Happy Days Farm*.

WCT: Really? And it's in California?

MR: Yes, and everyone wants to come because my husband is a very good cook. You know I have everything. Isn't that something? I have a tennis court, and a wonderful bocce court. We put a hundred dollar bill in the old trophy and whoever wins the bocce game gets the money.

WCT: Nice! I want to come play...

MR: Usually some person we don't know very well wins it. They say, "How do you play this?" You know, one of those people...

WCT: I hate that!

MR: Then he beats us all. We have ping pong going on, we have the pool, it is a sweet life. In the Hallmark movie it is a bit too competitive. The moral is you hang in there.

WCT: Do you play badminton like *The Randalls*?

MR: I do but it's a stupid game. It is about as stupid as croquet. Croquet is another really dumb one. I got injured right away in the movie, which is a really good thing.

WCT: Right. Then you can get out of playing the game.

MR: Then I didn't have to do rope climbing.

WCT: Poor Grandma Dorrie is beaten up so much. I feel bad for you.

MR: I know! Did you see me doing the Wii?

WCT: I did.

MR: I was boxing and the next day my thighs were so sore. It was from all the crouching playing that Wii thing. *[Both laugh.]*

WCT: Do you have a big family to draw upon for this *Randalls* experience?

MR: Well, now they are all grown up so they bring their wives over and there are about eight now. My daughter's in-laws like to come now. It

is fun and not something I had when I was a kid.

WCT: I really enjoyed you on ABC's *Brothers & Sisters*.

MR: Thank you.

WCT: That was a very different role.

MR: Oh, yes. Did you see me on *Nurse Jackie*?

WCT: I only watched a few episodes of that one.

MR: I cried; I looked so awful! It took me four hours to make me up. I played an abandoned person. If we call that acting, that's acting!

WCT: You have been in the business for so long.

MR: I have—like, 60 years now.

WCT: I heard you changed the spelling of your name when you were young from "Marian" to "Marion" because you felt it looked better on a marquee. So you knew you would be famous.

MR: Yes, and I must say you really have to be terribly determined. This is a very tough business. Not everyone can go into it, it is really tough, boy, you have to really want it because all of the hungry ones will get ahead of you.

WCT: You were in the movie *Sabrina*.

MR: Barely.



Marian Ross.

WCT: So a small part.

MR: Yes, very little.

WCT: I loved Audrey Hepburn.

MR: Ohhh, didn't we all? I should tell you this story. I was under contract to Paramount and I was like 22. One day I was up in hairdressing and underneath the hair dryer. This girl was next to me and then she gets up and was so charming you want to die. It was Audrey Hepburn. She was exactly my age. She had just come to do *Roman Holiday* and she was so thin. I went right out, bought two candy bars and ate them right away!

WCT: That is funny.

MR: But I am still here and I got to be Mrs. C. So what is so bad?

WCT: Do people identify you so much with that character that they want you to be their mother?

MR: Oh, yes and I play right along with it. I get anything I want! *[Both laugh.]*

WCT: Can you believe the career that Ron Howard has had?

MR: Well, no because we knew he was going to be a director but we didn't know that he was going to be head of the world. He seemed like an ordinary boy and a nice guy. But he is not an ordinary guy.

Marion Ross (lower left) and the cast of *Keeping Up With the Randalls*. Photo by Carin Baer

WCT: No, he is not. What has been the character you have played most similar to you?

MR: Mrs. C., and if you are going to do a series then you should have a character that is pretty close to you. It is very natural. What happens also is the writers watch you all week and they begin to write for you.

WCT: Oh, I didn't know that.

MR: Yes, [it's about] your rhythm. They know you well. I always tell young actors make friends with those writers because they are working blind. The more they can tell what you can do the more likely they are to write to you and your talents. Don't be fighting with the writers and throwing the copy down saying, "Who wrote this?" Make some friends!

WCT: Great advice. What else do you have coming up?

MR: I am going to do a play next summer in Toronto, *Lost in Yonkers*. I am playing that mean Jewish grandma.

WCT: Oh, I love that one.

MR: Yeah, I am learning that in depth so when I get up there I won't give it a second thought.

WCT: That is going to be a tough part.

MR: You are so young you may not know I did a show called *Brooklyn Bridge* where I played a Polish Jewish grandmother. She wasn't nearly as mean as this old lady. I can understand why she is like that...

WCT: Tough as nails.

MR: Well, she has been taught this. I love having something that I am memorizing or thinking about. The art of acting is just synthesizing many things. As you get older it is quite rich. We have seen a lot of different kind of people. Unconsciously, we draw upon all of this stuff. I always have this theory that we carry in our bodies the cells of all mankind. That makes sense, doesn't it?

WCT: Definitely.

MR: It is the concept that within myself, I can find it then I can be that person. I am intrigued with that. My children say, "Mother, you stare at everybody." I say, "I am sorry. I meant to be staring at you!"

WCT: I get it. You are studying them.

MR: Very unconsciously.

WCT: I am a starrer, too; don't feel bad.

MR: Hmm, look at the murderer...

WCT: Are you planning on retiring from this? You are still going strong.

MR: Nope. This business kind of retires us. I do a lot of voiceovers, such as *SpongeBob SquarePants'* grandma. Did you know that?

WCT: I didn't know that. That's good!

MR: That's a biggie, and *Handy Manny*, too. Last summer my darling Mr. Paul Michael [Ross' husband] did a play together at The Globe Theatre in San Diego, which is a really world-class theatre, called *The Last Romance*. It was written for us by the young man who wrote *Memphis* on Broadway and he won the Tony Award for it. His name is Joe DiPietro. We did a play of his a couple of years ago and got to know him.

I would call him in New York. My husband would say, "Don't call him." But I called him anyway and say, "You know you write for old people really well." He is a young man of about 45. "Why don't you write us a play?" "What?" he said. Then I would wait six months and call him again. "How is it coming with our play?" "What?" He would say. Finally after two years, me and my husband wooed him in New York and got to know him, he gave us the play *The Last Romance*. It was a wonderful experience. We just did that last summer. We are still resting on the laurels of that.

WCT: I just asked Cloris Leachman when she was going to retire and she said, "When someone hits me on the head with a lead pipe!"

MR: *[Laughs]* Yes, see we don't need to. Isn't that nice? As long as we have our wits about us. I suppose they could hold up a card and we could read it if we could see it.

WCT: People could feed you lines forever.

MR: Well, I have worked with actors where a lot of help was done that way.

WCT: I bet.

MR: That is not very much fun. Fortunately, life changes so gradually. All of the changes we will never know when it happens.

WCT: Very true. It was so great to talk you today.

MR: Thank you very much, dear.

The world premiere of *Keeping Up With The Randalls* is July 16 on the Hallmark Channel. For details and listings visit <http://hallmarkchannel.com>.

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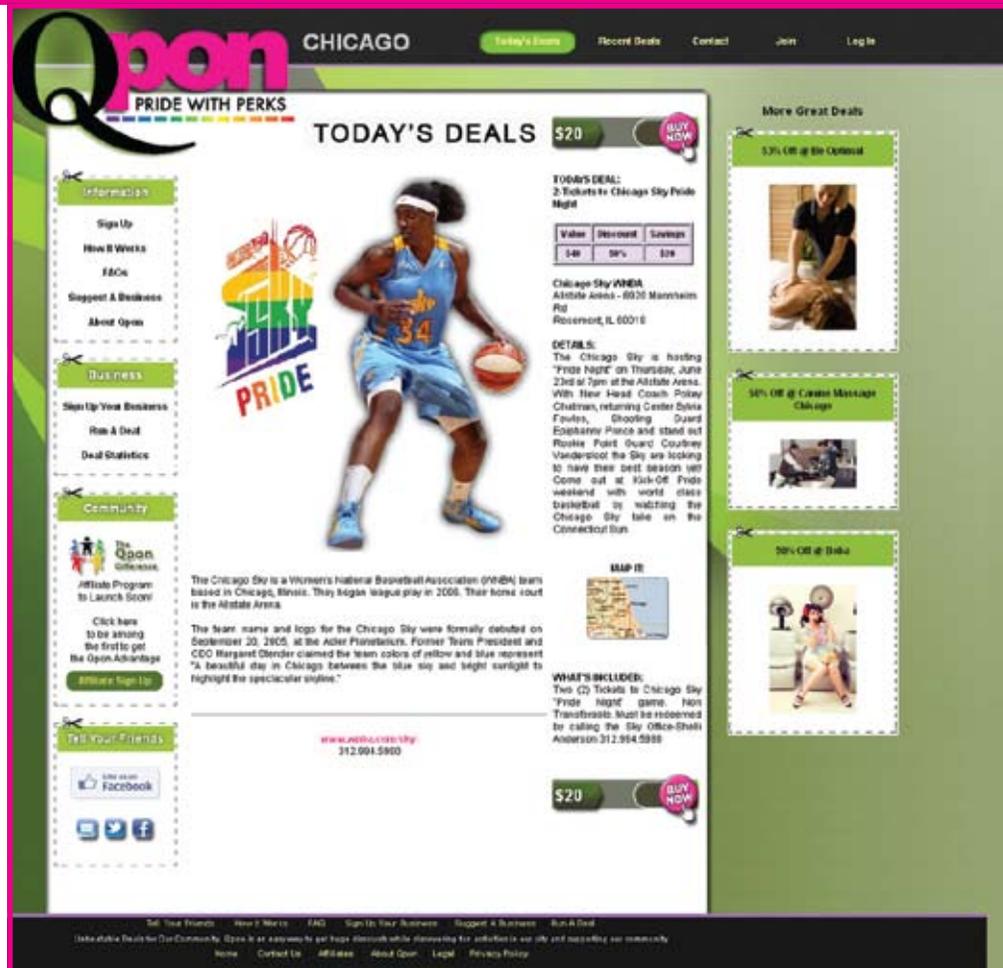
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Celebrations

Share your special moments with the community in Windy City Times' new announcement section!

