



TALKING WITH OUT ACTOR ZACHARY QUINTO

PAGE 18

WINDY CITY TIMES

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

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WCT TALKS WITH THE ICONIC DIONNE WARWICK
PAGE 19



Scrooge & Marley

Local gay holiday film opens this week

The Chicago-made independent gay Christmas film Scrooge & Marley opens Nov. 29 at the Music Box Theatre. See inside for details on the film and interviews with cast. Pictured are members of the Cratchit family in the film: Delaney Kaufman, Elijah Pendleton, Dixon Kaufman, Keante Pendleton, Scott Duff, Liam Jones and David Moretti as Bob Cratchit.

page 26



IRANIAN DOCTORS VISIT CHICAGO
PAGE 5

WINDY CITY TIMES' 2012 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

week one of two

page 22



GENERATION HALSTED CONTINUES
PAGE 10



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this week in
WINDY CITY TIMES

NEWS		ENTERTAINMENT/EVENTS	
UN report on AIDS	4	Scottish Play Scott	15
Iranian AIDS experts visit Chicago	5	Theater reviews	16
News: Boeing, HIV advocates	6	Interview with Zachary Quinto	18
Passages: Gary Skala	7	Dionne Warwick talks with WCT	19
Walmart protest	7	Knight reflects on 'Marley'	20
Clothing store opens in A'ville	8	Sheryl Lee Ralph: actress/activist	21
Gay in the Life	9	Holiday gift guide: Part one	22
Special: Generation Halsted	10	Scrooge & Marley articles	26
Views: Rangayan; letters	14	Dish: Marie's Pizza and Liquors	30
		Billy Masters	33

Photos on cover (left, from top): Photo of Zachary Quinto in American Horror Story: Asylum from FX; publicity photo of Dionne Warwick; photo of Dr. Kamiar Alaei by Erica Demarest; photo of Generation Halsted by Erica Demarest

OUTLINES	
Real estate; classifieds	31
Calendar Q	32
Lesbian bikes 1,000 miles for cause	34

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SEEING RED
Read our profile of the cabaret ensemble Chicago Red Line (left).
Photo by Jessica Ni Murphy



Read a review and see photos from Melissa Etheridge's recent Chicago show.
Photo by Jerry Nunn



Read a profile of local queer-friendly comic-book store Quimby's.
Photo by Matthew C. Clark

EVENT HORIZON
See photos from local events, including Vital Bridges staff celebrating Thanksgiving.

¿COMO ESTA?
Read about HIV/AIDS agency Test Positive Aware Network's launch of a Spanish-language group.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT
Read entertainment news about Helen Mirren, 'Glee' and Honey Boo Boo.

plus
DAILY BREAKING NEWS



Read Vern Hester's latest Bent Nights column. This time he reviews shows by fun. (above) and Duncan Sheik.
Photo by Vern Hester

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UN report says end of AIDS is 'feasible'

BY CHUCK COLBERT

The global response to the worldwide AIDS epidemic continues making remarkable progress in HIV prevention, improved treatment, and reduced AIDS-related deaths, a new report says, holding out hope and possibility for the end of AIDS.

"The global community has embarked on an historic quest to lay the foundation for the eventual end of the AIDS epidemic," the United Nations (UN) report states. "This effort is more than merely visionary. It is entirely feasible."

The report was released Nov. 20, in advance of World AIDS Day on Saturday, Dec. 1.

However, unsafe sexual behavior, intravenous drug use, stigma, discrimination and misinformation remain formidable challenges in stemming a disease that, entering its fourth decade, has claimed nearly 30 million HIV-related deaths.

Since the beginning of the epidemic, more than 60 million people have contracted HIV.

"Results," the title of a 48-page report issued by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), shows a dramatic 50 percent decrease in new HIV infections across 25 low- and middle-income countries, mostly in Africa, the continent most affected by HIV.

Better yet, in some countries with the highest prevalence of HIV in the world, rates of infection have been reduced dramatically since 2001. For example, in Malawi the infection rate dropped by 73 percent. In Botswana, the rate is down 71 percent, with similar decreases reported in Namibia (down 68 percent), Zambia (down 58 percent), Zimbabwe (down 50 percent), and South Africa and Swaziland (down 41 percent).

Declining numbers of HIV infections in children is a particularly encouraging finding of the report. Half the global reductions in new HIV infections in the last two years have been among newborns.

Last year, for instance, 330,000 children worldwide were infected with HIV, down from 370,000 in 2010 and 43 percent fewer than in 2003, according to UNAIDS.

Altogether, new infections globally fell to 2.5 million last year, down from 2.6 million, which represents a 20-percent decrease from 2001.

Overall, in 2011, an estimated 34 million worldwide are living with HIV, according to UNAIDS, at the same time 2.6 million people became newly infected, with 1.7 million deaths. The death rate, moreover, is down 24 percent from 2005 and is nearly six percent below the rate in 2010.

For more good news in HIV prevention, "Results" shows that Sub-Saharan Africa has cut AIDS-related deaths by one third in the last six years and increased the number of people on antiretroviral treatment by 59 percent in the last two years alone.

The report shows in fact that antiretroviral therapy has emerged as a powerful force for saving lives—an estimated 14 million life-years, including 9 million in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the report.

In the last two years the numbers of people accessing treatment has increased by 63 percent globally.

However, the report notes, some 7 million people worldwide do not have access to this life-saving HIV treatment, including 72 percent of children living with the virus.

Still, "The pace of progress is quickening," said Michel Sidibe, executive director of UNAIDS, in a statement. "What used to take a decade is now being achieved in 24 months."

"We are scaling up faster and smarter than ever before," he added. "It is the proof that with



Dr. Bernhard Schwartlander, director for Evidence, Innovation, and Policy at UNAIDS. Photo courtesy of UNAIDS

political will and follow through we can reach our shared goals by 2015."

A native of Mali, who has served as Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations since Jan. 1, 2009, Sidibe was referring to 10 specific targets pledged in a 2011 United Nations Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: Intensifying Our Efforts to Eliminate HIV and AIDS.

The targets are outlined and discussed in "Global Report," a 108-page UNAIDS document, released on the same day as "Results."

Among those goals are to reduce HIV sexual transmission and reduce transmission among people who inject drugs—both by 50 percent.

Two other targets include eliminating new infections among children and substantially reducing the number of mothers dying from AIDS-related causes.

Additional goals are to provide anti-retroviral therapy to 1.5 million people, reduce the number of people living with HIV who die from tuberculosis by 50 percent, close the global AIDS resource gap, and reach annual global investments of \$22 billion to \$24 billion (measured in U.S. currency) in low- and middle income countries.

Still other targets aim to eliminate gender inequalities and gender-based abuse and violence and to increase the capacity for women and girls to protect themselves from HIV.

The elimination of stigma and discrimination against people living affected by HIV is another goal, along with eliminating travel and residence restrictions for people living with HIV.

Bernhard Schwartlander, director for Evidence, Innovation, and Policy at UNAIDS, sounded an upbeat tone about reaching the goals.

"I am optimistic that with the progress we're seeing we can actually achieve the targets we set last year," he told reporters during a telephone conference call last Tuesday, Nov. 20.

Schwartlander is a medical doctor and holds a doctorate in medical epidemiology. Prior to join-

ing the United Nations, Dr. Schwartlander was the director of Infections Disease Epidemiology at the Robert Koch-Institut in Berlin.

Nonetheless, prevention programs for groups of people who are most at risk—sex workers, drug users, and men who have sex with men—are too limited, the UNAIDS report says.

And yet, education efforts aimed at teaching about safer sex practices, including the use of condoms, and the prudence of having fewer sexual partners has shown success in some countries, such as Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia.

However, in other countries risky sexual behavior has increased—namely the Ivory Coast, Guyana and Rwanda.

Guyana, Haiti, Lesotho and Rwanda, for instance, report statistically significant increases in men having sex under the age of 15. Haiti and Lesotho report a similar statistically significant finding for women having sex under the age of 15.

At the same time, condom use by men has decreased by a statistically significant measure in the Ivory Coast, Uganda, Benin and Burkina Faso. The same results hold for condom use by women in Ethiopia and Uganda.

The report notes another challenge stemming the spread of HIV—a stepped-up effort to offer men circumcision, which in trials has shown to be effective in the preventing some new infections.

Altogether, UNAIDS sounds the alarm bell concerning the populations most at risk for HIV. One group is men who have sex with men. "Go to any capital city in the world, men who have sex with men are significantly more likely to have HIV—on average 13 times more than the general population," the "Results" report states, adding, "As global HIV prevalence trends appear to have stabilized, there is disturbing evidence suggesting that global HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men may have increased between 2010 and 2012."

UN approves pro-trans draft resolution

A United Nations committee overseeing human-rights issues approved a draft resolution that, for the first time, acknowledges the need to protect individuals from executions on the basis of their gender identity, Advocate.com reported.

The Third Committee of the General Assembly passed the resolution by a vote of 108-1, with 65 abstentions and 18 absences; Iran was the only country to oppose the resolution.

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission stated in a press release that "The States' decision ... to support the inclusion of 'sexual orientation' and introduce 'gender identity' into the resolution is one more in a series of positive developments the UN and in regional human rights systems where there is increasingly recognition of the need for protection from discrimination regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

"The successful expansion of the resolution to include 'gender identity' on the Transgender Day of Remembrance, a day dedicated to those murdered as a result of their gender identity or expression, was particularly significant."

Report deals with LGBTs and the fiscal showdown

As fiscal cliff deliberations intensify, the Center for American Progress, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and a coalition of 23 other national LGBT organizations released "Caught in the Budget Battle: How the 'Fiscal Showdown' Impacts Gay and Transgender Americans," according to a press release.

