

LILY  
TOMLIN  
TALKS WITH  
WCT  
PAGE 25



# WINDY CITY TIMES

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

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OBAMA  
and the biracial factor  
THE BATTLE FOR A NEW AMERICAN MAJORITY



OUT WRITER  
TALKS OBAMA  
AND RACE  
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## Gay group at Navy base



Great Lakes Naval Station leadership attended the Feb. 13 historic launch of Gay, Lesbian and Supporting Sailors (GLASS). Pictured outside the facility where the event was held, from left: Base Commander Robert Sullivan; GLASS Vice President FCSN Beau Brisco; Seaman Jacob Canzoneri, ETSN; Secretary FC3 Liz Greenwood; President FC3 Ann Foster; Advisor BMC Dena Partain; and Master Chief Leon Walker. See page 6. Photo by Hal Baim, Windy City Times

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LESBIAN  
FILM  
WEBSITE  
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## Community questions break Gerber/Hart silence

BY KATE SOSIN

A group of Gerber/Hart Library insiders has issued a letter to the organization's board of directors requesting that the organization open up its governance and discuss questions surrounding its plans to move locations.

The letter has prompted the first on-record response from Board President Karen Sendziak since Windy City Times first reported that the library space was for rent a month ago.

The group—calling themselves "Friends of the Gerber/Hart" and composed of volunteers, members, past board members and others connected to the library—issued the letter to Gerber/Hart President Karen Sendziak and the board Feb. 14.

The letter came after a series of Windy City Times stories that revealed Chicago's LGBT library is planning to move amid questions surrounding its compliance with non-profit law and board of directors. Sendziak has yet to disclose basic information about the organization, stating that the library's attorney, who she declined to name, must respond to media inquiries. Sendziak has further declined to immediately disclose the names of current board members.

Dave Howser, who is part of the group that issued the letter, said that the group supports the library and wants to help it.

Howser served as board president immediately before Sendziak took on the role in 2004. He is also

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## Khan do

Grammy-winning singer Chaka Khan talks about everything from girl crushes to the musician she wished she could've collaborated with. See page 27. Photo courtesy of Mona Elyafi

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GETTING  
READY  
FOR OSCAR  
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Photos on cover (left, from top): Lily Tomlin as Ernestine; cover of Obama and the Biracial Factor; poster of the Tellofilms.com series I Hate Tommy Finch; photo from 2010 Center on Halsted Oscars party by Kat Fitzgerald

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### RAP IT UP

Rapper Imani the Misfit (left) talks with Windy City Times about music and his bisexuality.

Photo courtesy of Misfit Marketing



Read a remembrance of lesbian volunteer Joan Pellegrini.

Photo from Susan King



Lambda Legal's Greg Nevins talks about transitioning at work.

Photo from Lambda Legal

### TIS THE SEASON

Financial guru Phil Sitar looks at tax-season considerations.

### THEIS AS NICE

See photos from a recent reception for Illinois Supreme Court Judge Mary Jane Theis at Kanela Cafe.

### THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Read about news involving Kristen Bell, Bill O'Reilly and Marc Jacobs.

plus **DAILY BREAKING NEWS**

### LOOKING BACK



Check out photos from the Museum of Contemporary Art exhibit "This Will Have Been: Love, Art & Politics in the 1980s."

Photo by Jerry Nunn

### LILY TOMLIN

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# Md. passes one marriage bill; N.J. governor vetoes another

BY LISA KEEN  
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The Maryland House of Delegates passed a marriage-equality bill Feb. 17 71-67. However, it did so under the threat of a referendum, and it did so just hours after New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie followed through on his promise to veto a marriage-equality bill passed by that state's legislature Feb. 16.

A crowd in the Maryland House erupted into a loud and sustained cheer as the House clerk noted that 71 delegates had voted for the bill. The vote came after hours of emotional debate that sounded, at times, like a series of sermons—with some delegates declaring what they said God has ordained as marriage and warning that same-sex marriage would open the door to polygamy and marriages with children and that it would encourage children to become gay.

Delegate Kathy Afzali, a Republican, said a Democrat in the House begged her to vote against the bill because "it has caused so many churches to split and fracture." Republican Michael Smigiel urged a "no" vote, saying the marriage-equality bill would be divisive and that the legislature should give same-sex couples civil unions.

The Maryland Senate, which passed the bill last year and is likely to do so again this year, is expected to vote in the near future. The bill was sponsored by Maryland's Democratic Gov. Martin O'Malley.

A key vote appeared to be that of Delegate Tiffany Alston, a Democrat from suburban Wash-



Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley.

ington, D.C. Alston said she supported the bill last year but that her constituents opposed it so she voted against it. She said she was supporting and voting for the bill this year because the House adopted her amendment to enable a referendum on the issue.

The Alston amendment delays implementation of the new law until any litigation surrounding a possible referendum is resolved and states that, if any part of the law is "held invalid for any reason in a court of competent jurisdiction," the entire law shall be made null and void.

The bill also won the support of a key Republican, Delegate A. Wade Kach of Baltimore, who backed the bill after getting approval of an



N.J. Gov. Chris Christie.

amendment moving the effective date of the bill back from October 1 to January 1. Kach said he wanted to ensure that the bill did not have any impact on the November elections.

The House rejected numerous other amendments, including one that would have enabled parents to opt out their children from receiving any sex education that mentioned same-sex marriages; one that prohibited a minor from marrying a person of the same sex; one that sought to require a constitutional amendment allowing same-sex partners to marry; and one that sought to allow for civil unions only.

The vote in the Maryland House of Delegates had been expected Feb. 16, but a flood of amendments and the sudden hospitalization of one of the bill's supporters pushed that back until Friday. The chamber, which has 141 delegates, needed 71 to pass the bill.

Many opponents of the measure warned during debate that they would seek a referendum on the measure, if passed. Referenda law in Maryland requires that opponents of laws enacted by the legislature and signed by the governor file 55,736 valid signatures by May 31.

In New Jersey, Christie issued a "conditional veto" against the marriage equality bill there, saying it would create an "ombudsman for civil unions" to "ensure equal treatment under the law."

In New Jersey, supporters of the marriage bill said they would begin the process to seek votes to overturn Christie's veto. They will need 27 in the Senate (where the bill passed with 24 votes) and 54 in the Assembly (where it passed with 42). However, the legislature can take two years to overturn that veto.

There is little expectation that supporters of the marriage-equality law will seek a referendum in New Jersey, as Christie suggested.

Christie, in his veto statement, said "an issue of this magnitude and importance ... requires a constitutional amendment [and] should be left to the people of New Jersey to decide."

"I continue to encourage the legislature to trust the people of New Jersey and seek their input by allowing our citizens to vote on a question that represents a profoundly significant societal change," said Christie. "This is the only path to amend our state constitution and the best way to resolve the issue of same-sex marriage in our state."

Unexpectedly, Christie also emphasized his

commitment to non-discrimination through his veto statement.

"I have been just as adamant that same-sex couples in a civil union deserve the very same rights and benefits enjoyed by married couples—as well as the strict enforcement of those rights and benefits," said Christie.

"Discrimination should not be tolerated and any complaint alleging a violation of a citizen's right should be investigated and, if appropriate, remedied. To that end, I include in my conditional veto the creation of a strong ombudsman for civil unions to carry on New Jersey's strong tradition of tolerance and fairness. The ombudsman will be charged with increasing awareness of the law regarding civil unions, will provide a clear point of contact for those who have questions or concerns and will be required to report any evidence of the law being violated. In this way, we can ensure equal treatment under the law."

Lambda Legal Defense still has a lawsuit pending in state court, challenging the validity of the existing civil unions law.

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ONLINE AT  
WINDYCITYMEDIAGROUP.COM  
NATIONAL NEWS

—Sen. Mark Warner (left) criticizes Va. anti-gay law

—Wilton Manors, Fla., concerned about suicide spike

—Out & Equal to honor Chely Wright

## Justice Dept. not defending DOMA

The Department of Justice sent a letter to House Speaker John Boehner stating that the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments will not defend the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) regarding equal treatment for servicemembers who have same-sex spouses, Metro Weekly reported.

The letter from Attorney General Eric Holder reads, in part, "the President and I have concluded that classifications based on sexual orientation should be subject to a heightened standard of constitutional scrutiny under equal protection principles, and that Section 3 of DOMA [which defines the term "spouse" or "surviving spouse" as "a person of the opposite sex"] fails such scrutiny as applied to couples who are legally married under state law."

Holder also says that the DOMA section "as applied to same-sex couples who are legally married under state law, violate the equal protection component of the Fifth Amendment."

The department was stating its position with regard to *McLaughlin et. al v. Panetta et. al.*, which challenges DOMA and federal statutes related to benefits for the spouses of service members and veterans, according to a press release from the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN).

Army Veteran and SLDN Executive Director Aubrey Sarvis issued the following statement said, "We are pleased that the attorney general has decided not to defend the constitutionality of DOMA in the military context, just as he has declined to defend it in other contexts. We are also delighted that, for the first time, he has said that separate definitions that apply to military veterans are also unconstitutional. This is an important step for the McLaughlin plaintiffs."

## Anti-immigration Ariz. sheriff outed

In Arizona, Pinal County Sheriff Paul Babeu—known for his stance opposing illegal immigration—reportedly threatened his male Mexican ex-lover, Jose, with deportation when the man refused to promise to keep their relationship secret, according to Phoenix New Times.

The publication also reported that the most recent of the alleged threats were made through Babeu's attorney, Chris DeRose, who's also running Babeu's campaign for Con-



Sheriff Paul Babeu. Photo courtesy of his campaign team

gress. Jose claimed DeRose advised against mentioning the affair, saying Jose could get unwanted attention that could result in deportation.

On his website, Babeu posted Feb. 18 that "a tabloid article made a number of false allegations about me. Only one was true: I'm gay."

"I want to be judged on my service: 20 years in the military, two deployments—including one in Iraq; a police officer who has responded to thousands of calls for help; and a sheriff who has cut response times while reducing my own budget. I hope you will stand with me as we talk about the issues that matter: securing our border and ending the record debt and deficit spending that is stalling our economy and bankrupting the country we all love."

Also, Babeu said that he is no longer part of Mitt Romney's campaign, Politico reported.

## Rep. Frank, Murguia to receive honors in D.C.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights announced that it will honor National Council of La Raza President Janet Murguia and openly gay U.S. Rep. Barney Frank with the civil and human rights movement's highest honor, the Hubert H. Humphrey Civil and Human Rights Award, according to a press release.

The recipients will be honored Wed., May 16, at the 36th Annual Hubert H. Humphrey Civil and Human Rights Award Dinner, the nation's largest gathering of the civil and human rights community.

## Swedish PM asked to stop forced trans sterilization

Swedish transgender activists met with a representative of Prime Minister Fredrick Reinfeldt Feb. 14 to petition the prime minister to take a stand against a law that forces transgender persons in Sweden to undergo sterilization in order to legally change their gender.

The surgery renders a person permanently infertile and unable to have children in the future.

"Right now a reform of the law is being debated in Sweden," said Ulrika Westerlund, president of the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights. "But despite a major push to repeal the law, including support from 90 percent of Swedish MPs, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt has stayed silent on the issue, allowing one small conservative party Kristdemokraterna to use its seat in the government to block the change."

The pro-LGBT organizations AllOut.org and RFSL have gathered almost 50,000 signatures from European citizens urging Reinfeldt to speak out about the statute.

"The Swedish Prime Minister has publicly called sterilization law a 'dark chapter in Swedish history,'" said Andre Banks, co-founder of AllOut.org. "Now he has a chance to close that chapter for good, reaffirm Sweden's international reputation on human rights and set a precedent in Europe where other countries have similar barbaric laws."

## Personal PAC challenges law

Personal PAC, and two of its supporters, filed a federal lawsuit in Chicago Feb. 14, bringing a constitutional challenge to Illinois's campaign-

finance law.

Personal PAC is a bipartisan statewide political action committee that works to elect Democratic and Republican candidates who support reproductive rights and family planning services to many state and local offices in Illinois.

The suit aims to invalidate two provisions in Illinois's campaign finance law, asserting that both violate the First Amendment. The first challenged provision currently limits contributions to political action committees, including placing a \$10,000 limit on contributions by individuals. The second currently prevents any person from establishing or maintaining more than one political action committee.

In the lawsuit, the plaintiffs argue that both provisions are patently unconstitutional as a result of the United States Supreme Court's campaign-finance decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* in 2010.

Terry Cosgrove, president/CEO of Personal PAC, stated, "With so much at stake, we cannot win elections with one arm tied behind our back. The unconstitutional restrictions on contributions in the Illinois law prevented us from collecting tens of thousands of dollars in donations that we were legally entitled to last year. We want to remedy that wrong so that Personal PAC can continue to effectively advocate for the rights of women and girls in Illinois."

For a copy of the complaint, visit [www.personalpac.org](http://www.personalpac.org).

## Freedom to Marry reception Feb. 22

Lambda Legal is hosting the 11th Annual Freedom to Marry Reception Wed., Feb. 22, 6:30-9 p.m. at the National Museum of Mexican Art, 1852 W. 19th St.

This is a family-friendly event. Child care is available.

For more information, email [RYadira@LambdaLegal.org](mailto:RYadira@LambdaLegal.org) or call 312-663-4413.

# QUOTELINES

COMPILED BY KATE SOSIN

"Bullying is unacceptable, and specifically with gay teens, it's just wrong. Everyone needs to realize that this is a major issue, and we need to do anything we can to help. I've heard so many of our gay fans speak about how one of my songs, 'Who I Am,' has inspired them. It's a song that I wrote in a moment of coming into my own as a man, discovering how my whole world was setting up as an adult. It was great to see people connect to that song in their own way, specifically bullied gay teens who were encouraged to be exactly who they are."—*Tween pop sensation Nick Jonas to the Advocate, Feb. issue.*

"When I gave a girl a card, it was the worst, because I knew I had to do it in the most blank way possible, as if I was giving the card under doctors orders or under the gun or at least throw it at her as if to say, 'this is out of my hands.' Kids know when there's something about you that is different. They smell it and sense it and it sickens them because they recognize it in themselves and if they don't attack someone will soon do it to them. Bullying starts, as it is a form of self-hatred expressed outward, and since the cruelty towards ourselves we are capable of knows no bounds, it can be bad. Insanely so."—*Comedian Margaret Cho, to Huffington Post, Feb. 14*

"And while Virginia Democrats work to provide a fair shot to young people across Virginia, Republicans in Richmond would rather spend their time defining which families should be allowed to adopt foster children. Let me tell you this: As the first Virginia governor to ban discrimination in state government based on sexual orientation—and as a senator who stood up and voted to repeal the military's 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy—that is mean-spirited, and that is wrong. It is wrong to deny a foster child the opportunity to belong to a supportive, modern family simply because it is led by a same-sex couple in a loving and committed relationship."—*Virginia Sen. Mark Warner to The Washington Blade, Feb. 15.*

"Where is the tolerance of someone having a belief structure that is based in nature, that is based in reason, that is based in faith...The intolerance of the left, the intolerance of the secular ideology, it is a religion on to itself, it is just not a biblical based religion. And it is the most intolerant—just like we say from the days of the atheists in the Soviet Union."—*Republican presidential hopeful Rick Santorum in Think Progress, Feb. 8.*

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# First gay group forms on U.S. base

BY TRACY BAIM,  
WINDY CITY TIMES

A group of about 75 people made history Feb. 13 at the Great Lakes Naval Station, north of Chicago.

It was the first public meeting of Gay, Lesbian and Supporting Sailors (GLASS), believed to be the first non-academy, general base-sanctioned gay support group on any U.S. base in the world.

The Coast Guard can boast of having the first gay-straight alliance at a service academy, and such academies are located on a base.

The GLASS organizational charter was signed Feb. 10, and already other U.S. bases, including in Japan, have asked to see the bylaws to replicate the group in their areas. GLASS is thus an official Chartered organization of Great Lakes Naval Station.

This means that it is given the same weight and attention as the First Class Association, Chief's Mess or any other command-sanctioned organization.

GLASS, the brainchild of 25-year-old Petty Officer Ann Foster, got off to an emotional start at the meeting, held on base. Base Commander Robert Sullivan and other officers, sailors, friends and representatives of LGBT groups celebrated the historic evening.

Members of the Chicago chapter American Veterans for Equal Rights (Jim Darby, Patrick Bova, Ed Wosylus and Jean Albright, also of Windy City Times), PFLAG Chicago (Meg and Fred Valentini) and Links Pride Youth (Tracy Katz Muhl) addressed the attendees, who then enjoyed a social hour and celebratory cake for the event. There were other community representatives also at the event.

Several of the GLASS members were also at the Equality Illinois gala Feb. 11, and they spoke about how warm and accepting people at the gala were.

BMC Dena Partain, who has been in the Navy 24 years, is mentor and advisor to GLASS. "At the gala, veterans kept coming up to our table," she said, holding back tears. "They were just so happy we were there. ... To have that support, I can't even describe it."

Sullivan was proud of the event. "It was great," he said. "It is a good opportunity for those who have not been able to express themselves, to show the military is comprised of a lot of good people. You do your job, and do it well. That is regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation. When we do that, we have a lot better country."

Foster, who is president of GLASS, was inspired to start the group in November after speaking to her roommate, who has a partner and is helping raise her partner's two children, about the lack of resources on base.

"I am overwhelmed," she told the crowd. "A month and a half ago, if you would have told me there would be 75 people, spanning the community, students, officers ... I thought if someone was just 18 and just coming out, I wanted them to have resources."

One of the many straight allies—or "supporting sailors," as the group calls them—FCSA Zachary Quirk, explained why he was involved. He said about his friend FCSN Robert Baumgartner: "If my friend is brave enough to stand up, I'm certainly going to stand up with him."

Foster, who has addressed an estimated 4,000 people during open training sessions, said she

has received "nothing but support from the start. From our Facebook page, emails, and every single person who has come out to us..." she said, holding back tears. "The first thing people ask is, how can they help. I could not have done this without others."

Foster is leaving in two weeks for an assignment in San Diego, and she hopes to bring her

command structure, although there have been efforts to have some formal recognition. But such recognition would not happen for such an independent organization.

OutServe spokesman Josh Seefried said, "OutServe local chapters have different procedures for different bases. Some bases are really starting to work with OutServe to adjust training at bases or integrate same-sex partners in military programs, such as deployment support for partners. All our chapters have a chapter leader (or co-leader) that determines how their chapter is organized."

Seefried also pointed out that the Coast Guard Academy started the first gay-straight alliance at a U.S. service academy soon after the DADT repeal. SPECTRUM, a diversity council at the Coast Guard, started Dec. 1, 2011. OutServe's magazine reports that SPECTRUM is comprised "of two cadets from each grade, and with the assistance of the Office of Inclusion and Diversity, the academy's staff judge advocate, the Commandant of Cadets and the superintendent,

mands and schools proudly graduate thousands of recruits and Sailors every year. The base soon will be 100 years old. It, along with the mission here, has been in constant change, allowing us to prepare Sailors for an increasingly sophisticated and technology based Navy."

Brisco said GLASS has been the greatest thing to happen in his life. He recently came out to his family in Oklahoma, and came out to his Navy friends soon after DADT officially was over Sept. 20, 2011.

Brisco and several GLASS members attended a PFLAG Chicago meeting in January, and he said that was their first off-base event, and that it was a wonderful experience.

Partain said the standing-room-only launch of GLASS was unexpected, and wonderful. While DADT is gone, she said there is work to be done on benefits for gay and lesbian servicemembers. "Until DOMA [the Defense of Marriage Act] is gone, our partners can't be on page two [of the military forms] as a dependent," she said.

Sullivan was not the only supportive person



GLASS representatives attended the Equality Illinois gala Feb. 11. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald, [www.mysticimagesphotography.com](http://www.mysticimagesphotography.com)

experience in Illinois to that location: "We have our charter done and signed, all we have to do is take it to other bases." She said her colleague in GLASS, Vice President Beau Brisco, will be bringing the idea to his assignment, in Virginia.

"Never before in the military has this happened," Foster said, and this is indeed believed to be the first such group chartered on a base.

Pentagon spokeswoman Eileen M. Lainez said the Department of Defense could not verify this because they do not track installation groups across the services.

A U.S. Navy spokesperson said she was not aware of any similar group in the Navy. Army spokesman Troy A. Rolan Sr. told Windy City Times: "Currently, we are not aware of an organization operating on Army bases."

OutServe, an association of actively serving LGBT military personnel, has more than 4,500 members worldwide. It launched near the end of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) on July 26, 2010 and, therefore, started during a time when its members could not be out. OutServe now has more than 42 chapters, many that meet on bases. The ones deployed such as in Afghanistan (can obviously only meet on base)

OutServe spokeswoman Sue Fulton said while OutServe has chapters on bases in all branches of the military, it operates separate from the

group promotes respect and tolerance for all, regardless of sexual orientation. ... Other academies followed in the footsteps of the Coast Guard with cadet and faculty sponsored organizations."

Petty Officer Foster said that if there is a chapter of OutServe at Great Lakes, she is not aware of it.

GLASS is allowed to have posters in all the barracks, and Foster has been allowed to address large groups on base, including every Monday when new boot camp graduates start their A School orientation.

"Every week, new sailors come from across the street [from boot camp] and learn about all sorts of things, like sexual harassment, financial management," Foster said. "Every Monday, the Captain talks to the students about what it means to be a sailor. CSADD [the Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions] speaks to a new group every Monday, and they now mention GLASS."

Partain said that Great Lakes is the only boot camp the Navy has now, and after boot camp, about 40 percent of those men and women then attend "A" school at Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes base website states, "More than 25,000 military and civilian personnel work, train and live here. Our training com-

at the event. There were many non-gay people there, including Master Chief Leon Walker.

Sullivan and Walker posed for a photo with GLASS officers: Seaman and Brisco; Seaman Jacob Canzoneri, ETSN, a supporting member; Secretary FC3 Liz Greenwood; Foster; and Partain. Other members of GLASS were also introduced to the group, including Ryan Hollman, FC3; Marissa Nerey, FCSN; Treasurer FCSN Gina Champion; Seaman Robert Baumgartner; and Seaman Jocelyn Caro.

The GLASS mission statement states the group "seeks to foster a base free of prejudice, bigotry, harassment, and violence by providing a space for all Sailors to explore and increase their understanding of aspects related to sexual orientation and expression in an open and non-judgmental environment. We support and affirm the diverse identities and lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) Sailors as individuals and as groups, especially as students, staff, and faculty of Training Support Command (TSC) and their families, friends, and allies, by the cultivation of safe space, educational outreach, advocacy, visibility of LGB issues, information and referral, and academic and leadership opportunities."

The Facebook page said they are a "peer-to-peer group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and supportive sailors at Great Lakes Naval Station in

Great Lakes, IL. We are committed to providing support for our fellow sailors through advocacy, education and outreach."

Visit the organization's page at [www.facebook.com/GLASSgreatlakes?sk=wall](http://www.facebook.com/GLASSgreatlakes?sk=wall).

Also see [www.outserve.org](http://www.outserve.org).

#### Back story: Petty Officer Ann Foster

Foster was born in Reno, Nev., and grew up "all over the place," including in California and Colorado. She spent seven years in different cities as a photojournalist before deciding to enlist in the Navy at age 24—inspired by the enlistment of her older sister.

She enlisted in the 12-week boot camp in December 2010, the same month that the U.S. Congress voted to overturn Don't Ask, Don't Tell. But she still had to live another nine months under the policy, because it took until Sept. 20, 2011 for it to come fully down.

Foster was interested in continuing her photography in the Navy, but there were no positions open in that field, so she is in fire control, which she said has been a perfect fit.

Foster, who was out as a lesbian before enlisting, going back into the closet was hard. "I didn't think it was going to be as hard as it was," she said. "Not knowing, constantly looking behind your back, not sure what you could say. That was difficult. Now that it's not the case anymore, I can talk about my girlfriend [a civilian who is in school in Chicago]." Foster related two stories about coming out to sailors, and in both cases she was the first openly gay person they had encountered. She saw these as teaching moments, and suffered no negative repercussions.

"We're all wearing the same uniform, just judge me first as a sailor," Foster said. "Another thing I want to get out of this group, is in this population of sailors—we go to school with them, and they also know we're gay, maybe then they will see we are not stereotypical or scary. We all just happen to be gay."

Foster graduated from boot camp Feb. 18, 2011, and then started "A" school at Great Lakes. She graduated in October and was waiting for her next school orders when she decided to start what would become GLASS. She now has her next orders, and that is to attend "C" school in San Diego. Fire control specialists attend C school for each of the ship weapons systems. Once she graduates this fall, Foster said she expects to be deployed on a ship by the end of 2012.

When Foster discussed the situation of gays and lesbians in the military with her roommate last November, it was because there were no resources on base, and there were different financial constraints placed on the partners and children of gays and lesbians.

"I started thinking—when I first came out, I could go to a group, and learn about what it is to come out, they would help answer questions. There was nothing like that in the military. It started from there," Foster said Feb. 14.

Foster went to the Fleet and Family Service

Center on base. It is a place where all kinds of support is offered, and she told a counselor there about her idea for a gay and lesbian group. The counselor asked others, including Chief Partain, and the momentum for a group quickly sped up. This was right before Christmas, and by Jan. 5 the group held its first meeting, with about 20 people in the room. The name GLASS was agreed on, and Foster enlisted Petty Officer Greenwood to work on bylaws.

"Partain talked to us about what it was like, living under Don't Ask, Don't Tell, and she was very emotional," Foster said of that meeting. "Many of us never saw that side of her. Seeing that, if I had any doubts before, that solidified the need. For the younger, but also the older generations, who spent their entire careers and never could say anything. She said she could never be fully a part of Navy she loved, she always felt like an outsider, and now she can be who she is. I can't imagine that for 24 years, or Jean [Albright, Air Force Master Sergeant] with 20."

Foster said after the group was launched, retired military on the base came up to her to offer their help, as did some officers.

"There has been amazing support," she said.

Foster said she also received strong support from her chain of command, including Captain Peter Lintner of the Training Support Center. "He actually seemed upset that it was a junior sailor who brought this to him," Foster said. "He was upset it wasn't a staff member who thought of it. It was a fresh-off-the-press junior sailor. It shows that this generation of sailors, and in the military in general, are a lot more open and accepting, than a lot of the older generation. But we didn't have any flack. The entire command, both admirals and captains, made it be known that we are a group of value that deserves respect. If you have issues, that's fine—you don't need to do anything, leave them alone. They said no discrimination would be tolerated."

Getting the charter approved "set a world speed record" in the military, Foster said, thanks to Greenwood's past experience in the non-profit sector. They also had to complete many forms and applications, and they wanted everything to be meticulously done, so it could be used on any base.

Foster said she is not worried about GLASS continuing once she and other co-founders move to other bases. "I know many of them want to be part of it, and know the direction I wanted it to go," she said. "People coming in now never lived under DADT. This is the first generation that started their entire career without having to deal with it—whereas for me, Greenwood, Brisco, and others, it was part of life."

Great Lakes Naval Station is headquarters to dozens of commands across the Midwest, making the impact of GLASS even beyond a typical base. Some 18,000 student sailors a year come through Great Lakes.

## CHM forum looks at race and sexuality

BY YASMIN NAIR

The Chicago History Museum, in conjunction with The Public Square at the Illinois Humanities Council and as part of the latter's "Art of Dissent" series, hosted a Feb. 18 presentation and discussion, "When Identities Collide: Sexuality and Black Feminism."