Museum of Broadcast Communications hosts open house

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Illinois Senate President John Cullerton helped mark the end of major core and shell construction of the new Museum of Broadcast Communications, 360 N. State Street, during a June 16 ceremony.

The open house was a benefit for the non-profit MBC. Several of the museum's most prized artifacts were on display, including one of the original Charlie McCarthy puppets (a radio icon created by the late Chicagoan Edgar Bergen), the postcard-stuffed drum from WGN's Bozo's Circus, the camera used for John F. Kennedy's close-up during the first televised presidential debate in 1960, The Blob from local TV favorite Bill Jackson, the Family Classics set (with Roy Leonard in person) and a baseball bat chair from the collection of beloved sportscaster Jack Brickhouse.

Guests were also able to play the Grand Prize Game (for real prizes) and meet WGN's Bozo the Clown and the legendary Rich Koz (Svengoolie) from WCIU-TV.

The Museum is still raising final finishing funds. See <http://www.museum.tv/>



An artistic drawing of the Museum of Broadcast Communications building.



MBC's Bruce Dumont (left) with Chicago broadcast legend Roy Leonard. Photo by Hal Baim. Many more photos online at www.windycitymediagroup.com



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Celebrations

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Gloria Gaynor



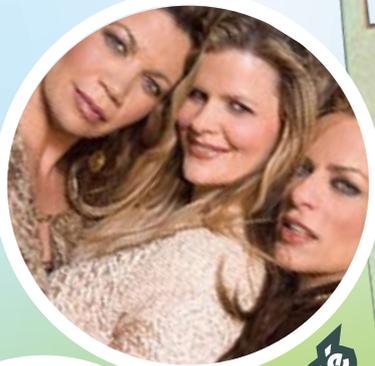
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TJ wins Gay Idol



Windy City Gay Idol 2011 TJ Chernick.

Of the 12 contestants who competed for the title of Windy City Gay Idol 2011 on June 18 at Sidetrack, TJ Chernick gave the most charismatic performances and won the crowd's attention and votes.

Judge Mitchell Fain said, "What is fun about this competition is that we get people who are not necessarily performers professionally who come out and have a good time, and then every once in a while you get somebody who is extraordinary. It's really impressive."

As the winner, Chernick received \$1,000 in cash; a trip for two to Vancouver; a Miller Lite mountain bike; and a gift bag with several different theatre tickets. Chernick said, "I feel elated and I'm mostly grateful for the incredible friends and support that I've had, without them it would have been nothing." Throughout his performances his friends could be seen front row center cheering him on. After they announced the winner, his friends joined him onstage for a celebratory dance.

Text by Constance Ruholl; photos by Kat Fitzgerald, www.MysticImagesPhotography.com. Many more photos online at www.windycitymediagroup.com



Performer Cyon Flare.



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Windy City Gay Idol 2010 Matt Rivera.



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First runner-up Shaun Rajah.



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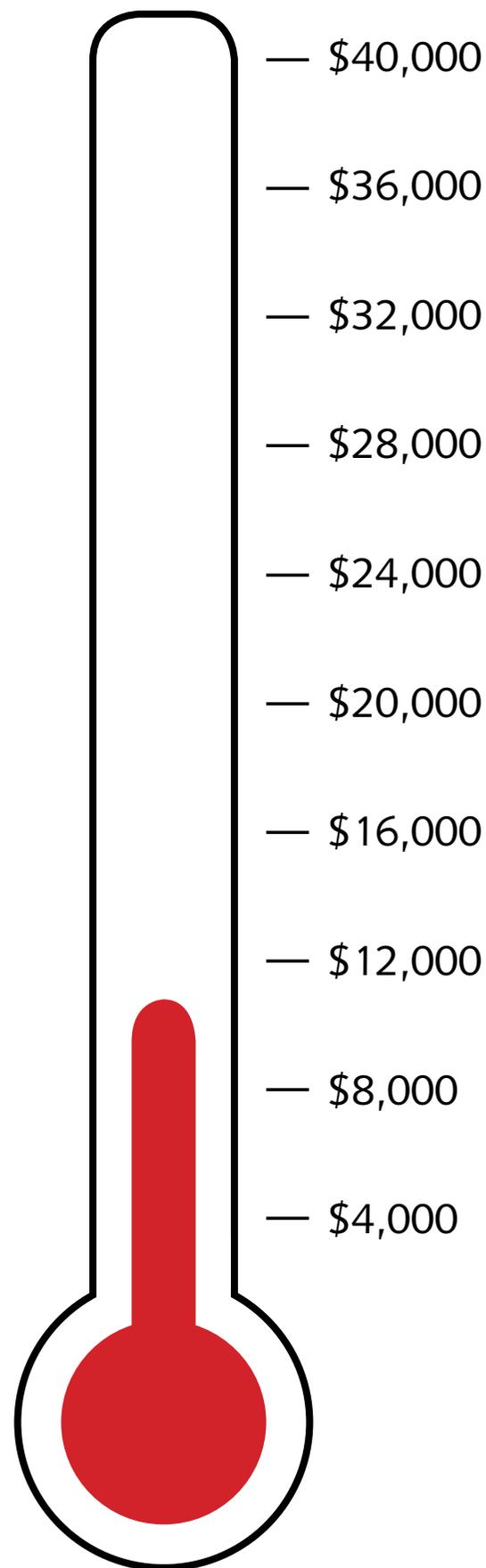
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**NUNN ON ONE:
PERSONALITIES**

B. Scott on coming out and Katy Perry

BY JERRY NUNN

Brandon Scott Sessoms—better known to fans as B. Scott—is raising the flag at Black Pride this year in Chicago. Sessoms moved into the spotlight with original YouTube videos and a personal website, <http://www.lovebsscott.com>, and is debuting the song “Kiss Kiss.” The “Multimedia Maven” called up for a quick chat recently.

Windy City Times: Heyyy, B! How did you get started with this life? You are from North Carolina?

B. Scott: Yes, I am from Ahoskie, N.C., which is a small Native American town. I grew up on a farm. I never quite fit in, needless to say, because I am multiethnic—my mother is Irish and my father is African/Native American.

I have always been different and androgynous.



B. Scott. PR photos

I was dealing with my sexuality but not really allowing myself to focus on that so I suppressed it because of the environment. I focused on how I could get out of this farm town in North Carolina. I found out about the North Carolina School of Science and Math. It is a boarding school for people who are gifted in science and math. I wanted to go so I could get away. I went there; then to University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a full ride. I came out my sophomore year in college.

WCT: So coming out was a process.

B. Scott: People look at me and assume that I have always been out and proud my whole life but that is not the case. I came out my sophomore year, when my ex-girlfriend's boyfriend kissed me.

WCT: Drama!

B. Scott: Then from there I graduate early from Chapel Hill. I went to Washington, D.C., for about four years. I was a realtor and did interior design. I made a lot of money but wasn't happy though. I broke up with my ex then moved to LA with three red suitcases. That's all I had was three red suitcases, honey! I had never been to L.A. a day in my life before. I started doing print work in 2005. I kept hearing, “You're too gay, too androgynous—if we wanted a girl we would have gotten one.” I did an ad for high-definition television when it first came out with Katy Perry. This was before she was the Katy Perry we know today, but I played her boyfriend in the ad. That was funny and a little tidbit for you. *[Both laugh.]*

WCT: When did you start your website?

B. Scott: I wanted to make a name for myself after that. In 2007 I started LoveBScott.com. In June of that year I did my very first YouTube

video about Shemar Moore's ding-ding. I was so excited about the nude pictures of Shemar! That video was posted on all of the major blogs. It snowballed after that.

I made more videos talking about my life, drama with my Ethiopian neighbors, my sister's death—I was real, I was me. This was therapy for me. Celebrities started watching and reaching out to me for interviews. That led to Mariah Carey, who is now one of my closest friends. We were just featured in Life & Style, where she did a piece about our friendship.

WCT: When did that come out?

B. Scott: It came out last Friday. She is such a godsend for me. Growing up being mixed heritage she was my idol. She gave me inspiration to be who I am, at least as far as my ethnicity goes. To celebrate it and not try to fit in, to be okay with who I was. To not only meet and interview her but become one of her closest friends is just amazing.

WCT: Who else have you interviewed?

B. Scott: I have interviewed her [and] Chaka Khan. Jamie Foxx is a huge fan of mine. He offered me my own radio show on Sirius XM. I did that for a year before I left because of personal reasons I needed to go on. I started making television appearances such as The Tyra Banks Show, Oxygen's Hair Battle Spectacular and Access Hollywood. I knew by coming to L.A. that I was interested in entertainment, but this is where God starts to work in your life and dreams become reality. You have to dream bigger and check things off a list to go for the next thing.

WCT: Now you have a single called “Kiss Kiss.”

B. Scott: Yes; I have been doing fun songs for awhile like “Paw Paw,” which is a dance I do. I have songs called “Androgynous” “Glamour and Glitter” and “Come for the Queen.” They have been fun songs but nothing serious. It was more just for the brand. The song “Kiss Kiss” is produced by Midi Mafia. It is fun and sexy. It is about not fighting with your man—make it right and “Kiss Kiss” up and down your body. *[Laughs]* It is naughty and fun.

WCT: Did you make a video for it yet?

B. Scott: I am in the process for making a video for it. We are commissioning the remixes now. It is coming on iTunes. It has been featured on many different blogs. It came out around the time of the Kim Kardashian song came out. I won in all the polls of B. Scott vs. Kim Kardashian!

WCT: Good for you; I didn't care for her song too much. I was rooting for her, though.

B. Scott: I was rooting for her, too. Girl, it seemed like she was very unenthused. Why did she sing the song if she didn't want to?

WCT: Right. I felt the same way.