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NATIONAL NEWS

—Esera Tuaolo (left) criticizes college coach

—Univ. of Va. angered by hate crime

—NBC News blocks marriage ad with Chelsea Clinton

And the report states, "People who inject drugs are the worst off: Evidence from 49 countries shows that their risk of being infected with HIV is 22 times higher than the general population."

UNAIDS acknowledges the challenge in getting people to change their behavior. "It involves knowledge, motivation, and choices, which are influenced by sociocultural norms, as well as risk assessment in relation to immediate benefits and future consequences. It involves both rational decision-making and impulsive and automatic behavior," according to the report.

More money would also help. The report says that only 5 percent of HIV funding in the worst-hit nations was spent on programs aimed at changing behavior, including the promotion of condom use.

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This report details how many federal programs, both directly and indirectly, function to support and serve the LGBT population, and lists negative outcomes related to the fiscal policy known as sequestration.

Some of the outcomes include:

—Threats to the employment security of LGBT workers because federal agencies would have fewer resources to investigate claims of employment discrimination; and

—Lower quality health care for LGBT families because of reduced programmatic funding used to address their health care needs

See www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/budget_battle_2012 for the full report.

Obama moves forward with health-care law

The Obama administration has moved forward to implement provisions in the health-care law that would make it illegal for insurance companies to discriminate against people with pre-existing conditions, according to a U.S. Department of Health & Human Services press release (HHS).

"The Affordable Care Act is building a health insurance market that works for consumers," said HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. "Thanks to the health care law, no one will be discriminated against because of a pre-existing condition."

The Obama administration issued a proposed rule that, beginning in 2014, would ban health-insurance companies from discriminating against individuals because of a pre-existing or chronic conditions. The administration has also issued a proposed regulation outlining policies and standards for coverage of essential health benefits while giving states more flexibility to implement the Affordable Care Act.

Iranian AIDS experts visit Chicago

BY ERICA DEMAREST

Two noted Iranian HIV physicians spoke at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) Nov. 13 as part of a brief educative visit to the city.

Brothers Dr. Arash Alaei and Dr. Kamiar Alaei have pushed for comprehensive AIDS treatment and prevention in their native Iran since 1997. The men have been persecuted, imprisoned and banned from operating in the Islamic nation. They are currently based in Albany, N.Y., where they teach and draft Middle Eastern HIV strategies.

"We grew up in the western part of Iran, and we saw HIV/AIDS issues and drug addiction," Arash said. "The Iranian government ignored [early AIDS reports] and said: In the Islamic Republic of Iran, we don't have any sex, we don't have any injecting drug users, and we don't have any LGBT [people]. The thought was: HIV/AIDS is for western countries, and we are not a western country."

As friends and classmates became infected, the young doctors felt compelled to act. They created a network of so-called triangular clinics, which provided treatment and prevention for those impacted by drug use, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

"At the beginning, we had one patient per week," Arash said. "After six months, we had 50-60 patients a day. Step by step, the quality of programs increased."

The approach was simple: Provide culturally competent care at each patient's level.

For example: When the Alaei brothers realized that many at-risk populations were illiterate, they changed how education materials were dis-

tributed. Brochures and pamphlets weren't going to reach the right people, Arash said.

Women could access all-female staffs, including doctors, nurses and midwives. And patients with deep-seated distrust of the medical community spoke to peer educators.

There were soon triangular clinics in 67 Iranian cities. Each addressed cultural stigma and medical misperceptions head-on, much to the chagrin of the religious government, Arash said.

He explained that before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran offered methadone clinics and other progressive drug addiction treatments.

"[But when the new government came in,] they changed all of the laws and said: There are no options for drug users," Arash said. "Using drugs is illegal, and [people who use drugs] have to go to prison without any treatment."

Those suffering from HIV/AIDS, drug use or STDs were deprived of treatment, as the government categorically denied such issues existed in Iran.

"A lot of our friends and neighbors were suffering, and we had to do something for them," Kamiar said of the brothers' clinics. "We didn't think we were heroes who wanted to save the country. We thought: This is a need, and we have to do something. Something is better than nothing."

In 2008, the Iranian government imprisoned the Alaeis for an alleged conspiracy to overthrow the Iranian government, as well as alleged ties to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The doctors spent several years in jail, where they continued their activism—pushing for better sanitation, healthier food, more exercise and smoking cessation in prisons.



Drs. Kamiar (left) and Kamiar Alaei. Photo by Erica Demarest

When they were released, the Alaeis were told they could not work in social settings in Iran, which effectively barred them from operating the triangular clinics. Today, the men develop global AIDS strategies from separate posts in Albany, N.Y.

During Tuesday's presentation, Kamiar shared a story from his childhood. One day, an uncle of his suffered a heart attack. The uncle was scared to go to an emergency room because he had been drinking earlier, and alcohol was banned in Iran.

"He waited for hours so the symptoms of alcohol could disappear," Kamiar said. "He went [to the hospital] the next morning, but it was too late. He died two days later."

Kamiar cited this incident as his inspiration for studying medicine. He has devoted his life to helping the underprivileged, and is hopeful that Iran's impending presidential elections will allow him to go home.

"If the environment changes, we'll go back," Kamiar said.

AFC President David Ernesto Munar praised the Alaeis for their progressive work.

"The [U.S.] still has such conflicting relationships with Iran," Munar said. "It's important to remind ourselves that despite what our countries may be doing, that it is not representative of its people."

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Union: Boeing to deny equal pension benefits to same-sex spouses

BY KATE SOSIN

A union in contract negotiations with Chicago-based aerospace company Boeing is alleging that the company intends to deny equal pension benefits to married same-sex couples in Washington state, despite the recent passage of same-sex marriage there.

The Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), told its members that Boeing contract negotiators said they would not be extending the benefits to same-sex couples.

SPEEA is currently representing 23,000 employees in contract negotiations, the majority of them based in Washington state, which just passed same-sex marriage.

Ray Goforth, executive director of SPEEA, said that the union began pushing for the extension of pension benefits for same-sex couples over the summer, in anticipation of the passage of same-sex marriage.

But this month, Goforth said, the company stated in no uncertain terms that it was not required to offer such benefits because federal law governs pensions and does not recognize same-sex marriage.

"We were really really surprised that the company's answer was 'no,'" said Goforth. "We thought that this position was beneath them."

Goforth noted that Boeing has largely been progressive on LGBT issues.

A statement provided from Boeing to Windy City Times notes the company was one of the first to offer domestic-partner benefits.

"Boeing has informed employees that the company is taking a closer look at R-74 [the referendum that legalized same-sex marriage in Washington] and its impact on current policies and benefits once the law goes into effect in Washington state in December," the company wrote in a statement. "We're studying how any change to our pension plan would impact our growing pension obligations, and we'll continue to discuss it with SPEEA."

Doug Alder, a spokesperson for Boeing, said the company is not commenting beyond that statement. Windy City Times had asked the company if it did, in fact, tell SPEEA it would not be extending the benefits.

The Stranger, a Seattle-based newspaper that first reported the Boeing controversy, reported that Alder said that suggestions that the company discriminates are "blatantly false and, quite frankly, offensive." That article goes on to claim, however, that Alder skirted the question

of whether Boeing reps did tell SPEEA it would not extend the benefits.

Suit, report allege hazings at suburban high school

BY KATE SOSIN

A Des Plaines high school is facing down allegations that it failed to protect varsity soccer players after parents filed suit claiming their son was sexually assaulted in a hazing ritual this year, and the district received a similar report dating back to 2008.

Maine West High School has taken disciplinary action against 10 students and reassigned two coaches over the 2012 incident. Three other coaches have been relieved of their duties.

According to a lawsuit filed in Cook County Circuit Court, the school's varsity coaches ordered the hazing, during which a freshman varsity soccer player was allegedly beaten, held down and sexually assaulted by teammates.

The suit states that team members "grabbed the Plaintiff, forced him down to the ground, then repeatedly struck him on his arms, legs, head, and torso, tore off his pants and underwear, grabbed his testicles, and sodomized him with their fingers, and other foreign objects."

It further alleges that coaches have sanctioned the ritual for years.

According to a statement released by Maine Township High School District 207, the district recently learned that Maine West investigated a similar complaint in 2008, involving the same head coach. That complaint alleged that four baseball players pulled down a teammate's pants in the locker room. The statement said that the 2008 incident was investigated and students were disciplined.

Michael Divincenzo, who has been relieved of his teaching and coaching duties pending an investigation, headed both teams.

In a series of statements, the district said it is taking the complaints seriously.

"We have clear expectations for the conduct of our athletes and coaches, and if there are allegations of misconduct, we have a duty to take them seriously, to conduct an objective investigation of the facts, and to respond accordingly," said District Superintendent Ken Wallace in a statement. "The safety and well-being of our District 207 students is always our highest priority."

LGBT political leaders reflect on elections

BY KATE SOSIN

Local LGBT leaders sat down Nov. 19 at Mary's Attic in Andersonville to reflect on a slew of recent astounding election victories.

Kim Hunt, executive director of Affinity Community Services; Randy Hannig, director of public policy for Equality Illinois; Debra Shore, commissioner of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District; and Lauren Peters, campaign manager for Senate candidate Tammy Baldwin, discussed what went right Nov. 6 and how to keep that momentum.

"We really are at a turning point for the LGBT community," said Hannig. "We're definitely a



Equality Illinois' Randy Hannig at the event. Photo by Kate Sosin

force to be reckoned with, and there's no turning back now."