The program was part of the museum's "Out in Chicago" series. The museum is also host to "Out in Chicago," the special exhibition about Chicago's LGBTQ history; it ends on March 26. Visitors can see the exhibition for free through February.

The main speaker was the scholar Kimberly Springer, author of the book *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations,*

tions of Black feminism that affected the historical records of such groups, the most prominent one being that Black feminism was merely an offshoot of white feminism and derived its meaning from the latter. In fact, she pointed out, the histories and struggles of Black feminism were and are unique. Rather than being derived from white feminism, Black feminism developed in parallel to white feminism and highlighted the issues of oppression, class and race.

In particular, Springer focused on the role of Black lesbians in these organizations, whose place in the movement was as controversial and as painful as that of white lesbians in feminist organizations who were once collectively dubbed the "Lavender Menace"



Kimberly Springer (left) and Alice Kim, executive director of The Public Square. Photo by Yasmin Nair

1968-1980. Jennifer Brier, co-curator of the exhibit, introduced Springer. Following Springer's talk, the two engaged in a brief discussion about the topic of the evening before inviting questions and comments.

Brier spoke of the current exhibit and said that it was an attempt to document the "constant struggle between the experience of oppression ... and the ability of people to find the possibility of change and freedom in everyday things or a social movement."

Springer's talk expanded on that tension between struggle and freedom by highlighting the histories and struggles of five different feminist groups: Third World Women's Alliance (1968-1980), National Black Feminist Organization (1973-1975), Black Women's Organization for Action (1973-1980), the National Alliance of Black Feminists (1977-79, based in Chicago), and the Combahee River Collective (1973-1980).

Springer spoke of the common misconcep-

in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Like their counterparts, Black lesbian feminists were often central to their organizations, and were seen as traitors to race issues. Many of them, like Audre Lorde, went on to become central political and cultural figures.

Springer said that the costs of the expulsion of Black lesbians from their feminist organizations were the failure to recognize their history as organizers and the loss of such activists as a resource. Another result was also that it took a longer time to theorize Black sexuality. Despite these issues, Black lesbian feminists continue to be pivotal points at the intersection of race and sexuality.

The conversation and discussion touched upon the relationship between Black gay men and the Black feminist and lesbian movements, as well as Chicago's histories of alliances between various groups aligned along the lines of sexuality and gender.

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## GERBER from cover

a dues-paying member of the library and, until late January, worked as a volunteer shift coordinator.

According to Howser, approximately 10 people put their names to the letter, most of whom declined to release their names for publication. Others who did not sign the letter are also involved, Howser said. Of that group, just Howser and Cheryl Pattin agreed to be named on-record, Howser said. Pattin could not be reached in time for publication.



Karen Sendziak. Photo by Ross Forman

The group has not provided the reported letter to WCT, although outside sources have confirmed its existence.

The letter asked Sendziak to consider postponing the move and to open up governance of the library to "a new, more extensive board and it must be done in a way that is transparent and easily accessible to the public," Howser said.

"It's not about us versus Karen [Sendziak]," he said. It's about how we can add our voices to the direction of the library."

Howser said that the group does not have legal authority over the organization. Rather it is a group of people who have been closely connected to the library over years that are worried that the library cannot survive or thrive without more board members.

"There just needs to be more people involved in the decision-making process," Howser said.

As of December 2011, the library did have two board members in addition to Sendziak, who is listed as both president and acting treasurer on an annual report filed with the secretary of state. Don Landers, a resident of Arizona, and Stan Huntington of Chicago are listed as board members, with Huntington named as acting secretary.

Messages to Huntington were not returned. Landers did not respond immediately to a request to comment on the library.

On Feb. 19, Howser went to Gerber/Hart, located in Edgewater, and asked Sendziak if she had received the letter. He said that Sendziak confirmed that she had and that a response was forthcoming. That response came on Feb. 20.

According to Howser, the group did not release the letter at the request of a board member. Howser said he was surprised that Sendziak had released a letter to press under such circumstances.

Howser said that the group began talking about issues related to the library after WCT found that the library space was for rent and raised questions about its ability to move.

"There are problems that have been accumulating for years before this article," he said.

Howser said he sees the move as an opportunity for the library to grow, but that the group wants to open up that decision-making to library members.

"It feels like so many things are decided by one person," Howser said.

Some community members have said that they feel Sendziak controls too much of the organization, while others have noted that Sendziak kept the library running when few others would, working entirely as a full-time volunteer to keep the library open.

It is not widely known why the library plans to relocate. Windy City Times previously reported that its landlord wanted to keep the library in the neighborhood.

The group's plea to postpone the library's move may have come too late, however.

The building's landlord, Rae Ann Cecrle, confirmed that she is in the middle of contracts with a new tenant. She said that Sendziak called her and asked for a rental extension because the library has not yet found a space. However, Cecrle said that her tenants were already set to move in. She said she contacted 48th Ward Ald. Harry Osterman and asked him to assist the library in relocating.

Osterman previously told Windy City Times that he wanted to keep the library in the neighborhood and had offered to help the organization.

Gerber/Hart now must move before May 1.

Windy City Times has continued to ask Sendziak to disclose information about the library, including what bylaws it is operating under, who its board members are and how long Sendziak has served as president. Sendziak has stated that the library's attorney is working on those questions but would not name when answers would be made available. Windy City Times began asking questions about the library's operations approximately one month ago.

However, on Feb. 20, questions about Sendziak's response to the "Friends of the Gerber/Hart" letter prompted a response from Sendziak, who disclosed the following letter:

*Dear Friends,*

Thank you for bringing your concerns about Gerber/Hart to my attention in your letter of Feb. 15. I will address what you say is your "greatest concern" first—that is Gerber/Hart's possible move, and I stress possible, because no final decision has been made, notwithstanding what you may have read in the Windy City Times.

The impending expiration of Gerber/Hart's lease for the space on Granville mandates that a prudent board of directors considers whether to stay or to move. There are many issues to take into account, among them finances, access, space, safety and the landlord's record with us. We have declined, as is right to do, to deliberate or to negotiate in the press. In this regard, we have proceeded no differently than the board of directors of Gerber/Hart proceeded back in 1998, when we moved to the Granville space from the space on Paulina. Then, as now, the board studied all the relevant factors over a long period of time and took the decision it thought best. We regard this as our fiduciary duty. No attempt was made then, nor can we permit any attempt to be made now, to stampede the Board into any decision by the press or any other party.

While the board is open to, and will consider, the opinions and wishes of all of the friends of Gerber/Hart, including members of the press, individuals such as yourselves, the alderman and community groups, the final decision will be the one the Board believes best serves the interest of Gerber/Hart and the community it serves.

You—who elsewhere in your letter are critical of what you call my autocratic leadership—demand, without knowing the issues involved or the status of the negotiations, that I "immediately" renew the lease on the Granville space, acting unilaterally, ignoring the board of directors and setting aside all the study and negotiation that has been done up to now. What sort of leadership would it be for me to do that? In what way would that fulfill my fiduciary duty to Gerber/Hart?

The balance of your letter is a critique of my

leadership. Of course, you are entitled to your opinion. To the extent any specific points can be discerned in what you say, I would reply with the following:

—Yes, a tax return was filed late and another contained a list of board members from the wrong year. These are trivial errors that any organization could make. The late tax return has now been filed and the erroneous one is being amended.

—Yes, there are fewer board members, because in recent years it has been difficult to find qualified individuals who are willing to devote the time needed and are not burdened by conflict of interest. As for transparency, the application for board membership has been on our website for years. The board has three members, and their identity is a matter of public record, on file, as required, with the secretary of state. A board recruitment task force was recently formed to help recruit more members.

—Yes, the space looks a little run-down. That is, in fact, one of the many issues the board is considering in connection with the possibility of a move.

—As for programs, we have eight planned for

March. As for exhibitions, we revitalized them last fall starting in October with an exhibition highlighting our AIDS posters; in November, we staged an exhibition commemorating the 30th anniversary of "Reeling," the gay and lesbian film festival; currently, we have an exhibition about Broadway musicals.

I would add, although you don't mention it, that thanks to my efforts Gerber/Hart's financial base has steadily improved, and today is sound.

Other points you make are histrionic—that Gerber/Hart is a "shadow" of its former self, that the archives are "impenetrable," that my style is "autocratic"—and do not deserve a response.

I hope that all the friends of Gerber/Hart will support the board as it undertakes the serious and complex task of determining our new home.

*Sincerely,*

*Karen Sendziak*

Windy City Times will update this story online as details become available.

## Judge throws out Springfield benefits vote

BY KATE SOSIN

A Circuit Court judge has ruled that a Springfield city vote in favor of extending benefits to civil-union spouses violated the Open Meetings Act.

Bruce Rushton, a reporter for the Illinois Times, filed suit in January after the Joint Labor/Management Health Care Committee held a closed-door vote over extending the insurance benefits. The committee had previously voted against extending the benefits amid outcry from Illinois LGBT-rights groups.

Judge Brian Otwell ruled in favor of Rushton, stating that the committee was a public committee and was therefore obligated to hold open meetings.

The ruling throws out the committee's reversal on civil-union benefits.

The Civil Rights Agenda (TCRA) announced the ruling in a press release. TCRA Executive Director Anthony Martinez said that a delay in voting could mean that benefits will not be available in March, when the city's fiscal year begins.

"Although we are very supportive of the Open Meetings Act, it is unfortunate that this ruling has the effect of invalidating the City of Springfield's decision to grant benefits to city workers in civil unions," said Martinez in a statement.

TCRA called on the committee to act immediately to ensure that civil union spouses are offered benefits by March.

The committee initially voted against extending the benefits because actuarial projection estimated a cost to the city of \$725,000. The committee argued that its initial vote was legal because the city is self-insured. However, no city employee in a civil union had inquired about the benefits, and a revised projection put the cost at \$66,000.

## Quinn unspecific on marriage support

BY KATE SOSIN

Gov. Pat Quinn's views on marriage equality remain unclear after questioning from media outlets, including Windy City Times.

The governor has come under scrutiny in recent days after the Associated Press reported that Quinn was unsure of his support for a recently filed marriage equality bill in the Illi-

nois General Assembly. Quinn signed the civil unions act into law and has been outspoken about his support for LGBT rights.

Quinn defended his record on LGBT rights in an interview with WBEZ but would not specifically state whether or not he supported same-sex marriage in Illinois.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel has come out in favor of marriage equality in Illinois.

At the Equality Illinois gala on Feb. 11 Quinn reconfirmed his commitment to the LGBT movement in a brief address to attendees.

"We're going to make the will of the people the law of the land," Quinn said.

Brooke Anderson, a spokesperson for Quinn, said that the governor has championed LGBT rights in the past and that he supports equality, but she also stopped short of addressing Quinn's support for same-sex marriage in Illinois.

"The governor believes in equal rights for all people," said Anderson in a statement to Windy City Times. "He fought for and helped deliver civil unions last year, which have been utilized by couples in 90 of Illinois' 102 counties. As the governor noted earlier this week, we're looking forward to a full legislative debate."

## 'Out of the Closets...' Feb. 26

The forum "Out of the Closets into the Occupation! Queer Struggle Against the 1%" will take place Sunday, Feb. 26, 1-3 p.m., at Occupy Chicago headquarters, 500 W. Cermak Rd., seventh floor.

According to the event's Facebook page, there will be "a lively discussion about a new emerging queer struggle that rests at the heart of the occupy movement. We will discuss our lived experiences with also a close examination of the material oppression that pervades queer people's lives."

See more at [www.facebook.com/events/184657768301136](http://www.facebook.com/events/184657768301136).

## LGBT Narcotics Anon. meetings at Haymarket

Narcotics Anonymous meetings for LGBT individuals will take place Mondays 8-9 p.m. at Haymarket Center, 20 N. Sangamon.

For more info, call Anthony Oltean at 312-208-4021.

# Talking with the head of the Chicago Loop Alliance

BY STEVEN CHAITMAN

The Chicago Loop Alliance (CLA) holds its annual meeting every February to, among other things, unveil new initiatives to continue improving the vitality of The Loop and its businesses, as well as draw more visitors downtown. The CLA spearheaded the Looptopia events in 2007 and 2008, for example.

For Ty Tabing, the CLA's openly gay executive director, the meeting celebrates the anniversary of his tenure. This year's meeting, held recently, marked eight for the Kansas native, who, in a way, became a Chicagoan by accident.

A post-college graduation road trip brought Tabing and two friends to Chicago. After catching a Brewers game in Milwaukee, the friends got in an accident and totaled their car. They were stuck in Chicago for a month, staying with Tabing's aunt and uncle in Barrington. They spent much of that time exploring the city and were soon hooked. All three live in Chicago today.

Prior to his current post, worked at City Hall for what was then the Department of Planning and Development. He handled a number of real-estate projects in the Loop until he was asked to become executive director of the Greater State Street Council due, in part, to his connection with the city. He later helped merge that organization with the Central Michigan Avenue Association to form the CLA.

Tabing spoke with Windy City Times about his various initiatives to make the Loop more appealing, how he sees downtown Chicago and his plans to move up to the North Side.

**Windy City Times: When you first visited, what were your initial observations of the city?**

Ty Tabing: I loved the architecture, the buildings, the pace, the energy and the diversity of people. There's not a whole lot of diversity in Wichita, Kan.

**WCT: The Loop is seen through so many eyes every day; how do you see the Loop?**

TT: I see the Loop as a series of inflows and

outflows. There are 300,000 people who come into The Loop every day to come to work. But we also have 30,000 residents who live in the Loop, 65,000 college students that attend school in the Loop and we have one of the more vibrant theatre districts in downtown Chicago vis-à-vis the rest of the country.

I live down here as well. From one perspective it's great to have lots of tourists coming down here; from a pure resident perspective I'm less than enamored, but it is what it is. I actually just put my condo on the market yesterday.

I've lived down here for four years and I'm basically a guy from Kansas and grew up with a backyard and green space in my life, so even though I love the simplicity that comes from living three blocks from where you work, on weekends I find reason to get out of the neighborhood and go up to Andersonville or Boystown or Wicker Park or wherever else weekend fun might take me.

**WCT: Do you have a specific idea of where you want to move?**

TT: I really like Andersonville. I find myself going up there a lot to meet friends so I could really see myself living in that neighborhood.

**WCT: What are you personally most proud of in your time as executive director of the CLA?**

TT: Our Pop-Up Art Program, which is bringing art to vacant storefronts, is probably the program I'm most proud of. It was a very opportunistic response to the recession and in part the difficult times in the retail market. We basically turned vacant storefronts into galleries, some of which you can walk into. Where we didn't have access to interior spaces we really activated storefront windows, which, in the process, enhances the visitor experience to the Loop but, at the same time, really improves the curb appeal of these spaces for rent.

**WCT: One of the big initiatives that you launched at the annual meeting was Art Loop 2012. Tell me about that.**

TT: There are two things we announced. One was Phase II of the LED lights and music display, Lightscape, which is on State Street. We're try-



Ty Tabing.

ing to enhance the destination appeal of State Street.

[The second] is our art installation that's going on this summer called Color Jam. It's by internationally famous artist Jessica Stockholder, who will literally drench an intersection in color. So the sidewalks and the streets will be painted and the colors will extend up the sides of the four buildings that are participating, so it should be a really immersive experience to visit this intersection.

**WCT: Has being openly gay had any kind of influence or impact on your job at all? Why or why not?**

TT: It's had no impact, for the most part. City Hall is a great place to work as an openly gay man. I've kind of been out forever in my professional life. It's one of those things that never comes up—unless someone tries to fix me up. I'm sort of a longtime suffering single. Last night at the annual meeting a couple of members came up to me and said they had someone they wanted me to meet. I don't know if that was just the wine talking or what, but I'll see where that goes.

**WCT: Have you spearheaded any LGBT-related efforts in the Loop?**

TT: For Looptopia there was a Miss Looptopia drag contest, which was hysterical, actually. The thing about an organization like ours is we have to be everything to everybody, and that includes suburban families and young professionals and everything else ... With Lightscape, we're working on bringing show tunes to State Street, so we'll see how that works out. There are different ways to set up Lightscape and so we're brainstorming some fun things that have included karaoke and show tunes and stuff like that, so that seems like a great opportunity for a Sidetrack Sunday type of thing, but on State Street.

**WCT: Would you still describe the business in the Loop as LGBT-friendly or the atmosphere as open to all walks of life?**

TT: Yeah; about a week or so ago I saw these two women holding hands walking down Wabash and I had a little bit of an "a-ha" moment, like, "Wow, it's cool to see that down here," because I don't recall seeing that too frequently. It was a little bit of a sign to me that there is more acceptance city-wide instead of just having a rather small area in which it's okay to hold the hand of your partner or whatever the case may be. So that was nice to see.

## Berwyn groups to host forum

On Saturday, March 10, BUNGALO (Berwyn United Neighborhood Gay And Lesbian Organization) and Berwyn CARES (Berwyn Citizens Aligned to Renew Education for Children) will be jointly hosting a candidates' forum.

The candidates' forum will be at 1 p.m. in the 2nd Floor Community Room of the Berwyn Public Library, 2701 S. Harlem, Berwyn. Candidates running for the 24th Illinois State House District and the 12 Illinois State Senate District have been invited. State Rep. Lisa Hernandez and challenger Robert Reyes have accepted invitations to attend.

See [www.bungalo.org](http://www.bungalo.org) or [www.berwyn-cares.org](http://www.berwyn-cares.org).



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# Chicago-area company composts its way to success

BY TRACY BAIM

Erlene Howard calls herself a treehugger with an interest in health for both body and planet. She combined her skills and interests to found her own company, Collective Resource, Inc., to help others understand the importance of composting as a big step forward in helping the environment.

With many traditional waste locations nearing capacity, and the country as a whole trying to figure out what to do with all its garbage, Howard wants people to understand that it is not all garbage, and that we are literally throwing away our future by not composting those materials which can be re-used.

Howard's company will be among those exhibiting at the Chicago Green Wedding Alliance's "Committed: An Avant-Garde Wedding Event" Sunday, Feb. 26, 12-4 p.m. at the Greenhouse Loft, 2545 W. Diversey Ave. See [www.greenweddingalliance.com](http://www.greenweddingalliance.com).

Howard, 52, an Evanston resident who identifies as bisexual, was a business administrator in previous careers, so when she started to think about opening her own composting service, she



Erlene Howard and Kevin Macica.

knew she could use those skills to strengthen the business.

"As my food evolved, I started to teach people a little more about raw vegan food preparation," Howard said. One student collected the food scraps to take to her compost pile, and this inspired Howard to learn more about the other end of the food cycle.

"As a condo dweller, there was not really any space for me to compost. Some people can set up a bin, but I didn't have anywhere to put a bin," she said. For a while, she gave her food scraps to the former student, but by October 2009 she was inspired to create a service for other people who would compost, if it was accessible.

She researched the idea with friends, and Howard eventually modeled her company after The Earthgirl from Vermont, [www.earthgirlcomposting.com](http://www.earthgirlcomposting.com). Then she researched where in the Chicago area she could take the composting she would pick up from clients.

In April 2010 she met Ken Dunn, who became her mentor. He runs the Resource Center, [www.resourcecenterchicago.org](http://www.resourcecenterchicago.org), a 35-year-old non-profit environmental education organization.

Dunn helped Howard "close the loop" on the composting process, introducing her to Land and Lakes, [www.land-and-lakes.com](http://www.land-and-lakes.com), the company that she now uses to compost all of her clients scraps.

"I feel the whole concept has been a real gift—and it was interesting timing as far as what Illinois was doing," Howard said. "The waste hauler industry had gotten food scraps classified as toxic waste. They did it so nobody else could take garbage. So, until January 2010

when Illinois SB 99 passed, it was illegal for residents and restaurants to separate food scraps. So now it is legal."

Senate Bill 99, proposed by state Sen. Heather Steans, simplified the permitting process for food waste composting. Previously, food waste composting facilities in Illinois "were regulated like solid waste facilities, which means they [were] almost as expensive and complicated to permit as landfills," according to BioCycle magazine.

Howard said the law was successful in part because municipalities are running out of landfill space.

"It's really important to have the nutrients from the food scraps go back into our soil for lawns and gardens," Howard said. "It's really bad to have the food scraps in landfill—they need an environment to break down naturally. If they are in a landfill, and all of them are just packed in, then the scraps do not have the air and water and turning, natural turning, to have them decompose naturally, so that's why it creates methane.

"There are some healthy ways to speed up the process of composting food scraps with bio digesters, but they also create methane—but then it can be captured and used for good like for heating or running equipment. Methane has good uses if it is captured.

"Land and Lakes, they use a wind row process—they let it in air, sunlight, water and turn it, they let it break down naturally."

While Land and Lakes does take lawn scraps, Howard focuses primarily on food and other compostable items.

Howard's first haul was in June 2010. By August 2011, they had their first one-ton week of hauling. Now, they haul an average of two tons a week from across Evanston, Skokie, Wilmette and Chicago. Last December, they hauled one ton in just one day.

Howard has 80 residential customers and eight restaurants, including Tweet, and the client she is perhaps most proud of is the Academy for Global Citizenship, [www.agcchicago.org](http://www.agcchicago.org), a Chicago Public Charter School, located on the Southwest Side of the city. Their mission is "to empower all students to positively impact the community and world beyond."

"They cook breakfast and lunch, and it's all home-cooked food, as local as possible," Howard said. "It is all served on plates and with silverware that get washed and re-used for every meal. They produce 32 gallons a day of food scraps—and we pick up once a week."

In April 2011, Howard hired Mary Beth Schaye, a client, to consult with other clients about "zero waste" events. Schaye is a Green Committee chair at her daughter's elementary school "and with the help of Collective Resource has been instrumental in transforming the school's community events from events that generated bags and bags of garbage to nearly zero-waste events. Mary Beth has signed on with Collective Resource to help other schools and organizations to make this same transition," CR states on its Website.

"Mary Beth Schaye works diligently to green every party she is invited to," Howard said.

Howard has one truck, and her son Kevin Macica, who is 22, is now employed to help with the lifting—although in the beginning, he had to work up to his mom's level of strength, since she was already building her muscles through the early months of hauling.

"My mission is to compost for any company or any household that wants to do it," Howard said. "But that has to be within my geographic area—I can't be driving too far for so little.



Erlene Howard and Kevin Macica at work. Photos by Hal Baim

But my goals are kind of endless. There are very open-ended and organic. But for now, I see us easily increasing to being able to haul five tons a week and continuing partnerships with residents and restaurants and communities that want to reduce their landfill use.

"I would not have to buy another truck or anything to get us to five tons a week. The truck is a 2008 Dodge Sprinter cargo van. We pick up containers, and don't tip them until we get to the facility."

Howard charges her clients a fee based on the bin size they use, and gives discounts for multiple pickups in a small geographic area. She pays a tipping fee at Land and Lakes, and then that company makes money reselling the final product.

"I would like to emphasize this is a win-win-win of it being composted and put back into the soil; there is a lose-lose-lose of it going into the landfill," Howard said. "For the most part, what it costs people to throw their stuff into the garbage is minimal. But it will get more expensive when we run out of landfill. So this is a paying it forward—if you start separating and encourage your neighbors now, we will pay less in the future."

Part of the job of Collective Resource, and Howard and Schaye, is education. It isn't just about hauling scraps. They attend green events and expos, and will speak to just about any audience that wants to learn how to be environmentally conscious.

Schaye especially focuses on "precycling," planning ahead at your events to have a zero-waste result. This means using any number of beautifully looking disposables. "We do pancake breakfasts for 300 people, and end up with less than a jewel bag full of landfill," Howard said.

Precycling "is a brilliant way of bringing consciousness to it," Schaye said. "It starts in the store—you can make choices. Consumers really have a lot of power. If you don't have the means to compost in any way, avoid certain things. Glass and aluminum are better than plastic. At the very least, try to buy things you can recycle in your town. Try not to buy things you can't recycle.

"You are more aware of how much waste is created when there are more people together at once—at weddings, community events and at schools. Because I have an interest in parties and party planning, I'm also very interested in the types of products that are compostable, and I am finding out about new ones all the time."

Schaye said there are many price levels, and that being good for the environment doesn't have to mean it is expensive.

Schaye also said that "something is better than nothing; diverting some of your food scraps is better than nothing. Every little bit counts. I don't want people to take zero waste so literally,

that they feel like they don't want to try. If the best you can do is not buy Styrofoam, than do not buy that. We do talk to restaurants about that—most that want to hire us are already far down the road, buying the compostable things."

Howard sums up their business nicely: "It is not garbage. It is nourishment for the planet."

Collective Resource's pickup area includes Evanston, Skokie, Wilmette, and Chicago's North Side and Chicago from Howard Street to Ohio Street and the lakefront to Kimball Avenue, but contact them to see if they can fit you into their schedule even if you are outside of those areas.

See [www.collectiveresource.us](http://www.collectiveresource.us).

## Judy Shepard to keynote H.E.R. Day 2012

Center on Halsted has announced that Judy Shepard will serve as keynote speaker at this year's H.E.R. (Health Education & Recreation) Day Saturday, March 10.

H.E.R. Day is the center's marquee women's event empowering female-identified individuals to live healthier, happier lives through a full day of events, workshops and special programs.

In October 1998, Judy and Dennis Shepard lost their 21-year-old son, Matthew, to a murder motivated by anti-gay hate. Determined to prevent others from suffering their son's fate, Judy and Dennis decided to turn their grief into action and established the Matthew Shepard Foundation, dedicated to working toward the causes championed by Matthew during his life: social justice, diversity awareness and education, and equality for LGBT people.

The keynote address will take place at 11 a.m., with programs and events beginning at 12 p.m. See [www.CenterOnHalsted.org](http://www.CenterOnHalsted.org).

## Lakeside Pride's 'Salute to Uptown' March 24

The Lakeside Pride Symphonic Band will perform "A Salute to Uptown" Saturday, March 24, at 8 p.m. at the Preston Bradley Center, 941 W. Lawrence Ave.

In honor of Chicago's Uptown neighborhood, the band's concert features music that reflects the legacy of this entertainment district.

Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door; they are \$12 for seniors and students. See [www.LakesidePride.org](http://www.LakesidePride.org).

# Guide to the Gays

The March 20 primary elections feature several openly gay and lesbian candidates for office. (All of the candidates are in the Democratic party.)

—**Paula Basta**

Race: State House (14th District)  
Web site: PaulaBasta.org  
The skinny: This increasingly contentious race between Basta and incumbent state Rep. Kelly Cassidy took on intrigue because it's possibly the first political contest in the state pitting two out lesbians against each other. (On Jan. 19, for example, Basta's campaign issued a press release accusing Cassidy of implying through a phone-survey question that Basta's campaign was in violation of federal law.) Basta's website highlights her LGBT-related accomplishments and "deep understanding of the intricacies of aging and City services."

—**Kelly Cassidy**

Race: State House (14th District)  
Web site: CitizensForKellyCassidy.com  
The skinny: Once a part of the Cook County state's attorney's office, Cassidy became a state representative in May 2011 after Harry Osterman



Mary Trew.

—**Mary Trew**

Race: Cook County Circuit Court Judge (Ninth Subcircuit, Epstein vacancy)  
Web site: www.VoteTrew.com  
The skinny: When she was the executive director of Domestic Violence Legal Clinic, she helped create one of the nation's first on-site civil court clinics for orders of protection in the Cook County Domestic Violence Courthouse. In November 2010, Trew was appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court to the James R. Epstein 9th Subcircuit Vacancy.