B. Scott: That's Kim K. So the new video will come out within a month or so. It probably will pick up from where my “When Christmas Comes” video [leaves off]. Mariah had asked me to promote her second single off of her Merry Christmas II You album. I did a full-out video as if I was Mariah, but B. Scott style. One of the men in the video was Benjamin Patterson from Noah's Arc. We had a very sexy kiss at the end and he proposes to me. We are going to pick it up—maybe we are arguing on our wedding day and then it goes into a bedroom scene. He is very hot.

WCT: I was surprised that Mariah album didn't do better.

B. Scott: It did pretty good for a Christmas album in this day and age. People are not selling records like they used to. I think the album solidified her owning Christmas. “All I Want for Christmas” is a classic. Mother is almost 70 years old and has to play that Christmas album every year now.



WCT: Do you have an interview that you would love to do?

B. Scott: I put a video on YouTube recently saying that I am coming after Beyonce. I met her right before she did the performance on the Grammys with Tina Turner. She is very kind and a fan of mine. I would love to do the interview and she could teach me the “Uh oh!”

Another dream come true for me [happened recently, when] I was the host for Jeffrey Sanker's White Party in Palm Springs, which is the biggest gay part in the nation. I had a moment with Charo.

WCT: She is a blast to talk to!

B. Scott: She taught me how to do the “Sexy Sexy.” I loved it! I will cherish that moment for

the rest of my life. She is almost 80 years old and looks that fabulous.

WCT: You are coming to Chicago this summer.

B. Scott: I will be there for Black Gay Pride. I will be hosting their White Party, which is their biggest event. It is on July 3. I think the Taste of Chicago is going on at the same time. I can't wait to experience Chicago. I have never been there before. I will text you when I get there.

B. drops into the Mid Lounge Sunday, July 3, 10 p.m.-4 a.m. for White Haute, the official white event for Chicago's Black Gay Pride. Tickets are \$25 in advance at <http://luxseries.com>. For more of the “Maven” click over to <http://www.lovebsscott.com>.

Dance for Life's sneak peek



Dance for Life is the has been bringing awareness and raising funds for HIV/AIDS for over 20 years. Various dance companies partner together for a performance that sells out every year. For this year Giordano Jazz, Hubbard Street, along with Joffrey are among the companies featured.

This past week the group kicked off a party with savory snacks and martinis, hosted by WGN's Dean Richards, at Columbia College. The Dance for Life documentary was partially screened for attendees and tickets were offered for early purchasing.

The upcoming performance is Aug. 20 at the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 E. Congress. For information and tickets visit <http://www.danceforlifechicago.com>.

The filmmakers would like support through the Kickstarter campaign. See <http://exotic-worldthefilm.com/> and click on the “Donate” button. Text and photos by Jerry Nunn; more photos online at <http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com>



VEHICLE REVIEW 2011 Bugatti Veyron 16.4 GrandSport

BY NICK KURCZEWSKI, GAYWHEELS.COM

Driving a Bugatti in the Big Apple

With its \$2.1 million price tag and mid-mounted 1001-horsepower engine, the Bugatti Veyron 16.4 GrandSport is one of the world's most exclusive automobiles. For the price of one GrandSport, you can buy nine Ferrari 458 Italias (and still have cash left for a Corvette). So what would inspire anyone to take this multi-million exotic onto the mean streets of Manhattan?

For starters, you don't mess around with details like 'where to' when the chance comes to drive a Veyron. The invitation from Bugatti U.S.A. was to start around noontime from the posh suburban enclave of Greenwich, Connecticut, before heading west to New York State, and down into Manhattan and to the heart of Times Square. My co-pilot was racing driver and three-time 24 Hours of Daytona winner Butch Leitzinger.

As he deftly steered the Bugatti around road-hogging soccer moms in Porsche Cayennes,

The Veyron feels like a real car, not simply an expensive toy priced higher than a Central Park East luxury condo. The steering is direct and fluid, though not hyperactive and constantly alive in your hands. That's a good thing when you have more than 1,000-hp lurking over your shoulder.

The seven-speed dual-clutch transmission has shift-paddles on the steering wheel, though you're better off leaving it in fully automatic mode and focusing on the road ahead—or in the case of my test drive, the sudden appearance of blinking blue lights directly behind me. I was being pulled over in a Bugatti. The coolness factor was only limited by the fact that I'd actually been doing the speed limit.

The young officer sauntered up to the driver's side and, peering down at me from his Oakley sunglasses, asked if I knew why I'd been stopped. When I admitted to having no clue, he flashed a smile. "To check out the car, of course," he exclaimed. After a sigh of relief and quick tour of the car (on the shoulder of I-95 south) we were back on our way—minus any ticket, but also lacking my request for a police escort.

There was some time to make up if the Veyron was going to make its 2 p.m. appointment in Times Square. Seeing any gap in traffic, all it



Bugatti Veyron 16.4 GrandSport. Photo from Gaywheels.com

Butch offered a few pointers before I got behind the wheel. He assured me the Veyron is extremely "easy" to drive – at least once you forget the wheels and tires alone cost more than \$60,000 to replace. His assurances about the car's normalcy were, of course, followed by a highway merge that felt like being dropkicked by God.

There aren't many adjectives (at least PG-rated ones) that accurately describe a Veyron's acceleration. There is a whoosh from the four turbochargers, the bellow of the W-16, and a split second as the four-wheel-drive system and massive tires grab hold of the asphalt. You're fired down the road with ethereal speed. Top speed is more than 250 mph. The sprint from 0 to 60 mph takes fewer than three seconds.

Sliding behind the wheel, I couldn't help but notice the speedometer reads up to 280 mph. The seats are exceptionally comfortable and finding all the major controls takes only a minute or two. Anything not covered in rich black leather is finished in solid metal, with brushed aluminum covering the center console. It's very business-like and, with the top removed (a two-person job), there is the bonus of unlimited headroom.

After the first overly cautious couple of minutes, the Veyron GrandSport proves itself to be extremely user-friendly. The suspension is firm, but soaks up bumps with a solidity that makes the car feel like it was honed from solid rock.

took was a dab of the gas pedal for the car to streak forward. Vehicles that, only moments before, were far in the distance were reeled in and suddenly only inches away from the Bugatti's chrome-ringed nose.

Down the West Side Highway, around the tip of Manhattan at Battery Park, and back up the FDR, the Bugatti devoured city traffic. At every red light, other drivers and pedestrians would scramble to snap a photo with their mobile phone. People shouted and waved, and I admired the car's reflection while cruising past the glass-walled lobbies of Midtown skyscrapers.

On time and with the car in one piece, I hopped out in Times Square and said good-bye to Butch and the Bugatti. Somehow I'd expected to feel a sense of relief. After all, my career was safe again; the burden of piloting a \$2.1 million supercar in New York was no longer mine. Instead, I felt like I'd just partied with a rock star but had to leave before the concert began.

Could I ever afford this car? Absolutely not. But could I get used to this kind of four-wheeled celebrity lifestyle? Oh, yes—you bet I could! The Bugatti Veyron 16.4 GrandSport is outrageous in every detail: price, power, performance and exclusivity. It's the most awesome machine I've ever driven, period.

See more reviews and news at <http://www.Gaywheels.com>.

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DESTINATIONS

Michigan's Dunes marks 30 years

BY CONSTANCE RUHOLL

In 1998, three partners, Mike Jones, Danny Esterline and Greg Trzybinski were planning their future with the idea of a gay bar in the forefront of their minds. The next day they called Lynda Holmes, a realtor friend of theirs and nine months later on May 26, 1999 they made that dream a reality. Mike Jones said of their ownership, "Since we've owned it it's been open 365 days a year for 30 years."

The three friends and partners bought The Douglas Dunes from Carl Jennings and Larry Gammons. Originally The Douglas Dunes was opened in 1981 to welcome curious gay men and women to Douglas (Saugatuck) Michigan. Throughout the years, under the guidance of Jennings and Gammons, entertainers in fields spanning from pop to porn have appeared. Varied tastes have resulted in a nightlife that defies eclectic and a dance floor that plays music from progressive to hard-rock. Eventually Jones, Esterline and Trzybinski changed the name to The Dunes Resort and today Dunes continues to be a place where good memories are made.

The Dunes Resort is located only two and a half hours from Chicago by car and is one of the grandest gay resorts in the Midwest. The resort contains 22 acres of land with 81 hotel rooms and six bars and a newly renovated pool area with a pool bar. The resort also features a game room, outdoor patio bar and western Michigan's largest gay dance bar and a cabaret with live entertainment. The resort also has Karaoke every Thursday for the entire year. "Every year we try to put back into the business as much as we can to keep the product fresh, new and exciting. We try to give back to the customers that come here every day," said Jones.

During the two annual women's weekends at The Dunes the clientele becomes about 90 percent women. For all other times throughout the year the clientele is predominantly gay men by 80 percent. The normal mix for relationship status is typically 50 percent singles, 50 percent couples. The clientele ranges from gay and straight to young and old, and all feel comfortable in the Dunes environment. The entertainment is scheduled according to what kinds of entertainment the predominant group would prefer or enjoy for that specified weekend.

Thirty years after dreaming about their future,



The Dunes Resort has become one of the most favorable vacation spots for GLBT individuals. The three partners have shown unwavering dedication to their dream by providing the best in service, hospitality and most importantly a safe gay haven. Mike Jones noted, "It's really a piece of paradise, a little safe haven that whether or not you are 21 or 86 you can come and there are people from all over the country that you can meet. It's Midwest charm and hospitality."

Speaking for the partners, Jones truly believes that "everyone that comes here melds together, they work together, they have fun together and form friendships together." He also noted that "This is a very welcoming place, regardless of what you like, what you don't like, if you are a boy or a girl, black or white, whether you like to wear a dress or you don't, etc."