Panelists noted Tammy Baldwin's historic victory in Wisconsin, Sam Yingling's successful campaign to become Illinois' first out gay Rep. outside of Chicago and a number of national wins by pro-LGBT candidates.

But, Peters added, the success of LGBT candidates this November was not the result of their identities. It was a product of their platforms on constituent issues.

"[Baldwin's] not here to make history," Peters said. "She's definitely there to serve Wisconsin-ites."

Peters noted that Baldwin did not face anti-gay attacks, in large part because such attacks would have alienated voters.

And this election cycle was historic for other reasons, noted Hunt. Congress increasingly reflects the makeup of the United States, from

LGBT people and women to people of color, Hunt said. Wins in four states on marriage equality votes reflect the growing support of many people of color for LGBT rights, she said.

"A lot of those wins come from people of color coming to the table and sometimes voting against what their ministers said," said Hunt.

The challenge going forward, panelists agreed, would be to keep the momentum.

Peters pointed the wins on marriage ballot measures as an example of grassroots efforts for change. Hannig added that research showed that most who support marriage equality now are people who changed their minds on the issue.

The Victory Fund and Equality Illinois hosted the event. Tressa Feher, chief of staff for the 46th Ward, moderated the panel, and Ald. James Capplemann introduced the event.

HIV advocates eyeing sequestration cuts

BY KATE SOSIN

Next year, Illinois will lose housing for 125 families impacted by HIV, will see 52 additional HIV infections and conduct 4,300 fewer HIV tests. That is according to a new fact sheet the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) issued.

AFC has released a document that looks at the possible impact of sequestration on Illinois HIV prevention and care efforts. Sequestration, or the automatic across-the-board federal budget cut process that lawmakers agreed to in 2011, will go into effect come January unless Congress acts to prevent it.

In Illinois, that could mean deep budget cuts for HIV care and prevention.

"It's really taking us in the wrong direction," said John Peller, vice president of policy for AFC. "The cuts that might come with sequestration would really worsen the lives of people living with HIV."

According to AFC, anticipated cuts will total approximately \$10 million in Illinois alone. That means an additional 631 people will lose access to medication through the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, 66 additional people with HIV will go undiagnosed and services for HIV care across the board would be significantly cut, AFC says.

A fact sheet the National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors put out projects bleak numbers nationally as well. According to that document, more than 15,700 people will lose access to HIV medication and an additional 50,000 people will be infected with HIV each year.

President Obama has said that sequestration will be avoided and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have expressed a commitment to heading it off.

But Peller said that AIDS advocates also worry that without drastic revenue increases next year, HIV funding could be hard-hit, regardless.

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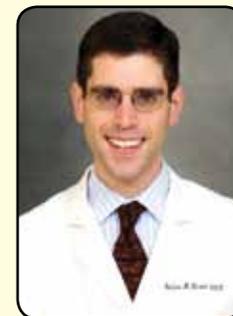
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Small group protests Lakeview Walmart on Black Friday

BY KATE SOSIN

Lakeview's Walmart Express store, 3636 N. Broadway, was the target of a small Black Friday demonstration Nov. 23.

Demonstrators called on the company to offer high wages, more hours, full family benefits and more respect to workers.

The demonstration was one of many held across the nation and throughout the Chicago area on one of the biggest shopping days of the year. The United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) and OUR Walmart, an organization of employees, called for the protests.

Walmart said that reports of massive worker walk offs on Black Friday had been overblown.

"We estimate that less than 50 associates participated in the protest nationwide. In fact, this year, roughly the same number of associates missed their scheduled shift as last year," said Bill Simon, Walmart U.S. president and chief executive officer, in a statement.

The company also stated that workers received holiday pay on Black Friday and were offered special discounts, but it did not respond directly to allegations that it underpays and under schedules employees.

Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ), an organization that advocates for workers' rights, organized the Lakeview demonstration. A handful of protesters gathered at the store in the blistering cold to deliver letters to the store's manager.

IWJ's Joan Flanagan urged demonstrators to approach the store's management with respect.

"What we're doing is legal," she said. "What



Interfaith Worker Justice's Joan Flanagan. Photo by Kate Sosin

we're doing is ethical."

Two Walmart staffers greeted demonstrators at the door, took the letters and promised to pass them along.

PASSAGES

Gary Skala

Chicago gay activist Gary Skala passed away Nov. 6 in his late parents' home in Hampton Bays, N.Y. In Chicago, he was active with the Metropolitan Community Church, the Night Ministry, and theaters including Bailiwick Repertory.

Skala maintained residences in both Hampton Bays and Chicago and spent his winters



Gary Skala. Photo from Chuck Phelan

in recent years in Florida. He was planning to drive from Hampton Bays to Florida Nov. 15. His death was sudden and unexpected and he died in bed of natural causes. Ironically, within the last year, Skala had lost 70 pounds or so and was feeling really good about life. He visited friends, including Chuck Phelan in

Los Angeles the second week in October and was "at the top of his game."

Visitation will take place Friday, Nov. 30, 2-4:30 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. ET at Overton Funeral Home, 172 Main St., Islip, N.Y. The funeral service will be at Bay Shore Congregational Church, 1860 Union Blvd., Bay Shore, N.Y., on Saturday, Dec. 1, at 12 p.m.; Rev. Pat Baumgardner of MCC New York will officiate. Burial will be at Oakwood Cemetery in Bay Shore.

As Skala wanted, after the service there will be a party to celebrate his life at the Irish Coffee Pub, 131 Carleton Ave., in East Islip, N.Y., with music, pictures and more.

Anyone who would like to make donations in lieu of flowers may do so to Gary's favorite charity, Sylvia's Place for Homeless Youth at Metropolitan Community Church of New York, online at <http://mccnycharities.org/donate.html> or by mail at MCCNY Charities, Inc., 446 West 36th Street, New York, N.Y., 10018.

MCCNY Charities, Inc. is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit, so all donations are tax-deductible. Please mark donations to Sylvia's Place in Memory of Gary Skala.

Steve Starr event taking place Dec. 12

An event that photographer Steve Starr was organizing to mark 45 years in the business will now be a tribute to Starr, who recently passed away.

On Wed., Dec. 12, "The Face of News"—showcasing Starr's photos of journalists, broadcasters, reporters, columnists and publishers—will take place at the Murphy Auditorium, 50 E. Erie St., 6-9:30 p.m.

Tickets start at \$100 each for the event, and people can also make donations; see <http://stevestarr.eventbrite.com>.

Center on Halsted spokesperson leaving post for CDPH

BY KATE SOSIN

After 17 months on the job, the Center on Halsted's media spokesperson has announced his departure.

Brian Richardson, who has served as the Center's media liaison since July 2011, has accepted the position of director of public affairs for the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH).

"CDPH is a phenomenal opportunity," Richardson told Windy City Times. "Obviously, public health is becoming more and more important as we move forward."

Richardson said the new job is a chance to continue his work impacting the LGBT community.

He started at the Center during a time of challenge for the organization, as some Lakeview residents blamed the Center for a perceived uptick in violent crime in the area at that time.

According to Richardson, the Center has tripled its number of Facebook fans since he started. Richardson also oversaw the rebranding of the Center, which included a redesign of its website. According to him, the redesign has doubled the site's traffic.

Richardson previously worked at Google, as a spokesperson for the Democratic National Convention and as press secretary for the U.S. Senate.

AFC praises new CDPH commissioner

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) issued a statement welcoming the appointment of epidemiologist Nanette Benbow as the new deputy commissioner for HIV and STI Services at the

Chicago Department of Public Health.

"Nanette bring an impressive record of public service fighting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases in her nearly 20-year career at the Chicago Department of Public Health," said David Ernesto Munar, AFC President/CEO. "She possesses a keen understanding of local and national HIV/AIDS trends and the strategies needs to achieve greater progress. These attributes along with her dedication and compassion make Nanette an ideal leader for Chicago's HIV/STI Services Division."

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Lesbian partners open Andersonville clothing store

BY ROSS FORMAN

At her maximum five years ago, Kathleen McGuire weighed 305 pounds. She knew she was knocking on the door of diabetes and also endured horrible sleep apnea. In addition, her knees, ankles and back were always hurting.

"It was time," McGuire said in early November, now proud to boast that she's lost 180 pounds.

"[Before the weight loss,] I was very introverted; I was very shy, very quiet. I was hiding behind the weight. I rarely did public events, even the Pride Parade, which I always enjoyed. I just didn't want to run into anyone."

As the weight dropped, McGuire grew out of her oversized clothes and, thus, was forced to buy new items—which, in reality, wasn't much

of a force for her.

"Fashion is a passion of mine. I've been a budding diva since I was, oh, 2 years old. I was one of those lesbians who would never wear a pair of jeans, just dresses.

"I've always been fashion-driven and passionate about it," said McGuire, known to most as Kat.

She first started buying all her new clothes at retail stores, and then eventually found the value in thrift and resale stores.

Over the five years, she went through about 15 new wardrobes.

Consequently, she ended up with more clothes "than I could wear in seven lifetimes," she said, laughing.

Pat Ciara, her partner of 14 years, added with



Above: Kathleen McGuire (left) and Pat Ciara. Upper right: Shoes at Chick*A*Boom. Photos by Ross Forman



a smile: "We were getting to the point where we likely would have been on the next episode of Hoarders."

So the two turned to eBay and found a successful marketplace for no-longer-needed clothing, some still with their original price tags still attached.

McGuire has gone through literally thousands of garments over the past five years, she admits, and spent countless dollars. "It would be [the amount for] a decent car," McGuire said, laughing.

"[Shopping for clothes] is like a sport for me; it's so much fun."