—**John Ehrlich**

Race: Cook County Circuit Court Judge (Eighth Subcircuit, Cole vacancy)  
Web site: EhrlichForJudge.com  
The skinny: Another race pitting two out candidates is a judicial one involving John Ehrlich and Brad Trowbridge. As deputy corporation counsel in the City of Chicago's law department, Ehrlich oversees almost three dozen attorneys and a staff of 15. He's personally handled cases such as the Wrightwood porch collapse and the E2 nightclub tragedy.



Brad Trowbridge. Photo by Andrew Davis

—**Brad Trowbridge**

Race: Cook County Circuit Court Judge (Eighth Subcircuit, Cole vacancy)  
Website: BradForJudge.com  
The skinny: On his website, Trowbridge discusses his legal and counseling/social service experience, and has worked at agencies such as the Northwestern University Counseling Center and the AIDS Legal Council. He also authored the "Alternate Family Relations and Civil Unions in Illinois" chapter for Illinois State Bar Association Family Law Handbook.

—**Alex Arroyo**

Race: State House (84th District)  
Web site: www.Arroyo2012.com  
The skinny: Arroyo was born and raised in Aurora. The former chair of the Aurora Democratic Party is an active union member in good standing with the Association of Flight Attendants-Communications Workers of America. Arroyo also sits on the board of directors of the Illinois Coalition of Community Services in Springfield.

—**John Dalton**

Race: 16th Circuit Court, Kane, "A" vacancy  
Web site: JohnDaltonForJudge.com  
The skinny: Dalton—who would be the first openly gay judge elected outside of Cook County if he prevails—has been an arbitration chairman for more than a decade and an attorney for more than two decades. Dalton plans to fund his campaign without accepting donations from attorneys—a rare position among Illinois judicial candidates. Also, Dalton is an active member of Elgin's First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ.

stepped down to successfully run for alderman. Recently, she has protested library cutbacks, and helped introduce a marriage-equality bill and a gender-identity amendment.

—**Greg Harris**

Race: Illinois State Representative (13th District)  
Web site: GregHarris.org  
The skinny: Harris, who is openly HIV-positive as well as being openly gay, has represented his district (which includes Uptown, Ravenswood, Lincoln Square, North Center and Bowmanville) since being elected in 2006. Although his name has appeared most prominently in LGBT publications in connection with the issue of marriage equality (introducing a civil-marriage bill), he is intimately involved with a host of other issues, such as the state budget, foreclosure mediation, children of incarcerated parents and insurance reform. He is currently running unopposed.

—**Deb Mell**

Race: Illinois State Representative (40th District)  
Web site: DebMell.org  
The skinny: Deb Mell started her first term making history as the first open lesbian in the Illinois General Assembly—and then did something historic in being the only representative to vote against impeachment of then-Gov. Rod Blagojevich, her brother-in-law. A staunch advocate for marriage equality, Mell is running unopposed in the primary, although it looks like she'll face Republican Antoinette "Toni" Puccio-Johnson in the general election.

## Altgeld, Haymarket Riots subjects of Darrow event March 13

CHICAGO—Clarence Darrow aficionados will gather at the Darrow Bridge in Jackson Park Tuesday, March 13, at 10 a.m. for the annual ceremony commemorating Darrow's death in Chicago on March 13, 1938. Darrow is remembered for his crusading role as "attorney for the damned" in such controversial cases as the Scopes Monkey Trial, the Leopold and Loeb murder case, and the pardoning of the Haymarket anarchists.

After the ritual outdoor wreath-tossing ceremony, guests will move inside to the Museum of Science and Industry's New Columbia Room for a lecture and discussion on the Haymarket case, "Absolving Anarchy: John P. Altgeld and the Pardon that Shook Gilded Age America," to be given by Heath W. Carter.

The talk delves into the precipitous rise and fall of one of Illinois' most progressive governors. On June 26, 1893, Illinois Gov. John P. Altgeld pardoned the three surviving prisoners who had originally been sentenced to death for Chicago's Haymarket bombing. He was widely vilified for this decision and his political career was never the same, but upon his death in 1902 Darrow praised him in a famous eulogy as "a soldier in the everlasting struggle of the human race for liberty and justice on the earth."

Heath W. Carter is a Ph.D. candidate in U.S. history at the University of Notre Dame. He has broad interests in the social history of modern industrial society, and has published articles on race, religion, and labor in a variety of academic and popular journals. He is writing a book entitled Union Made: Working



Heath W. Carter.

People and the Rise of Social Christianity in Chicago, which tells the story of how wage-earning believers innovated a fierce critique of both the captains of industry and the churches that underwrote their rule. He has taught courses at the University of Illinois (Chicago), Loyola University Chicago, and the Newberry Library. In the summer of 2012, he will assume a new post as the assistant professor of modern United States history at Valparaiso University.

Loyola Law Professor Anita Weinberg, daughter of the late Arthur and Lila Weinberg, will preside over the indoor program. Tracy Baim, daughter of the late Joy Darrow, will preside at the bridge. Other Darrow committee members are event co-founder Herb Kraus, Bill Campbell, Nina Helstein and Nina Barrett.

Darrow, who was born in 1857 in Farmdale, Ohio, practiced in Chicago, repeatedly represented underdog clients and vigorously opposed capital punishment. None of his many clients was sentenced to death.

Darrow's death on March 13, 1938, was memorialized throughout the world. His ashes, and later the ashes of his wife Ruby and his son Paul, were scattered from the Darrow Bridge which was dedicated to his memory by the Chicago Park District in 1957.

For more details, see [www.darrowbridge.org](http://www.darrowbridge.org).

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COMPILED BY KATE SOSIN

## Kimmins Southard

**Identifies as**  
Genderqueer

**Pronouns**  
they, them, theirs

**Hobbies**  
Vegan cooking and baking, spending time near the lake, singing, drawing, performing and crafting.

**Life's work**  
"I personally am passionate about issues of gender, sexuality and sexual health and would like to spend my life in a helping profession doing the work that will make the greatest positive impact around these issues."

**Job**  
"I am currently serving a year with the AmeriCorps AIDS United Team Chicago, I work at a local non-profit organization doing HIV testing with homeless and precariously housed youth and adults throughout Chicago."

**What is the best thing about being trans/gender-variant?**  
"I spent my teenage years as many young women do—stressing about fitting in and attempting to change my body to meet society's standards and expectations of a young woman. Once I came out as genderqueer, I felt free of all the pressures and expectations placed upon men and women and felt like I could finally just be myself."

**Do you consider yourself an activist?**  
"In college I was very involved in activism, I performed and organized quarterly GenderF\*ck

Drag Shows on my campus, I lead a queer activist student organization that worked to make trans-inclusive policy changes with the University and I was part of a group that worked with local and statewide government to promote positive sexual health legislation. Since moving to Chicago I haven't been as involved in activist pursuits, and I definitely miss it."

**What issues outside of the queer community do you care about?**

"I believe that every issue is a queer issue. The queer community is so diverse that any issue impacts our community in some way. That is why it is important to fight for changes on an intersectional level. One issue that I have become passionate about is homelessness, through the work that I am doing here in Chicago it has become abundantly clear to me that homelessness is definitely a queer issue and it is important to have support from the queer community in the fight to end homelessness."

**What do you think are the most important issues facing the trans/gender-variant community?**

"Different issues affect different parts of the community in different ways. It is hard to say what is the most important, but a problem that I see are the divisions within the community among race, class, education, and gender. I believe the trans and queer community could and should be much more united."



## Equality Illinois PAC's early endorsements

CHICAGO—The Equality Illinois Political Action Committee (PAC) issued its early endorsements of legislative candidates running for office in the March 20 primary elections who have strong voting records on LGBT issues, according to a press release.

"We really wanted to rush out of the gate early with our endorsements because these stakeholders have been the strongest supporters of the LGBT movement here in Illinois," Jeremy Gottschalk, president of Equality Illinois PAC's board of directors, said. "We want to make sure that those legislators who have repeatedly supported us in the past have the opportunity to take advantage of the benefits that our PAC endorsement involves as quickly as possible. They have proven themselves to be great allies to the LGBT community, and we want to thank them publicly for their support."

### State Senate endorsements:

- Sen. Antonio Munoz (D-1)
- Sen. William Delgado (D-2)
- Sen. Mattie Hunter (D-3)
- Sen. Kimberly Lightford (D-4)
- Sen. Annazette Collins (D-5)
- Sen. John Cullerton (D-6)
- Sen. Heather Steans (D-7)
- Sen. John Mulroe (D-10)
- Sen. Martin Sandoval (D-11)
- Sen. Kwame Raoul (D-13)
- Sen. Emil Jones III (D-14)
- Sen. Jacqueline Collins (D-16)
- Sen. Donne Trotter (D-17)
- Sen. Maggie Crotty (D-19)
- Sen. Iris Martinez (D-20)
- Sen. Michael Noland (D-22)
- Sen. Dan Kotowski (D-28)
- Sen. Terry Link (D-30)
- Sen. Mike Jacobs (D-36)
- Sen. Don Harmon (D-39)
- Sen. Toi Hutchinson (D-40)

- Sen. Linda Holmes (D-42)
- Sen. A.J. Wilhelmi (D-43)
- Sen. David Koehler (D-46)
- Sen. Michael Frerichs (D-52)
- Sen. James Clayborne, Jr. (D-57)

### State House endorsements:

- Rep. Daniel Burke (D-1)
- Rep. Edward Acevedo (D-2)
- Rep. Luis Arroyo (D-3)
- Rep. Cynthia Soto (D-4)
- Rep. Kenneth Dunkin (D-5)
- Rep. Esther Golar (D-6)
- Rep. La Shawn Ford (D-8)
- Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-12)
- Rep. Greg Harris (D-13)
- Rep. Kelly Cassidy (D-14)
- Rep. Lou Lang (D-16)
- Rep. Robyn Gabel (D-18)
- Rep. Michael J. Madigan (D-22)
- Rep. Michael Zalewski (D-23)
- Rep. Elizabeth Hernandez (D-24)
- Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie (D-25)
- Rep. Monique Davis (D-27)
- Rep. Robert Rita (D-28)
- Rep. William Davis (D-30)
- Rep. Mary Flowers (D-31)
- Rep. Andre Thapedi (D-32)
- Rep. Marlow Colvin (D-33)
- Rep. Al Riley (D-38)
- Rep. Maria Antonia Berrios (D-39)
- Rep. Deborah Mell (D-40)
- Rep. Keith Farnham (D-43)
- Rep. Fred Crespo (D-44)
- Rep. Rosemary Mulligan (R-55)
- Rep. Elaine Nekritz (D-57)
- Rep. Carol Sente (D-59)
- Rep. Jack Franks (D-63)
- Rep. Angelo Saviano (R-77)
- Rep. Camille Lilly (D-78)
- Rep. Anthony DeLuca (D-80)
- Rep. Emily McAsey (D-85)
- Rep. Jack McGuire (D-86)

- Rep. Jehan Gordon (D-92)
- Rep. Naomi Jakobsson (D-103)
- Former Rep. Jay Hoffman (D-113)
- Rep. Eddie Lee Jackson, Sr. (D-114)

The next round of legislative endorsements for open races will be announced mid-February and will be based on candidates' answers to Equality Illinois PAC's endorsement questionnaire and in-person interviews. Local and non-legislative endorsements will be announced in the coming weeks.

## Equality Illinois PAC issues more endorsements

The Equality Illinois Political Action Committee (PAC) has issued its final endorsements of candidates running for office in the March 20 primary election who have indicated strong support for LGBT issues.

"After meeting and talking with so many talented candidates for public office, we are extremely pleased with our slate of endorsed candidates in such an important election year for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender movement," Jeremy Gottschalk, president of the Equality Illinois PAC board of directors, said.

### Endorsed state Senate candidates are:

- Senate District 9: Daniel Biss
- Senate District 15: Donna Miller
- Senate District 23: Thomas Cullerton
- Senate District 25: Steven Hunter, Corinne Pierog
- Senate District 29: Julie Morrison

### Endorsed state House candidates are:

- House District 7: Rory Hoskins, Emanuel "Chris" Welch
- House District 10: Rep. Derrick Smith
- House District 11: Rep. Ann Williams
- House District 17: Laura Fine
- House District 19: Robert Martwick
- House District 21: Rudy Lozano
- House District 26: Christian Mitchell
- House District 34: Elgie Sims
- House District 45: JoAnn Franzen
- House District 50: Andrew Bernard
- House District 62: Sam Yingling

## WCT seeks nominations for 30 Under 30

CHICAGO—Windy City Times is seeking to recognize 30 more outstanding LGBT individuals (and allies) for its annual 30 Under 30 Awards.

Nominees should be 30 years or under as of June 30, 2012, and should have made some substantial contributions to the LGBT community, whether in the fields of entertainment, politics, health, activism, academics, sports or other areas.

The deadline to nominate individuals is Friday, April 20.

Individuals, organizations, co-workers, etc. can nominate a person by e-mailing Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com or faxed to Andrew Davis' attention to 773-871-7609. Self-nominations are welcome.

The nomination should be 100 words or fewer, and should state what achievements or contributions the nominee has made. Nominators should include their own names and contact information as well as the contact information and the age of the nominee.

Note: Following the policy instituted in 2005, individuals can only win once. Those have won the award since that year are ineligible for this year's awards.

Honorees will be notified in May and recognized at a free ceremony Thursday, June 28, at 5:30 p.m., at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.

- House District 71: Mike Smiddy
- House District 84: Alex Arroyo, Carole Cheney

Endorsed candidate For Cook County state's attorney:

- State's Attorney Anita Alvarez

Endorsed candidate For Cook County Recorder Of Deeds:

- Karen Yarbrough

Endorsed candidate For Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner:

- Commissioner Debra Shore

Early endorsements for legislative races were issued Jan. 3 and were based on candidates' previous voting records on important LGBT issues. This latter round of endorsements for candidates without prior voting records was based on answers to Equality Illinois PAC's endorsement questionnaire, personal interviews and community input.

## Early voting Feb. 27-March 15

For the March 20 presidential primary election, early voting will take place Feb. 27-March 15.

Voting locations and hours are listed at [www.cookcountyclerk.com/elections/earlyvoting/Pages/EarlyVotingLocations.aspx](http://www.cookcountyclerk.com/elections/earlyvoting/Pages/EarlyVotingLocations.aspx). In Chicago, visit [www.chicagoelections.com/page.php?id=9](http://www.chicagoelections.com/page.php?id=9) for sites and times.

State law requires early voters to display valid photo identification to an election official before receiving a ballot to vote early. Valid forms of ID include: a current driver's license, state-issued ID card, university/college ID or another government-issued ID with a photograph.

People who vote early must vote in person.



# Jay Juarez

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ROSS FORMAN

Jay Juarez didn't hesitate when asked where he will go with his partner, Andy Burrows, when they celebrate their 30th anniversary together in 2013.

He said he'd go to his native Philippines.

However, Burrows wasn't so sure since, in August, the Philippines likely will be hot and steamy, and it's the peak season for traveling thus, consequently, higher airfares, he said. So Burrows suggested San Francisco—the city where, in 2008, the two celebrated their 25th anniversary and got married.

The loving couple has daily ties to the Philippines, though. They are the co-owners of Iloilo, a custom framing shop in Andersonville.

What's Iloilo? The city in the Philippines where Juarez was born. Burrows suggested the name for their local store, "because it's a unique name and has a ring to it," he said.

Iloilo, which is about 300 square feet, has a steady flow of loyal customers. Juarez's handiwork has even been used to frame—believe it or not—a man's pants and a woman's pacemaker. Plus, a 96-inch-by-48-inch piece that Juarez framed, the largest he's ever done, is now on display at the Shedd Aquarium.



The store features some framed artwork for sale, including the handiwork of Juarez' niece, Jhelou Juarez, now 15 and living in the Philippines. She started painting at age 9, and some of her work was first shown at Iloilo when she was 11.

The most popular items framed at Iloilo are photographs and posters. Juarez also often frames autographed sports jerseys.

Ironically, Juarez was encouraged by his parents to study agriculture. However, that wasn't his niche. "I really enjoy what I'm doing," Juarez said. "I really enjoy meeting new people, framing their artwork."



**Age**  
59

**Neighborhood**  
Edgewater

**Homeland**  
Philippines

**Relationship status**  
Partners with Andy Burrows, 59; they have been together since 1983.

**Job title**  
Co-owner, Iloilo custom framing; has had three store locations in Andersonville over past 21 years

**Hobbies**  
Volleyball, Filipino folk dancing, Broadway musicals

**Favorite TV shows**  
I Love Lucy and Modern Family

**Little-known fact**  
Studied agriculture, then earned a college degree social work

**Favorite local restaurant**  
Calo's

**Tuesday, Feb. 28**  
**7:30 p.m.**  
**Margot Livesey**  
**The Flight of**  
**Gemma Hardy**



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# 12th National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day: Destigmatization through dialogue

BY ALEX LUBISCHER

Dialogues of empowerment through knowledge, prevention as treatment, and the de-stigmatization of HIV/AIDS were at the forefront of a Feb. 7 event at Trinity United Church of Christ that marked the 12th National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. The event featured keynote presentations by representatives of Gilead Sciences, a leading pharmaceutical company in the fight against AIDS, as well as the STI/HIV/AIDS Division of the Chicago Department of Public Health.

The Coalition for Justice and Respect, a civil-rights and social-justice organization for African-American lesbians and gays, sponsored the event. In his opening remarks, Marc Loveless, project coordinator for the coalition, said, "It is by the grace of God that we are coming to the end of HIV/AIDS."

The event's focal presentation by Gilead Sciences representative Staci Bush emphasized the need to de-stigmatize HIV in the African-American community. "HIV now, we have to think of it as a virus, and not a virus of behavior," said Bush, who used data obtained from past studies to illustrate how high viral loads of HIV in African-American communities increases the risk of infection.

Bush sought to dispel the myth of HIV as a gay, predominantly white male disease, citing that over half of new HIV infections occur among African Americans. She added that African Americans are also nine times more likely to not know their HIV-positive status than whites. She went on to stress the importance of African American women as leaders in the fight against the virus, especially given its status as the leading killer of African American women ages 30-34.

In addition to covering prevention-as-treatment methods, such as condom use and regular HIV testing, Bush spoke of biomedical treatments like Truvada. When taken daily, the breakthrough drug was shown in one study to reduce the likelihood of HIV transmissions from positive status adults to their partners by 92 percent.

The event also featured Chris Brown, the outgoing assistant commissioner of the STI/HIV/AIDS Division of the Chicago Department of Public Health. Brown said his division is seeking funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for an outreach initiative that would target young, Black, South Side men who have sex with men (MSMs).

"We've heard over and over again, through community forums and input, that this is a population that is being hit hard not just by HIV, but by syphilis and other infectious diseases," said Brown. "And people want a safe place, a comprehensive space, a kind of community center on the South Side."

Brown explained that beyond providing primary healthcare and HIV testing, the center would encompass a broad scope of social aspects and recreational facilities. The proposed center would also provide outreach to transgender people on the South Side.

"We've got a lot of work to do in the transgender community," said Brown, who went on to stress the importance of gathering data over the next few years to determine how HIV and other diseases are affecting this portion of the African-American community.

This March, the Chicago Department of Health will learn the status of its CDC funding that would make this South Side center a reality.

"But even if it doesn't get funded, we need to ... figure out how we can do this," said Brown. "I think it's very important for Chicago and I don't want to see just one turned-down proposal end this discussion."

In addition to presentations from keynote speakers like Bush and Brown, National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day included a robust dialogue between various groups within the African-American community. With expertise that ran the gamut from HIV ministry and healthcare administration all the way to LGBTQ activism, each concerned community member provided a unique perspective to a complex issue.

Rev. Anthony Sullivan of the Pillar of Love Fellowship Church said that groups marginalized by HIV/AIDS need to engage in conversation with each other in order to heal relationships within the Black community.

"Grassroots work needs to be done at the basic level. And this is the basic level. You have MSMs [men who have sex with men] in this room, you have Black women in this room, and you begin to have dialogue in this room," said Sullivan. "Because until you de-stigmatize the issue that we have with one another ... That's where events like this are beneficial. Because what happens is you can educate, and reeducate, and you begin to heal. And you can't heal if you can't have dialogue."

Kimberly Foster, the adolescent HIV program coordinator at Children's Memorial Hospital, expressed a similar need for increased communication on the topic of HIV/AIDS prevention. Foster said, "We need to open discussion more. ... We need to learn how to advocate and how to teach the next generation so we'll have more voices."

Just down the hall in Trinity United, Provi-



Logo for Black HIV/AIDS Day.

dence Hospital provided free on-site HIV testing. Sheila Smith, a prevention coordinator, performed the simple test on this reporter. It consisted of the painless swabbing of my gum line, with results available a mere 20 minutes later.

The day ended early that afternoon with a closing prayer, followed by some final words from Loveless. Optimistic yet resolute, Loveless spoke of re-evaluating the way we participate in the ever-changing battle against HIV/AIDS.

"It's not like it was 30 years ago," said Loveless. "We're not 30 years ago. We're not even 20 years ago. Heck, we're not even five years ago. We're today, and we're now."

## Black AIDS Day marked in Illinois

BY ERICA DEMAREST

In honor of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) and Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus (CBGMC) traveled to Springfield Feb. 7 for a day of advocacy and lobbying.

Representatives from each organization joined state Sen. Jacqueline Collins (D-16) and state Rep. Karen Yarbrough (D-7) at a mid-morning press conference to urge lawmakers to extend the Quality of Life "Red Ribbon Cash" lottery program, set to expire Dec. 31, 2012.

Established in 2007, the scratch-off fundraiser supports prevention and treatment efforts in communities hardest hit by AIDS. To date, more than \$3 million has been donated to groups that work with youth, Black, Latino and LGBT populations.

"Funding for HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention programs is vitally important given the increasing prevalence and devastating nature of this disease in our communities," said Collins, who along with Yarbrough co-sponsored legislation that would extend the lottery's sunset date to Dec. 31, 2017.

In 2012, the lottery ticket program will fund 14 community-based organizations across the state, including the CBGMC. Caucus Co-Chair Keith Green was on hand to talk about about HIV infection rates among Black men who have sex with men.

"I began my remarks," Green wrote in an email,

"by acknowledging the difficulty of addressing the epidemic among Black men as a result of the number of social determinants associated with transmission and acquisition within this population (incarceration, homophobia, stigma, the down low, etc.)."

Some activists present took offense to Green's comments, claiming he disrespected Black female activists and ignored contributions made by local grassroots organizations.

"I understood you to say, 'Black men are dying of HIV/AIDS due to silence about black men and this issue,'" HIV activist Beryl C. Fitzpatrick wrote in an open letter to Green. "I believe the science-based facts do not support this premise ... Also, I think making this statement ... in a room full of elected officials and advocates, where a lot of advocacy and work has been done to develop a cordial, professional working relationship was just incorrect and inexcusable."

Fitzpatrick demanded an apology from Green, arguing his remarks were "disrespectful of all the hard work that Black LGBT and heterosexual Black women have done together."

"If I can offer an apology for anything," Green answered, "it would be that my words were not received in the way in which they were intended."

Green continued: "In the ongoing battle for scarce resources ... Black men and Black women continue to be pitted against one another ... If we are going to make any headway at reducing the disproportionate rates of infection that ex-

ist among both of these significantly impacted groups of people, we must address the epidemic holistically and not continue to segment us off as either victim or vector."

Green said the CBGMC plans to revive its "Conversations Series," which brings together queer and heterosexual Black community members for solutions-based dialogue. He invited Yarbrough and Collins to future sessions. Following the press conference, AFC and CBGMC members, including caucus Co-Chair Anthony Galloway, continued advocacy efforts in the state capital.

— Each group met with state officials to discuss challenges posed by ADAP changes and potential budget cuts.

— Rev. Doris Green, AFC's director of corrections and community relationships, offered the opening prayer on the state Senate floor.

— Rep. Thaddeus Jones sponsored a House resolution to commemorate National Black AIDS Awareness Day and encourage African-Americans to get tested and treated.

Back in Chicago, CBGMC founder and former co-chair Ariq Cabbler spoke at a radio broadcast titled "seX Factor: A Dialogue on HIV Prevention and Care Among Older Adults."

And caucus members Charles Nelson and Craig Johnson closed the day by attending a planning session titled "HIV 2012: The National HIV/AIDS Strategy" at Loretto Hospital.

National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day was founded in 1999 to encourage testing and com-



Keith Green. Photo by Erica Demarest

munity mobilization.

Black Americans accounted for nearly half of all new HIV infections in 2009 despite the fact that only 14 percent of U.S. residents identify as Black, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Within the African-American community, Black men accounted for 70 percent of new infections. And nearly three-quarters of these men identified as men who have sex with men.



Above: David Munar, CEO of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, with Chris Brown last summer.

Right: Chris Brown.

Photos by Erica Demarest



## Changes at Chicago Health Dept.: Brown steps down, HIV councils dissolve

BY ERICA DEMAREST

After more than a decade with the Chicago Dept. of Public Health (CDPH), Assistant Commissioner Chris Brown will be stepping down from his position on March 15, 2012.

Brown, who's been responsible for the city's HIV/AIDS response, made the surprising announcement Feb. 17 at the Chicago Bar Association during a joint meeting of the Chicago Area HIV Service Planning Council and the Chicago HIV Prevention and Planning Group (HPPG). Brown has accepted a job offer from the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center.

The joint session had been called to consider motions that would dissolve each of the HIV planning bodies, effective April 30, 2012. Passed by a roll call vote, the motions await final approval from Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

Dissolving the existing HIV bodies is a necessary first step in establishing a new Chicago-area HIV services council sometime in the near future. The new body will handle HIV policy that concerns prevention, care and housing; Mayor

Emanuel will appoint council members.

The move toward one cohesive body is expected to bring Chicago in line with President Barack Obama's 2010 National HIV/AIDS Strategy, as well as guidelines established by the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.

Those assembled at Friday's meeting bid Brown an emotional farewell. Since becoming the head of the health department's STD/HIV/AIDS division in 2001, Brown has established himself as one of the city's most valuable voices on HIV policy and prevention.

He served on the United States Conference of AIDS (USCA) Chicago Host Committee in November 2011, when the conference made its historic Chicago debut. And his decades-long career has earned him myriad advocacy and service awards.

Before joining the CDPH, he spent seven years at the Arizona Department of Health Services as the head of its HIV/STD/Hepatitis C Services office. Brown also devoted 11 years to HIV and STD programs at the Pima County Health Department in Arizona.

## NMAC files brief in SCOTUS healthcare challenge

For the first time in its history, the National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) filed an amicus brief today with the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *State of Florida, et al. v. Department of Health and Human Services, et al.* NMAC is joined in its brief by four leading national HIV/AIDS organizations, amFAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research; HIV Medicine Association; National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors; and the Treatment Access Expansion Project.

In its brief, NMAC urges the Court to uphold the Medicaid expansion included in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), which would eliminate current disability requirements and expand eligibility to all citizens making up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). Currently, low-income individuals living with HIV are not eligible for Medicaid until they are disabled by an AIDS diagnosis. The expansion included in the ACA will provide access to healthcare for thousands of individuals living with HIV, as well as make huge strides in combating the spread of the epidemic.