The people who visit the resort are not the only thing that is diverse on the scene. The resort offers a kaleidoscope of entertainment, from raucous to romantic and from strippers to live entertainment and cabaret. The resort also hosts DJs and The Dunes makes it happen for their guests. The variety of company, music and atmosphere is the reason people continue to visit The Dunes year after year.

Every weekend during the summer there is a



The Dunes. Photos from Mike Jones

reason to vacation at The Dunes Resort. Entertainment for the 2011 summer season includes DJ Tony Moran, DJ Paulo and Chi Chi LaRue for the Red White on Blue Star event that will be held over Independence Day weekend. The party over Labor Day weekend will include Lydia Prim, Joe Gauthreaux and more Club Channel One Studs. The summertime is the busiest time of the year for the partners and for The Dunes Resort. "Once we get into July and August something is going on every night of the week. We stay sold-out five of the seven nights when we are in summer. We want to provide something fun for them to do every day.

Again speaking for the partners, Jones said, "I think because of the small town feel, a lot of our customers take a sense of ownership in the dunes. It's a constant flow of feedback and ideas and suggestions on what people would like to see and who they would like to hear. They feel committed and connected and loyal to the property and the product.

"The Dunes can be a lot of different things for a lot of different people. You meet people here that I think you maybe never would have met before. It's worth the weekend because I guarantee you will have a good time, so come join the party. ... It's a celebration."

'Woke Up Black' TV premiere June 26

Filmmaker/activist Mary Morten's new independent documentary, *Woke Up Black*, will have its broadcast premiere on WTTW-TV, Channel 11, on Sunday, June 26, at 4 p.m.

The film places at its center the voices of Black youth—their ideas, attitudes and opinions that are often overlooked in today's society.

For an in-depth look at the film, see <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/ARTICLE.php?AID=29298>.

Gay poet's photos on display through July

The Stephen Daiter Gallery, 230 W. Superior, is running photos of the late gay poet/essayist/photographer/lecturer/publisher Jonathan Williams and his surviving life partner, Tom Meyer, July 1-30 (Wednesdays through Saturdays, and by appointment).

The opening reception of "Eye/object: Photographs from the Collection of Jonathan Williams" will take place Friday, July 8, 5-8 p.m. A catalog will be available for purchase.

See <http://www.StephenDaiterGallery.com>.

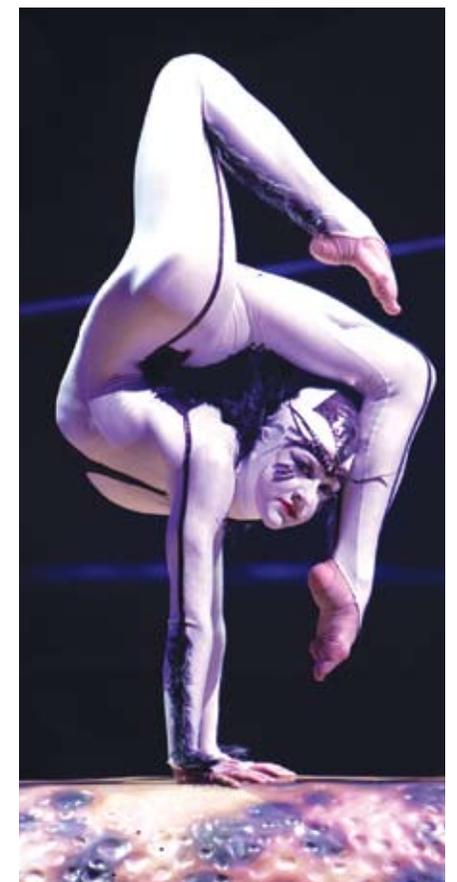
Cirque du Soleil's 'OVO' in town June 30

Cirque du Soleil is returning to Chicago this summer with OVO, a live big-top production with an insect theme that will premiere

Thursday, June 30, for a limited engagement under the blue-and-yellow Grand Chapiteau at United Center, 1900 W. Madison.

Following on the footsteps of Quidam, Dration, Varekai, Correo and KOOZA, OVO is the sixth big-top touring show to perform on the grounds of United Center in Chicago.

Tickets are available online at <http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/ovo> or at 800-450-1480.



Spider in Cirque du Soleil's OVO.



Gay man reflects on sailing around the world



Larry Jacobson (middle) with friend Patrik (left) and lover Ken (right) in Tahiti. All photos from Jacobson

BY ROSS FORMAN

Larry Jacobson was 13 when he shattered his right leg while skiing. He was in a cast from hip to toe for three months, and miserable.

"I was desperate to move, get out, do things," Jacobson recalls.

He read a lot at the time and almost anything, especially magazines.

One day, his mom brought him a magazine about boats. Something clicked inside the bright-eyed teenager.

"I realized that boats could take me places, thus I wouldn't be stuck in one place," he said.

Jacobson eventually learned to sail near Long Beach, Calif., and, by the time he was in high school, he was racing competitively. Jacobson eventually became a California state champion sailor. Then, he progressed into larger, more advanced boats.

Jacobson ultimately went to the University of California-Irvine, and spent two years on the school's sailing team before quitting. "But I just kept dreaming about sailing," he said. "I always had it in the back of my head that, someday, I was going to go sailing further."

Boy, did he.

If you're a mountain climber, the ultimate is climbing Mt. Everest. If you're a marathon runner, the dream is to qualify for the Boston Marathon. If you're a sailor, the golden goose is circumnavigation.

From 2001-2007, Jacobson circled the world in his 50-foot boat, Julia. His travel companion for the six-year odyssey was Ken Smith—and the two are believed to be the first, and only, gay couple to sail around the world, a feat accomplished by fewer than 100 people annually.

"It was absolutely incredible," said Jacobson, now 56. "I had some amazing adventures—from being chased by Komodo dragons in Indonesia to being caught in huge storms in the Red Sea."

They visited 40 countries along the way—with a rainbow flag sailing from their vessel throughout, except when they approached several traditionally anti-gay countries, such as Oman and Yemen.

"It was exhausting, draining, exhilarating," said Jacobson, who lives in Emeryville, Calif. "I wasn't very mechanical when I first started, but I now could fix a diesel engine with a piece of bubble gum and a rubber band."

Yep, Jacobson developed into the McGyver of the sea.

"It's great to do what you can to make your dreams come true, learning to let go," said Jacobson, who had worked 20 years in corporate America before setting sail.

"[The trip] was way more than I expected, way more difficult than I expected. When most people, myself included, think about sailing around the world, you think of Tahiti and it's [simply gorgeous] like that the whole way. But it's not. Sure, there were wonderful white sand beaches



with gorgeous palm trees, but there also are mechanical breakdowns, weather issues, etc.

"It was scarier than I expected.

"Just leaving the dock and truly not knowing where I was going ... that was scary. Our next stop [after starting out in 2001] was 3,000 miles away, across an ocean. That's kind of a scary feeling. Being caught in a storm also is very scary. When you're on a boat [together] for six years, we called each year as a dog-year, so it really was 42 years."

Still, Jacobson added, "I wouldn't trade the experience for anything."

Jacobson has chronicled his six-year journey in a book, *The Boy Behind the Gate: How His Dream of Sailing Around the World Became a Six-Year Odyssey of Adventure, Fear, Discovery and Love*. (It's now available.)

"I didn't anticipate how much I would learn [while at sea]," Jacobson said. "I thought I would just go out there and go sailing, but I had so much to learn, such as, being decisive, facing your fears, becoming mechanical, etc. That was a great, positive experience."

The worst part was the amount of mechanical breakdowns they endured, breakdowns that "nearly broke me—until I got a handle on how to deal with them," he said.

Jacobson sailed routes known for evil, troublesome pirates. He also stopped in Cartagena, Columbia—actually, he was forced to stop in Cartagena, Columbia.

"We were surfing down the faces of 15-foot waves and 30-knot winds, and all of a sudden we lost our steering gear; a cable broke," Jacobson said. "So we were forced to sail into Cartagena, where we were planning to skip."

"It turned out to be one of our favorite places in the world."

His least favorite spots were in the Middle East, he said.

"When we were approaching Indonesia, we got a warning from the state department, telling us that we weren't supposed to go there because it had been declared a no-go country," Jacobson said. "But we got perhaps the warmest welcome we got anywhere" when we landed in Indonesia.

Jacobson is taking his experience and turning it into a speaking career, driven to motivate others to follow their dreams—regardless of how wild they may be, or how difficult they are to attain.

"I like the idea of inspiring others," he said. "Not just others who want to go sailing. But rather, the high school kid who doesn't see a bright future [for himself or herself]. Heck, I was the fat, Jewish kid. I was teased for both, and also for being gay. Now I've sailed around the world. I want to inspire kids, especially those in the gay community."

Jacobson's journey was self-funded, and the trip also included scuba diving with poisonous sea snakes in the country of Niue (an island nation in the South Pacific Ocean). It's a trip he would "absolutely" would do it over again, if he had the chance.

"It was the greatest thing that I've done in my life," Jacobson said. "I took a big risk. ... I left my business; I left my home; I left my partner at the time—all for a dream. And I'd do it again."

Jacobson and Bob Joyce were partners for 20 years. The day they met, Joyce learned that Jacobson was hooked on the high seas and that, someday, he was going to sail around the world. Sailing, though, was not Joyce's dream.

Joyce did not join him for the trip.

Ken Smith, a friend of both Jacobson and Joyce, was Jacobson's right-hand man for the trip—and by day five, they had fallen for each other.

Jacobson and Joyce are still now the best of friends, Jacobson said.

Jacobson and Smith are the world travelers.

Note: *The Boy Behind the Gate* was awarded a Silver Medal in the Independent Publisher Book Awards. The ceremony was in late May at the Book Expo America in New York.