And now it's also her profession, truly a dream come true. The two opened Chick*A*Boom Resale Boutique, 5653 N. Ashland Ave., in October—an 1,800-square-foot store with about 75 percent of its inventory for women and 25 percent for men. There are shirts, sweaters, pants, dresses, shoes, handmade hats and more. There's just no baby clothing.

"We want to bring really high-end labels at a very reasonable price," McGuire said. "What's very important to me is the quality of the clothing. We want to sell people the clothing that they'd have to go to a really high-end store to get, at less than what they're going to pay for it at Target; that's our goal."

The men's dress shirts (most for \$15) have been among the hottest sellers to date, they said. There are goods from such retailers as J.Crew, Banana Republic, Pierre Cardin, Gucci, Giorgio Armani, Patagonia, Brooks Brothers, Jos. A. Bank and others.

The store also offers a buy-sell-trade-consign program, with items priced for sale from \$1 to \$500. (When this reporter visited the two for this story, someone purchased a \$500 fur coat.)

"Andersonville is one of the hottest areas in Chicago," said McGuire, who has worked as an accountant and also is a registered nurse.

"We just decided to give [this store] a shot. I don't want to be 80 years-old wondering, what if."

In addition to Ciara and McGuire, they have three part-time employees.

"I have learned a lot from Kathleen regarding

clothing, [including] brand names, what's good, what's not good, what's in, what's out, etc.," Ciara said. "When Kathleen came up with the idea of looking for some [store] space, we went out on a hunt. We looked in Wicker Park, Oak Park and elsewhere. Kathleen always wanted to be in Andersonville."

Ciara, 64, was the highest-ranking out lesbian in the history of the Chicago Fire Department, not to mention the highest-ranking female officer in the United States.

Ciara left the department in 2007 after 32 years on occupational disability for heart and lung issues.

"My final impetus for doing for actually going ahead with [this store] came from, believe it or not, Kim Kardashian," McGuire said. "I saw an interview with her and she told about the best advice she ever got from her dad; it was, 'Do what you love doing, and find a way to get paid for it.'"

"I knew I had to find a way to get paid to shop."

Ciara added, "We're just hoping this can be a successful venture for us and an asset to the community."

LGBTQ Health & Wellness Conference Nov. 30

The 2012 LGBTQ Health & Wellness Conference will take place Friday, Nov. 30, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.

The keynote speaker will be Dr. Bechara Choucair, commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health. There will also be student presentations as well as a networking breakfast and research interest groups.

The cost is \$40 (\$20 for students); register at www.CenterOnHalsted.org. Call 773-472-6469, ext. 498, for more info.

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GAY *in the* LIFE

Eric Durchholz

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ROSS FORMAN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY DURCHHOLZ



Age
40

Neighborhood
Uptown

Relationship status
Single

Job title
Comedian and manager of The Funny Spot (4437 N. Broadway)

Four people (living or dead) who you'd have over for dinner
Prince, Lady Gaga, movie director Kevin Smith and Groupon CEO Andrew Mason

Favorite Chicago restaurant
Pho & I

Translation
Durchholz is German for "through wood"

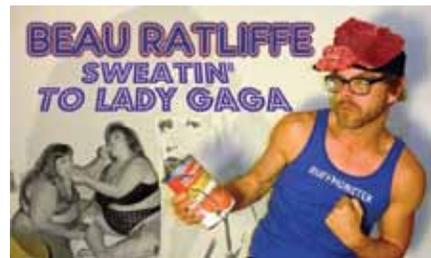
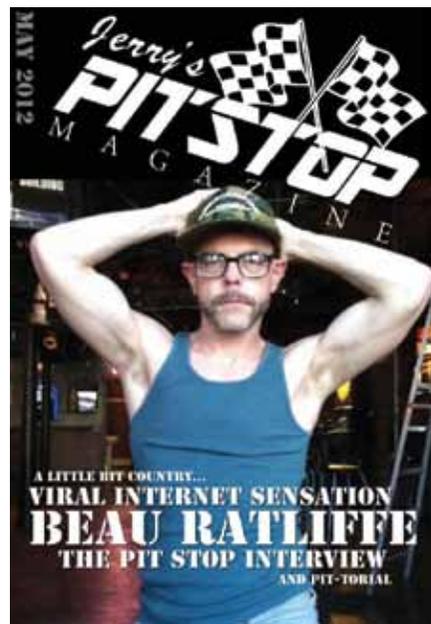
Little-known fact
Has a half Japanese half-brother whom he has never met

Eric Durchholz applied in October to be a server or bartender at The Spot in Uptown but its owner, Calvin Duong, had another idea for the multi-talented Durchholz.

He brought Durchholz to the upstairs portion, which was not being used. He said, "Figure out a way to convert the space into a comedy club."

Durchholz is now the manager of The Funny Spot, which officially opened before Thanksgiving and will have its grand opening in early 2013.

"When I went to a comedy club [in the past], it seemed very dark and depressing, and a lot of comedians seemed very cynical. So I wanted to create a place that was diverse, for all colors and all sexual orientations, somewhere that would be a bridge between an amateur comedian and a professional comedian," Durchholz said.



The Funny Spot has seating for 60, offers gourmet food (from The Spot) and even has a beer-pong table. There will be nine comedians performing on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (starting at 9 p.m.), and the best of those 27 will be on stage on the weekends too in 2013, said Durchholz, who will serve as the host for at least one of the mid-week comedy nights.

"I can do standup, but that's not the direction I want to go in my career; I would rather be an actor and develop a TV show," Durchholz said. "This [new job] was one of the first times in my life when someone was not scared of my experience or talent, but rather, exploiting it for maximum profit potential."

Also in November, Durchholz performed at Salona-thon, a weekly performance art event. He sang and shared a short film. In addition, he has done a live show at Gorilla Tango this year. In addition, on Dec. 12, Durchholz is hosting a pilot screening party at The Funny Spot (7 p.m.) for his genre-spanning satire called ANYTHING BEAU'S.

"I really wish this delineation between gay and straight comedy would just go away. In my mind, I just see this as a place where fresh and innovative talent comes from."

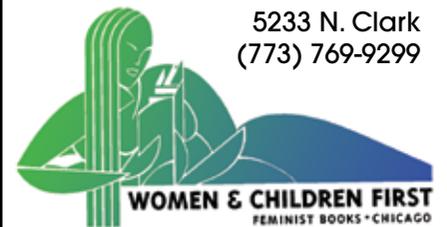
The Funny Spot will likely have a limited number of gay entertainers, simply based on those who have applied. That's fine, Durchholz said, tagging The Funny Spot as a facility with a "gay sensibility," meaning "we're not afraid of different."

"A perfect night would [involve] a straight comedian, a straight female, a lesbian, a drag queen, a Black comedian, and also an Asian, Latino and others," he added. "We all can bring our experiences together. A bunch of us funny people, striped of pretension and greed, no telling what could come from this. We do it because we love it."

The comedians will not be paid during the week. Rather, The Funny Spot will serve as a training ground for them. "This is more like a real-life comedy workshop," Durchholz said.

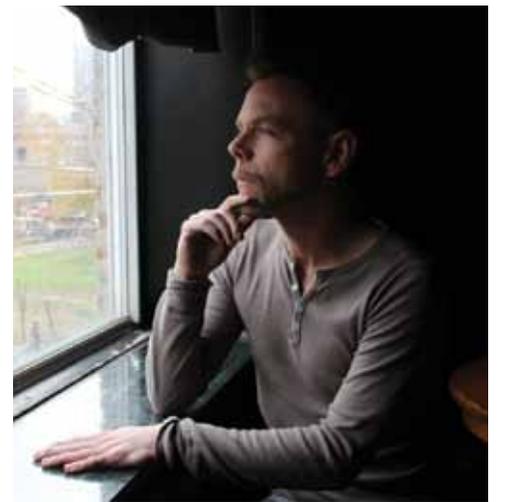
Wed., Nov. 28
7:30 p.m.
Allison Adler, Jennifer A. Freeman, Claire Young, Vicki Zwart (authors) and Angus Carroll (editor) Lyin' Cheatin' Bastards

Thursday, Nov. 29
7:30 p.m.
Lori Rotskoff, editor, and Deborah Seigel, contributor When We Were Free to Be



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T *in the* LIFE

COMPILED BY KATE SOSIN



Photo courtesy of Zapata-Alma

To nominate a person for T in the life, email: kate.sosin@windycitytimes.com

Gabriela "G" Zapata-Alma

Pronouns

"Zhe (but am not offended by use of 'she,' 'he,' 'they,' etc., since all correspond to aspects of my gender)."

Identifies as
Two-Spirit

Neighborhood
Logan Square

Job
Associate director of Scattered-Site Housing, and founder/co-chair of the Advocacy Committee at Chicago House & Social Service Agency.

Hobbies
"Eating, reading, spirituality, dogs and other animal friends, all things 'cute,' body modification, performing/playing/writing/enjoying music, dancing around my apartment, consuming and creating art, comic books, activism, gender f*cking, meditation, laughing, nature, carpentry, DIY, skill-sharing, and spending quality time with loved ones."

Do you have a coming out story?
"It seems that there have been people in all areas of my life who have had a tough time recognizing or respecting what it means to be Two Spirit, genderqueer, or pansexual. There is still a huge need for growth in awareness, understanding, and respect for gender variance, even within our own LGBT community, as we have overwhelmingly been raised to see gender as fixed within a gender binary, far and wide within a transphobic cultural context. I first came out in early childhood, and continue to have to reinforce my coming out to this day. When one doesn't fit the gender binary (which in turn affects the definition of one's sexual orientation), it seems like every day is 'coming out day.'"