See [http://nmac.org/images/NMAC\\_ACA\\_AmicusBrief.pdf](http://nmac.org/images/NMAC_ACA_AmicusBrief.pdf).

## amFAR ramps up investment in HIV cure research

amFAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research announced four new grants to leading researchers from around the world in the Foundation's most competitive round of HIV cure grants to date.

Each grant will provide significant support over two years to teams working on cure-focused research at the California Institute of Technology; Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland; Ghent University Hospital in Ghent, Belgium; and Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

One project is led by Dr. David Baltimore, a Nobel laureate and professor at Caltech who is directing his attention and efforts toward curing HIV. Dr. Baltimore was awarded the 1975 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for his discovery of reverse transcriptase, which enabled the development of reverse transcriptase

inhibitors—drugs that form the cornerstone of HIV treatment today. His amFAR-funded project seeks to address an enduring controversy in the cure field: whether, and how, HIV continues to replicate even when a patient has an undetectable viral load. The answer to this question will fundamentally determine which processes and parts of the anatomy must be targeted to cure HIV infection.

## Tony Kushner at AIDS Foundation of Chicago event

Renowned, award-winning playwright Tony Kushner, author of *Angels in America*, will share his insight and perspective on the evolution of an epidemic as the guest of honor at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago's annual Spring Dinner — *An Angel Among Us: An Evening with Pulitzer Prize-winning Playwright Tony Kushner* — on Tuesday, March 27 at the Hilton Chicago. Never one to shy away from polarizing issues, Kushner is known for his direct, episodic dialogue and long-form plays, which aim to enlighten as well as entertain.

See <http://aidschicago.org/>.

## AIDS Legal Council and WCT announce Advocates of the Year

The AIDS Legal Council of Chicago (ALCC) and Windy City Times will host the 18th annual Advocates of the Year Awards on Thursday, March 22, to recognize several individuals and organizations working locally to make a difference in the lives of people with HIV. Honorees were chosen last month by a committee of previous award recipients and by representatives from AIDS Legal Council of Chicago and Windy City Times.

"These men and women are on the frontlines of the epidemic and they represent some of the most dedicated and inspiring people in HIV care and advocacy today," said ALCC Executive Director Ann Hilton Fisher. "Some of them have been widely lauded for their efforts in the past, while others work quietly and with little recognition. It's important that we pay tribute to them as a community and acknowledge the profound difference that their work can make."

This year's honorees are State Rep. Greg Har-

ris, Matthildur "Matta" Kelley of Community Outreach Intervention Projects (COIP), Cheryl Potts of Alexian Brothers AIDS Ministry, and Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) which is celebrating its 25th year of service. ALCC will also be presenting its own "Friend of the Council Award" to longtime volunteers and donors Ed Jeske and John Hern.

The 2012 Advocates of the Year Awards will be co-presented by ALCC and Windy City Times at the firm of Sidley Austin LLP in downtown Chicago and is being generously supported by leading sponsors Sidley Austin LLP and Kirkland & Ellis LLP. For information, contact Ricardo Cifuentes, director of development for the AIDS Legal Council of Chicago at (312) 427-8990.

## Obama's budget includes HIV/AIDS funding bump

The following is a statement from National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) Director of Legislative and Public Affairs Kali Lindsey:

"Barely two months ago, President Obama outlined a powerful vision for bringing an end to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in his speech commemorating World AIDS Day. ... [In] his fiscal year 2013 budget request, the president translated his words into a call for Congressional action. Given our nation's difficult fiscal climate, President Obama's call for increased HIV/AIDS funding demonstrates his steadfast commitment to combating this epidemic and realizing what Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called an 'AIDS-free generation.'

"In his budget, the president requested an additional \$75 million in funding for Ryan White programs, including \$67 million for the struggling AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), which provides access to critical care and treatment services for individuals with no other avenue for accessing them. President Obama also called for an additional \$30 million in HIV/AIDS prevention funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and \$20 million to support care provided by HIV clinics across the country, while maintaining current funding levels for critical research initiatives at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

"NMAC is also pleased by the president's call for additional funding for the Indian Health Service (IHS). While his request did not specifically

reference HIV/AIDS, expanding IHS infrastructure and capacity is critical if we are to address the epidemic within this community. American Indians and Alaska Natives have the third highest rate of HIV infection of any racial/ethnic group in the U.S. Strengthening this program is essential to stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS within native communities.

"While the president's budget reflects a laudable commitment to the struggle against HIV/AIDS, it still fails to prioritize housing as an essential component of prevention and public health. Despite the call for improved targeting of funds through the Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) program, the budget includes a \$3 million cut to its overall funding. Access to affordable and safe housing is critical for not only preventing new HIV infections, but also improving health outcomes for those living with HIV or AIDS."

## Good news for ADAP recipients in Illinois

For 4,200 people in the state, it will soon be easier to get HIV medications through the Illinois AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP).

Fewer people with HIV will run the risk of losing their access to medicines because of cumbersome application and paperwork requirements, thanks to a series of rule changes advocated by AIDS Legal Council of Chicago and AIDS Foundation of Chicago (and approved recently by the Illinois Department of Public Health). This comes as especially good news to the many who had reported difficulties navigating the online application process and having to repeatedly submit documentation to qualify for help.

Low-income people with HIV who are uninsured or underinsured obtain life-saving HIV medications through ADAP. Although the program has been stressed in recent years due to falling state revenues and an influx of people turning to ADAP for help, preserving regular access to medications is considered key to suppressing the virus in people with HIV and reducing the likelihood of further transmission to uninfected partners.

Among the new rules to be adopted, ADAP will no longer require existing recipients to fill out an entirely new application every six months, opting for a much less burdensome process of "recertification" instead.

## VIEWPOINTS

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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.

MEL  
FERRAND

out to his supportive family but still took his life due to the bullying he experienced at his school. Jarrett said that the teachers at his school turned a blind eye to the bullying and were, therefore, partly culpable for his death. This allegation neatly wraps a complex issue without even calling into question the actions of the administrators at his school or the district leadership.

When you unwrap this nicely packaged suggestion, you find it is patently unfair and untrue. The teachers and other adults responsible for that boy at school may have known about the bullying but the sheer fact that a gay child, even with a supportive family, didn't feel comfortable reporting the abuse is testament not to the failure of his teachers, but rather our society as a whole. It is time to honestly deal with the culture of violence we foster and perpetuate and realize that bullying is a national disgrace that should get our full efforts to correct.

Bullying is an especially critical issue for members and advocates of the LGBT community because queer children are disproportionately impacted by this shameful phenomenon. Nine out of 10 LGBT kids are harassed or bullied at school. They are skipping school, dropping out and, tragically, committing suicide.

As teachers, we know there are other systemic issues at play, including administrators who do not provide anti-bullying training for teachers and other school employees. It disheartens us to see teachers become the scapegoat for a problem that is everyone's responsibility. Until school district officials nationwide recognize that bullying is a problem and provide the nec-

essary tools for teachers and other school employees to combat bullying, the problem will persist.

The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) LGBT Rights Committee (of which we are members) is working to garner support for the Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA). This measure prohibits LGBT discrimination in schools. The beauty of this bill is that it will make it better for students who identify or who are perceived to be LGBT and is designed to support equal rights for all students.

The committee plans to lobby Sen. Mark Kirk, R-ILL., to become a co-sponsor of the Senate bill when his health has improved and he returns to office. The SNDA already has the support of 36 other senators, including Dick Durbin, D-ILL. The companion bill in the House of Representatives has 155 co-sponsors, including all but one member of the Chicago contingent (Rep. Dan Lipinski, D-ILL). In addition, there is a large and growing coalition of national and state organizations that support these bills.

For the first time ever, the CTU purchased a table at the gala. There was such a showing of support that our table of 10 actually held 11. We happily squeezed in to celebrate the advances we have been fighting so hard to achieve and benefit from. We were shocked and dismayed that at a place where we expected to feel safe and embraced, we were vilified, scapegoated and, in effect, bullied.

**Mel Ferrand and Carrie Maxwell are members of the Chicago Teachers Union and freelance writers for Windy City Times.**

CARRIE  
MAXWELL

## Stop scapegoating teachers!

Amidst celebrating the accomplishments of the LGBT community at this year's Equality Illinois "Justice for All" gala, we never expected to feel attacked or offended, but that's exactly what happened—and the insult came all the way from a representative of the president of the United States.

President Obama's senior advisor, Valerie Jarrett, in her otherwise inspirational keynote speech, stood at the podium and, before a captivated crowd, blamed teachers for the suicide of a young gay boy. The boy had already come

CHARLENE  
STRONG

## We shall be free

Washington state is poised to become the seventh state in the nation to grant same-sex marriage rights to its citizens. Now that Gov. Chris Gregoire has signed the bill into law, those supporting its passage are preparing for a contentious battle by those opposed to it. Those claiming to be on the right side of history seem to have very little regard for the damage their hateful and irresponsible words are inflicting upon thousands of families in Washington state, not to mention the millions of families watching us from around the world.

I had the occasion to testify for the Washington House Judiciary Committee before the marriage-equality vote was to then to go to the House for the final passage.

The testimony of Pastor Ken Hutchinson of Antioch Bible Church in Redmond, Wash., was by far the most egregious testimony that anyone should have had to endure, not to mention the fact that he was completely out of order toward Rep. Jaime Peterson, who chaired the committee. Had Peterson dressed him down for his misconduct and being out of order, there would've been a backlash that Hutchinson was being censored and, dare I say, he knew that as well.

I grew up in New Orleans, hearing offensive words that I knew at a very young age would break people. I was ashamed of the struggle in our country some endured because of the color of their skin. I witnessed the damage of bigotry and hatred that many were guilty of as well, but not all.

Civil-rights history in the United States has left quite a scar on our country. Hutchinson spoke at the Washington House Judiciary Committee as if every single white person in the United States was guilty of discrimination against him. He literally said, "The reason I played football was so that I could hurt white people." When asked in an interview recently about "my situation" when my wife died he said, "I know about her, and sin is sin."

This is a moment where I am trying to understand the content of his character. This is the pastor of a church—a man who says he is on the right side of God. This is a man who shows no remorse for his bigotry and yet he sits and speaks with a self-important tone that only he knows what is right and wrong for others.

Self-reflection and growth are very powerful—if not essential parts—of a man's life. My own personal growth has come with my own reconciliation and re-evaluation of behaviors in my past and an understanding that sometimes we make decisions based on our surroundings and influences and not what we feel in our heart. It is with soul-searching that we come to realize who we authentically are and sometimes results in awakenings and changes in our lives.

Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of peace, forgiveness and equality. He said, "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity." It was not just Black men and women who walked hand in hand with him and fought for civil rights in this country; many white men and women sacrificed to work for the equality of Black individuals. Why? Because they saw the damage of inequality and they knew they needed to stand shoulder to shoulder against those opposing change. They believed it was the right thing to do. They were on the right side of history.

The laws in the United States must be considered and altered when they no longer meet the needs of the citizens. This is a moment where LGBT people need to be heard. It is ludicrous to think that our stories are not needed and are of no importance, as Hutchinson alluded. We need

to hear of the harm, pain and conflict placed on the lives of others in order for us to truly have an understanding and apply the necessary changes to laws that affect our brothers and sisters.

When I chose to testify in 2006 regarding the death of my partner, I needed to be heard. I needed to be understood. I needed for someone to make sense of the insensible. I did it for no other reason—not to get my name in the paper or to have anyone tell me that I was a hero. I did it because I loved. I did it because I shared a commitment with my spouse who gave me a beautiful 10 years of life. I also knew that I was not alone and that many had suffered the indignities of the inequality I was facing. I chose to speak simply for my late wife and myself and, in doing so, it had an effect I could've never imagined. My story of pain and loss helped change laws in Washington State that have since affected all of us ... but I was just telling my story.

Being gay is not the new black—it is a civil rights issue. The federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) defends no one, and only serves to discriminate and create hardship for millions of Americans. It was originally put in place under pressure by the Republican right to yet again put a nail in the coffin of equality.

Standing in opposition to another group's human rights fight is a painful reminder that perhaps we as a country have a very short memory span. The destructive words and actions that deny another's life, liberty and happiness is not the right side of history. As Malcolm X said, "Truth is on the side of the oppressed."

And it is that truth that will speak of equality for all.

**Charlene Strong is a public speaker and the subject of an award-winning documentary film. She serves as a human rights commissioner for Washington State and is the co-editor of The Seattle Lesbian (www.theseattlelesbian.com).**

## GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo by Michael J. Lutch

## SIMPLY THE 'BESS'

Audra McDonald and Norm Lewis star in the Broadway revival of The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess. WCT reviews it on page 20.

## DISH

Sweet success.  
Page 32.

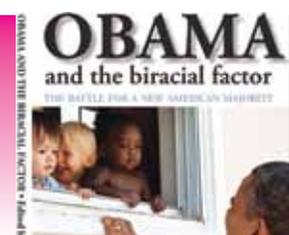
Photo by Shira Kollins



## THEATER

Dante's inferno.  
Page 18.Photo from Dating Walter Dante  
by Dean LaPrairie

## BOOKS

Colorful conversation.  
Page 27.

## SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

John Bucchino on  
'A Catered Affair'

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Out composer and lyricist John Bucchino is not ashamed to admit that he's been known to cry watching performances of his 2008 Broadway musical *A Catered Affair*.

"It's very powerful," said Bucchino during a telephone interview from New York. "Every performance that I have seen has moved me to tears—and much of the audience, too, which is always a good thing."

Local audiences will get to see if a good cry is in store with *A Catered Affair* since Porchlight Music Theatre is currently presenting the show's Chicago premiere. Some might also get a chance to see if Bucchino is true to his personal tear-shedding statement when he comes to Chicago for an event-filled visit featuring a few teaching and performing gigs tied to the show.

Bucchino came to write his first Broadway musical when out playwright/actor Harvey Fierstein (*Torch Song Trilogy*) specifically sought him out to collaborate on *A Catered Affair*. Although Bucchino didn't have that much theater-writing experience (he had some renown for the one-act musical *The Lavender Girl* which was part of the 2000 musical trilogy *3hree*), his songs had become something of a hot property in New York's cabaret scene.

A critically acclaimed album, *Grateful: The Songs of John Bucchino*, debuted in 2000 and it featured a wide array of artists ranging from 1960s pop legends (Judy Collins, Art Garfunkel) to theater stalwarts (Kristin Chenoweth, Patti LuPone). The album's sheet music was even published and heavily promoted by the Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization.

However, Bucchino had never truly pursued a career in theater composing when he first started writing songs in high school.

"I don't come from a Broadway background at all," Bucchino said, adding that his ultimate dream was to become a pop singer/songwriter star along the lines of Elton John or Billy Joel.

For a time Bucchino was living in Los Angeles, where he was largely ignored by its pop music industry. Still, Bucchino was able to make some life-long connections in California that laid the ground work for his future career.

Bucchino worked as an accompanist for the lesbian folk artist and activist Holly Near in the mid 1980s and became a dear friend. (Bucchino said they'll be touring again within the year.) Bucchino's work also started appearing at many benefits, which is how he came to the attention of composer/lyricist Stephen Schwartz (*Godspell*, *Wicked*) who contacted him in 1987.

"I really didn't know his work," Bucchino admitted with a laugh of embarrassment. Eventually the two became good friends.

"(Schwartz) is really the first person who encouraged me to think about writing for the theater," Bucchino said. "I guess he heard something inherently theatrical in the way that I wrote that he thought would be good for writing for characters."

Now the inspiration for *A Catered Affair* isn't necessarily what many people might think would make a thrilling musical. It's based upon gay author Gore Vidal's 1956 screenplay (based upon a TV play by Paddy Chavafsky) for the MGM film *The Catered Affair*, which memorably starred Bette Davis, Debbie Reynolds and Ernest Borgnine. (It was another slice-of-life drama follow-



John Bucchino. Photo courtesy of Bucchino

up to Borgnine's to his Academy Award-winning turn in *Marty*.)

*A Catered Affair* concerns a working class family in living in the Bronx in 1953. When the eldest daughter plans to get married, conflict brews since the family would have to spend their life savings in order to stage a huge wedding banquet.

In adapting the film for the stage, Fierstein and Bucchino made changes both big and small. The title was slightly altered, but Fierstein and Bucchino also significantly refashioned the bride's bachelor uncle Winston (who was played in the musical's original production by Fierstein himself) to be gay.

"The audience discovers in a graceful and comic way over the course of the show that in fact he's gay," Bucchino said. "I think it was a beautiful layer that adds another level of resonance to one of the themes of the show which is in fact about family and questioning what is family."

Bucchino's looking forward to his upcoming Chicago visit, not only to work with local talent in master classes and to perform a couple of

cabaret shows, but to see how *A Catered Affair* comes off for Windy City audiences. He's especially pleased to hear that Porchlight is presenting his show in a more intimate setting at Stage 773.

"The happiest thing I've discovered in seeing a number of regional, and even recently a community theater production in Helena, Mont., is that (*A Catered Affair*) actually works better in a more intimate space, because it's really an intimate show," Bucchino said.

Porchlight Music Theatre's *A Catered Affair* continues through Sunday, April 1, at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Fridays, 8 p.m. Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$38 with group and student discounts available. Call 773-327-5252 for tickets or visit [www.stage773.com](http://www.stage773.com).

A John Bucchino Master Class is scheduled from 3 to 6 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 25, at Stage 773. Beckie Menzie accompanies this event where Bucchino offers tips and critiques to singers performing his material. The Master Class is open to the public to watch at \$25 and \$15 for students.

Bucchino then hosts *The Music of John Bucchino Cabaret* at approximately 10:15 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 25, following the evening performance of *A Catered Affair* at Stage 773. Tickets are \$15.

Bucchino is also slated to a panelist in a free post-show discussion on Sunday, Feb. 26 following the 2 p.m. performance of *A Catered Affair*.

John Bucchino then performs a rare solo cabaret concert at Davenport's, 1383 N. Milwaukee, at 8 p.m. Monday, Feb. 27. Tickets are \$25 plus a two-drink minimum.

Porchlight Music Theatre also hosts a special LGBT Night performance of *A Catered Affair* scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Friday, March 2.

For more information on all of these events surrounding John Bucchino's visit to Chicago and Porchlight's production of *A Catered Affair*, visit <http://www.porchlightmusictheatre.org>.



Hunger. Photo by Suzanne Plunkett

## THEATER REVIEW

## Hunger

Playwright: Chris Hainsworth, adapted from the novel by Elise Blackwell

At: Lifeline Theatre, 6912 N. Glenwood Ave.

Phone: 773-761-4477 or

www.lifelinetheatre.com; \$32-\$35

Runs through: March 27

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

The literary genre is the “bunker”—sometimes, the “lifeboat”—story, in which an isolated group of people must unite in their efforts to defeat a nebulous, potentially fatal threat. In Elise Blackwell’s 2008 novel, set in 1941, the surrounding terror encompasses Nazi troops blockading supplies to the Russian western-border city of Leningrad while their bomber planes send the citizenry scurrying for cover, Joseph Stalin’s ruthless secret police, and the cruel winters sparing neither foe nor friend. Oh, and since the members of this fellowship are state-funded research botanists, their enemies also include rival scientists not above using politics to eliminate contenders—in the permanent sense.

The treasure our heroes guard is a cache of rare seeds, bred to facilitate super-crops that will someday, they hope, bring an end to famine throughout the world—edibles now endangered by a population reduced to draconian deprivation. Gradually, the comrades’ numbers decrease—some surrendering to waning health, some to lost morale, some to incaution leading

to their arrest as spies or traitors. Even after the siege lifts, the return to normalcy, in a dictatorship, continues to test the resolve of those remaining.

This formulaic fable is populated by the usual assortment of personalities, anchored by our narrator, who matures from an impetuous youth cheating on the wife he loves and reveling in his occupation-mandated field trips to exotic lands, into a gaunt and distrustful recluse whose only goal is survival, even if it means eating the precious lab-samples that awaken memories of his fallen companions. Unfortunately, the epic sprawl of Blackwell’s novel does not translate well to the stage, despite adapter Chris Hainsworth’s obvious efforts to excise all but the most necessary components in winnowing his story down to a spartan two-and-a-half-hour running time.

If the results force us to ignore significant images (the irony of a single potted plant amid huge banks of embryonic flora, for example), our emotional connection remains unbroken, thanks to a cast of Lifeline regulars under Rob Kauzlaric’s direction, who render every minute riveting in their depiction of the excruciating hardships suffered by those who would benefit all humankind. Their imprisonment is enhanced by Jessica Kuehnah’s Chinese-box scenic design and Andrew Hansen’s aural soundscapes, invoking panoramic exteriors ranging from Ethiopian rockslides to New Orleans jazz clubs, whose variety serves to tantalize the fugitives huddled in their technological bunker.



## SPOTLIGHT



Find out **How to be a Lesbian in 10 Days or Less** when the motivational speaker “Butchy McDyke” presents a seminar in this comic one-woman show by Rhode Islander Leigh Hendrix. McDyke promises “a journey of self-discovery and first love, coming out, politics and a really important Reba McEntire song” in her discussion that is tailored for “budding lesbians, no matter their sexual orientation.” How to be a Lesbian in 10 Days or Less plays one performance only at 8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, at Mary’s Attic, 5400 N. Clark St. Tickets are \$10 at the door and can also be obtained by visiting [www.hottobealesbianin10daysorless.com](http://www.hottobealesbianin10daysorless.com). Photo of Hendrix in How to be a Lesbian in 10 Days or Less by Nikki Cararra

## THEATER REVIEW

## A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Playwright: William Shakespeare

At: Chicago Shakespeare Theatre at Navy Pier, 800 E. Grand Ave.

Phone: 312-595-5600 or

www.chicagoshakes.com; \$44-\$75

Runs through: April 8

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Oh, here we go again—Bottom and Puck, Oberon and Titania, lovers, fairies, louts, “what fools these mortals be” la-la-la. The decision-makers at Chicago Shakespeare are no fools, however, and have called in director Gary Griffin—one of Chicago’s foremost transformers of donkey’s ears into peaseblossom purses ever since his storefront days—to put the fun back into this cumbersome classroom classic. Some of the devices he employs in this production:

1) He greets us at the doors with a framed picture of an Arthur Rackham-style forest and a Victorrola churning forth scratchy early-1920s ditties.

2) He opens the play with the Mechanicals warbling doo-wop harmonies in preparation for the upcoming festivities at court, providing us with the backstory thereon.

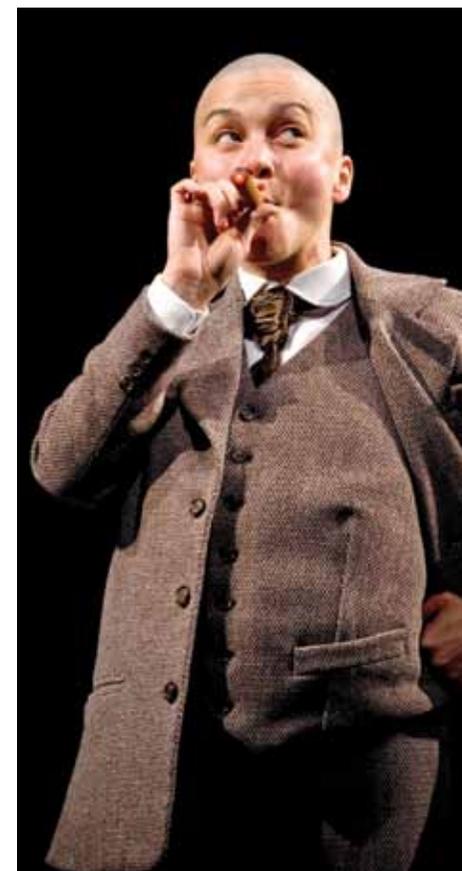
3) He characterizes Theseus as a stodgy upholder of the status quo, drawing a tepid response from his bride-to-be—the better to heighten the contrast with their emotion-driven pastoral counterparts.

4) He envisions Puck as a goblin hermaphrodite, garbed in shaved head, corset, cravat and gartered socks (gotta carry those enchanted flowers *somewhere*), after emerging from the image of a tweedy, cigar-smoking Sigmund Freud.

5) He assigns the lovers’ woodland scenes to fight director David Woolley, who injects an abundance of tussle-and-tumble physical comedy, enabling the giddy youths to deliver their cupid-besotted nonsense very quickly.

6) He presents Oberon and Titania’s kingdom as a pageant of tactile East Indian color and sensuality to dazzle our eyes. (Mara Blumenfeld’s fairy-hats alone are enough to keep us occupied during passages of unnecessary euphuism.)

7) He instructs sound designers Rob Milburn



Elizabeth Ledo in A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Photo by Liz Lauren

and Michael Bodeen to set the Pyramus-and-Thisbe burlesque to music, with styles ranging from Appalachian string band to Deep South blues, thus eliminating any need for ham-handed actorly shtick.

Elizabeth Ledo, despite a voice suffering under the weather on opening night, all but stole the show, playing a grotesque and thoroughly charming Puck, and Timothy Edward Kane, fresh from his marathon performance in An Iliad, had yet to find Oberon’s psychological center. Nevertheless, when an audience—on a rainy night, yet—enjoys itself as enthusiastically as that who cheered and applauded each individual episode in this 400-year-old fable, there can be no doubt that Griffin’s revitalizing wizardry has triumphed once again.

## THEATER REVIEW

## Dating Walter Dante

Playwright: Jon Steinhagen

At: Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark St.

Phone: 773-338-2177 or

www.raventheatre.com; \$30-\$40

Runs through: March 24

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Inevitably, perhaps centuries hence, some enterprising hack will spin the Drew Peterson case into a lurid neo-gothic romance along the lines of the Bluebeard legend. Fortunately, this new play by Jon Steinhagen isn’t it. Yes, the characters may share the circumstances of their nonfictional analogs, but those are all that link any recent headlines to what its heroine decides, over the protests of its auxiliary personnel, to label a “love story.”

To begin with, Walter Dante is a structural engineer—a professional citizen, in other words, educated and refined—whose first wife drowned in what was ruled an accident (but later will be declared murder). His second wife has been missing for a year. No hard evidence of his guilt has been discovered, but public opinion has ruined his career and made him a target of hostile speculation. Then one night, he meets recent divorcee Laura Bakersfield, who sees in him something innocent and trustworthy. Can their affection withstand the

pressure of his notoriety and the interference of well-meaning friends, angry ex-husbands, jaded police detectives and an inquisitive ghost?

The question frequently asked during the Peterson investigation was how *any* woman could be attracted to a man of his reputation. Steinhagen’s play proposes a possible answer, but more important is its sly insights into the bystanders whose prejudices drive them to commit criminal acts inviting the same suspicion as that they impose on the harried Dante, who considers fleeing, much as the second Mrs. Dante is alleged to have done. (“I wonder who they’d blame if I disappeared.”) In the end, we are given no tidy facts to wrap up the puzzle—detective Gibbs pronounces it an “unsolved mystery,” the spectral first Mrs. Dante cannot name her assailant, busybody neighbors Suzanne and Harper stalk the lovers, former hubby Sam threatens them. Finally, Dante is forced to take matters into his own hands.

A premise that could be derailed at any moment by real-life events makes for a slippery scenario, its tone shifting abruptly between star-crossed soap, domestic drama and marital comedy. The cast assembled by director Cody Estle still appeared to be feeling their way on opening night, but Jason Huysman and Kristin Collins invoke sympathy for the sweethearts doomed to live forever under a spotlight—a fate unlikely to trouble a play with arguably a shorter shelf life than we have come to expect from its author.