Top four spots visited during Larry Jacobson's six-year sail around the world:

1. New Zealand: "I loved the energy, friendliness and independence of the people."
2. Tel Aviv: "It's one of the most exciting, magnificent, friendly, warm, welcoming and safe places that we've ever been to. It's such a fun city."
3. Vanuatu: "They were the friendliest, most generous, loving, warm-hearted people that we met."
4. Thailand



Phuket, Thailand.



The Grenadines.

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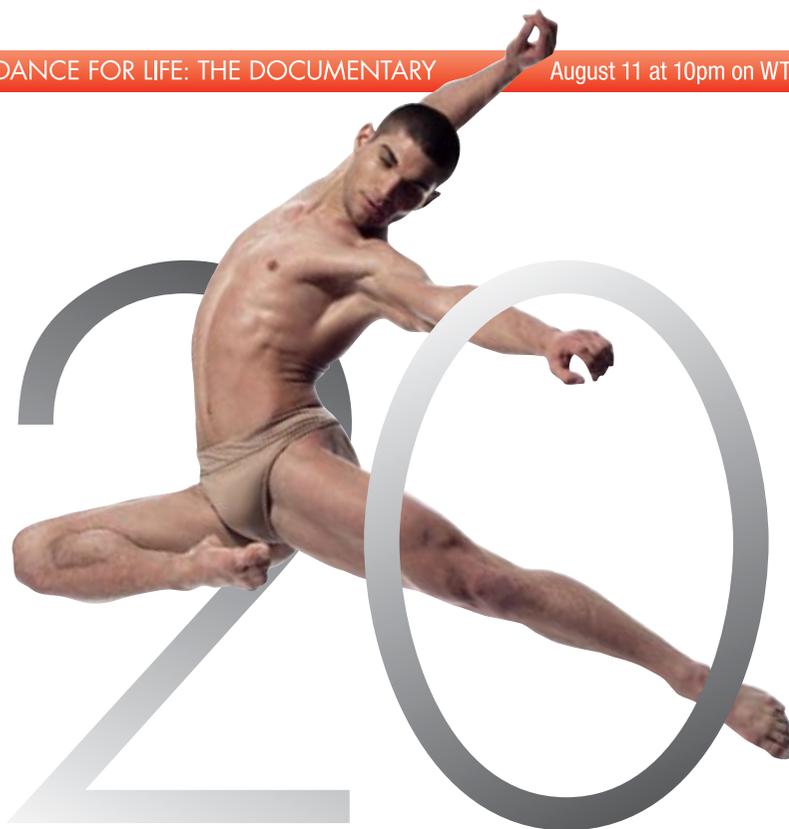
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Andersonville's own dachshund duo Topo Gigio (left) and Bowie handily won the pet costume contest at this year Midsommarfest. Their homage to guests of the British royal wedding brought them the best-dressed honor for the fifth year in a row. Who knows what they'll come up with next?





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3214 N Seminary \$775,000
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2154 W Division \$675,000
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4712 N Beacon 3N \$414,900
Sharp, highly upgraded 2nd flr unit. High end appls & finishes t/out the unit. Custom marble & granite kit & bths. This unit has everything; master bath has deep jacuzzi tub w/sep shower, custom elfa closets & window treatments ID#07827990
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1403 W Elmdale 2 \$218,000
Huge, flawlessly updated vintage 2 bedroom in Edgewater Glen. Amazing kitchen features in-island sink, silestone counter tops and S.S. appliances. In-unit laundry and full separate dining rm. Information & photos @ 1403elmdale.com ID#07775458
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4036 N Kenmore G \$170,000
Amazing deal on gut rehab greystone with 2 bedrooms plus den/2 bath high ceiling garden unit. Kitchen with granite counter tops & SS appliances. Large master suite features double closets and master bath w/sep shower & jacuzzi. ID#07791725
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Wed., June 22

Equality IL at Minibar Ultra Lounge and 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, 3656 N. Halsted, <http://www.windy-city-media-group.com>

Macy's welcomes Olympic Skater Johnny Weir Musical lunch hour with performances by Chicago Gay Men's Chorus and notable cabaret duo, Beckie Menzie and Tom Michael. 5:30 p.m., Macy's State Street, <http://pitch.pe/148551>

Rape Victim Advocates 2011 Visionary Awards Join Rape Victim Advocates for an evening of cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, live entertainment and a silent auction to benefit Rape Victim Advocates. Tickets are \$85 and available at www.rapevictimadvocates.org; 7 p.m.-9:30 p.m., 312-443-9603, Salvage One, 1844 W. Hubbard, <http://rapevictimadvocates.org>

You're The Star Karaoke with Honey West Take your place in the spotlight as hostess, Honey West entertains throughout! There's not a bad seat in the house. 10 p.m., 773-281-3355, Roscoe's, 3356 N. Halsted St, <http://www.roscoes.com>

Thursday, June 23

Birdhouse Art Auction & Cocktail Party to benefit Chicago House. This year, Chicago House is "Branching Out" with birdhouses, artwork, and merchandise for the masses. Tickets \$70 Advance (Until June 22 at

DYKE TRAIL Saturday, June 25

The Chicago Dyke March will take place on the city's South Shore.

Photo from 2010 by Mason Harrison



5PM), \$85 Door. 6 p.m.-9 p.m., Room and Board 55 E. Ohio, http://www.chicago-house.org/event_birdhouse.html

Ladies on the Lake Join a boat load of ladies to kick off pride weekend with a sunset cruise on Lake Michigan. Tickets \$65, include an evening with food, open bar and dancing. For more information, contact Jeff Souva at 312-663-4413, ext. 335. 6 p.m.-9 p.m., 312-663-4413, <http://www.lambdalegal.org/events/>

kd lang and the Siss Boom Bang celebrating the release of Sing it Loud; 6 p.m., Ravinia, Highland Park, <http://www.ravinia.org>

Chicago Sky Pride Night Celebrate Pride with the WNBA Chicago Sky as they take on the Connecticut Sun. Tickets start at \$25 and included ticket, t-shirt and donation. 7 p.m., 866-759-9622, Allstate Arena, 6920 N Mannheim Rd, <http://www.wnba.com/sky/>

LGBT Discussion and Book Signing Join author Steven Petrow with his new book, Steven Petrow's Gay & Lesbian Manners,

and Stacy Sullivan of the Arizona Republic for a discussion and book signing! 7 p.m.-9 p.m., Women & Children First Books 5233 N. Clark, <http://www.workman.com/products/9780761156703/>

Benefit for Team TPAN in Ride for AIDS Chicago A \$25 suggested donation at the door gets you access to food on the patio, drink specials, and entry into the raffle drawing. 7-10 p.m., Jackhammer, 6406 N. Clark, <http://www.jackhammer-chicago.com>

Report Back from Bradley Manning Kansas Demo A report back from the June 4th Free Bradley Manning (gay man and alleged source of the Wikileaks revelations) protests in NYC and Ft. Leavenworth, initiated by World Can't Wait. 7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., 773-209-1187, Center On Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, <http://www.gayliberation.net>

God-des & She Kick off Pride weekend with God-des & She LIVE. 10 p.m., Berlin, 954 W. Belmont, <http://www.berlinchicago.com>

Friday, June 24

Pride Month at Pritzker Park Concert Series: Actor Slash Model Bluegrass duo Actor Slash Model creates quirky and catchy music exploring the timeless classics of boozie, lust and heartache, as well as tropes of sex positivity, gender deconstruction and radical politics. 12:15 p.m., Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State, <http://www.chipublib.org>

Spirit of Chicago Pride Moonlight Cruise with Miss Fozzie These Pride Weekend themed cruises will be enjoyed by gay and lesbian adults and everyone celebrating the diversity of our city. These special cruises will be hosted by Miss Fozzie! 21+ with ID; 12:30 p.m., 866-273-2469, Navy Pier, 600 E Grand, <http://spiritofchicago.com/chicago/chicago-pride-moonlight-cruises>

Chicago Pride Fest Chicago's 9th Annual Pride Fest, held before the city's iconic Pride Parade on Sunday. This two-day gay/lesbian community fest features arts & crafts, food and non-stop live music. Through June 25. Gate donation \$7, \$10 after 5 p.m. and benefits the Northalsted Business Alliance. 4 p.m.-10 p.m., 773-868-3010, Waveland & Halsted, <http://www.chicagoevents.com>

PRIDE Celebration 2011 The Associate Board of Center on Halsted presents PRIDE Celebration 2011. Celebrate Pride on the Rooftop Garden, of Center on Halsted. There will be music, food, full bar, and friends. www.centeronhalsted.org; 5:30 p.m.-9 p.m., Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

[sted.org/coh/calendar/newevents-details.cfm?id=1512](http://www.sted.org/coh/calendar/newevents-details.cfm?id=1512)

Mirror to the Heart: Breaking Stigma of HIV This 30-minute documentary shows how African-American and South African youth are overcoming the stigma of HIV/AIDS and highlights prevention activities and personal experiences of youth taking leadership. 6:30 p.m.-9 p.m., Haymarket Center, 932 W. Washington, http://mirror-to-the-heart.com/6-24_screening.html

Thunder From Down Under Through Oct. 29. 7 p.m.-9 p.m., 312-361-3613, LaSalle Power Company 500 N. LaSalle, <http://www.thunderinchicago.com>

Tracy Baim, Owen Keehnen and Chuck Renslow Authors and subject of the trail-blazing story of Chuck Renslow, a Chicago living legend, living as an openly gay man in 1950s Chicago and creating a six-decade empire as a bar owner, publisher, bathhouse operator, sexual renegade and founder of International Mr. Leather. 7:30 p.m., Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark, <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

Saturday, June 25

Proud to Run The 30th annual event includes a 5k & 10k & 2 mile fun walk presented by Frontrunners/Frontwalkers Chicago in Lincoln Park. \$30 with proceeds benefitting local community organizations. 8am, Lincoln Park at Montrose Ave., east of Lake Shore Drive, <http://www.proudtorun.org>