What is the best thing about being trans/ gender-variant?

"Getting to experience every shade of myself, without being defined or limited by social constructs surrounding gender and sexuality. Communing with my higher spirit, which is comprised of all genders while also being unbound by gender."

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

"Animal welfare; HIV/AIDS; prison abolition and offender/ex-offender rights; bringing justice to the "justice" system; housing and medical access as basic human rights; reproductive rights; body- and sex-positive issues; workers' rights (for all, and especially for the sex industry); feminist issues; racial disparity; rights and protections for substance users; political participation by marginalized populations; pathway to immigration in the USA and EU, world citizenship for all Earth's inhabitants."

When did you start questioning gender?

"Around age 4, but because the doctor assigned one gender while I was in utero, and then changed his mind once I was born; I like to say I've been questioning since in utero."

How do you explain the way you feel about gender to others?

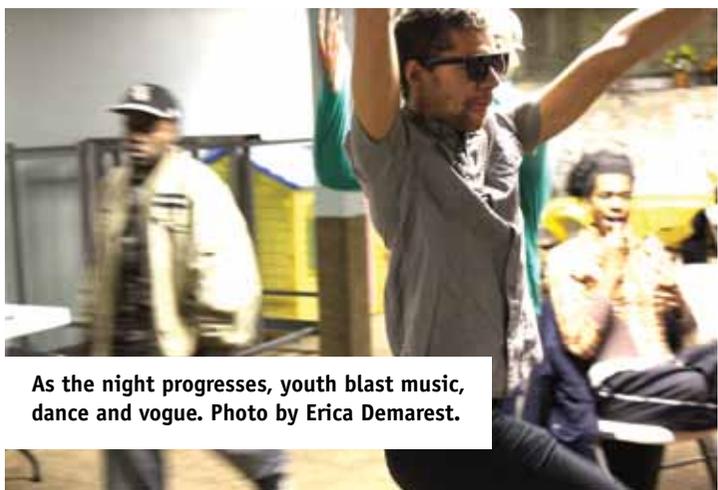
"Gender is a spectrum [draws a line], and where we fall can only be determined by our internal sense. Some individuals' internal senses are always fixed, while others' evolve over time. Some folks' internal experience of gender are more fluid, so that their gender flows back and forth along this spectrum, or is experienced as many points on the spectrum all at once. On the other hand, there are some whose gender doesn't fall on this spectrum at all, and they experience themselves as genderless, 3rd gender, and more."

GENERATION HALSTED

LGBTQ Youth Series from
**WINDY CITY
TIMES**



Z Williams. Photo by Erica Demarest.



As the night progresses, youth blast music, dance and vogue. Photo by Erica Demarest.



An attendee chats his with younger brother between bites of stew. Photo by Kate Sosin.



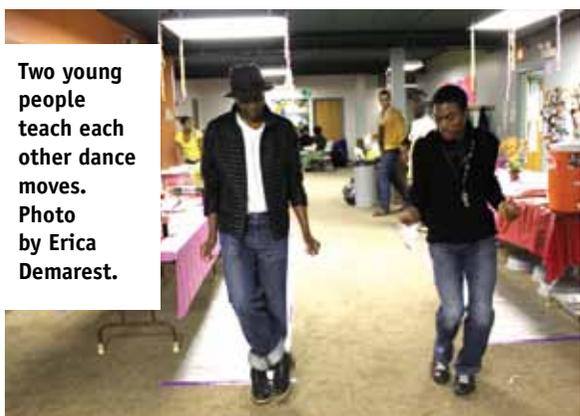
The Youth Lounge has operated a volunteer-run beauty parlor since Nov. 2011. "When we're cared for, we feel better about ourselves," the Rev. Lois Parr says. "There's a direct connection to self-esteem." Photo by Erica Demarest.



A volunteer dishes out hot food to one young person. He and his younger brother traveled to the Youth Lounge from the South Side to hang out with friends. Photo by Kate Sosin.



Two young people teach each other dance moves. Photo by Erica Demarest.



Attendees chat with volunteers while their nails are prepped for manicures. Photos by Kate Sosin.

Z's Church

BY ERICA DEMAREST

Four hours before her guests are set to arrive, Z Williams bustles about the United Broadway Methodist Church basement, making sure every detail is just right.

Carpets must be vacuumed. Colorful tablecloths are strategically arranged. Fresh flowers dot the dinner tables.

As visitors walk through the front door, they're greeted by the comforting smell of a home-cooked meal. Today, it's hearty beef stew paired with thick, fluffy cornbread.

"I like to look at it like we're having guests over," Williams says. "That requires a lot more time than just placing down some tables and chairs, but it's worth it."

For the last two-and-a-half years, Williams has run the Youth Lounge, Broadway United Methodist's LGBTQ-affirming drop-in program. Every second and fourth Saturday, the Lakeview church opens its doors to youth, who get hot meals, toiletries, entertainment (Wii, movies) and a place to relax.

Anywhere from 50 to 70 young people gather in the church's sprawling basement. Some scarf down platefuls of food; others braid one another's hair. Tables are pushed aside for a vogue competition, and about a dozen youth nap, curled up around one another, in a dim annex.

The scene reads more 'hangout' than 'youth program,' and that's the point, Williams says.

When Williams (who had been volunteering with LGBT youth for years) first started kicking around the idea of a youth lounge, she and pastor Lois McCullen Parr visited other Boystown programs. While the pair liked much of what they saw, they often uncovered rules, restrictions and guidelines that could be punitive toward the youth. In some cases, these dictates prevented young people from accessing programming.

"We decided to implement a very unique approach here: no rules," Williams says. "There are no rules whatsoever to our program. You don't come in and see a list of things you have to abide by. I believe if you raise the standard, it will give the young people something to aspire to ... It's risky, but it's working. It's definitely working."

The first lounge, which was hosted in March 2010 on a \$50 budget, brought in about a dozen youth. Word-of-mouth praise spread like wildfire, and numbers soon doubled and tripled. By March 2011, the lounge had gone from meeting once a month to twice.

"Being young and able to congregate with like-individuals in a structure where you're not being policed—that gave the young people a sense of freedom that they really treasure," Williams says. "Some people think the answer to everything is structure, and that's not the case."

When conflict arises during a lounge, Williams says, the youth often solve issues amongst themselves.

"I think some traditional church people would come in here and say: This is a church?!" Parr says with a laugh. "The youth will be horsing around and playing cards or whatever, and somebody will say, 'Fuck that bitch.' And then somebody else will go, 'Man, watch your language. Language!' There's this kind of self-policing that happens that is respectful."

Lounges run from 4:30-8 p.m. and feature little outward structure. Youth are free to eat, sleep, dance, play games or partake in programming—such as free manicures and pedicures or writing workshops—as they please.

Parr uses the analogy of a basement. All across the country, there are teenagers in their parents' basements, goofing off, watching TV, eating junk food, taking a nap, dancing and playing Wii.

"The young people here don't have a base-

Turn to page 13

GENERATION
HALSTED

LGBTQ Youth Series from

WINDY CITY
TIMES

Lakeview pastor talks 'love work'

BY ERICA DEMAREST

The Rev. Lois McCullen Parr has overseen Broadway United Methodist Church since August 2009. Along with the Rev. Vernice Thorn and volunteer Z Williams, Parr coordinates the church's twice-monthly Youth Lounge, an LGBTQ-affirming space for young people in Lakeview.

Parr recently sat down with Windy City Times to discuss youth programming, theological obligations and the value of volunteers.

Windy City Times: You've called your work with the Youth Lounge an extension of your spiritual mission. What do you mean by that?

Lois Parr: For me, the word 'worship' has a broader definition than just an hour on Sunday morning.

When we started [the lounge], we were specific to say: It's up to the youth to initiate relationships. At the first lounge, I didn't know anybody's name. And I thought: For young people to come in here and have this white 50-year-old woman say, 'Let's have a conversation. I want to know you,' is not loving. Not really. It's not meeting somebody where they are, which is, 'I need space.'

Now I know the names and stories of 20-odd regulars. Some of them would tell you they were here a long time before they knew I was a pastor [laughs]—which is not a bad thing. These youth are, for good reason, suspicious of the church. Our hope is to redefine church—not by preaching about God or Jesus, or anything like that, but to be faith in action.

Z [Williams] has termed that our 'love work,' and I think that's accurate.

WCT: What does it take to host one Youth Lounge? [The lounge operates on second and fourth Saturdays, from 4:30-8 p.m.]

LP: We like to have at least 10 volunteers. Some of us will come for setup at noon and stay until 9 p.m. cleanup. That's tiring. A couple of us are preachers the next day, and that's really hard. You need to have energy to be here because the young people have energy.

WCT: What does it cost each week?

LP: We benefit from great in-kind giving. Youth Lounge is not a separate entity, which means that everything—the space, utilities, toilet paper, paper towels, kitchen, water, bathrooms—is [covered by] Broadway United Methodist. If we were to add that up or rent a space, it would be a pretty big expense.

Another built-in cost-saver for us is that we operate entirely with volunteers. We're the cleanup crew, and if the toilet is stopped up—like it was this week—we're the plumber. That's just a huge number of volunteer hours committed to making it happen.

And all of our meals are donated. [Youth Lounge feeds 50-70 each week.] We are a congregation of about 130 people, and every two weeks, we have a sign-up list ... I'm always astonished at how much it is. Individuals bring a bag of onions, two boxes of spaghetti, ground beef, whatever ... and our [volunteer] cooks put it together. We do have a kitchen here, but it's not a big kitchen. I feel like our chief cook is a miracle worker.

WCT: So, is it accurate to say that you don't spend a lot of money? It all boils down to donations and volunteers.