Show Boat. Photo by Robert Kusel

## MUSICAL REVIEW

### Show Boat

Playwright: Oscar Hammerstein II (book/lyrics), Jerome Kern (music)

At: Lyric Opera of Chicago, 20 N. Wacker Dr.

Tickets: 312-332-2244;

www.lyricopera.org; \$54-\$254

Runs through: March 17 (in repertory)

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Connoisseurs of musical theater are sure to love this *Show Boat*, in which a uniformly-stellar cast impeccably delivers one of the most stirring and scintillating scores ever written for the musical theater stage. Connoisseurs of *Show Boat* in particular will find this Lyric Opera version better than many previous revivals, although no more definitive. In the pattern of all productions since the 1927 original, Lyric, too, alters the score and story.

Edna Ferber's 1926 novel concerns three generations of a riverboat family, specifically three generations of women. Ferber had killed off her two principal men halfway through the book, Cap'n Andy Hawks who owns the show boat and Gaylord Ravenal, the handsome gambler who marries Andy's daughter, Magnolia. In creating the 1927 musical, adapter/lyricist Oscar Hammerstein kept both men alive and eliminated Ravenal's consorting with prostitutes. Having Ravenal abandon his wife and child (as in Ferber's novel) was bleak enough for a musical comedy, along with a miscegenation subplot. Jerome Kern concurred, and poured his lyrical gifts into a dazzling score ranging from the iconic anthem "Ol' Man River," to the comic "Life Upon the Wicked Stage," to the jazz-influenced "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," to the soaring "You Are Love." Wisely, Lyric uses mostly (more than 80 percent) of the original 1927 orchestrations, which still are superb.

Lyric Opera's big change eliminates Kim, the third-generation daughter of Magnolia and Ravenal. In the novel and musical, she follows her mother into show biz and becomes an even bigger star. The adult Kim makes a wordless cameo appearance as the Lyric production ends, but her stardom is assigned to her mother and her big Charleston number is eliminated. Lyric director Francesca Zambello and conductor John DeMain hang this *Show Boat* on the central love story rather than on a family's history. This weakens one of Ferber's central themes, but isn't better/worse than adjustments made in other revivals.

Zambello smartly has cast opera singers as Ravenal (Nathan Gunn), mulatto Julie (Alyson Cambridge), Black stevedore Joe (Morris Robinson) and his wife, Queenie (Angela Renee Simp-

son) and musical theater performers as Magnolia (Ashley Brown), song-and dance team Frank (Bernie Yvon) and Ellie (Ericka Mac) and Cap'n Andy (Ross Lehman). The cast easily traverses the show's once-groundbreaking blend of operetta and musical comedy, with the chops to nail the songs, dialogue scenes and comedy (especially Lehman). Almost unique in opera, female leads Cambridge and Brown both are svelte, beautiful and can dance!

DeMain takes some uptempo numbers too slowly, and I wasn't overwhelmed with Peter J. Davison's set design (although the Act II stylized backdrops are excellent), while Paul Tazewell's costumes are beautifully crafted but often outrageously red-white-and-blue gaudy. Hey, we know this is an American musical! Still, this *Show Boat* sweeps you away and makes strong men weep, so you know it's rollin' along.

## CRITICS' PICKS

**Ameriville**, Universes at Victory Gardens Biograph Theater, through Feb. 26. Victory Gardens meets Slam Poetry in this pinch-hitter import combining spoken-word performance, *a cappella* vocals and body percussion in a panoramic tour that starts with hurricane Katrina and finishes in an ecstasy of Dionysian exuberance. MSB

**The Caretaker**, Writers' Theatre, through March 25. You simply won't find a better staging of Harold Pinter's quintessential 1960 Comedy of Menace, set in a tough London 'hood where an old bum nearly comes between two vastly dissimilar brothers. It features beautiful acting and direction. JA

**Disgraced**, American Theater Company, through Feb. 26. Ayad Akhtar's world premiere play showing a Muslim-American lawyer's professional and personal life suddenly unraveling definitely presses plenty of hot-issue buttons. This insightful drama also benefits from the ensemble's strong acting. SCM

**Six Characters in Search of an Author**, The Hypocrites at Chopin Theatre, through March 11. Steve Moulds' modernized update of Luigi Pirandello's massively influential play within a play drama is full of laughs and chills as it explores the "realities" of theater and bringing stories to life. SCM

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan



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## DOUBLE REVIEW

**Prima Donna**

**Composer:** Rufus Wainwright; **Librettists:** Wainwright and Bernadette Colomine  
**At:** New York City Opera at Brooklyn Academy of Music,  
 30 Lafayette Ave., New York  
**Phone:** 212-870-5687;  
[www.nycopera.com](http://www.nycopera.com); \$25  
**Runs through:** Feb. 25

**The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess**

**Composer:** George Gershwin;  
**Libretto:** DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, Ira Gershwin  
**Adapted by:** Suzan-Lori Parks and Diedre L. Murray  
**At:** Richard Rodgers Theatre,  
 226 W. 46th St., New York  
**Phone:** 877-250-2929;  
[www.PorgyAndBessOnBroadway.com](http://www.PorgyAndBessOnBroadway.com);  
 \$67-\$139  
**Runs through:** Sept. 30

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Not anyone can write an operatic masterpiece on his or her first time out. Even the earliest efforts by the likes of Wagner, Puccini and Verdi are not in the standard operatic repertoire.

So when you look at all of the critical vitriol hurled at out Canadian-American singer-songwriter Rufus Wainwright for his first opera, Prima Donna, he could at least be given some slack for trying. Yet a classic debut opera isn't impossible, especially when you have a musical genius well versed in both jazz and classical music like composer George Gershwin, who offered his first full-fledged "folk opera," Porgy and Bess, back

in 1935.

I was able to take in both Prima Donna and Porgy and Bess during a recent weekend trip to New York. Porgy and Bess is back on Broadway, where it originally debuted (albeit in a controversially much-revised revival), while New York City Opera is presenting the U.S. premiere of Prima Donna through Saturday, Feb. 25, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM). Due to budgetary issues, New York City Opera has since vacated its long-time home at Lincoln Center and is now an itinerant company.

It's interesting to note some similarities between Prima Donna and Porgy and Bess. Both operas are by composers initially most famous for writing hit popular songs rather than for serious operatic writing. And both works had scuttled plans to premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

Gershwin didn't want to have white singers performing in blackface for Porgy and Bess, which is why he turned down the pre-integrated Metropolitan Opera of the 1930s and opted instead for Broadway. As for an unnamed Wainwright opera (which eventually became Prima Donna), it was originally co-commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera and Lincoln Center Theater. However, the Metropolitan's plans fell through due to disagreements over a drawn-out production timetable and ostensibly because Wainwright chose to write the libretto (co-written with Bernadette Colomine) in French rather than English.

However, I have a suspicion that the Metropolitan Opera passed on Prima Donna because it just isn't that good. But that hasn't stopped Prima Donna from being picked up in other cities, ranging from its 2009 world premiere in Manchester, U.K., to subsequent appearances in London, Toronto and Melbourne.

As an avowed opera lover, you can sense Wainwright is clearly relishing his chance to write and orchestrate music for operatic singers and a



Taylor Stayton and Melody Moore in New York City Opera's U.S. debut of Rufus Wainwright's 2009 opera Prima Donna. Photo by Carol Rosegg

symphonic orchestra for Prima Donna. Yet, Wainwright and Colomine are completely at sea at crafting a credible libretto with a good plot or much dramatic tension; plus, their French lyrics are filled with banalities and odd metaphors.

While some operas come with pages of plot synopses in the program, Prima Donna came with just one paragraph at BAM.

After a six-year absence, reclusive Paris soprano Regine St. Laurent (Melody Moore) plans on making a comeback to perform her signature role of Alienor d'Aquitane (a rather short opera, since it fits on just one vinyl album). Her long-time butler, Philippe (baritone Randal Turner), is excited about her potential rise back to fame, although her new maid, Marie (soprano Kathryn Guthrie Demos) is apprehensive. A visiting fawning journalist named Andre le Tourneur (tenor Taylor Stayton) arrives for an interview, setting up unreal hopes for Regine for a young new love.

The singers are all fine, although at times they were hard to hear in the balcony over the sometimes loud conducting of Jayce Ogren.

Director Tim Albery does what he can with what is glaringly thin dramatic material and the lushly orchestrated score filled with oddly placed crescendos. Set and costume designer Anthony McDonald creates a burnished silver mirror look about the Regine's sequestered setting, which also allows for production designer William Reynolds to overlay images of falling rain (or is it tears?) and bursting fireworks that go out all too soon (no doubt to be symbolic about Regine's own extinguished opera career).

Although many pop-music critics have acclaimed Wainwright's singing and songwriting as hyperemotional and even operatic, it's disappointing that his first foray into full-blown opera doesn't really ignite. Instead, Prima Donna comes off an unfocused damp squib.

At the very least, I noticed many more twenty-something hipsters in the audience than at most operas I attend, so hopefully they'll be willing to delve further into other operas that offer many more emotional rewards than the ones Wainwright attempts to offer in Prima Donna.

No doubt the Gershwin estate wants more audiences to fall in love with Porgy and Bess as a musical in addition to the work's critically debated reputation as "The Great American Opera." How else to explain why they gave permission to Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Suzan-Lori Parks (Topdog/Underdog), jazz composer Diedre L. Murray (Running Man) and Tony Award-nominated director Diane Paulus (Hair) to tinker with Porgy and Bess in a new Broadway musical edition?

Even before this new take on Porgy and Bess debuted in 2011 at American American Repertory Theatre in Massachusetts, diehard fans of Porgy and Bess as an opera were outraged. (Composer Stephen Sondheim took the rare step of publicly criticizing the creative team via a

published letter in The New York Times.) Still, the public dispute generated lots of publicity, and it seems likely that this Broadway revival of The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess (how the Gershwin Estate wants the work to be officially billed) will spur more interest in this iconic work no matter where it is produced (including Chicago's own 2011 Court Theatre production of a chamber-sized Porgy and Bess).

As a diehard Porgy and Bess opera fan, I do miss the full orchestra, opera-sized chorus and un-amplified sound of the original. Yet the creative team of this new take on Porgy and Bess do offer a renewed vibrancy to the work, which flows much faster with Parks' streamlined and dramatically clarifying dialogue that replaces the sung recitative of the original libretto. Also, many more of the performances are more psychologically vibrant and true with these established musical theater stars than opera singers who train more for the voice rather than acting the honest characterizations.

Undoubtedly, one of the major reasons to see the production is for Tony Award-winning star Audra McDonald's haunting portrayal as Bess, the damaged good-time girl who is pursued by three different men in the South Carolina seaside community known as Catfish Row. In this production, Bess bears a physical facial scar from her brutish boyfriend, Crown (a hulking Phillip Boykin), and is a coveted target of big-city dope peddler Sportin' Life (a charmingly slithery David Alan Grier of In Living Color fame).

However, it's the honest and physically disabled beggar Porgy (Norm Lewis) who ennobles Bess, and their unlikely love in the face of so much adversity is truly touching. Though not as deeply resonant with his voice as some operatic bass-baritones who have tackled the role, Lewis' Porgy is down to earth and full of goodness.

Choreographer Ronald K. Brown immeasurably aids Paulus in keeping this Porgy and Bess on the go and giving the ensemble such a strong sense of community. Joshua Henry as Jake, Na-Tasha Yvette Williams as Mariah and Nikki Renee Daniels as Clara particularly stand out in the supporting ensemble.

Now Riccardo Hernandez's set design is too much of a blank canvas to get a sense of the place of Catfish Row, but the simpleness allows the performers to come to the fore as they deliver such melodic standards as "Summertime," "Bess, You is My Woman Now" and "I Loves You, Porgy."

Rather than replace Porgy and Bess as an opera, this new Broadway musical adaptation feels more like a companion piece. Besides, there is plenty of room for Porgy and Bess to appear not only on the stages of grand opera houses, but at Broadway and regional theater levels, too.

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## DOUBLE REVIEW

## Orpheus Descending

Playwright: Tennessee Williams  
 At: Shattered Globe Theatre at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave.  
 Phone: 773-327-5252;  
[www.shatteredglobe.org](http://www.shatteredglobe.org); \$18-\$34  
 Runs through: March 11

## The Ritz

Playwright: Terrence McNally  
 At: Circle Theatre, 1010 Madison St., Oak Park  
 Phone: 708-660-9540;  
[www.circle-theatre.org](http://www.circle-theatre.org); \$24-\$28  
 Runs through: April 1

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Finding links between Tennessee Williams' highly symbolic 1959 Southern drama *Orpheus Descending* and Terrence McNally's ribald 1974 bathhouse farce *The Ritz* is certainly a stretch. However, since both are respectively being produced around town now by Shattered Globe Theatre and by Circle Theatre, why not?

Both works are written by significant and openly gay U.S. playwrights of the 20th century, and both explore the plight of outsiders who get caught up in a uncomfortable setting where their lives may or may not be in danger. Also, both plays (or productions) have drawbacks that show why neither work will probably be seen as either playwrights' best work.

In terms of acting, directing and approach to style, Shattered Globe's *Orpheus Descending* is the more solidly produced show. Director Julianne Ehre coordinates a large cast that relishes playing Williams alternately gossipy, intolerant or rudderless Southern characters.

Joseph Wiens particularly stands out as the musical drifter Val thanks to his amazing guitar skills and imposing presence. It's easy to see why the town folk are intimidated by Wiens' Val, although you do question why his character decides to seek some constancy with an emotionally crushed and impending Italian widow named Lady (a feisty Eileen Niccolai). Although the town pariah Carol (a touching Heather Townsend) offers Val an escape, it all ends in tragedy.

Where *Orpheus Descending* become harder to swallow is in Williams' blunt symbolism and flowery dialog. Once again, Williams seems to take great pleasure in showing up the bigotry of the Deep South and destroying his sensitive heroes. Williams covered these plot points and themes elsewhere (and better). Yet, there still is an appeal of seeing Shattered Globe's production since *Orpheus Descending* doesn't get produced so often.

Also rarely produced is *The Ritz*, no doubt because a large cast and elaborate set are required. In addition, the squeamishness might scare some audiences away since it's all so sexual and gay with plenty of male torsos on display.

Unfortunately, Circle's *Ritz* cast, under Bob Knuth's direction, wasn't firing on all comedy cylinders at the final preview I saw, exposing some of McNally's choppy plotting. Hopefully, things will be speedier and funnier as the run progresses.

As straight man Guy Proclo—who unwittingly checks into a bathhouse to avoid a mafia hit—Dennis Schnell is okay, although he could show the stages of his character's shock and realization more clearly. Also just okay is Elizabeth Morgan as the heavily accented Latina songbird Googie Gomez.

In the rest of the ensemble, better supporting work comes from actors Shawn Quinlan, Jordan Phelps, Alexander Sharon, John Cardone and Nicholas Reinhart. Kevin Bellie's floor-show choreography is also a campy delight.

Although not perfect at the final preview, *The Ritz* also should be seen since it's a period gay rarity that doesn't come around too often.



The Ritz. Photo by Bob Knuth

## 'The Wiz' at Austin Town Hall

The Wiz—a modern, funky re-telling of The Wizard of Oz—will run at Austin Town Hall Park, 5610 W. Lake St., Feb. 22-23. Tickets are \$3-\$5.

## 'Laramie Project' opens March 4

The Chicago premiere production of The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later—directed by Jeff Award winner Greg Kolack—will run at Redtwist Theatre, 1044 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., March 4-April 7, at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$25-\$30.

In addition, there will be a benefit performance of The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later on Saturday, March 10, at 6:30 p.m. Judy Shepard, the mother of the late Matthew Shepard—on whom the original project is based—will introduce the performance. Tickets are \$100 each.

See [www.redtwist.org](http://www.redtwist.org) or call 773-728-7529.

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# For Scott Gryder, life is a cabaret

BY ALEX LUBISCHER

Recently, in a cozy rehearsal room atop the Sherwood Conservatory of Music, Chicago cabaret crooner Scott Gryder was in mid-argument with his performance partner, Freddie. Gryder alleged, correctly, that their monthly cabaret revue is titled "Simply Scotty," while his scene-stealing cohort insisted on "Fun with Freddie." After some well-tempered reasoning on Gryder's part, Freddie finally conceded. The affable Gryder rolled his eyes.

Freddie, sporting purple hair and wide saucer eyes, is a puppet. He's also the latest addition to Gryder's self-titled show, joining in for a tune or two every set. "I've been told that I'm the only cabaret puppeteer in Chicago," Gryder said, grinning. "People are upset when he [Freddie] doesn't perform."

With a *joie de vivre* comparable to Glee's Kurt Hummel, Gryder was instantly disarming. Com-



Scott Gryder.

fortably seated inches from a baby grand, his high tenor voice and winning smile gave an affect of genuine wholesomeness that is almost flabbergasting. However, any initial skepticism quickly evaporated upon discovery of one fact: this entertainer is one of a kind.

A former musical theater performer, Gryder made the switch to cabaret in 2008. He was working as a house manager at Victory Gardens theater when a coworker approached him with the idea of banding together to put on a show. While his Actors' Equity status barred him from any non-union musical performances, cabaret was fair game. The gang dubbed themselves "The Desperate House Managers" and whipped together a cabaret revue. "And I was like, 'Wow! That was so easy,'" said Gryder. "And it felt really good."

When asked why cabaret was a better fit, Gryder said, "I think in musical theater, there's a package that you have to open up. It's like playing a board game and these are the rules and the parts you play. But cabaret is just entertainment. So it can be anything."

Being bitten by the cabaret bug, Gryder went solo for his next project, "Not At My Audition: My Half-Latin Life On Stage So Far." He first conceived the one-man show in a diner with musical director and partner, Nick Sula. Gryder pitched the show as being "based on the bigger auditions I've had and it'll tell my life story through those auditions." Recalling how he sat down, wrote the script and put it together with Sula, Gryder pauses and smiles, "Of course the cabaret scene loves Nick."

Sula continues to accompany Gryder on piano

for his current show, "Simply Scotty," although their two busy schedules leave little time for rehearsal. Their preparation begins with Gryder transposing sheet music into an appropriate key, followed by Sula's expert revisions. "And then, if we're lucky, we get to run that song before we get to 'Simply Scotty' but most of the time it's just off the cuff," Gryder said. The chemistry that allows them to excel with so little prep time astounds even Gryder. "It's unbelievable!" he told Windy City Times. "It was just fate."

Gryder discovered his next major cabaret companion, Freddie, years later, after three friends separately gave him puppet memorabilia for his birthday. Coincidence? Gryder said with a shrug, "People say that I'm like a living Muppet sometimes."

When asked how Freddie acquired his signature showbiz-loving personality, Gryder mused, "It's like when someone goes to a pet store to pick up cat food and they have no intention of buying another cat, but there's someone who has cats for sale so they pick one up and someone says what's its name and you say 'Sally!' ... So I had Freddie. There's no reason why he's Freddie. He's just Freddie."

The same can be said of Scott Gryder, an entertainment personality who'll be putting a fresh spin on cabaret for years to come. On his debut album, *Pure Imagination*, his zany, nightclub warbling brings a blend of humor and lightness to an art form oft equated with smoky stages and maudlin ballads. "I think cabaret has a bad rap," he said, proceeding to comically demonstrate an overwrought French caricature. "There's sort of a dark aura for cabaret, is what I think. Cabaret is so much more. It's communication and sharing and joy. It can be anything! That's the beauty and the curse of cabaret."

**Gryder performs "Simply Scotty" the first Sunday of every month at 3160 Piano & Cabaret, 3160 N. Clark St., at 7 p.m. See [www.thescottgryder.com](http://www.thescottgryder.com) for more information.**

**His album, *Pure Imagination*, is available on Gryder's website or iTunes.**

## WCPA's 'Broadway' show March 10

Windy City Performing Arts will present Windy City Gay Chorus and Aria in "Broadway And Beyond: An Evening of Broadway Benefit & Concert" Saturday, March 10, at the Mayne Stage Theater, 1328 W. Morse Ave., at 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.

The performances will feature hits from Broadway's past and present, including songs from productions such as *South Pacific*, *Hair* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. In addition, there will be a silent auction (on items such as a guitar Melissa Etheridge once owned), an appetizer and dessert reception with cash bar, prize drawings and more.

General-admission tickets are \$50 each. Visit [www.MayneStage.com](http://www.MayneStage.com) or call 773-381-4554.

## Nathan Lane, Brian Dennehy in 'Iceman'

Artistic Director Robert Falls announced the cast for his major revival of Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* at Goodman Theatre, running April 21-June 10 in the Goodman's Albert Theatre.

Falls' production features Nathan Lane as Theodore "Hickey" Hickman and Brian Dennehy as Larry Slade.

Visit [www.GoodmanTheatre.org](http://www.GoodmanTheatre.org) or call 312-443-3800 for tickets.

# Documentary to explore homophobia at Wheaton College

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

On the heels of the pro-LGBT group OneWheaton's recent formation, a documentary called *Let Your Light Shine* is currently in production. The movie will explore the persistent homophobia at Wheaton College and within U.S. Evangelical Christianity.

The documentary is the brainchild of Markie Hancock and Stephen Henderson, who connected with each other over their shared experiences as Wheaton College alumni after they both moved to New York City a few years ago.

Hancock, an out lesbian, was invited to join the OneWheaton private Facebook page by another alum. After reading the personal stories of fellow LGBTQ Wheaton College alumni she contacted Henderson, who is openly gay, and they both decided to join forces and produce the documentary.

Henderson, the executive producer of the project, likens what happened with the OneWheaton group to the wave of demonstrations known as Arab Spring, where social media

College and how it all intersects."

Henderson added, "This documentary is not a vendetta against our college. We want to point out that there are hundreds of Christian colleges and thousands of Christian churches in the United States who believe essentially the same thing that Wheaton College believes. Wheaton College's homophobia allows not only churches but also other Christian colleges and even non-religious people to find cover for their homophobia in the fact that places like Wheaton College still foment homophobia."

One of the ways Wheaton College incites homophobia is by requiring students to sign a community covenant pledge that forbids (among other things) premarital sex and same-sex relations, according to Hancock and Henderson, who said that when they went to the school in the late 1970s and early 1980s the pledge was even stricter.

"The taboo against homosexuality in the evangelical Christian world is still going strong, even though they have become more worldly and liberal about certain things like



Stephen Henderson. Photo courtesy of OneWheaton

played a big part in uniting fractured populations around one cause. When Henderson and Hancock, the director of the project, saw how many LGBTQ alumni of all ages had joined the private Facebook page—as well as the hundreds and hundreds of people who signed on to the letter on OneWheaton's website as a protest to the policies of Wheaton College—they realized the potential of the documentary.

"Both Markie and I have journeyed away from Wheaton College and Christianity," said Henderson. "Yet, [we] look at the OneWheaton site and see that kids who graduated in 2010 were having these same feelings of panic and dread—and, maybe, fantasies of suicide—because they had been so convinced by this environment [Wheaton College] that God hated them and they were going to hell, [and] that being gay was so terrible. We wanted to blow a whistle on the fact that this indoctrination is still going on at the college."

"The larger documentary will look at the deep and long history of evangelicalism in the United States to see just how normative being an evangelical Christian is and how the United States, as a Christian nation, has been so discriminatory against LGBTQ people," said Hancock. "We will be interlocking that with the gay-liberation movement and how evangelicals in places like Wheaton College are only responding [in a discriminatory way] because LGBTQ visibility is growing, and they are being reactive to this movement. We will link evangelicalism and gay liberation through the prism of a place like Wheaton

drinking and going to R-rated movies," said Henderson.

"'Let your light shine' is a Bible verse and a Christian song, and we want to expand the notion that it's OK to be evangelical but it's not OK to discriminate against LGBTQ people. [We want to convey] that, surely, your God is big enough to not want to snuff out these lights [LGBTQ people]," said Hancock.

When contacted for a comment regarding the documentary, Wheaton College officials responded, "We do not plan to comment on the documentary at this time."

OneWheaton is a group of LGBTQ alumni of Wheaton College formed to help current students who feel/felt isolated while attending Wheaton College. The organization currently has about 700 signatories to the letter posted on its website, up from 600 people last November. Approximately 365 people have joined the private Facebook group and more than 1,000 people have liked the fan page on Facebook.

Although the creation of OneWheaton was the catalyst for the documentary, Hancock said, "We are not funded or officially affiliated with OneWheaton. However, some of the people we have interviewed are members of [the group]."

The filmmakers are hoping to get financing through the website Kickstarter, fundraising parties and foundation grants.

The documentary trailer is at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgjISIsYj0Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgjISIsYj0Q). For more information about OneWheaton, visit [www.onewheaton.com](http://www.onewheaton.com).

# Website aims to be the 'HBO of lesbian content'

BY ROSS FORMAN

Christin Mell spent her elementary school years in Chattanooga, Tenn., where she attended a co-ed, conservative Catholic school, complete with uniforms.

That's where she confronted "Tommy Finch."

He actually really wasn't named Tommy Finch; that's just the fictitious name Mell gave the Finch-like character that many know oh-so-well: that annoying, pesky school bully. He tortured all of the girls, pulling their pigtails, pinching them or just causing havoc, Mell said.

Fast forward to the present, and I Hate Tommy Finch is a two-woman show that follows the friendship/relationship of best friends from the age of 8 to 35. Each scene is a moment during a pivotal age in their life. The show will focus on their first meeting and the ups and downs of the friendship as they discover themselves and love. I Hate Tommy Finch is a new original play/web series.

The play/web series stars Nicole Pacent and Shannan Leigh Reeve, with musicians Sami Grist and Shannon Nicole.

The play was performed in Chicago in mid-October, and two of the three shows were sold out.

A continuing series, I Hate Tommy Finch, launched in January on Mell's lesbian-driven website, [www.tellofilms.com](http://www.tellofilms.com).

"We have had such an overwhelmingly positive response" to I Hate Tommy Finch, Mell said.

Mell confirmed that the play, I Hate Tommy Finch, will be back in Chicago in the spring.

Chicago-based Tellofilms.com is a web-based video distribution company for films made for, by and about lesbians. The tello mission state-

ment is: to be a virtual forum devoted to provoking thought, empowering people, and fostering connectivity through original projects essential to the lesbian experience.

Mell, 36, who lives in Chicago's Avondale neighborhood, is the co-founder and CEO. She works for the YMCA by day, focuses on tellofilms.com before and after her day job and on weekends. Her partner is State Rep. Deb Mel.

Nicole Valentine is the co-founder of tellofilms.com.

"Over the past year, we have posted an impressive little array of web series," said Mell, who expanded the company in the fall. Jessica King was named the COO, while Julie Keck is the new Chief Creative Director.

"It got to the point where I needed more support because we were continuing to receive more project interests, more scripts, [plus] the website numbers were growing. It was just me and Nicole, so we needed to expand. We needed more folks who had this wonderful skillset.

"Both [Jessica and Julie] are amazing writers; each can read and re-write a script, if needed. Their ability to read a script and tell that story is fantastic. They also are absolute geniuses when it comes to social media; their use of Twitter and Facebook is so impressive. Each has a lot of great tech skills.

"Jessica is a wonderful director and cinematographer, who also can edit. Julie is a great writer, who does a lot of marketing, too."