Dyke March rally and march with post-parade activities in the park. 2:30 p.m., South Shore Community, 7054 S. Jeffrey, http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_14233764762

Chicago Pride Fest Chicago's 9th Annual Pride Fest, held before the city's iconic Pride Parade on Sunday. This two-day gay/lesbian community fest features arts & crafts, food and non-stop live music. Gate donation \$7, \$10 after 5:00PM and benefits the Northalsted Business Alliance. 11am-10pm, Waveland & Halsted, Chicago, <http://www.chicagoevents.com>

Backlot Bash The 8th annual outdoor women's party returns to Chicago's Andersonville neighborhood. Saturday features the rockin' flagship party that goes from afternoon until late night with live bands, dancing, drinks, friends & fun. Through June 26. 3 p.m.-10 p.m., Cheetah Gym Andersonville, 5248 N. Clark, <http://www.backlotbashchicago.com>

AIDS Run Fundraiser with Supergurl "Supergurl" Jackie Weinberg will be guest bartending to raise money for 2011 AIDS Run & Walk. 6 p.m.-9 p.m., Parlour on Clark, 6341 N Clark

RuPaul's Drag Race and Drug U's Ongina LIVE Ongina (RuPaul's Drag Race Season 1, Drag U Season 1 & 2) will be joined by Jade for an amazing Pride Party! There will be two performances (11 p.m. & midnight). 9 p.m., Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont, <http://www.spin-nightclub.com>

Rev. Pieter Oberholzer, African LGBTQ rights activist Founder and CFO of Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM), the largest faith-based LGBTQ-rights organization on the continent of Africa will speak. 10:30 a.m., St. Luke's Lutheran Church of Logan Square, 2649 N. Francisco, Chicago, <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=178558398866599>

Sunday, June 26

The 42nd Annual Chicago Pride Parade Chicago's 42nd Annual Pride Parade will feature 250 entries featuring floats, decorated vehicles and walking groups representing businesses, organizations and individuals. Crowd estimates each year surpass 450,000 spectators. 12 p.m., 773-348-8243. Starts at Belmont and Halsted. <http://www.chicagopridecalendar.org>

Israel Pride Party Israel Consulate General, Ministry of Tourism, ADL and StandWithUs host pre-party celebration; RSVP online.



JOY-WALKING Friday, June 24

Tracy Baim, Owen Keehnen and Chuck Renslow will discuss the book **Leatherman at Women and Children First, 5233 N. Clark.**

10am-11:30am, Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted, <http://www.leadnet.com/leadnet-bin/goisrael-seminar-hydrate.cgi>

LGBTQ Solidarity Service LGBTQ Solidarity Service at Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ. Free and all are welcome! 10am-11:15am, 773-935-0642, Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ, 615 W. Wellington, <http://www.waucc.org>

GBT Rocks Pride The Rocks has for 14 years attracted thousands on the last Sunday during Pride month to Montrose Park's "Cricket Hill" on Chicago's lakefront. 1 p.m.-5 p.m., Montrose Park's "Cricket Hill" on Chicago's lakefront

Strictly Pride 2011 Drag-queen revue starring Cee Cee LaRouge, Strictly Dance Radio DJ Jeannette, recording artists Georgie Porgie, Wayne Taylor, Jenna Drey and Jenn Cuenta. 4 p.m., Casey Moran's, 3660 N. Clark

Monday, June 27

National HIV Testing Day National HIV Testing Day is an annual observance to promote HIV testing. The National Association of People with AIDS founded the day in 1995 and continues to be the lead for this observance. This is a particularly important time for YOU to get involved! Take the Test, Take Control. 9am-5 p.m., Howard Brown Health Center, 4025 N. Sheridan, <http://www.aids.gov/awareness-days/national-hiv-testing-day/>

United House: A Night of Unity in House Music Join Hydrate Nightclub, ChicagoPride.com, and host Cyon Flare for United House: A Night of Unity in House Music, featuring New Resident House DJ Semaj; 10 p.m., Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted, <http://www.hydratechicago.com>

Tuesday, June 28

Filmmaking classes Chicago Filmmakers offers college-level classes in film and video for beginners. Courses include Digital Moviemaking, Screenwriting, Producing, Directing, and more. 10:30am-10:30 p.m., 773-293-1447, 5243 N. Clark, Chicago, IL, <http://www.chicagofilmmakers.com>

Wed., June 29

Jesus Camp: The Musical Combine the pre-teens from 2006's Academy Award nominated documentary Jesus Camp with a setting reminiscent 1979's Academy Award ignored summer camp comedy Meatballs. Add music and a healthy dose of Corn. Bake at John 3:16. Serve up an irreverent good time as Corn Productions presents Jesus Camp - the Musical. 8 p.m.-10 p.m., 773-650-1331, Cornservatory 4210 N. Lincoln Ave., http://cornservatory.org/?page_id=21



AB-ULOUS!

Sunday, June 26

The 42nd Annual Chicago Pride Parade will wind through Boystown.

Photo from 2010 by Ross Forman

BILLY MASTERS

"I don't know what the exciting news is. I'm up 20—I'm down 20. What's so exciting about that?"—Carnie Wilson discusses her constantly fluctuating weight on *The View*. Here's my question—how many "up 20s" does she go through before a "down 20" kicks in?

"BREAKING NEWS—Billy Masters is hovering between life and death after a head-on collision. Not expected to survive." This is the headline I envisioned as I began my fourth hour in a prominent Boston emergency room lying on a gurney wearing a neck brace. Admittedly, it wouldn't be a headline in a major paper like the *Boston Globe*. But I'd like to think I'd make the cover of *Bay Windows*...finally!

While trying to avoid going into the light (and we know how flattering those hospital fluorescents can be), I mused on some of the big questions in life. Like when did male nurses start wearing Crocs? I'm sure they're comfy, but I felt like I was trapped in a bad episode of "Hawthorne"—as if that ain't redundant. When my Crocs-wearing nurse asked if I'd like water or juice to take my pain meds, I said juice. He returned with a very large plastic glass of cranberry juice, shaved ice and a bendy straw. Throw in an umbrella and I could have been on an Atlantis cruise!

But the best was the doctor who sidled over to me and whispered, "That neck brace doesn't match your shoes!" I'm on life support and now I have to worry about coordinating? Who the fuck was he? Tim Gunn? I expected him to bellow, "Make it work," as I attempted to make a more flattering hospital gown out of toilet seat covers!

I had to get out of that damn ER so I could go home and watch the Tony Awards. The show brought out Broadway's best and brightest ... and Christie Brinkley. After her Broadway turn in "Chicago" (which has very high standards—Melanie Griffith played the role, for Christ's sake), she's repeating the feat in London's West End. Or an emergency room. Yes, when Brinkley was backstage at the Tonys, a woman fainted. Christie sprung into action. Without a thought for her own health and welfare, she selflessly got the woman a glass of orange juice to raise her blood sugar. She even sat with her until the paramedics arrived. Moments after they arrived, it was announced that Brinkley won a \$25K watch in the auction. And with that, like all do-gooders, she disappeared.

Neil Patrick Harris was his usual effervescent self and did a boffo job hosting the show. He also helped bring up the ratings 9 percent from last year.

Blair Underwood will be making his Broadway debut as Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. A "multiracial" production of the play has been discussed for years, and it will allegedly hit the Great White Way next spring.

In what is being described as a coup, *Inside the Actor's Studio* has booked Madonna for next season. This will be one of those rare episodes where 15 minutes will be spent discussing the craft and the subsequent 45 minutes will find the subject rattling off her favorite curse words.

Prior to my accident, I was thrilled to attend my first Boston Pride in about a decade. Alas, the weather didn't cooperate. That didn't stop revelers from rocking out to powerhouse Deborah Cox—who surprised the audience and organizers alike by going on significantly earlier than scheduled. That meant one of the most gorgeous and talented men in the UK, Shayne Ward, became the *de facto* headliner in this, his first U.S. appearance. Shayne's got it all—looks, voice, charisma, and likeability. Think of him as a good-looking Justin Timberlake. Yeah, he's got the whole package. The former "X Factor" UK

winner will be making his stage debut in "Rock of Ages" at the end of the summer. With the release of his third CD, *Obsession*, and a starring role in London's West End, he's certainly living the life. And we were lucky to get him here in Boston!

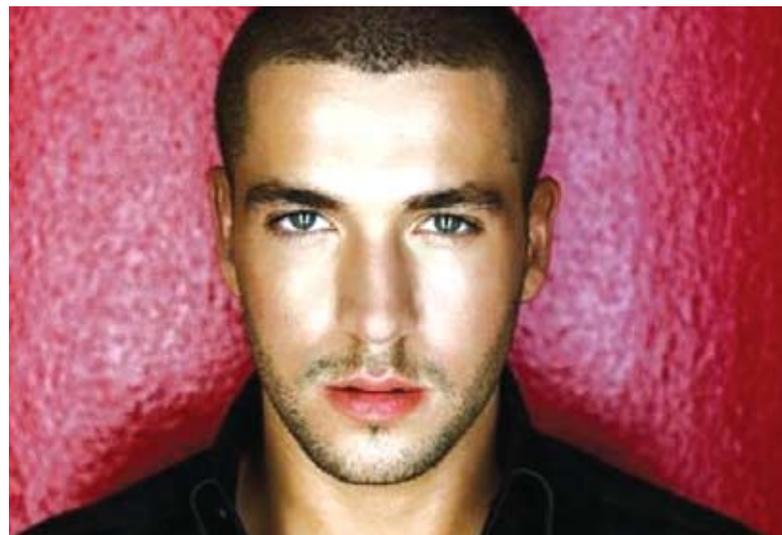
Our "Ask Billy" question concerns another sexy Brit. Tony in Baltimore asks, "Do you watch 'Game of Thrones'? It's SO good and the guy who plays Theon is gorgeous and was naked last week—full frontal and everything. Do you have any info about him? He's got bad teeth, but I'd still do him."