LP: That's what makes it. Totally.

WCT: Theoretically, if another group had the space and volunteers, it'd be pretty easy to replicate the Youth Lounge, right?

LP: Right. We've dreamed about replicating it on the South and West Sides.

WCT: Why hasn't anyone else done it?

LP: The way we operate is, some people would say, risky. We don't have rules published at the door. We don't make people show us an ID or leave their bags anywhere. Some people would say: You're asking for trouble.

That's not been our experience. When you treat people with love and respect, they respond, and they rise to the occasion.

We've had 56 Youth Lounges so far, and we've probably had about six incidents. Six! Ain't nobody else got that record. Six! We don't have any guards at the door. Sometimes there's an escalated moment because somebody calls someone else a bitch, and it gets out of hand. People are living so precariously that it's easy to react in a hurry. But six incidents tells me that it makes a difference when you respect the youth.

WCT: Can you tell us the 'hole in the wall' story?

LP: We had an incident about a year ago where a fight suddenly broke out. People were horsing around, and in a flash, one person shoved another into the drywall downstairs; the guy went straight through the wall.

We decided: Let's not fix it. At the next Youth Lounge, we sat down with the young people and asked them what to do.

Several said, 'Can we help fix it? We'd like to help fix it.' [At the church,] we have an annual event called Hanging of the Greens, where we decorate for Christmas, so we decided to have the young people come. There were more youth than we needed for the wall, so they started to decorate with the congregation. The young people really took ownership of the space they called 'home.'

But I'll repeat: 56 lounges, six incidents. I think not everybody is willing to operate that way. I think for some people, it's too scary. You have to trust yourself to be okay in the space if it feels hairy. And I think you have to trust that the young people ultimately aren't interested in doing harm.

WCT: Some people might hear that wall story and worry about the financial risks associated with creating a similar program.

LP: Honestly, I don't think it's about that. I don't think it's about a financial risk, or 'Does our insurance cover it?' I think it's about people's emotional response to groups of young Black people. This is going to sound harsh, but I think some people are just scared. There are stories told of violence and destruction here in Boystown, but the youth here show respect. Because I give respect.

WCT: You train your volunteers in asset-based language. Can you tell us about that?

LP: It's how we talk and think about our young people, who come in with a lot of energy. This goes back to Take Back Boystown. Let's say a young Black man comes in the door, and he seems really angry. So, what happens if I don't label that as anger? What happens if I say: A passionate young man has just come in the door? That changes how we think about him.

That's the difference between giving and feeling sorry for somebody, versus giving to be in relationship with somebody. It's the difference between pity and compassion.

At the end of the night—especially in winter when it's cold out—[the volunteers] would all just sit around and mope. So we couldn't even give thanks for having spent four very successful hours with these young people because we were sad that we can't do more. Sometimes volunteers would say, 'I really just feel so sorry for them. I don't know where they're going to sleep.'

It's easy to get burnt out as a volunteer. So, how do we transform our thinking to say,

'I don't feel sorry for these young people. They have enormous resiliency and assets.' How do we claim the gifts we see in these young people and affirm them, rather than have this sense of separation?

WCT: How have neighbors reacted to the Lounge?

LP: Our first year, we kept intentionally quite a low profile. At our one-year anniversary, we sent a note to the neighbors and invited them to be involved. Most people were really positive, but one person was really, really ugly and left heinous, hateful messages on my voicemail.

And then the summer came, and Take Back Boystown happened. Somebody made an anonymous flyer claiming we directly support prostitution, drug dealing and violence in Lakeview. That's an absurd thing for anybody to say. Our reputation as Broadway Church is pretty well known, so people—including some of the media—responded supporting us.

WCT: Were there any repercussions?

LP: There was a short period of time that same summer, where the young people were really comfortable here and started sleeping on the patio. Our initial response was, 'We love you, you're safe here, you can stay there.' They got harassed, and we got some ugliness from neighbors. We had to turn the youth away. The truth is: It would jeopardize the Youth Lounge, which we weren't willing to do. We wish we had a shelter, but we don't.

At that time, it felt like: Gee, the neighbors are really breathing down on us. But the truth is: It wasn't the neighbors. It was a couple people. And they were loud.

The summer of 2011 was very tough. In contrast, this summer was a very positive experience.

WCT: Your congregation is committed to an anti-racism work. How does that play out in Lakeview?

LP: We know that a lot of the young people of color who come to Lakeview as a place where they can be safe, experience racism. We also know that young people who are survivors can get into conflict.

This is a social and philosophical, and I suppose political, comment. When a young Black man on the street, who, with his friends or alone, has been spit on, yelled at, had the police called about him, had a false arrest, has been questioned or searched by the police—or just been told be passersby, 'This is not your part of town. Get out of here. You're a hoodlum.'—to me, that is institutional and cultural violence.

So when young people walking down the street respond in anger, I do not personally believe they're initiating violence. They're responding to the violence of racism that's already been perpetuated on them.

Every day, people of color are negotiating the spaces they walk into, and white people don't have to. We are culpable as a culture, as a society, as a neighborhood. For us to ever say that young people who might do a desperate thing or start a fight are initiating anything is false. It's just false.

We need to examine our role in the social construct that makes it possible for people to not have a place to sleep or get a meal. It's your work as a citizen, as a human being, to look at how you participate in systems that create an environment where a 17-year-old Black kid might throw a punch. Why? If I talk to that kid, I can hear a lot of good reasons why he's angry.



The Rev. Lois Parr. Photos by Erica Demarest.



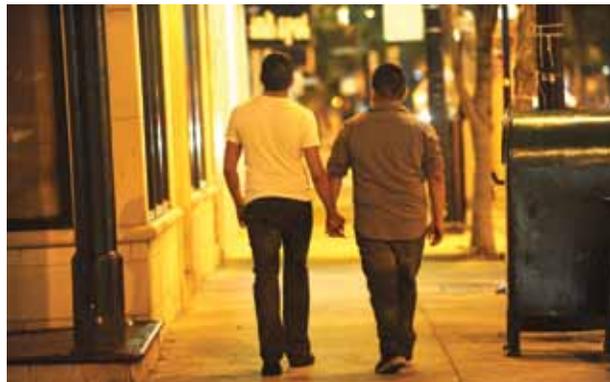
The Rev. Lois Parr answers emails in her office.

GENERATION
HALSTED

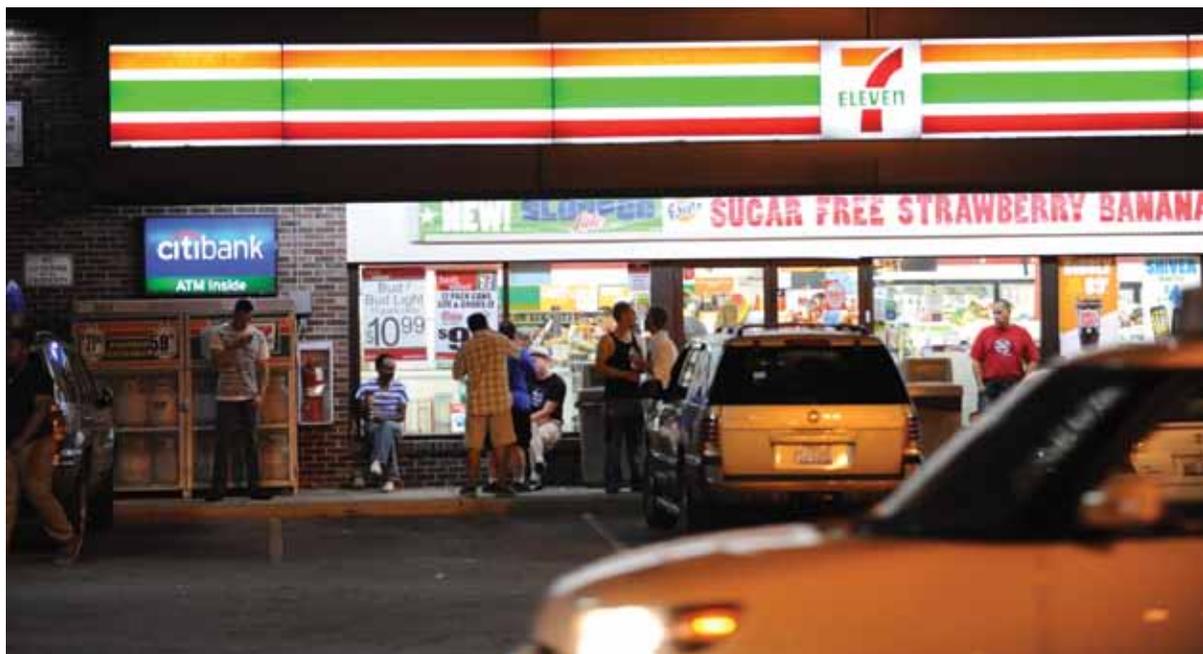
LGBTQ Youth Series from

WINDY CITY
TIMES

Overnight in Lakeview:



Photos by Bill Healy, Erica Demarest, Kate Sosin.



Lakeview residents have increasingly recounted overnight mayhem along their streets on summer weekends. Windy City Times (WCT) has received reports of people passed out on lawns, party-goers jumping on cars and trash filling the streets. For those who visit Lakeview on sunny afternoons, after the trash has been cleaned and before the clubs start blasting beats, the description of a neighborhood out of control is hard to imagine.

In August, WCT documented the neighborhood's drama for a night. A team of six reporters, equipped with cameras, notebooks and audio equipment, set out into the neighborhood to document how it changes from sundown to sunup. What follows are highlights from that Saturday evening and Sunday morning.