King and Keck designed and developed tello's live game show, 'Who Knows Her Better,' which was taped in Chicago and hosted by The L Word's Elizabeth Keener.

"We want to be the HBO of lesbian content,"



From left: Shannan Leigh Reeve, Nicole Pacent and Christin Mell. Photo courtesy of Mell

Mell said. "We want to have thousands of subscribers and be able to fund our projects, but also support other producers and fund their projects. Sure, we're already doing that, but we want to do it to a larger extent."

Tello offers free content for website visitors and also exclusive material through its Premium Content section (\$3.99 per month). The Premium content includes Cowgirl Up, McManusLand, and more.

The Premium section has nine web series—and Cowgirl Up is its most popular.

"There's nothing else out there like it," Mell said. "It's essentially a lesbian Western, with an all-female cast, except for one male. The storytelling is really fun and funny. There are great stars, great writing."

Mell confirmed that McManusLand, Season 2, will be launching in the spring. She said there also is a possibility of Cowgirl Up, Season 2.

"The biggest surprise is just that this model actually is working," Mell said. "If you tell a

good story and actively engage with your fans, they will come to your site and support you, subscribe to the content.

"A lot of people are hungry for content, but they aren't primed to go make it themselves. It's been interesting to hear people tell us what they'd like to see. I'm surprised a bit at that, given today's technology, I thought they would try it themselves, then upload it [to the web], but that's not the case."

Mell said the majority of the visitors to the tello website are from the U.S., but there are viewers from Japan, Australia and England, among other countries.

So what about a website for gay male content?

"Originally, we thought it would be really good to expand into the gay community, and actually were going to call it Fello Films," Mell said. "But, I don't feel like I could run a site because I don't feel like I know what resonates with the gay male community. I focus on lesbian content because it's what I know."

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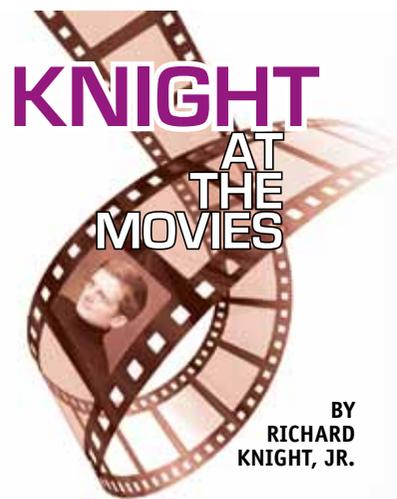
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## Queer at the Oscars; film note

It won't be the same without queer icon Bruce Vilanch backstage providing up-to-the-minute quips for host Billy Crystal. Nevertheless, the Gay Man's National Holiday aka the annual Academy Awards (the 84th edition) are going forward this Sunday, Feb. 26. Vilanch wasn't originally part of this year's backstage talent line-up from the start—but then, neither was Crystal.

When Academy Awards officials tapped action-film director Brett Ratner to come on board as a first-time producer of the show his first order of business was to sign up Eddie Murphy (a



**The Help** (with Viola Davis, left, and Octavia Spencer) is in the Oscar mix. Photo courtesy of Dreamworks Pictures

head-scratcher of a host if ever there was one). But then Ratner made his now infamous anti-gay slur and resigned amidst the controversy that ensued; his intended host, Murphy, quickly followed him out the door. Last week, in an attempt to make amends with the queer community, Ratner announced he's directing a new coming-out video series for GLAAD. (Maybe he'll enlist Murphy's participation, too but don't hold your breath.)

Academy officials quickly announced the return of Billy Crystal, surely the show's most beloved host since Bob Hope, for his ninth appearance. Vilanch—who has provided one-liners and other hilarious bits for 23 of the last 25 shows and has worked with Crystal on some of his most memorable entrances and opening monologues and song parodies—was expected to return as well. However, citing commitments "writing for Broadway" (he's part of the March 5 Broadway Backwards AIDS benefit), Vilanch won't be returning. And though it's not hard to guess (and anticipate with delight) Crystal inserting himself into an opening montage of the nominated pic-

tures followed by an opening-song monologue parody, new producers Brian Grazer and Don Mischer haven't confirmed that or much of anything else.

Keeping mum will certainly heighten the mystery, but is more likely an attempt to downplay high expectations from audiences considering the giant goose egg last year's hosts, James Franco and Anne Hathaway, laid. Franco—who was alternately uncomfortable, bored or wooden as the evening progressed—was clearly out of his element, leaving Hathaway to almost tap-dance in her efforts to bring the energy level back up. The entire thing was a dreadful dud, didn't score big ratings with "the kids" and turned off veteran viewers (and was later the cause of a spat between Vilanch and Franco, who have since made up via Twitter postings).

We do know that neither of the nominated songs will be performed—surely an Oscar first. In light of the breezy choices (one from *The Muppets*, the other from the animated *Rio*), this isn't necessarily a bad thing (with \$5 bucks to anyone who can recall even one of the so-so songs tarted up to extravaganza size in a past show). It's my hope that the evening will include a lot more movie footage and given that two of the Best Picture nominees (*The Artist* and *Hugo*) are a direct homage to the early days of cinema, perhaps we'll have a broader overview of the powerful and longstanding impact of movies on the culture. In other words, show more clips please.

Will there be queer representation at this year's show? The answer is "yes," as few prominent examples in the movies themselves—the gender-bending Albert Nobbs, with its nominations for Glenn Close and Janet McTeer (Close is

my pick but I doubt she'll get it); Christopher Plummer playing the gay 75-year-old dad in *Beginners* (a sentimental and honestly earned nomination and my choice as well); Rooney Mara as the bisexual Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (both a Best Picture and Best Actress nominee); and Supporting Actor nominee Kenneth Branagh as rumored bisexual Sir Laurence Olivier in *My Week with Marilyn*.

Behind the screen there's plenty of LGBT representation as well. Best Picture nods have gone to *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (from out producer Scott Rudin and married gay director Stephen Daldry). *The Help*, also in the running in just about every major category, was helmed by out director/actor Tate Taylor. *Hugo*, another Best Picture nominee, has a lot of other nods to its credit, including one for its adapted screenplay by openly gay writer John Logan.

Even though it would've been fun to watch Madonna and Elton John diss each other on the red carpet, as they did at the Golden Globes, anticipate clips of Michael Fassbender's fron-

tal assets in *Shame* or listen to bisexual singer Sinead O'Connor warble the year's most gorgeous song from a movie ("Lay Down Your Head" from Albert Nobbs), this year's Oscar telecast still offers a lot of memorable moments for armchair wisecrackers—who will have their work cut out for them in the absence of Vilanch.

There's always next year.

### Film note:

—The **2012 Peace on Earth Film Festival**—which showcases a collection of films focusing on "nonviolence, tolerance and social justice"—takes place Thursday, Feb. 23-Sunday, Feb. 26, at the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., in the Claudia Cassidy Theater. All screenings are free and open to the public.

The line-up includes a bevy of shorts and feature-length documentaries including two that will be of particular interest to the queer community, both showing back to back Saturday, Feb. 25. The first of the duo, shown at 6:45 p.m., is director Charlie Gage's 2009 gritty, impassioned *Inspired: The Voices Against Prop 8*. Featuring a lot of man-on-the-street, handheld footage and one-on-one interviews, Gage's movie takes the viewer into the trenches as the campaign to stop Prop 8 was happening in California. Utilizing

### Houston's funeral held in N.J. church

A funeral for superstar Whitney Houston was held Feb. 18—a week after her untimely death—at the New Hope Baptist Church in her hometown of Newark, N.J.

The church called the event—which had more of a celebratory than a somber tone—a "home going" ceremony.

Three police officers escorted Houston's silver casket, which was draped with white roses and purple lilies, according to CBS News. Gov. Chris Christie, who attended the ceremony, had ordered flags flown at half-staff Feb. 18 for Houston.

One news camera was allowed to record the proceedings. Houston's cousin, singer Dionne Warwick, presided over the event.

Filmmaker Tyler Perry noted Houston's "grace that kept on carrying her all the way through, the same grace led her all the way to the top of the charts. She sang for presidents."

Kevin Costner, Houston's co-star in the blockbuster movie *The Bodyguard*, said, "Whitney if you can hear me now, you weren't just good enough—you were great."

Among the celebrities who attended were Jennifer Hudson, Chaka Khan, Brandy, Jordyn Sparks, Oprah Winfrey, Mary J. Blige, Mariah Carey, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Roberta Flack and Houston's mentor, Clive Davis. Aretha Franklin, a close family friend (not Houston's godmother, as widely reported), was slated to sing at the ceremony, but was reportedly too ill to attend.

Bobby Brown, Houston's ex-husband, walked out after a dispute over seating arrangements, according to CNN.com. In a statement, he said, in part, "We were seated by security and then subsequently asked to move on three separate occasions. ... In light of the events, I gave a kiss to the casket of my ex-wife and departed as I refused to create a scene."

Stevie Wonder performed his hit "Ribbon in the Sky," one of Houston's favorite songs by him; he altered the lyrics to honor her. He also sang "Love's In Need of Love." R. Kelly, CeCe Winans and Alicia Keys also performed.

Houston was laid to rest Feb. 19 in Westfield, N.J. She was buried next to her father.

### Daughter with drugs?

According to *The Daily Beast*, Houston's daughter, Bobbi Kristina Houston Brown, was

reportedly found using drugs hours after her mother's funeral. Several hours after the funeral, a source said Bobbi Kristina was located at a hotel "getting high." However, a family spokesperson denied the claim, adding, "There was some confusion about Bobbi Kristina's whereabouts [Feb. 18] for a short time, but she's OK. She needed some time alone. She is going through a very hard time, as you can expect."

Houston's godmother, singer Darlene Love, also denied the report, saying on *Today* Feb. 20 that Bobbi Kristina "was with the family the whole time."

### Australian actress Szubanski comes out

Australian comic actress Magda Szubanski came out of the closet while on one of that country's news shows, *The Project*, according to *The Age*.

She showed up on the show to express her support for marriage equality. Szubanski, 50, also said, "I absolutely identify as gay and for a very long time have." However, regarding her sexuality, she added a more complex take: "I would say I am gay-gay-gay-gay-gay—a little bit not gay-gay-gay-gay."

She has been overwhelmed by the public's response, according to ABC Melbourne. "I'm blown away actually because you never know how these things are going to go," she said. "I'm very grateful for the amazing relationship I have with the Australian public."

Szubanski has been in both *Happy Feet* movies, the movie *The Golden Compass*, both *Babe* films, and the *Kath & Kim* TV series; she is also in *The Kath & Kim Film*, currently in post-production, according to IMDB.com.

### March 2 showing to benefit AFC

There will be a screening of the film *Being Flynn* (starring Robert DeNiro and Julianne Moore) Friday, March 2, at the ShowPlace ICON Theatre, 150 W. Roosevelt Rd., at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$20 each, with proceeds benefiting the AIDS Foundation of Chicago's 100K Campaign Housing Program. See [www.FlynnBenefitChicago.com](http://www.FlynnBenefitChicago.com). For more on the program, visit [www.aidschicago.org/housing](http://www.aidschicago.org/housing).

NUNN ON ONE

# Lily Tomlin: On performing and Meryl Streep



BY JERRY NUNN

For decades Lily Tomlin has kept audiences rolling in the aisles. From Laugh-in on television to movies with Meryl Streep such as a Prairie Home Companion, this multi-talented performer always brings her characters to life.

Her roles on such shows as Damages and NCIS have continued to entertain a whole new generation of TV watchers.

Tomlin packs up her characters and heads to Skokie for two shows and we caught up to her to see what's spinning in her universe.

**Windy City Times:** Hi, Lily. So how are you?

Lily Tomlin: Good, good.

**WCT:** I'm excited to see you back in town.

LT: The last time I was there was for the benefit for Center on Halsted. Is Skokie that close to Chicago?

**WCT:** Not too far, just north of the city. I thought I would bring you some Garrett's popcorn, something very Chicago.

LT: [Laughs] That's a good idea. But what if it spills in your lap during the show?

**WCT:** If I jump up from excitement then it definitely would.

LT: You might leap out of your seat and it



Lily Tomlin as Ernestine.

would spill out. I would have fun with that from the stage with popcorn flying through the air! No, just bring yourself.

**WCT:** You have two shows and run around a lot onstage. I don't know how you do it.

LT: I usually do a few dates and try to concentrate them. I will go out, do a few dates in one place, then come home. I didn't go out any of December, half of January, any of summer. I fit it around other stuff. I like to do certain pockets of it. It keeps my hand in. I love to work on the stage most of all.

**WCT:** I have seen you in action a few times!

LT: [Laughs] I like the immediacy of it. My partner Jane always says, "You probably like to perform because it is the only part of the day that you are in the present."

**WCT:** I was wondering how she handles you always having to leave town.

LT: She has nothing to handle, really. She just says, "Goodbye, I will see you soon!"

**WCT:** Will you be performing some of your characters for us?

LT: Oh yeah, sure. I always do 10 or 12 characters. Then I will talk about Skokie and spaceship Earth.

**WCT:** Are there any politics this time?

LT: I always do socially topical stuff. Unless I change something, Ernestine will still be working at the Healthcare Insurance Corp denying health care. That is still timely. Something has got to change so humans don't have to worry about getting sick.

**WCT:** Very true. I went to Canada recently and it is a different story there. So, how do you feel about Meryl winning this Oscar?

LT: I imagine she will, although people have started taking her for granted, she is so out of sight. She ought to win. She has had [17] nominations with only two wins. One of those was for supporting actress on an early film, Kramer vs. Kramer. [Editor's note: The other Oscar was for Best Actress for Sophie's Choice.] She is Miss Divine. Bette has to move over so she can take it. The Divine Miss S!

**WCT:** I love it.

LT: I read her notices and critics are having a hard time finding a word to describe her. In [The Devil Wears] Prada, they couldn't come up with enough superlatives for her. I can't even think of a word. Any work you say sounds like a cliché. She's phenomenal, astounding, and dazzling. Also, Roy, her makeup artist, who has been with her for years did the makeup in Iron Lady and I think it is profound. It was impeccable. Have you seen any aging makeup that good?

**WCT:** It has gotten better over the years, in general.

LT: When you go to a Writers Guild screening here in Hollywood where people are aging everybody starts hooting and laughing. It is so hard on film to do good aging. Her makeup was incredible in her last stage. Meryl is unbelievable.

**WCT:** Joan Rivers wanted me to give you her best.

LT: Aw, did she? Joanie and I really go way back, even to the mid-to-late '60s.

**WCT:** She said even before you were both famous.

LT: Yes, she got famous way earlier than I did. She was such a sensation on Carson and everything. I was in a review where I played upstairs and she would perform downstairs, this is in New York, I would stand in the stairwell and just listen to her. She was just audacious, outrageous and misbehaves.



Lily Tomlin. Photo by Greg Gorman

**WCT:** She does! [Laughs]

LT: Jerry, when I am lucky enough to get a little riff going with her, she has me laughing. She tickles me. I know her heart and we had a lot of time together in our past. She touches me always.

**WCT:** You get a shout-out in her reality show.

LT: I just heard about that and I wrote her after. Melissa said, "Oh, is she back?" [Both laugh.]

**WCT:** Would you ever want to do a reality show?

LT: I will tell you about 15 years ago for CBS I developed a show that was basically a reality show. I was going to build the set like my house. Everyone was going to wear a spy camera in the show except me, including the animals and everything. Anything that got shot at home could cut into the show. If a critic insulted me, then I called the critic and confronted them. I never could get it done. I think it would have been terrific with all of my characters appearing in mirrors behind me. Ernestine was always berating me and telling me what was wrong with me.

**WCT:** Sounds funny. What are you working on for the rest of this year?

LT: We are still going around with Web Therapy. Do you ever watch that?

**WCT:** I have.

LT: Showtime picked it up last year and did 10 episodes. They filmed some extra footage after that deal to fill out the story. They shot with me, and Victor Garber, who is really off the wall. We have begun the second season. It has to go to the web first then Showtime because of the guilds and Internet. They sometimes don't know what to do with these different venues. I don't when they will ever figure it out. I have had great fun doing that show.

**WCT:** I like the humor in it.

LT: Also, we have developed some Edith Ann games that will be coming out soon. They are for children but grownups will like them too because they are skill tested. I love it because I adore Edith.

**WCT:** How do you like for people to keep up with you?

LT: I have had my website for about 15 years at [www.lilytomlin.com](http://www.lilytomlin.com). It is real kitschy and weird. I made it for hardcore fans. I have a new website coming out and the old one will just be an icon on it.

**If you love Lily, run to the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie, on Saturday, Feb. 25, with performances at 5 and 8 p.m. Visit [\*\*"PUCKING HILARIOUS"\*\* \*\*"HIGHLY RECOMMENDED"\*\*  
—CHICAGO THEATER BEAT —CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

\*\*A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM\*\*

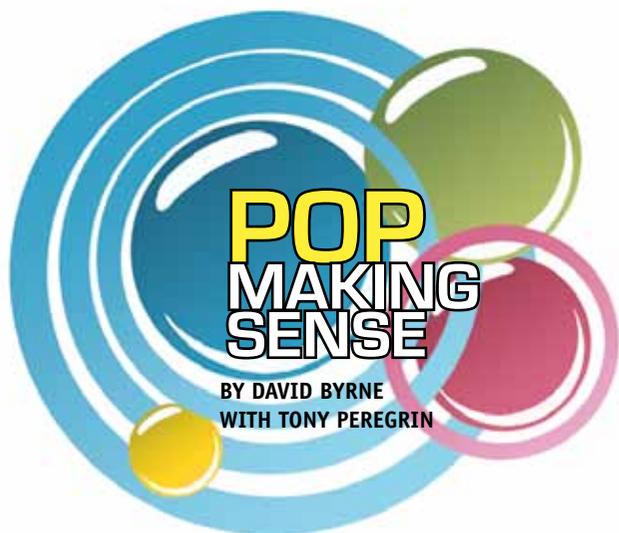
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When I hear a certain lyric or riff, I rack my brain to figure out what song is being sampled or referenced. The way **Kelly Clarkson** sings the line "You don't know a thing about me" on her kiss-off to the press, "Mr. Know It All," makes me immediately think of "Heart and Soul" by Huey Lewis and the News.

Clarkson's album, *Stronger*, also features the worthwhile pop ditties "Honestly" and "Standing in front of You." The chart-topper "Stronger (What Doesn't Kill You)" can be heard on an episode of *Suburgatory* and a

Toyota Camry commercial. Clarkson's latest has a longer-lasting flavor than her 2009 outing, *All I Ever Wanted*. The Ron Paul supporter comes to The Venue at Horseshoe Casino, 777 Casino Center, Hammond, Ind., on Saturday, March 10.

Universal love is celebrated on the **Richard Anthony** (Goberville) song "We Belong." The anthem is the backbone to a short film that tells the story of two gay youths and two retirees blossoming their respective relationships.

After remixing "Walking with a Ghost," "Back in Your Head" and "Alligator" for **Tegan and Sara, Morgan Page** teams with the queer Canadian twins on the new track "Body Work." Remixes are now available and the upbeat number will appear on Page's forthcoming full length album. Tegan and Sara also collaborated with Tiesto on "Feel It in My Bones." Page will spin at Enclave, 220 W. Chicago Ave., on Saturday, March 3.

Blues singer **Shemekia Copeland** issued her first retrospective, *Deluxe Edition*, earlier this



Left: Image of Shemekia Copeland by Larry Busacca. Right: Photo of Kelly Clarkson by Jemal Countess.



year. The set focuses on her material when she was signed to Alligator Records. Copeland has a mighty voice that adds a certain conviction on the sassy "Better Not Touch" and "Wild, Wild Woman." She shines brightly as the organ emphasizes her story on "Ghetto Child." Other slower jams, such as "Don't Whisper" and "Love Scene," emit emotion as the arrangements complement her vocal prowess perfectly. Check out 2000's *Wicked* for a bluesy take on "Steamy Windows," the Tina Turner hit from 1989's *Foreign Affair*.

Known for her stage presence, Copeland returns with a show at Space, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston, on Saturday, March 3.

**Bettye LaVette** can stamp a song with her aching voice and her signature delivery. At last year's United Negro College Fund's An Evening of Stars Tribute to Chaka Khan, LaVette sang "Love Me Still" with Herbie Hancock on piano. The pair stole the show and brought Khan to tears. LaVette's latest is *Interpretations: The British Songbook*, with her takes on classics like "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" and "Nights in White Satin." On Friday, Feb. 24, LaVette will perform at Old Town School of Folk Music, 4544 N. Lincoln Ave.

Some may say it is a gift, but it also is a curse.

In the singer-songwriter's clip to "Love Is the Power," he "gets a little help from his friends," as the teacher at Joliet Central has his students featured in the video. Both videos can be found on YouTube.

"We Belong" is from the new set *Love Is the Power*. "Stranger in My Bed" has a tasty guitar solo and traces of "Could It Be Magic" as he sings, "Now I see the light." Keyboards and a synthesizer's beat build a strong groove on the standout "The Meaning." "Free" possesses a beautiful melody recalling KC and the Sunshine Band's "Please Don't Go." *Love Is the Power* is out now on iTunes and CD Baby.

In the wake of **Whitney Houston's** death on Feb. 11, Simon Cowell called into Piers Morgan Tonight and fittingly described the late songstress as "one of the greatest voices in our time we're likely ever to hear." The following Tuesday, Amber Riley performed a knockout version of the late diva's megahit "I Will Always Love You" on *Glee*. This is the best take on the power ballad since Leona Lewis nailed it on *X-Factor* in 2006.

When she was at her prime, Houston crossed over into film with *The Bodyguard*. Its soundtrack sold more than 13 million units. In recent years, her once-flawless voice took a turn for the worse, famously noted on her panned tour to support

the comeback effort, *I Look to You*. During her successful career, Houston topped the pop, R&B and dance charts on multiple occasions and won multiple awards, including six Grammys.

Although she is known for love songs like "Greatest Love of All" and "All the Man I Need," Houston scored several hits on the dance charts. Her best remix is Jonathan Peters' reworking of "My Love Is Your Love," although the Thunderpuss club mix of "It's Not Right But It's Okay" might be her best remembered.

In 1992, when Houston released "I Will Always Love You," there was concern that radio would not embrace a broken-hearted love song, which is a *cappella* for the first 43 seconds. The worldwide smash went to reign at the pole position on the pop charts for 14 weeks.

No other siren who could deliver "The Star-

## '8' the Play in Rock Island July 6

The District Theatre, 1611 2nd Ave., Rock Island, will present a reading of *8*, a new play chronicling the historic trial in the federal legal challenge to California's Proposition 8.

Written by Academy-Award winning writer Dustin Lance Black, *8* will make its area premiere in an exclusive, one-night-only event Friday, July 6, at 8 p.m. A portion of the proceeds from this event will benefit the American Foundation for Equal Rights (AFER).

The District Theatre's Tristan Layne Tapscott emailed Windy City Times about how the event came about: "I just read the Playbill article and jumped on the opportunity. It is a terrific opportunity to support a good cause ... and it is an excellent way to raise awareness in my community and gain some national attention.

"Any producer ... should be on this."

The national website for *8* is [www.8theplay.com](http://www.8theplay.com).

AFER and Broadway Impact have announced the full cast for the West Coast premiere of *8*, according to a press release. The cast includes Kevin Bacon, George Clooney, *Glee's* Chris Colfer, George Takei, Jane Lynch, Matthew Morrison, Rob Reiner, Jamie Lee Curtis, Martin Sheen, Matt Bomer and many more. The production—penned by Oscar-winning screenwriter and AFER founding board member Dustin Lance Black—will premiere at Los Angeles' Wilshire Ebell Theatre March 3.

Tickets are \$25 each for the Rock Island production; email [tristan@districttheatre.com](mailto:tristan@districttheatre.com), visit [www.DistrictTheatre.com](http://www.DistrictTheatre.com) or call 309-235-1654.

—Andrew Davis

## 'Woke Up Black' screening Feb. 27

Filmmaker and activist Mary Morten's documentary, *Woke Up Black*, will screen at Loyola University Chicago's Water Tower Campus Monday, Feb. 27, at 3 p.m.

*Woke Up Black* focuses on five Black youths, along with their struggles and triumphs as they start their journey into adulthood. 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 two years, Morten and associate producers Keisha Farmer-Smith, Aparna Sharma, and Marisol Ybarra followed five youth from the Chicago area to explore their experiences when it comes to navigating the world they live in. As they move through their personal challenges this documentary also mirrors the complexities of this often ignored group that are at the center of many sociopolitical issues, including discrimination, political participation, sex and relationships, music and the media's portrayal of Black youth.

For more information, go to [www.wokeupblack.com](http://www.wokeupblack.com).

Spangled Banner" like Houston did in 1991, making it a top 20 hit upon its initial release, then sending it to the top 10 after 9/11.

Houston and her ex-husband, Bobby Brown, had a very public battle with drugs and alcohol, as witnessed on the short-lived reality show *Being Bobby Brown*. She became the target of jokes in many outlets like *Saturday Night Live*, *MADtv* and *In Living Color*. Kathy Griffin recently said she would tone down her jabs at Houston. Even a sock-puppet rendition of her startling interview with Diane Sawyer went viral and DJs sampled dialogue from this piece, as Houston repeated "Crack is wack." The late icon also denied rumors about her sexuality.

Houston will appear in the movie remake of *Sparkle* and have two new songs on the soundtrack, both due in August.

black.com or email [mary@wokeupblack.com](mailto:mary@wokeupblack.com). Follow on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/wokeupblack](http://www.facebook.com/wokeupblack), or at [@wokeupblackdoc](https://twitter.com/wokeupblackdoc) on Twitter.

## Madonna adds second Chicago show in Sept.; WCMG running contest

Fresh off her Super Bowl halftime performance, Madonna is embarking on a world tour that begins May 29 in Tel Aviv, Israel, and wraps Nov. 17 in Atlanta. The tour is to support her new CD, *MDNA*.

The shows will include arenas, stadiums and special outdoor sights, including the Plains of Abraham in Quebec and a return visit to South America. She's also putting on shows in Australia, where she has not performed in 20 years.

She has added a second show to her Chicago stop; Madonna will now perform Sept. 19-20 at the United Center. Tickets are available at [www.LiveNation.com](http://www.LiveNation.com) and [www.Ticketmaster.com](http://www.Ticketmaster.com); at select Live Nation and Ticketmaster retail outlets; and at 800-745-3000.

In connection with the show, Windy City Media Group is running a contest for a pair of tickets. Enter to win the tickets by sending an email with "MADONNA" in the subject line to [click2win@hotmail.com](mailto:click2win@hotmail.com), or clicking "Like" at [www.Facebook.com/WindyCityMediaGroup](http://www.Facebook.com/WindyCityMediaGroup) by Monday, March 12.

## Center's Oscar party Feb. 26

Center on Halsted's 2012 "On the Red Carpet" Oscar party will move venues, taking place at the Park West, 322 W. Armitage Ave., on Sunday, Feb. 26, at 6 p.m.

There will be a silent auction and raffle prizes; cocktails and buffet dinner; a predict-the-winner contest; champagne service; and, of course, the live Academy Awards telecast.

Tickets are \$30-\$125 each. See [www.centeronhalsted.org/oscars.html](http://www.centeronhalsted.org/oscars.html).

## Concert to feature Lady Gaga's music

Loud LLC, a Chicagoland entertainment and concert production company, will present the country's first live concert experience and full-scale production dedicated to the music of Lady Gaga.