My fans are such givers—why you're a regular Christie Brinkley! In this case, you'd be giving it to Alfie Allen—who happens to be the brother of singer Lily Allen. My UK fans might know him from 2009 when he took over the lead role in *Equus* from Daniel Radcliffe and toured in the play. At the time, much was made of Alfie's penis, which is known to swing with reckless abandon. He would brag to anyone who'd listen that he'd put Harry Potter to shame—and,

indeed, he could. While Danny's testes have not quite dropped, Alfie's large, uncut member bobs about. In the episode of HBO's *Game of Thrones* that Tony is referring to, he even gets somewhat aroused—and it's quite a sight to behold. So much so that we'll be posting it in its uncut entirety on BillyMasters.com.

When I'm handing you a nob for less than a bob, it's time for me to order more HobNobs and end another column. Are you familiar with the

milk chocolate HobNobs? They are my favorites—if ever you need to buy me a little prezzie. And I'll give you something in return—even more gossip on www.BillyMasters.com, the site that never flatlines. If you've got a question, drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Madonna joins that multiracial "Streetcar"—oh, what a Blanche she'd make. Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Shayne Ward kept Boston rockin' recently.

Pride Sunday, June 26

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GAY SOFTBALL WORLD SERIES

James Bulawa

BY ROSS FORMAN

James Bulawa joined the local gay softball league in 1990 and also participated in his first Gay Softball World Series that summer, when it was held in Pittsburgh. His memories from that tournament still stand strong—sadly.

His team advanced to the championship game with an undefeated record and led the San Francisco Uncle Berts Bombers 8-3 in the sixth inning. Bulawa was pulled from left field to allow a veteran left fielder to play as Bulawa was a pickup player for that Chicago team.

"I will never forget this. ... We had the game in hand. There were two outs and we led 8-3," Bulawa said. "A ball was hit to [the] left fielder who replaced me and he dropped [it]. We wound up losing that game, and then lost the [deciding] if-game, too.

"It seemed as if all the air left our team after that drop in the first game.

"I often wonder if I was not pulled whether we would have won the A-Division championship that year.



James Bulawa. Photo from Bulawa

"We almost won it again a few years later, but never could quite punch through. I [later] moved down to the B-Division and we again came close a couple of years and nearly won it in 2006."

However, it was famine instead of feast for Bulawa—until 2009, when he played for the B-Division champions, the Chicago Spin Cougars.

He was back in the B-Division at the 2010 Series, and his team finished ninth.

"Not too disappointing considering we had a new group of guys with only five playing together previously," said Bulawa, 47, who lives in Andersonville. He is the director for U.S. sales for a \$50 million portable power solution firm based in Lisle.

The 2011 Gay Softball World Series will be played in the Chicago area, starting Aug. 29.

"Finally, [the Series] has come back to Chicago after we last hosted the 1983 Series," Bulawa said. "I was not in the league or playing at that time, but I heard from many of my former teammates that it was a blast. I expect nothing less for Chicago hosting the 2011 Series. I was on the committee to bring the Series to Chicago in 2009, but we fell a bit short on votes and the bid was awarded to Milwaukee. I must say they hosted a great tournament.

"I have played in every [Gay Softball] World Series since 1990. I have been fortunate to always be on winning teams and Chicago will be my 20th Series in a row. The most memorable [Series] was winning the B-Division championship in 2009.

"The Series is special because the elite teams are the only ones that make it. You know you are one of the best teams by winning your bid to play in the Series. You develop great friend-

ships along the way, so every year since 1990 has grown to become a big part of my life."

More James Bulawa:

—Favorite baseball team: Chicago Cubs

—Favorite baseball player: Todd Helton

—Softball quote: "I hope more young players continue to join the league, learn the game and move up in divisions," he said. "It is so nice to see new players come into the league, start out in the lower divisions and after a few years move up and become very good softball players. The league has been, and continues to be, a great social networking tool. In fact, I met the love of my life through softball. I would encourage everyone to come out in 2011 and register to play ball; you will have a tremendous time and make many new friends along the way."

Cubs' 'It Gets Better' video out

BY ROSS FORMAN

The Chicago Cubs are the second major league team to release an "It Gets Better" video, following the San Francisco Giants' lead.

The Cubs' 60-second video features multiple speakers—players, coaches and team owner Laura Ricketts, an open lesbian.

Manager Mike Quade, raised in Chicago's northern suburbs, is the first speaker in the video, which also features Ryan Dempster, Marlon Byrd, Darwin Barney and coach/former Cubs outfielder Bob Dernier.

Dernier addresses the team's message at one point directly to LGBT kids and teens.

"The Chicago Cubs organization celebrates you for exactly who you are, gay or straight," Quade said.

Barney said, "To all kids who are struggling, know that you have a caring community by your side," and Byrd then finished the sentence, "and there is light at the end of the tunnel."

Ricketts is the most emotional in the video: "We know that it can get really tough; I've been there; so many of us have been there."

The video ends with It Gets Better on the famed red marquee from outside Wrigley Field.

See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcpkRL_5IYk&feature=youtu.be.

Windy City Times will present Pride Day at Wrigley Field Sunday, Sept. 4, 1:20 p.m. when the Chicago Cubs take on the Pittsburgh Pirates. The sales of tickets for the Labor Day weekend game will benefit six local LGBT and AIDS charities.

Pride Day is presented in partnership with the national gay softball world series taking place through Sept. 3 in the Windy City. Thousands of athletes will be in Chicago as part of the annual NAGAAA world series tournament.

The organizations which will receive a portion of the proceeds are: AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Center on Halsted, Equality Illinois, Howard Brown Health Center/Lesbian Community Care Project, GLAAD Chicago Leadership Council and Lambda Legal.

The media partners for Pride Day at Wrigley are Windy City Times, Nightspots, GoPride.com and Grab Magazine.

Tickets are \$50, and they are all for bleacher seats. The price includes tax, shipping, and a portion donated to charity. Deadline for ticket purchase is Aug. 15, 2011.

Purchase tickets at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com/WrigleyPride.



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Chicago Force player revels in diversity

BY ROSS FORMAN

Chicago Force player Liz Okey knows all about hate and bigotry.

She's a small-town girl who's dealt with small minds in a big way.

Okey grew up in Manchester, Mich., a rural town 25 miles southwest of Ann Arbor. She went to school with brothers who were Ku Klux Klan (KKK) members along with their father. Okey still remembers the racial slurs said in the hallway, the Confederate flags they wore and hung from their pickup truck, the Black baby doll they would tie to the front of their truck's spoiler to run into objects. And that was in 2001.

"Not everyone had those same feelings, but certainly knowing that that kind of hate still existed was by far the worst," Okey said.

Okey ultimately graduated from Manchester High School in 2003 with 85 classmates, where she played basketball and volleyball and marched in the drum-line. Okey then attended Kalamazoo College, graduating in 2007 with a Bachelor's of Arts in Human Development and Social Relations, plus a minor in Political Science and a concentration in Women's Studies. Okey was the captain of the volleyball team, president of the Athletic Leadership Council and studied abroad in Bonn, Germany.

She certainly led a diverse life—and not surprisingly.

Liz is one of Monty and JoAnn Okey's six children, and their only biological offspring. Liz's siblings are:

- Jen Okey Bair, 37, Vietnamese-American;
- Jen Okey, 37, African-American;
- Jon Okey, 35, Mexican-American;
- Ben Okey, 34, African-American; and
- Kate Okey Towler, 29, Caucasian.

Liz is the lone gay sibling.

"My parents always wanted to have a family of mixed biological and adopted children. They had trouble conceiving, so they decided to start a family through adoption," Okey said. "My oldest sister, Jenny, was adopted in Michigan. Jon and Ben both joined the family when my parents were living in San Diego [while] my dad was stationed there in the military. Then, when they returned to Michigan, they adopted Jen." Okey said.

"At that point, their family was complete with their four children. Then six months later they learned that Jen had a six month old half sister who he did not know about it. The adoption agency asked if my parents would stay in contact with the family that was adopting her. At that time my parents said it was wrong to separate siblings, [so] Kate joined the family as the fifth child.

"Two years later, I joined the family. I was the 'surprise' child. My sisters and brothers welcomed me and I quickly became the family pet.

"I had a great childhood. Growing up with five siblings in a small town we were always running around, riding [our] bicycles, playing in the woods, meeting friends in a nearby park, etc. Our parents were very clear that we were a family and our differences made us unique. Adoption allowed us all to be a family, but our relationships were as close as blood. Within our home, it was easy to ignore the social issues race plays in society; we were a family. Outside of our house, it was a bit different. But in our home it didn't matter, we teased each other all the same."

Okey—nicknamed "Zokes" and who is in her third year playing for the Force—is 26, lives in Wicker Park and has a girlfriend, Kim. Okey works as the Chicago Community Organizer for Stand For Children, working mostly on the West and South sides of the city with parents, teachers and community members to see that every child receives the best public education possible.



Liz Okey. Photo from Okey

"The best part of my childhood was the mix of small town community and exposure to other cultures and worlds," Okey said. "For anyone who has ever lived in a small town, you understand how close the community is; you can leave your front door unlocked, neighbors know your dog by name, people look out for each other. Combine that with regular trips to bigger cities and you have my childhood.

"My parents were great about taking us to Detroit to see musicals and operas, going on vacations to big cities in the U.S. and Canada, as well as weekly trips to Ann Arbor for ballet lessons. They valued a bigger world perspective and helped all of us see life beyond a small town. I grew up with deep community roots and wings that yearned to see the world.