7:17 p.m. The sun is starting to set in the neighborhood. It's a warm night, and the streets are relatively quiet. The restaurants are full of people eating dinner.

8:04 p.m. Groups of people start appearing along Halsted.

10:28 p.m. At the corner of Buckingham and Halsted, people are walking past Nookie's. Everyone seems pretty chipper and relatively sober.

10:40-10:53 p.m. At Spin nightclub, the doorman dons a skimpy "Black Swan" costume. He checks in guests wearing similarly elaborate get-ups. Youth are congregating at the corner of Buckingham and Halsted. A few spill over into the street. No one seems to mind.

11:09 p.m. A taxi barrels down the street, windows down, blasting "Move Bitch" by Ludacris. People dance on the sidewalk. Two men walk southbound on Halsted carrying Jewel Osco bags and loaves of French bread.

11:15 p.m. Windy City Times reporters notice police handcuffing a man on the western side of Halsted Street. When the police realize reporters are watching them, they flash peace signs, let the man go and walk away.

11:30-11:32 p.m. Five police officers, in bright yellow vests, walk southbound on Halsted outside of Whole Foods, taking up the entire sidewalk. Two additional police officers, also dressed in bright yellow tops and black trousers, round the corner of Waveland and follow their co-workers down the street. A police SUV drives past Whole Foods, for a grand total of eight police officers on one block within two minutes.

1:28 a.m. About 30 people gather outside Scarlett, blocking the sidewalk entirely. The din has risen considerably, and the streets are packed. People shout, dance, climb in and out of cabs, and pour in and out of clubs.

1:35 a.m. At the intersection of Roscoe and Halsted, visibly drunk people crowd the street. Bar/club patrons walk in front of cars and cabs; drivers and pedestrians yell at one another. Trash has started to appear along the sidewalks. What appears to be dozens of napkins are scattered over the sidewalk in front of Roscoe's, where a large crowd blocks the sidewalk. The garbage cans along Halsted are already full.

1:46 a.m. On Halsted, dozens of people wearing tropical, luau-themed outfits sleepily pour out of a coach bus, and unload coolers and duffel bags.

1:53 a.m. Two EMTs sleep in their ambulance with the engine still running. Two women who appear to be intoxicated walk along Halsted. "We could go to the lakefront and drink it," one says to the other.

2:03 a.m. At the corner of Halsted and Waveland, an older man on the street begs for money with an outreached cup. "I'm hungry, ma'am," he says to a woman outside Kit Kat Lounge & Supper Club. The woman laughs and says "I'm hungry too!" as she walks away.

2:14 a.m. Two people in head-to-toe costumes pose along the sidewalk in front of Tulip Toy Gallery, as they distribute promotional flyers. One wears a skin-tight zebra costume; the other appears to be a leopard.

3:28 a.m. Most of the bars have closed. Mostly youth remains, and the streets are significantly quieter. Earlier, crowds were predominantly white. Now, most of the people outside are Black. A few stragglers remain near bars and clubs. The trash cans along Halsted are overflowing with garbage.

3:56 a.m.-4:08 a.m. Smokers gather outside Berlin. Some ask around to see if anyone has weed. Several people start to make their way to the red line as Berlin empties. Others climb into cabs, while some stand around and chat with friends.

4:31 a.m. The Starbucks at Belmont and Clark is crowded, mostly with people napping or sleepy-eyed. A homeless youth sleeps with her head on a counter by the window. Inside, a few other young people chat with a worker from The Night Ministry.

5:26 a.m. The sky is brightening with the sunrise, and the neighborhood is quiet save for the shush of passing cars. Trash lines the streets on both sides of Belmont. There are bottles, a crushed Cheetos bag, Starbucks cups, confetti and 7-Eleven pizza boxes. The window of a neighborhood dry cleaner is shattered but still standing. A glass with half a drink sits on the stoop of another Halsted business.

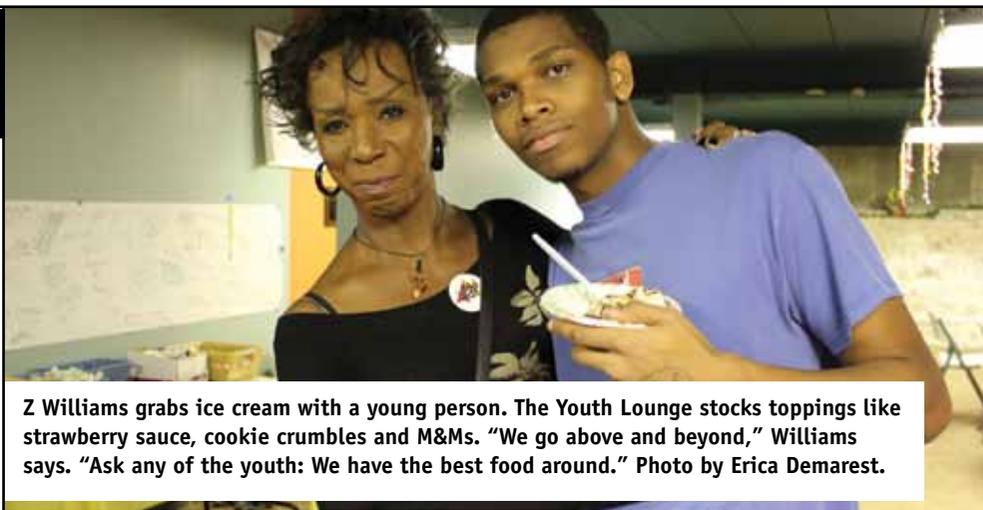
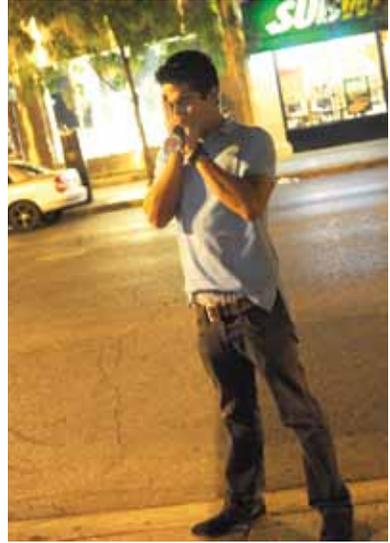
5:36 a.m. The streets are now nearly silent. The night over, one queer homeless youth heads off to find a place to sleep. Two men hail a cab. Moments later, two other men appear from an alley, looking slightly disheveled.

Follow this series for numbers on crime in Lakeview, interviews with police, thoughts from service providers and reflections from youth.

GENERATION HALSTED

LGBTQ Youth Series from WINDY CITY TIMES

A timeline



Z Williams grabs ice cream with a young person. The Youth Lounge stocks toppings like strawberry sauce, cookie crumbles and M&Ms. "We go above and beyond," Williams says. "Ask any of the youth: We have the best food around." Photo by Erica Demarest.

CHURCH from page 10

ment," she says. "So it's not a small thing to open your door twice a month and say: Come and be who you are here. If that means acting a fool, act a fool. Just be yourself, because yourself is a wonderful thing."

Many of the youth who visit the Youth Lounge identify as LGBT. A large number are homeless or precariously housed, and many have been shunned from families due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

"I think it's so brave of the young people now to be able to experiment and explore," Williams says. "That courage that I see in them constantly gave me the courage to look into myself and step beyond ... a lifetime that has not been true to who I was."

When this reporter first met Williams two years ago, she used male or female pronouns and dressed androgynously. Today, the 58-year-old proudly identifies as a trans woman and credits the youth with giving her the strength to transition.

"It's been a journey of affirmation for me to see these young people, who in many cases, lost a home, lost family, and ended up with nothing too much more than the streets, just to express who they are," Williams says.

Growing up, Williams tried on her mother's makeup and high heels, but quickly learned to "de-gay" herself to avoid bullies. Later in life, she would identify as gay but always felt "it wasn't far enough."

"There's a lot of work that has to be done within the gay community," Williams says. "To be trans—there's so much negative connotation. That was a weighing factor for me If you're living in Boystown—primarily if you're white or middle class—your system is pretty good. But being trans, if you're not in the entertainment field and entertaining the regular people, you're an oddity."

As the Youth Lounge progressed and Williams

developed close relationships with more and more young people, she felt both inspired and obliged to transition.

"I grew up in a very, very strict household," Williams says. "I honestly believe that if I had the courage to be honest to who I was at that time, that I would be in the same situation as these young people. I believe that with all my heart, so I feel a kinship to them There's a lot of responsibility that comes along with that."

Several youth have dubbed Williams "Mother Z" or the "Mother of Belmont," and many refer to Broadway United Methodist as "Z's Church."

Williams takes special pride in mentoring young trans women, whom she encourages to express non-stereotypical forms of femininity. There's more to being a trans female than long wigs and push-up bras, she says.

Slowly, Williams has seen young people grow into themselves, just as she has.

"This is not a pipe dream," Williams says. "This is not a space where young people come in, feel good, and go on their merry way. Our philosophy is that we work from the inside out We try to make the young people feel good, because once you have that feeling of self-worth, you will find a way to improve your condition."

Williams beams with motherly pride as she recounts a recent conversation: A volunteer at the Crib (The Night Ministry's LGBT-friendly shelter) told Williams she could tell when the Youth Lounge has been in session. Youth who stay at the shelter on those nights are calmer and more self-possessed; arguments and incidents are rare.

"We're not trying to cure what these young people are facing in their lives as a whole," Williams deadpans. "We're not equipped for that. ... We're giving them a chance. I feel that these young people deserve the best, and I'm determined through this program to give them the best that I can."