"Bad Romance" will take place March 16 at the Copernicus Theater, 5216 W. Lawrence Ave. It will feature musicians and dancers in a sound-and-light concert experience with music, theatrics and energy.

Doors open at 7 p.m., and the production begins at 8 p.m. Ticket prices are \$20-\$35; visit [www.badromanceshow.com](http://www.badromanceshow.com).

## NUNN ON ONE: MUSIC

# Chaka Khan: She's every woman



Chaka Khan. Photo courtesy of Mona Elyafi

BY JERRY NUNN

Funk singer Chaka Khan was born and raised on Chicago's South Side before joining the band Rufus. The group broke through with hit "Tell Me Something Good" and became a platinum-selling act. Afterwards, her solo career took off with such hits as "I Feel for You" and "Through the Fire." She has won 10 Grammy Awards, sold more than 200 million records worldwide and was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame last year along with earning a spot on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

The "Queen of Funk" is bringing her act to one of the biggest female events in the country. In an email interview, I asked her about it and how she is every woman.

**Windy City Times:** Hello, Chaka. I just heard about you performing at this event. Past performers have included The Pussy Cat Dolls, Katy Perry and Lady Gaga. How does it feel to be headlining the biggest lesbian event in the world?

Chaka Khan: It's fabulous. My gay and lesbian fans have always been there for me. They are my most loyal. I know we're going to have a wonderful time!

**WCT:** What can audiences expect from the show?

CK: I promise them an awesome show!

**WCT:** "I'm Every Woman" is certainly the song for The Dinah. The girls will go crazy! It seems like the perfect match with a women's-empowerment message.

CK: Indeed, that's what it's about. We are powerful, more than we know...

**WCT:** Countless numbers of drag queens have lip-synched to that song over the years, and you've performed at various Pride events. How does it feel to be a gay icon?

CK: It means a lot because gays will read you!

**WCT:** Do you have a girl crush? And if so, who is it?

CK: Not at the moment!

**WCT:** Of all the hits you have in your repertoire, do you have a favorite one?

CK: "Ain't Nobody."

**WCT:** You've received a nomination for induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

**Is that the ultimate career achievement for you?**

CK: My ultimate career achievement to date was working with Miles Davis. However, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame nomination was a huge honor.

**WCT:** You have worked with some great people like Miles and others like Stevie Wonder, Prince and Quincy Jones. What was your thought when you first heard the now iconic "Chaka Khan" rap by Mel Melle on "I Feel for You?"

CK: I was embarrassed!

**WCT:** You recently performed in Chicago. How was it going back to your hometown?

CK: I always love going home. They always welcome me so warmly.

**WCT:** Your De La Soul duet was amazing, and so was your recent VH1 Divas Live performance with Mary J. Blige. Is there a current rapper or pop artist you would like to collaborate with?

CK: Amy Winehouse was my choice.

**WCT:** Do you think it's easier or harder for fans to find performers they like in the Internet age?

CK: Modern technology has changed so much in so many industries. Ultimately, I believe that it helps because it allows greater access, both faster and more direct. I enjoy doing live chats with my "friends."

**WCT:** The Chaka Khan Foundation provides help and education to children and young adults who are victims of domestic violence, substance abuse and autism. Please tell us why creating this foundation was so close to your heart.

CK: Because empowering the innocent is my passion and purpose. Children and women at risk are who we assist through The Chaka Khan Foundation.

**WCT:** What are your upcoming projects in 2012?

CK: Surprise! Stay tuned to [www.chakakhan.com](http://www.chakakhan.com).

**Go "Through the Fire," head to Palm Springs and escape this cold weather March 31. To purchase tickets and find more information at [www.thedinah.com](http://www.thedinah.com).**

## Out writer Andrew Jolivet on Obama and race

BY DAVID-ELIJAH NAHMOD

History was made a few short years ago, when Barack Obama became the first African American president in U.S. history. Though it's been mentioned, the fact that the president is actually half white hasn't gotten nearly as much attention.

There's no question that American demographics are changing rapidly. The Leave It To Beaver/Father Knows Best nuclear family is disappearing, and is being replaced by families that encompass all the colors of the rainbow.

In his new book, **Obama and the Biracial Factor** (The Policy Press), professor Andrew J. Jolivet of San Francisco State University offers a series of essays in which a variety of writers discuss the changing colors of the American landscape. The writers are all university academics, representing a variety of schools and ethnicities. Jolivet talked with Windy City Times about why he felt the book was needed, as well as his own status as a multicultural gay man.

**Windy City Times:** Can you tell us about the classes you teach at San Francisco State University?

AJ: I started teaching almost 12 years ago at the University of San Francisco. It was a people of mixed-descent class that focused on people who are multiracial. I was born and raised in San Francisco and moved to Oakland about eight years ago. For the past two years I've been chair of the American Indian Studies Department at San Francisco State University.

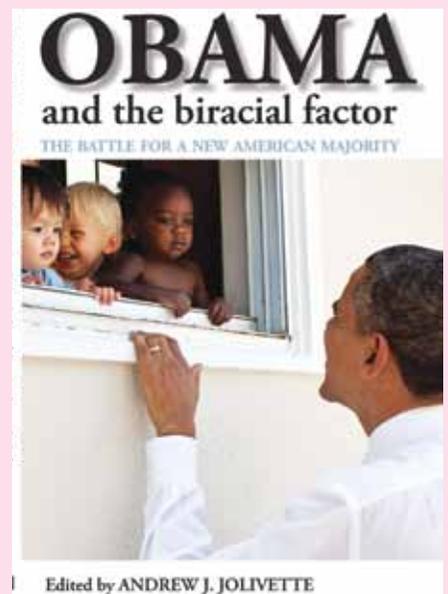
I've taught a lot of different classes over the years: Mixed Race Studies, People of Color and AIDS, American Indian Education, American Indian Religion and Philosophy, and Black Indians in the Americas. I suppose because of my training in sociology I am interested in many different social and behavior explanations for societal inequalities, especially for Native Americans, LGBT and communities of color.

**WCT:** And don't you also work with the LGBT History Museum in San Francisco?

AJ: I first involved with the museum as a volunteer many years ago, maybe around 2003. Then, in 2009, a colleague asked me to consider joining the board. After looking and programs I saw how important the work was in narrating the lives and histories of queer people of color in the Bay Area and nationally. I began my work on the board as a co-chair of the program committee, helping to organize film, and speaker series dealing with diversity and inclusion. For the past year and a half I've been co-chair of the board of directors. We are doing some really exciting work this year that will increase our visibility with the museum and the archives program.

**WCT:** Why do you think there's a need for this book?

AJ: My own background as a Louisiana Creole (French, American Indian--Opelousa and Atakpa, African and Spanish) has always had an impact on my identity. Growing up I wasn't sure where I fit in exactly in terms of race. My father is a Creole from the Southwest and my mother is African American and American Indian from Alabama and Indianapolis. People always tried to guess what my background was and I've heard just about everything from Egyptian and Cuban to East Indian. People from mixed backgrounds are often forced to move between different identities. In the case of Mr. Obama, I argue he knows how to navigate through many different com-



munities. He can relate to white Americans, Black Americans and many other groups because he's lived in so many different cultures. He has found a way to relate to people that helped him get elected.

**WCT:** In your opinion, how big a part does race play in the hostility towards President Obama from the Tea Party and Republicans?

AJ: You don't hear things like "food stamp president" or elected officials calling for the president's wife to be a widow, or having a Congressman calling the commander-in-chief a liar during a State of the Union address. Obama is trying to build a different type of ideology and American majority that includes LGBT folks, people from all walks of life, poor and working class, and so this is why we're battling for a new American majority. I think the irony of Conservative comments that say the president is using Politics of Envy or creating class warfare has been used over and over to scare people. Some candidates for the GOP nomination won't even refer to President Obama as President. It's always "Obama" or "this president." It's an indirect, passive aggressive approach to denying Mr. Obama's legitimacy.

**WCT:** When he was first elected, much was made of Obama being the first Black president. Do you have any insight as to why his biracial status hasn't gotten nearly as much attention?

AJ: Most of the country still argues that if you have any African or Black ancestry you will be seen and treated as Black. This is true only to a certain extent. In the book, I argue that being half white, being biracial, also shapes who he is as a person.

At the beginning of his first campaign his "Blackness" was heavily questioned: Was he "Black enough" or "too Black?" As some of the chapters in the book suggest, his private identity is more likely to be multiracial. As a mixed person you are always compromising, trying to fit in and find your place in the world. I think this is true also for LGBT communities. We have to learn to move through the Queer or Gay world, and the mainstream world. So mixed race and LGBT groups are both looking for a world where there is more acceptance. Obama as a biracial person is also looking for a society that is more equitable. His background, like all our backgrounds, does shape how we talk, how we relate and our values.

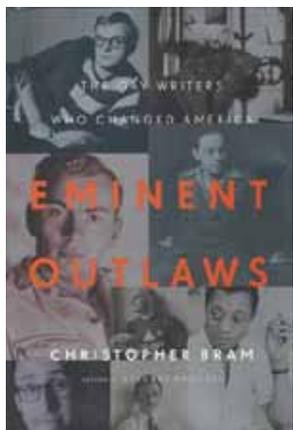
**Read the full interview with Jolivet online at [www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com](http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com).**

## BOOKS

## Between the covers

BY AMOS LASSEN

This month brings us a lot of good reads and diverse list as well. I know that I have already mentioned **Eminent Outlaws: The Gay Writers Who Changed America** (Twelve Publishers) by Christopher Bram but I must add that after reading it for a second time, it quickly found a place on my list of favorite books. It is a book that is so badly needed, and yet it is great fun.

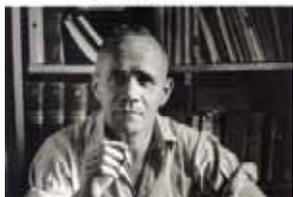


In a single volume, Bram presents our modern literary history without missing an author or a significant book—and he does so with great and readable style that makes it almost impossible to stop reading. We first learn that following World War II, a small group of gay writers formed a group of “power players” in the literary world (a world at that time that kept us closeted). These writers changed the rules by causing cultural changes that we would feel for a long time afterwards and that would forever change American literature. With the rise of our literature, we had the rise of a gay consciousness.



The Gay Reader's Annotated Bibliography

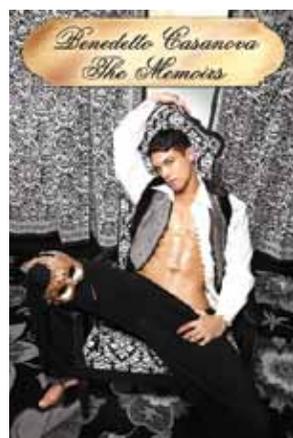
Roy Kirby Chaudoir



Roy Kirby Chaudoir has compiled **The Gay Reader's Annotated Bibliography** (Lulu) and it is also something that we have needed for a very long time: a bibliography of gay literature. This is not just a bibliography; it is more of an almanac of the gay written word and gives us a great deal of information about our literature. I cannot imagine the research involved in producing such a book and we all owe Roy Chaudoir a thank you.

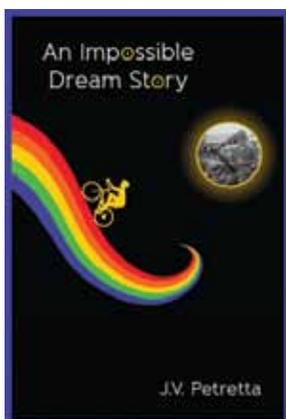
It is conveniently divided into categories—research, major tributaries, authors and references. As I browsed, I periodically checked out the entries and checked out other places where I could find similar information and was very pleasantly surprised to find that all I really needed about an author was here. However, you must realize that we are speaking of literature and not just gay writers.

At this point, you must think about what is literature and why an author is included here and another writer is not. We have Jean Genet, Edmund White, Andre Gide, Bruce Benderson, Andrew Holleran and many others but you will not find, say, Larry Kramer as a separate entry. We have extensive lists of gay authors and a history of gay literature as well as a list of the “Top 100 Gay Novels” (which means my work is cut out for me, although there are very few that I have not read). There are lists of the Lambda Literary and the Stonewall Literary award winners and an extensive bibliography or as I would say “Everything You Want to Know.” What I really like is the way the resource material is presented so that I know just where to go if I need to look something up.



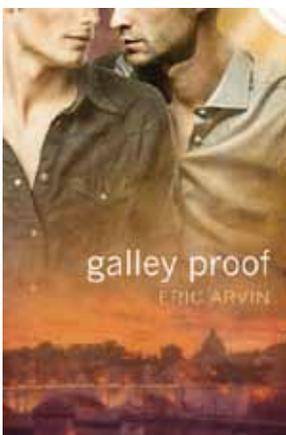
In fiction I must recommend one of the most beautifully written gay novels to come along is some time, **Benedetto Casanova: The Memoirs** by Martin Weber (Create Space). I have been hearing a great deal about it and my copy came a few days ago so I am now able to comment. This is one of those books that once you begin you cannot stop reading. I am sure many of us had no awareness that the famously infamous Casanova had a gay brother (and whether he really did or not is not important as this is a novel).

J.V. Petretta's **An Impossible Dream Story** (Dog Ear Publications) has us both laughing and weeping. With humor and passion, Petretta invites us to join a ride on a bicycle that will take us through life and by com-

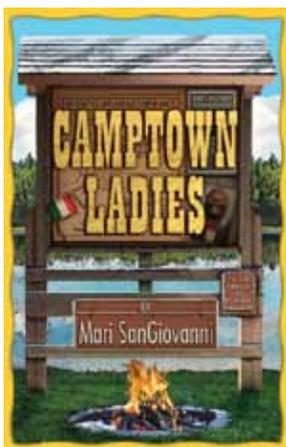


ing along we learn about the struggle for LGBT equality.

I have been a fan of Eric Arvin for about five years and I love that we can watch him mature as a writer as we read his work. In **Galley Proof** (Dreamspinner) we meet Logan Brandish, a successful

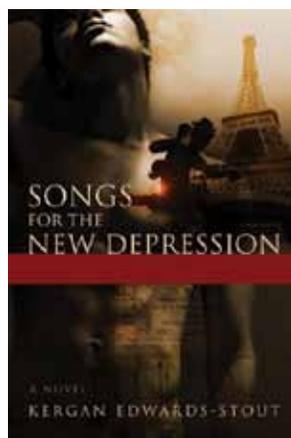


writer who finds himself in a rut as he realizes that he is stuck and cannot seem to think of something new to write about. He has been going from editor to editor trying to find his way back into writing but it was not until he met Brock Kimble that he felt a change. Kimble is not only good-looking but he is smart as well, and he holds nothing back as he begins to show Logan what he needs to do. Brock flirts with Logan and tells him that his writing is no good thereby challenging him to write more and better.

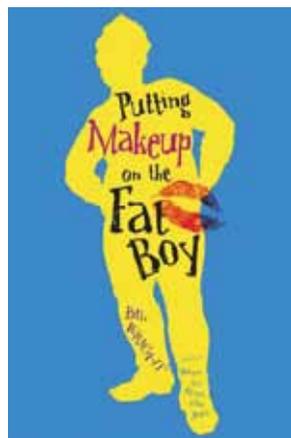


Mari SanGiovanni's **CampTown Ladies** (Bywater Books) has to be one of the best reads I have had since Sally Belle-rose's *The Girl's Club* and that is saying quite a mouthful. I am often asked how I approach lesbian literature be-

ing that I am a man, and here is where I have to tip my hat to a graduate course in feminist literary criticism, where I learned that men and women read differently and in order to truly enjoy writing by women, I would have to learn to read as a woman. Marie Santora is nursing a broken heart and uses her family as a way to forget. And what a family! If you know Italians then you know what I mean but above all there is great love in the Santora clan. Coming home for solace and rebuilding, she finds her sister, Lisa, has other plans for her besides finding vaginas in almost everything. Lisa wants to take a “rundown” campground and turn it into a gay and lesbian “paradise” with a five-star restaurant. You will have a very funny read and, in fact, I am still laughing.



Kergan Stout Edwards' **Songs for the New Depression** (Circumspect Press) is interesting in that we all face periods where we just want everything to be finished and then we realize that life is meant to be lived and enjoyed even with the trials we face. Gabriel Travers is one such person—it is in his head that death is coming soon even though his doctor tells him that he is doing okay. Gabe does not like what he sees in the mirror and thinks that his best days are gone. When he was younger, he had the world at his feet. Everything was wonderful until he tried to make it matter and things went terribly wrong.

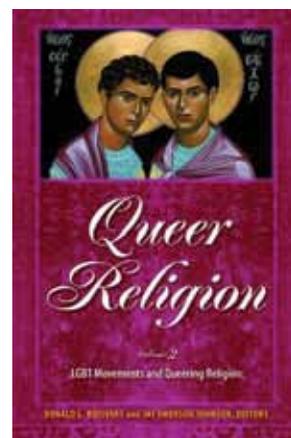


One of the books that is making a lot of noise this year is Bil Wright's **Putting Makeup on the Fat Boy**, and it has just won this year's Stonewall Award. The story is about

Carlos Duarte, a high school student who is a whiz about makeup. He has a great sense of style and gets the job of his dreams at Macy's as makeup artist at the FeatureFace counter. He soon discovers the competitiveness in the world of makeup and he sees that if he wants to succeed, he must really believe in himself.



Joy Ladin's **Through the Door of Life: A Jewish Journey between Genders** (University of Wisconsin Press) is an amazing read by a wonderful writer. Professor Jay Ladin was teaching literature at Yeshiva University and had done so for years. When he came to campus as a woman, headlines went up around the world not so much because of the change of gender but because the university, which is Jewish and Orthodox, allowed her to stay on. Jay was now Joy and a new door opened which allowed us to embrace that part of our community that was usually marginalized. In this autobiography, Ladin takes us along as she is transitioning and changing genders and creating an entirely new person.



One of the more important publications is **Queer Religion**, edited by Donald Boisvert and Jay E Johnson (Praeger) that examines where religion and same-sex desire come together from St. Augustine to the present, and does so by presenting two volumes of diverse essays. We see that

religion can be compatible with queer culture and we learn that homosexuality and spirituality have existed side by side throughout history.



Robert Walker is a dynamic young poet who tells us in his book, **the buoyancy of it all**, that he is really only good at three things: writing, making things up and performing fellatio. I, however, did not have the chance to get him to prove either of the last two to me when I met him at Saints and Sinners Literary Festival so I can't say anything about his making things up or performing oral sex, but I can unequivocally say that he is not only good but brilliant at writing. I am a somewhat emotional person but it takes a good deal to make my eyes tear when I read. Robert Walker had me weeping with his absolutely gorgeous poetry. He does things with language that are just amazing.



Finally, and not least, is Alan Kessler's **A Satan Carol** (Wild Child Publishing). In it he reminds us that evil still exists in the world by giving us a disgruntled Satan who feels that the world has neglected him and that those things that gave him license to work are no longer important. Heresy is a thing of the past and Satan really just gets blamed for death and disease. Think about it—did we blame Satan for 9/11 or for Katrina?

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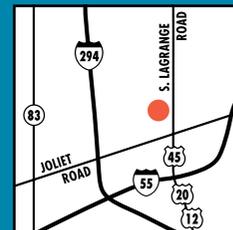
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# LGBT employees not recognized at some auto manufacturers

BY RICHARD READ, GAYWHEELS.COM

Hyundai, Kia, Porsche and Suzuki offer no protections or benefits for their LGBT employees.

There are two ways of looking at that.

On the one hand, you could say that of the 37 car companies Gaywheels has surveyed, a whopping 33 are gay-friendly (at least to some degree).

Considering that most of those automakers have added pro-LGBT policies within the past decade, that's swift progress. Only four lagging behind? Not so shabby.

On the other hand, you could also say that in this day and age—when every single firm on Fortune's list of best companies to work for has a non-discrimination policy to protect its LGBT employees—it is appalling that any automaker remains so clueless.

We can appreciate both arguments, depending on our mood and caffeine levels.

In an effort to keep Gaywheels' list of gay-friendly automakers up to date, we've contacted Hyundai, Kia, Porsche, and Suzuki to see what steps—if any—they're taking to make their companies more LGBT-friendly. During the 2012 Detroit Auto Show, we even followed up with

three of those companies in person. Here's what we learned.

## Hyundai/Kia: Still not gay-friendly

We've reached out to Hyundai/Kia on several occasions, asking for updates on their LGBT employment policies. To date, our calls and emails have been ignored. In Detroit, on our first visit to the Hyundai/Kia booth, we were told that no one on-site could respond to our queries, but if we stopped by later in the day, they'd have some answers. We did. They didn't.

Hyundai's website isn't any more helpful or encouraging. Under "diversity," the company says one of its goals is "To hire and retain an executive management and employee staff based on equal participation and opportunity for all, regardless of race, gender, age, national origin, religion or any other legally protected characteristic [emphasis ours]." Sigh.

That said, we would be very, very surprised if Hyundai/Kia didn't get on the LGBT equality train very, very quickly. The sisters from South Korea are working overtime to grow market share in the United States, and if they want to do that, they're going to need to maintain a workforce that is as diverse and creative as the ones

managed by competitors like Toyota, Honda, and Detroit's Big Three. Hyundai/Kia won't add LGBT protections because it's "the right thing to do"; they'll do it because they need the talent of LGBT employees and the bucks of LGBT customers.

Want to make your voice heard? Send a note to Hyundai at [consumeraffairs@hmausa.com](mailto:consumeraffairs@hmausa.com) (Kia doesn't make it that easy), or call 800-633-5151 (Hyundai) and 800-333-4542 (Kia).

## Porsche: Still not gay-friendly

When we stopped by the Porsche booth at the Detroit Auto Show, the front desk attendants were all smiles. "Is there someone we could talk to about Porsche's policies toward its LGBT employees?" we asked. One happily went off in search of an appropriate staffer.

The PR rep who came out to meet us, however, was definitely not eager to chat. In a nutshell, her response was a curt, "We don't comment on internal policies"—a response she repeated several times. She was kind of like the bouncer at a nightclub telling an intoxicated patron, "I'm sorry, sir, but I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

We left all right, and much like that drunk, we were not happy about it.

After we'd calmed down a bit, we tried to give the rep the benefit of the doubt. The auto show is a hectic place, after all—maybe she'd just had a bad day. We followed up with her a couple of weeks ago to see if she'd be willing to elaborate. Not surprisingly, we were ignored.

However, despite her reluctance to comment on personnel policies, our PR rep and the rest of the Porsche team will likely be dragged kicking and screaming into the era of LGBT equality—and soon. There's no question that Porsche suffers from a bad case of elitism, but that's the very attitude that got Porsche in trouble when it recently tried to take over sister company, Volkswagen. Now that VW is running the show, rumor has it that Porsche has begun a slow process of

adding LGBT protections, bringing it in line with VW, which landed an impressive score on HRC's 2012 Corporate Equality Index.

Want to make your voice heard? Porsche has practically no contact information on its website, but you could try reaching out to Nick Twork, Product Communications Manager, at [nick.twork@porsche.us](mailto:nick.twork@porsche.us) or 678-323-6975. (He's not the right person to hear your grievances, but he's listed on recent press releases—better than nothing.) We'd give you the email address of the PR rep we spoke to in Detroit, but that would probably be an exercise in futility—and frustration.

## Suzuki: Still not gay-friendly

As with Hyundai/Kia and Porsche, our queries to Suzuki have gone unanswered, and the company was a no-show in Detroit. Short of sending a letter by registered mail, we don't know what else to do.

But whatever. Rumor has it that Suzuki isn't long for the western world, anyway. The Kizashi helped improve the brand's standing a bit, but it has its share of critics, too. (We'd add that if you're trying to draw attention to your car company with a halo model, betting the farm on a mid-size sedan may not be the way to go.) We wouldn't be surprised if Suzuki packed up its toys and went home in a couple of years.

Want to make your voice heard? Given the lack of email addresses on Suzuki contact page, we're guessing the company doesn't like to communicate that way. (Which might explain why our emails have gone unanswered.) If you feel passionately about Suzuki and want to see it stick around, try calling 800-934-0934.

But what if you love the Hyundai Santa Fe? What if you can't live without a Porsche 911? Next week, we'll talk more about these four not-so-gay-friendly brands and what to do if you're bound and determined to buy a car from one of them.

See more at [www.Gaywheels.com](http://www.Gaywheels.com).



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## WEEKLY DINING GUIDE IN WINDY CITY TIMES



BY MEGHAN STREIT

### I Monelli Trattoria Pizzeria

If you were driving through the north end of Lincoln Square, you might miss I Monelli, a small Italian restaurant housed in an unremarkable building on Western Avenue. But, I'm here to tell you to slow down, park your car, and go in for a memorable meal.

First, grab a bottle of wine from the liquor store across the street because I Monelli is BYOB. I chose an affordable Chianti on my visit, and it paired nicely with the simple Southern Italian cuisine.

I Monelli's interior is simple. No more than 15



Above: I Monelli's gnocchi alla rustica. Lower right: Potato rosemary pizza. Photos by Meghan Streit

tables are covered with checkered cloths; daily specials are handwritten on a chalkboard; and the staff who greet you are warm and genuine. It's the kind of true Chicago joint that I think makes this city so special—the ones that get little fanfare, but churn out truly fantastic food night after night for loyal customers who probably live right in the neighborhood. It's the kind of place you can go back to again and again and enjoy every time.

I started with an appetizer of fried balls of risotto and cheese, which sounded basically like one of my wildest dreams come true. They were tasty, but not flavorful enough that I'd waste the calories next time. Fortunately, it was all uphill from there.

I have a weak spot for gnocchi. My absolute favorite in the city comes from the kitchen at Pizza Rustica, which serves the most impossibly tender gnocchi I've ever eaten. No other gnocchi can compare to Pizza Rustica's, in my view. So, the gnocchi at I Monelli had a very tough act to follow when I ordered it. I will say it comes in a very close second to Pizza Rustica's gnocchi, which is a compliment of the highest order, coming from me. It's soft and doughy, cooked just right and drenched in a hearty tomato sauce

with a dash of cream.

The Orecchiette con Spinaci was also a delicious surprise among I Monelli's pasta offerings. The al dente shells are drizzled in olive oil, and mixed with spinach and a healthy amount of garlic. It's kind of like a grown-up version of noodles with butter—simple and satisfying.

The pizza at I Monelli is the star of the show, so don't leave without sampling one (or three). Pizzas are sold by the quarter, half or whole. Even the quarter is quite large, and enough for two people to share if you're also having pastas and/or meat and fish. The potato rosemary pizza is really tasty, with thin slices of potato smothered in bubbly mozzarella and speckled with plenty of fresh rosemary. The crispy crust is brushed with olive oil for the perfect finish.

I had heard from a reliable source that the eponymous I Monelli pizza was the best on the menu, so, naturally, I sampled that one as well. This busy pizza is topped with chopped pepperoni, bits of sausage, sautéed onions and your choice of green pepper or jalapeño. When it arrived at my table, my first reaction was that it looked startlingly like a frozen Totino's supreme pizza. However, I can happily report that the I Monelli pizza tastes nothing like a mass-pro-

duced frozen version. It's got the same perfectly baked crispy crust as the potato rosemary pizza, and with all those tasty toppings, it really bursts with flavor. Don't be surprised if you find yourself vying for the last slice.