"Being the youngest [sibling] has played a bigger part in my life than being the only biological child. All my siblings were there to hold me when I was born; they all helped raise me. I get much more crap for being the youngest who got away with murder, after they all left the house than anything else. My family always joked that I didn't realize I was not adopted. About five years ago, while I was in college, I had come home for Christmas. My sisters, mom and I were decorating the Christmas tree and came across a decoration that had only four of the kid's names on it. I said to my mom, 'Was this from before I was adopted?' My sister Jenny replied, 'Lizzie, if you don't know by now that you are not adopted we have bigger problems.'"

Okey came out last year, and has had no issues.

"In our family, the only common theme is that everyone is unique and different," Okey said. "I think being the only gay child makes me much more a part of the six. They each have their own unique story of their adoption and biological family background. I have my own story of identity to add to the mix. It just adds a layer of acceptance and love to our family.

"I had a great coming-out experience, [even though] my [Force] teammates and friends have warned me not to tell people that are not out [about] my experience, because I will give them a false hope that they too may have as great of an experience as me."

Okey came out to her parents within a month of her first same-sex relationship.

Her dad's first response was: "Who cares it is a woman? When do we get to meet her?!"

Both were excited for their daughter and respectful about sharing the news with the rest of the family, "and even more loving and understanding than I could have imagined," Okey said. "The biggest challenge was simply that all my family was in Michigan and I did not see them outside of large family gathering. So, I told each sibling and family member privately as [soon] as possible. My family has continued to

love and support me.

"I have a strong sense of community and doing what is right to help others. My parents instilled a sense of commitment to my community. I also have a level of comfort and empathy for many different groups of people. This allows me to blend into different social settings as well as connect with individuals. I jokingly say, 'I make friends everyday.'"

Okey plays on the offensive line for the Force, which is anything but a glamorous position. She wore the Force uniform in 2009 when Chicago flew to Seattle for a playoff game against the number one-ranked team at the time. Chicago pulled off the upset.

Okey also was a starter in the national All-Star Game in 2010, representing the Western Conference.

"I was raised by two very involved parents," Okey said. "My parents instilled a sense of public service into me, almost the notion of 'pay it forward.' I've been lucky enough to do work in Chicago that allows me to help others while continuously challenging myself."

For instance, she worked with the local organization Girls in the Game for three years, running after-school programs, one-day events and a Sports and Leadership Summer Camp. She worked with youth from all over the city, building leadership skills and self-esteem using fitness, athletics and health education as tools.

"Working with girls from some of the roughest corners of the city and helping them develop their own leadership skills was extremely rewarding and inspiring," Okey said. "But after working with small groups of young ladies I kept thinking about all the other youth that are not getting the education, mentorship and support they need to succeed. I began working with Stand For Children this past year to address systemic changes in public education that prohibit students from learning and growing into engaged citizens and that are barriers for our educators to do the very best they can. I knew that in order to truly positively impact all youth we would need to change the public education system."

Okey's work with Stand For Children is part of a coalition of partners that endorse Senate Bill 7, making sure Illinois keeps and maintains the very best educators in the classroom. The bill passed the Senate 54-0, the House of Representatives 112-1-1 and now is awaiting the governor's signature.

"I'm lucky enough to be a part of a bill that could advance Illinois to become a leader of education in the nation," Okey said. "If you talk to anyone in the non-profit world, you will find individuals who have a strong sense of conviction to help others. I feel the same way. There is a great deal of satisfaction knowing that you are actively working to improve the conditions around you, not to help yourself but to help



Okey's mother shows her support. Photo from Okey

others. My driving force is knowing that I work everyday to make the future easier and more promising for our youth.

"While at Girls in the Game, I met some of the most inspirational girls from across the city. Their drive, their dreams, their vision for the future pushes me everyday to the change they wish to see. I jokingly say in non-profit work, 'Your heart is full, and your wallet is empty.'"

Clearly, Okey's past—specifically, her childhood—has had a dramatic affect on her Chicago force.

"My upbringing has been an essential part of my work in Chicago non-profits," she said. "I have worked throughout the city in almost every neighborhood. I love meeting new people, trying new things, and learning about different cultures. This drive and comfort would not have been possible without my experiences growing up."

"The beautiful thing about players on [the Chicago] Force is that we have a bond that unites us that ignores race, class, education, etc. We are a Band of Sisters. I think I have been drawn to play football because of that commitment to the Force Family.

I do love the reactions I get when people look at me, with [my] blonde hair and blue eyes, as I tell them about my family. I can remember after a game earlier this year, I was looking for my sister Jenny. I walked up to one of our athletic trainers and told her that I was looking for my sister. Without thinking, I asked her if she had seen a small, feisty Vietnamese woman. She looked at me like I was nuts."

However, it was "nuts" in a good, loving, accepting way.

Force playoff game June 25

The Chicago Force women's pro football team will play a playoff home game vs. the Pittsburgh Passion Saturday, June 25, at 7:30 p.m. at Evanston Township High School. The stadium is at the corner of Church and Hartrey.

The Force secured the hosting rights demolishing the Indianapolis Crash 77-18, completing an undefeated season. The Passion is also undefeated, at 8-0, and have been named the National Conference Mid-Atlantic Champions of the Women's Football Alliance.

See <http://www.chicagoforcefootball.com>.

Chicago Outfit in Pride Parade

The Chicago Outfit Roller Derby has announced that it will participate in Chicago's 42nd Annual Pride Parade Sunday June 26, according to a press release.

"Pride complements our other charitable and community initiatives," said Nicole "Nicomatose" Matos, "including our partnership with Howard Brown Health Center and our recent participation in Slutwalk Chicago. It reflects the inclusive and empowering nature of roller derby as a sport."

Currently celebrating its progress in national rankings, The Outfit hopes to foster additional growth with a round of advanced tryouts Monday, June 27, at the Fleetwood Roller Rink, 7231 W. Archer, Summit. The league's next bout—scheduled for Saturday, July 9, at the Windy City Fieldhouse, 2367 W. Logan—features a double-header against the archrival Roller Girls of St. Louis.

Ticket sales and more info are available at <http://www.chicagooutfitrollerderby.com>.

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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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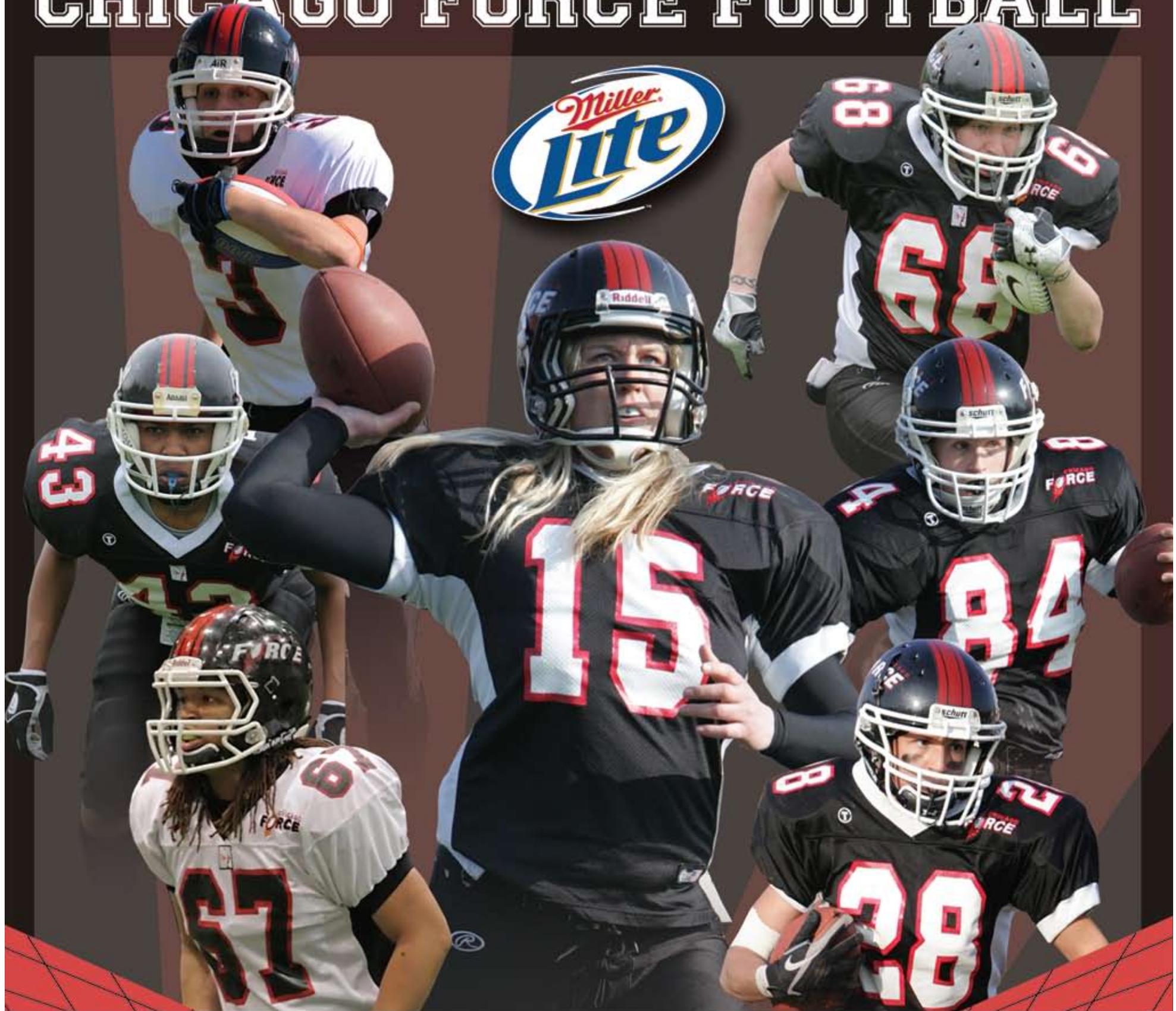
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