The dessert menu has all of the classic Italian staples like panna cotta, cannoli and gelato. Sadly, the profiteroles were sold out the night I was there, which I'll take as a testament to their quality. So, I opted for the tiramisu instead. It was creamy, not too sweet, and served in a cute little cup. The portion size is mercifully small, just enough to satisfy a sweet tooth at the end of a filling meal.

I learned the night of my visit that I Monelli was scheduled to be featured on Check Please!, so you can expect wait times for a table at this tiny pizzeria to be longer for a while, as the rest of the city comes to check out one of Lincoln Square's best (previously hidden) gems.



I Monelli is located at 5019 N. Western Ave.; call 773-561-8499 or visit [www.imonelli.info](http://www.imonelli.info).

Do you need some more Sugar & Spice in your life? Follow me on Twitter: @SugarAndSpiceMS – for inside scoop and commentary on Chicago's dining scene.

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## Meeting an icon

Deerfield, Ill., resident Marilyn Keller, a long-time member of PFLAG, was in Washington, D.C., Feb. 14 to see The Kinsey Six, which includes her son Irwin Keller, a former Chicagoan. She is pictured here with Candace Gingrich-Jones of the Human Rights Campaign after the performance of "Electile Dysfunction: Kinsey Sicks for President." Courtesy of Irwin Keller



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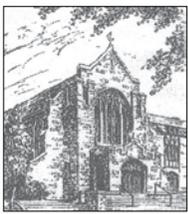
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As you can see, **Diego** is a very handsome fellow. But what you can't see is what a sweet, cuddly and lovable guy he is! Diego is 8 years old and is a sharp-looking brown tabby who has the greenest of eyes. He's a good-sized fellow and is one big lover boy who is sure to love nothing more than hanging out with his favorite human giving and getting lots of love. He's laid-back, gentle, and quite simply, one very cool cat.

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# Celebrations

Share your special moments with the community in Windy City Times' new announcement section!



## ANNIVERSARY: Robles/Culver

Joy Culver and Patricia Robles (right) celebrated their 11-year anniversary on Valentine's Day. They met through the Windy City Times personal ads in 2001. They became pen pals and wrote letters to one another for a few months before actually meeting. In 2006, they founded the Windy City Animal Foundation, a non-profit 501c3 animal rescue for cats and dogs, which was also inspired by Windy City Times. Photo courtesy of the couple

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# calendar

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## Wed., Feb. 22

**GL Chamber Weekly Wednesday Lunch Networking Group** Picking members to start our new networking group. \$10 cash at door. RSVP and apply online. 11:30am, Chicago Area Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce HQ, 3179 N. Clark St., www.glchamber.org

**11th Annual Freedom to Marry Reception** The annual reception is one of many ways to engage the LGBT community, allies, and our families and friends to discuss the importance of marriage equality. RSVP ryadira@lambdalegal.org; 6:30pm-9:30pm, National Museum of Mexican Art

**Legal Seminar: Consumer bankruptcy primer** Everything you were afraid to ask, brought to you by the offices of Wheeler & Patel, LLP and Center on Halsted. Preregistration required, free event. RSVP to legal@centeronhalsted.org stating specific event. 6:30pm-8pm, 773.472.6469ext.436., Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted St., www.centeronhalsted.org

**Unnecessary Farce** Don't miss the Chicago Premiere of Paul Slade Smith's side-splitting and bawdy comedy Unnecessary Farce directed by Alison C. Vesely. Unnecessary Farce runs through March 4. 8pm-10pm, 630-986-8067, First Folio Theatre, 31st St. & Rt. 83, Oakbrook, www.firstfolio.org

## Thursday, Feb. 23

**Male Inclusion in Reproductive Justice** Join the staff from the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health for an informational session (bring a bagged lunch) on how to include male-identified persons in our Reproductive Justice Work. RSVP Vivian

## FUN & JAMES Thursday, Feb. 23

**Ald. James Cappleman will hold a reception for his run as Democratic committeeman at the Highball Lounge, 738 N. Clark St.**

Photo by Kate Sosin



Barrett @ ICAH. More info: Vernon Johnson @ ICAH or p: 312-427-4460 ext 226. 12pm-1:30pm, ICAH 226 S. Wabash Ave., Suite 900, www.icaah.org

**Autism Partners Resource Fair** The open house celebrates the opening of the autism therapy center's second Chicagoland location; 4pm-7pm, 630-590-5571, 1920 Thoreau Drive, Suite 180, Schaumburg, IL, www.byyoursideautismcenter.com

**James Cappleman for Democratic Committeeman** Co-chair Mayor Rahm Emanuel. \$1000 to \$150. 5:30pm-7pm, Highball Lounge, 738 N. Clark St.; email ProgressiveSolutionsLLC@gmail.com or call 773-829-2199

**Eriedescence HIV/AIDS event** Erie Family Health Center hosts an evening featuring cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, a silent auction and music from world renowned DJ Rock City. Proceeds from the event directly support uninsured and underinsured patients in Erie's award winning HIV/AIDS program. 6pm-9pm, 312.432.7378, Lumen, 839 W Fulton Market, www.eriefamily-

health.org/eriedescence.

**Reception for Village President and Senate Candidate Tom Cullerton** Hors d'oeuvres, open bar, RSVP requested by Feb. 20. 6:30pm-9pm, 630.485.0866, Villa Nova Restaurant 237 W. St. Charles Rd., Villa Park, https://secure.actblue.com/page/villanova

**Joffrey Ballet presents** The Joffrey Ballet brings to Chicago the work of three world-renowned choreographers in "Winter Fire," a mixed repertory program featuring two premieres and an audience favorite. 7:30pm-9:30pm, 800-982-2787, Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 E Congress Pkwy., www.joffrey.org/winter

**Drag Idol Hydrate Nightclub** presents season two of Drag Idol! A winner is chosen every week to take home a cash prize of \$100 and secure a spot to compete in the Drag Idol Finals to win a prize package worth over \$10,000! 9pm, Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St., www.hydratechicago.com/home

**Thirsty Thursdays** Je t'aime Entertainment Presents: Thirsty Thursdays \$3 "You Call it", Chicago's Largest LGBTQA Night with Special Drag performances, resident DJ Fuego, and special guests at Watra Night Club; 9pm, 773-558-1093, Watra Night Club 4758 S. Pulaski Rd., www.facebook.com/jetaimechi

## Friday, Feb. 24

**Brother Outsider film screening** The film follows the life of Bayard Rustin, an African-American civil rights leader forced to play a behind-the-scenes role due to his sexual identity. Rustin mentored Martin Luther King Jr. on the concepts of non-violent resistance and organized the legendary 1963 March on Washington. inquiries tp info@outcenter.org. 6:30pm, 269-925-8330, OutCenter, 132 Water St., Benton Harbor, Mich., www.outcenter.org

**GayCo: Are you there Judy? It's me, Cancer.** Judy Fabjance presents an evening of Comedy, Cries and Choreography as she takes you on her journey through Breast Cancer. Learn about "the one" who truly wasn't there for her and why she hates all holidays except one. And why cancer all she can think about is cancer so come cancer see this cancer show. \$13. Fridays through Feb. 24; 9pm, Donny's Skybox Theatre, 1608 N. Wells St., Chicago, www.secondcity.com

**It's Britney, Bitch** A night dedicated to the pop legend. All Britney, all night with DJ Riley York. 9pm, The Call (Chicago), 1547 W Bryn Mawr, Chicago, www.facebook.com/thecallbar

**Hot Jock Contest** Man up at this monthly contest to pick the hottest jock strap in

the bunch. Sign up begins at 10:30; contest at 11. \$150 cash/prizes first prize, \$75 cash/prizes second prize, \$25 Crew card third prize. Hosted, as always, by Sofia Saffire. Mega Mojitos, \$3.50 312 drafts, \$2 PBR cans, \$2 Malort shots. 10:30pm-11:30pm, Crew Bar & Grill, 4804 N Broadway, www.worldsgreatestbar.com

## Saturday, Feb. 25

**Lincoln State Cat Club All Breed Cat Show** Meet the breeds at the Breed Booth, adopt the perfect shelter or pedigreed cats, learn about cat care in the education ring, shop at vendor booths and watch the judging of cats. 10am-4pm, 847-707-2896, Harper College, 1200 Algonquin Road, Palatine, www.lscats.org

**This Will Have Been: Art, Love, & Politics in the 1980s** The years shaped by two phenomena that frame the 1980s: feminism and the AIDS crisis. Within these larger outlines, the exhibition finds desire - rather than cynicism or irony - to be the real tenor of the decade. Through June 3. 12pm, Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave., www.mcchicago.org/media

**Afro-Beats!** Black History Month festive and interactive performance perfect for the whole family. \$10; 2pm, 312-334-7777, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E Randolph Dr, Chicago, www.harristheaterchicago.org

**Meet candidate Judge Trew** Note new date. RSVP to 400ForestCoffee@comcast.net; 2pm-4pm, Private home

**Lily Tomlin** Lily Tomlin is a versatile performer, comedian, writer and producer who has touched some of the most beloved American comedy institutions. 5pm, North Shore Performing Arts Center, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie, www.northshorecenter.org

**Flip Cup Tournament FUNdraiser for CWRFC** Chicago Women's Rugby's fundraiser. Register with brandi.vigil@gmail.com. Include Team Name and Team Captain Name (registration day of will be accepted). Guidelines on site. 7pm-10pm, Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont Ave., www.cwrfc.org/cwrfc\_fundraisers

**In the Heart of America** Haunting political dream play about the interconnected cycle of interpersonal violence. Written in 1994, it explores the relationship of two gay soldiers serving under Don't Ask Don't Tell during the first Gulf War. Fawzia Mirza plays a Palestinian-American woman struggling to find her identity while searching for her missing brother (one of the gay soldiers). Through April 1. \$15-\$25; 7:30pm, Theatre Seven of Chicago, 1341 W Fullerton Ave., www.theatreseven.org/index.php

**Hollywood to Dollywood** Hollywood to Dollywood screens at the Peace On Earth Film Festival. On the fumes of a dream, twin brothers Gary and Larry Lane have written a script with a plum roll for one of their idols, Dolly Parton. 8:45pm-10:15pm, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., www.peaceonearthfilmfestival.org

## Sunday, Feb. 26

**Urban Village Church: Andersonville service** Andersonville is a neighborhood full of passion, art, diversity, and eclectic energy, all which makes Urban Village Church thrilled to be joining the community! 10:30am-11:45am, 1602 W. Ainslie (at Ashland), www.newchicagochurch.com

**Urban Village Church** Spiritual worship is about coming together as community to make space for God to move in us. 11:15am-11:30am, Urban Village Church, Spertus Institute, 610 S. Michigan Ave., www.urbanvillagechurch.org

**Out of the Closets into the Occupation** Discussion about a emerging queer struggle at the heart of the occupy movement; lived experiences and material oppression in queer people's live; class issues disproportionately affecting LGBT laboring class:



## JUDY CALL

### Friday, Feb. 24

**"Are You There Judy? It's Me, Cancer" concludes at Donny's Skybox Theatre, 1608 N. Wells St.**

Photo by Judy Fabjance from GayCo

employment discrimination, denial of marriage rights, police violence, healthcare disparity, youth homelessness, youth suicide, hostile schools and feelings of isolation or rejection. 1pm-3pm, Occupy Chicago HQ, 500 W. Cermak Rd., 7th Fl; www.facebook.com/events/184657768301136

**On the Red Carpet Oscar Party** Join the Center on Halsted for its Annual On the Red Carpet Oscar Party. Presented by Nielsen, the party will be the biggest party yet, as they transform the Park West theater into Chicago's premier Academy Awards hot spot. 6pm-11pm, Park West Chicago, 322 W Armitage Ave, Chicago, www.centeronhalsted.org/oscars.html

**ICON Oscar viewing party in the Lobby Lounge** Movie lovers can view the awards show on five 50-inch HD TVs located throughout the lounge while sipping on an exclusive "Evening Gown" cocktail (Voli Lyte, Sour, Triple Sec and Sprite; \$12 and only 110 calories) and the "Black Tie" (Hennessy Cognac, Canton Ginger, Ginger Ale; \$12). 7pm, ShowPlace ICON, 150 W Roosevelt Rd, www.showplaceicon.com

## Monday, Feb. 27

**Early Voting** Through March 15; 12pm, Your voting area

**Deadline to R.S.V.P for Cyber-Bullying Seminar** Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez's Office in conjunction with the Chicago Police Department will on March 1 offer topics including: prevention and action. Light refreshments will be served. Lerner Auditorium. 4pm, 773-334-4066, gina.ceh@cookcountyl.gov or by phone

## Tuesday, Feb. 28

**Associated Writing Programs Week February 28-March 4** The annual AWP conference will have writers, publishers, editors, and academics in Chicago to participate in hundreds of readings, panel discussions, and other literary events. During this week Women & Children First will host back-to-back readings featuring conference participants. Through March 4. 1pm, Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark St.

## Wed., Feb. 29

**Grand Opening of new GL Chamber Headquarters** Open House: 9am to 5pm. Reception: 6 pm to 8:30pm. Info and registration online. 9am-8:30pm, GL Chamber Headquarters, 3179 N. Clark St., www.glchamber.org

**Leap Day Party: Brad Trowbridge For Judge** Hosts: Art Johnston, Jon Erickson, David Bartnick, Anthony Miceli, Aaron Brost, Sue Moehn, Michelle Arocha and Sam Slade. Donation Amounts: Leap of Faith, \$ 150; Giant Leap \$ 100; Big Leap \$ 50; 5:30pm-7:30pm, Sidetrack, 3349 N Halsted St., www.bradforjudge.com



## FEATHERS IN THEIR CAPS

### Sunday, Feb. 26

Center on Halsted will host its annual Oscar viewing party at the Park West, 322 W. Armitage Ave.

Photo from 2011 by Kat Fitzgerald

# BILLY MASTERS

"She's not my favorite girl for a lot of reasons—mainly because I respect people with talent. I'm not so sure if you're talented yourself you take on your mother's stage name. It's not Liza Garland, for God's sake."—Billy Sammeth shares his impressions on Melissa Rivers, daughter of his former client Joan. Wait till you hear what he says about Cher and Chaz!

I must start this week's column by saying how incredibly touched I was by the sheer quantity of e-mails, calls, texts, Facebook postings, etc. that I received on my birthday—it was simply overwhelming. Amongst the fans, friends and other fabulous folks, I got a note from Sammeth, the legendary personal manager who helped guide the careers of many entertainers. (He's specifically associated with Joan Rivers



Billy remembers Whitney in his own way.

and Cher.) Billy's good name was tarnished in Auntie Joan's documentary, where he is painted in a not-so-flattering light. I had the unfortunate distinction of being the first one to tell Sammeth what was in the flick. He was not happy. He was hurt. His relationship with Joan had ended months earlier, but it didn't all go down as depicted onscreen. He sued and they settled out of court, with one important condition—no gag order. He's writing a book, but in the meantime he did a very dishy interview with The Daily Beast that I'll link to on BillyMasters.com. It's definitely required reading.

Of course, the big news is still the death of Whitney Houston. Many of you have written to me asking about those lesbian rumors and Whitney's basketball-playing galpal Robyn Crawford. Her official job was Whitney's personal assistant (she resigned in 2000), but they were closer—much closer. Whitney was never seen with a man ... only with Robyn. She called her "the sister I never had." It was very Oprah and Gayle. Got it?

When the rumors got louder, she addressed them in Time magazine: "I'm not with any man. I'm not in love. People see Robyn with me and they draw their own conclusions. Anyway, whose business is it if you're gay or like dogs? What others do shouldn't matter. Let people talk. It doesn't bother me because I know I'm not gay. I don't care." I love it when people compare homosexuality with bestiality! Last week, Robyn resurfaced in an Esquire magazine piece. Towards the end, she says, "I have never spoken about her until now. And she knew I wouldn't. She was a loyal friend, and she knew that I was never going to be disloyal to her. I was never going to betray her." There are many more scandalous details I can't get into here, but I'll include them on BillyMasters.com.

Like the death of Michael Jackson, Whitney's death won't stop more product from coming out. First, the West End is readying a live theatre version of The Bodyguard that should debut in the fall and star Heather Headley. Before that, Whitney will be on the big screen in Sparkle, playing the mother of Jordin Sparks. And there's already talk of a live stage version of Sparkle being developed as we speak.

And this leads us to our first celebrity nude this week. Yes, I said first ... this is like the appetizer. I must confess that singer Steph Jones doesn't seem to me to be much of a celebrity. I never heard of him. But his on-again/off-again

girlfriend is Jordin Sparks. See? A connection. Apparently, he has a pissed-off ex who decided to leak some nude photos of him. This bitter bitch claims, "He was f\*cking me while he was with Jordin Sparks. I went in his phone while he was in the bathroom and saw their texts. She is definitely not a virgin as she claims to be either because the texts I saw with her telling him she missed him and needed to feel him inside of her are definitely not the words of a virgin." I should say so! OK, he's a typical man. And? The ex continues: "His dick is big but he is self-ish and doesn't use it well." I'm sorry, the only thing I heard was the word "big." And since I'm a man writing for men who enjoy seeing other men, you can see Steph in all his glory on BillyMasters.com.

Let's talk about this whole Matt Bomer "coming-out" story, shall we? First off, I'm not so sure anyone came out. Yes, obviously we all know that Matt is with publicist extraordinaire Simon Halls and they have three kids. (Matt was not involved in the conception of any of them.) In the past, Matt has vaguely talked about "my family." If it were any other actor, the next question would be, "And who are the people in your family?" But (presumably) because of Simon, "don't ask, don't tell"—so much for gays wanting to be treated like everyone else. Last week, Matt was accepting the New Generation Arts and Activism Award at the Steve Chase Humanitarian Awards. In his speech, he said: "I'd really especially like to thank my beautiful family: Simon, Kit, Walker, Henry. Thank you for teaching me what unconditional love is. You will always be my proudest accomplishment. God bless you."

That's all terribly touching. But did anyone come out? I'm not criticizing him, but let's keep this in perspective. I trust that Matt wants to do this simply and without any fanfare. Why now? It's a politically charged time we're living in. Prop 8 has been overturned—kinda. And he's appearing in Dustin Lance Black's play, 8, about the trial. I suspect we'll be hearing more things like this from Matt. It's all about baby steps.

That leads to our real "Ask Billy" question of the week. It also leads me to a quandary. You see, if I run it as written, I could be sued. And if I answer it as I'd like, I could be sued—and nobody wants that. So I'm gonna turn my letter from Todd in Laguna Beach into a blind item: "I'm a longtime subscriber to BillyMasters.com and think you're the best. I was hoping to see in your column pics of a certain really hot famous guy whose nude photos leaked online recently. The story's been squelched and every site that had the pics have taken them down after they were threatened legally. But if you have them, maybe you could just e-mail them to me!"

If I had such photos in my possession, I would feel compelled to share them. And as you well know from how others have described them, they're awfully hot. Rarely does one get to see such a large penis from so many angles! That said, I don't know this person. I don't recognize him. And nobody has complained to me ... yet. So, I'd recommend you head on over to BillyMasters.com. And here's some a bit of friendly advice—do it quickly.

When a blind item could eventually be referred to as "Exhibit A," it's definitely time to end yet another column. Sounds like a perfect time to check out [www.BillyMasters.com](http://www.BillyMasters.com)—the site that gives as well as receives (I guess that means we're versatile). While you're checking out the site, you can ask me a question—or dash off a belated birthday greeting. Send them along to me at [Billy@BillyMasters.com](mailto:Billy@BillyMasters.com) and I promise to get back to you before I blink. Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

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# Darrell Yarborough's lifelong love affair with bikes

BY ROSS FORMAN

Darrell Yarborough was about 6 when he got his first bicycle: a red, 20-inch Western Flyer.

"When the Schwinn Stingray was introduced, I tried to convert the Western Flyer into a Stingray-esque bike; [however, it] didn't quite achieve the coolness of a real Stingray," Yarborough said of his bicycle legacy that dates back to the late 1950s.

"I remember that I had a very hard time learning [how] to ride. Since I grew up in the country, we didn't have sidewalks and the road was too dangerous to ride on, so it was grass, gravel or dirt."

Now 60, openly gay and a software quality assurance analyst who lives in suburban Arlington Heights, Yarborough still savors his time around all aspects and elements of the two-wheel riding tradition.

"When I came out of the Army in 1971, my uncle gave me a job at The Western Auto Store [that] he ran in my hometown: Lexington, N.C.," Yarborough said. "In addition to selling car tires and batteries, they sold a good number of bicycles. [There] was a bike boom [in] the early 1970s, and Raleigh [bicycles] were being imported from England in large numbers. It was there that I bought my first Raleigh, a sports [style] in the color called coffee. Though I don't have that same bike today, I have one like it."

Fittingly, it's called, Mr. Bean.

"A few years ago, I started thinking about what I might do in my retirement. My initial

idea was to build and offer support for personal computers, [but] I got put off [on] the idea because nobody I know wants to spend any money on their own PC or they can do it themselves," Yarborough said. "After I bought my first vintage Raleigh, I decided I needed to learn to build bicycle wheels. I took a class from Christopher Wallace and since then I've built about a dozen wheel-sets. I have my first commission for a set that will go on a single-speed/fixie gear this [February]. Working on mechanical things satisfies my need to tinker. Working with computers, which I've done most of my working life, just doesn't give me the same satisfaction.

"My long term plan is to take a course at United Bicycle Institute in Portland, Ore., within the next couple of years. While I'm out there, I also want to take another wheel-building course from another teacher, just so I have the perspective of another wheel-builder. Restoring vintage bikes is one thing, but my knowledge of modern bikes is sadly lacking. That's why I want to go to a bike-repair school. If I only get two or three commissions for really nice bike builds during my retirement, I think that will be enough to satisfy me. It takes a long time for people to recognize your work because there are so many excellent builders out there."

So what is the appeal of bicycle riding?

"Just getting out by myself or with friends in a quiet place and enjoying the ride, be it 10 miles to have lunch or just to the nearest Starbucks," he said.

Yarborough said that when he retires in a



Darrell Yarborough on his "Tweed Ride" with Cyril, his Raleigh Sprite. Photo from Yarborough

few years, he wants to work freelance as a bike wrench and wheel-builder: "My hope is that there is enough vintage bicycle work in the Chicago area to market myself as the go-to guy for that sort of thing, especially English and French bikes of the 1970s."

Yarborough's vintage bicycle world truly comes to life on Sunday, June 10, during The Manor & Meadow Tour that starts at the Mayslake Peabody Estate in Oak Brook. The ride will take in paths and roads around Fullersburg Woods, Graue Mill and a stop at York Tavern to raise a pint or two, organizers said.

The ride will last about three hours, and the event also will include a raffle drawing for an Ace of Clubs bike. All proceeds from ticket sales will go to Chicago's Working Bikes Cooperative. (According to its website, the cooperative "diverts bicycles from the waste stream in Chicago by repairing them for sale and charity.")

"The Manor & Meadow Tour sprang from an

idea I had for a ride from Oak Brook to Geneva," Yarborough said. "Several of us did the ride, but decided that the leg from Oak Brook to The Prairie Path was too disjointed to work for a large group ride. I was so taken with the house, Mayslake Hall, that I had to figure out a way to make it the centerpiece for a ride."

As for the raffle drawing, Yarborough said, "One of the members of British Bicycles Chicago volunteers for Working Bikes Cooperative. The idea for building Ace of Clubs was twofold. First, it will raise money for Working Bikes and second, it will help me get my name out to people as a serious wheel-builder and bicycle restorer."

When asked about his favorite bicycling story, Yarborough said it's simple: riding from his home to downtown Arlington Heights through some quiet, residential streets. Then, he'll have lunch or visit Starbucks, then off to some local shops and time with his friend, Peter Barson.

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## JOINT TENANCY VS. LAND TRUSTS TO OWN REAL ESTATE

Janet and her lover Denise have found a condominium they would like to buy together. Denise wants to own the property in joint tenancy so that title to the condominium will pass to her if Janet should die. Janet who has a much larger income than Denise will be making the entire down payment but she feels uncomfortable in giving Denise one half of the equity in their new home. They agree they are not ready for a civil union.

Many LGBT couples take title to their homes as "joint tenants with right of survivorship." For the reason of ensuring that title to their home will pass to their surviving lover if one should die. When one joint tenant dies the remaining joint tenant automatically owns the entire property, without the necessity of a will or probate court proceedings.

It is a common misconception that joint tenancy is always the best answer for LGBT couples. The right of survivorship of joint tenant owners can be severed terminated by a joint tenant owner. If that happened the couple would still own the real estate, but as tenants in common. Joint tenancy also doesn't solve the financial problem of the LGBT couple with unequal incomes making unequal contributions for the down payment and who don't split the monthly payments and expenses equally. Joint tenancy cannot reflect the couple's financial agreement to own their home on anything other than a 50/50 basis.

The right of survivorship of joint tenant owners can be protected by using an Illinois land trust to hold legal title to the real estate. In this example, Janet would be the sole beneficiary of the land trust and have the trust agreement provide that upon Janet's death her interest in the home would go to Denise. Until Janet died, Denise would have no interest in the home and could not transfer a part of it to anyone.

If Janet and Denise had contributed equally to the purchase of the condominium the trust agreement could be drafted to provide that Janet and Denise would own the beneficial interest of the land trust as joint tenants with right of survivorship and preclude in the trust agreement the other from making any assignment of the beneficial interest (transfer of ownership of the property) without the written consent of both beneficiaries - preserving the joint tenancy.

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## Rugby fundraiser Feb. 25 at Spin

The Chicago Women's Rugby Football Club (CWRFC) will hold a "Flippin'" flip-cup fundraiser Saturday, Feb. 25, at Spin Nightclub, 7-10 p.m.

There will be teams of five people (no more than two current CWRFC players per squad). The cost is \$20/person. Team names are required and costumes are encouraged.

Email Brandi.Vigil@gmail.com or visit [www.cwrfc.org/cwrfc\\_fundraisers](http://www.cwrfc.org/cwrfc_fundraisers) for more info.

## 'Strike Out Hunger' March 31 at River Rand

Vital Bridges Center on Chronic Care and the 9-12 Bowling League will hold the 15th Annual "Strike Out Hunger" bowling fundraiser at River Rand Bowl, Des Plaines.

The event will take place Saturday, March 31, 7-10 p.m.

The cost is \$35 per bowler, and \$180 per team (up to six bowlers). Visit <http://www.vitalbridges.org> to RSVP.

## 'Stars on Ice' at Rosemont March 11

The figure-skating tour "Stars on Ice" will visit Rosemont, Ill., Sunday, March 11, for a 5

p.m. performance at Allstate Arena.

The tour will get a new infusion of creativity from legendary skater Kurt Browning, who will co-direct and choreograph this year's production.

The event includes Browning; Olympic silver medalist Sasha Cohen; two-time Olympic gold medalist Ekaterina Gordeeva; 1998 Olympic gold medalist Ilia Kulik; and world champion and six-time U.S. national champion Todd Eldredge, among others.

Founded in 1986 by skating icon Scott Hamilton, the Stars on Ice tour has played more than 1,000 shows for over a quarter of a century. Tickets start at \$25 and are available via all Ticketmaster outlets, [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com), 800-745-3000 and the Allstate Arena box office.



Todd Eldredge.  
Photo by Paul Harvath

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### Ray J. Koenig III and Clark Hill PLC



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

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