To learn more about Youth Lounge, visit www.broadwaychurchchicago.org.

next week in



Beyond Boystown: Follow Windy City Times on a trip to 75th and Halsted, learn more about Youth Pride Services, and see how Chicago stacks up nationally.

for more

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VIEWPOINTS

WINDY CITY TIMES

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

Community Marketing, Inc.



SRIDHAR RANGAYAN

Touring queer Mumbai

It was time for nostalgia and a walk down memory lane, literally. "Gulabi Yatra (Pink Tour)"—which Mumbai, India's youth LGBT group, Yaariyan, organized—recently took a large group of young gay, lesbian and transgender youth to some of the historic sites in Mumbai that gays frequented in bygone days. These were places where right from early 1980s, gays in Mumbai would go to meet other gay men, often clandestinely, for pickups or sexual encounters.

The stopovers for the tour were Bandra Railway Station, Maheshwari Gardens, Gateway of India and Gokul Restaurant. Ashok Row Kavi, chairperson of The Humsafar Trust, and me, a filmmaker and founder trustee of The Humsafar Trust, provided notes and anecdotes about each of the places.

Kavi said, "These were the only places for gays to meet, interact and know each other. Many of the lasting friendships and relationships actually started at these very places. Alternative families were formed at these very public spaces."

It was also discussed how, in those days when everything was hidden and invisible, meeting at these places sometimes could also lead to dangerous situations—being picked up by a plainclothes policeman and threatened or blackmailed by hustlers.

"With safe LGBT spaces available now and also the presence of internet dating sites, very few physical spaces are being used nowadays as meeting places," I said. "These places, used for cruising, were also places of community intervention where safe-sex messages were given and



Sridhar Rangayan (left) and Ashok Row Kavi. Photo courtesy of Rangayan.

condoms were handout to the then underground community."

"Through Ashok and Sridhar, we heard such funny and fascinating incidents! We need more such interactions so that younger guys know more about their efforts/trials/struggles for that little safe space which we take for granted today," said Sibi, one of the forces behind Yaariyan.

"It was wonderful getting acquainted with landmarks and places we have spent years visiting, only to see them in a whole new 'pink' light this time," said Shruta, one of the youth orga-

nizers of the event.

The busload of young LGBT individuals felt the Gulabi Yatra was certainly a delightful way to spend a Sunday evening, learning and reliving the good old days—when, before parties and the Internet—safe places for gay men to meet was scarce.

It is important to record and document some of these histories. Otherwise, they will be lost forever.

Sridhar Rangayan is an Indian filmmaker who has made films with special focus on queer subjects.

LETTERS

Vatican vortex

Dear Editor,

The LGBT community—in its defense of the evolution of marriage, as opposed to the inflexible position of the Church that marriage is only allowed between a man and woman—is dealing with a loss of reason from the Vatican.

The marriage-equality victories visibly shook the Vatican, the epicenter of anti-gay bigotry. Maryland, Maine and Washington state approved same-sex marriage by popular vote. Minnesota pushed back an attempt to write homophobia into the state constitution in the election that returned Barack Obama to the presidency. Also, Spain upheld its gay-marriage law and France pushed ahead with legislation that could see same-sex marriage legalized early next year.

Responding to these big wins in the United States and Europe, the Vatican opened the floodgates of drama in a front-page article in the Nov. 10 issue of the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*. The Holy See sought to frame itself as the lone voice of courage in opposing initiatives to give same-sex couples legal recognition. In a separate Vatican Radio editorial, the pope's spokesman asked sarcastically why same-sex-marriage proponents don't now push for legal recognition for polygamous couples as well.

"One might say the church, at least on this

front, has been defeated," an article stated in *L'Osservatore Romano*. This was from a Vatican news outlet that promotes propaganda over reason, and refuses to publicly debate the issue with representatives of the Rainbow Sash Movement.

"The church is called to present itself as the lone critic of modernity, the only check ... to the breakup of the anthropological structures on which human society was founded," the article continued. So much for a position of reason—it would appear the Vatican is no longer speaking for worldwide Christianity, and that's a good thing.

Bill O'Connor
 Rainbow Sash Movement

World AIDS Day:
A call to remembrance

This year World AIDS Day falls on Saturday, Dec. 1. Many in our community and among our allies have lost loved ones to AIDS. Many have loved ones who live with HIV. This disease robs us of our humanity, because it attempts to define our human dignity in terms of our sexuality solely.

On Dec. 1 at 7 p.m., Alexian Brothers Bonaventure House, the Archdiocesan Gay and Lesbian Outreach, St. Joseph Catholic Church and Immaculate Conception Catholic Church are

sponsoring their 20th annual World AIDS Prayer Service at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, 1107 N. Orleans St. All are welcome. Parking is available on Hill Street in the church's school parking lot across the street from the church. A reception will follow the prayer service.

Our prayer service is a sacred space to call the community to remembrance. We gather in prayer as an opportunity for people in Chicago to unite in the fight against HIV/AIDS, show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died of AIDS. Please join us.

Prayer for World AIDS Day

Excerpt from *Catholic Relief Services, Candlelight Vigil of Hope*

We indeed find hope in the light of Christ. Yet, we cannot remain complacent in this hope. We must not forget that 33 million people in the world are living with HIV and AIDS and 5,700 are dying from AIDS each day. Many of those infected are ostracized by the stigma. They live in silence and suffer alone, afraid to seek the help they need, afraid to go against their culture's norms. HIV and AIDS affect men, women and children of every race and economic level.

Joe Murray
 Chicago

GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo by Michael Brasilow

A 'JENNY'-SPLENDORED THING

Jennifer Avery (left) and Lily Mojekwu star in the play *Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter*. Read the review on page 12.

DISH

Food and atmosphere.
Page 30.

Photo at Marie's by Shira Kollins



BILLY MASTERS

Louganis makes waves.
Page 33.

Photo of Greg Louganis courtesy of Louganis



SPORTS

The wheel deal.
Page 34.

Photo of Erin O'Feil Stevens from Stevens



SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

And a merry Minnelli to you

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

The past three months have been a whirlwind for the creators of About Face Theatre's world-premiere holiday musical *We Three Lizas*.

"It was so fast," said *We Three Lizas* director and About Face Theatre artistic associate Scott Ferguson about getting the go-ahead to create the show this past August. "I was thinking it would be a year from now, but [About Face Theatre director Bonnie Metzgar] was like, 'No, let's go. We've got to get started, we've got to get a schedule and start having auditions,' and we were like, 'Whaaat?!'"

Ferguson's first fellow collaborator on *We Three Lizas* was About Face artistic associate Scott Bradley, who is best known for his locally produced camp musicals like *Alien Queen* and *Carpenters Halloween* through *The Scooty & JoJo Show*. Bradley performs in the show and is also responsible for the show's libretto.

Bradley admitted to singing in his hairbrush along with Cher and Liza Minnelli growing up in the 1970s, and he felt it was vital to pick just the right gay icon with a "larger-than-life iconography to match the holiday."

"Really, Liza still sits in this strange place," Bradley said, regarding Minnelli's position as a gay icon following on the heels of an older generation's idea of a gay icon like her mother, Judy Garland, and subsequent generations' embrace of more defiant performers like Madonna and Lady Gaga. "Everyone knows about Liza Minnelli as a gay icon because of her resilience—that

quality of taking these knocks and coming back and that reinvention that she's able to do."

And because Liza grew up among showbiz royalty with her mother as a mega-watt Hollywood celebrity and her father, Vincent Minnelli, as a major film director, Bradley says she "always lived in a different realm from the rest of us" and has always been part of a "Hollywood and Broadway mythology."

Hence the concept for *We Three Lizas*, which focuses on an aging gay man named Conrad Ticklebottom who tries to recapture his glory days by conjuring the "Great Queen of Wishes" to bestow upon him youth, wealth and beauty. Instead, three distinct and mystical versions of Liza Minnelli come to bestow their gifts in a Christmas Carol style to Conrad and his anxious assistant, Reggie.

Those three versions of Liza include her at her effervescent performance peak from the 1970s (played by Danielle Plisz), Liza as we know her today from her *Arrested Development* TV roles and tattered vocal range (played by Scott Bradley in drag) and a sort of future Liza known as "Liza Always" that Ferguson describes as "the Liza that lives in everyone's hearts" that is voiced by Sean Blake and will involve some form of puppetry.

Because of the tight deadline, Ferguson was keen to bring aboard someone who could write music quickly and be able to make quick adjustments as a music director. Luckily, Alan Schmuckler was available, a multiple Jeff Award-nominee known for his acting chops (*A Minister's Wife*,

From left: Sean Blake, Scott Bradley and Danielle Plisz in *We Three Lizas*. Photo by Cheryl Mann

Sugar) and acclaimed composing skills on Chicago Shakespeare Theater children's shows like *The Emperor's New Clothes* and *How Can You Run with a Shell on Your Back*?

"I grew up not particularly immersed in the Liza lore," said Schmuckler, who was more familiar with the scores and songs of frequent Minnelli collaborators composer John Kander and lyricist Fred Ebb rather than their ties to a single iconic performer. But in doing his research on Liza Minnelli, Schmuckler came to see why she has become such an icon.

"[Liza] was and continues to be a pretty striking performer," Schmuckler said. "She has such an unbridled passion for what she does and it comes across in waves."

So far Ferguson and Bradley have been exuberant with praise for Schmuckler's music and additional lyrics, particularly a Kander and Ebb-sounding number for Plisz called "I Can't Believe I'm Me" featuring a Bob Fosse-inspired routine by choreographer Patrick Andrews.

"Danielle looks and sounds just like Liza Minnelli, and then she has her two backup dancers doing this number that is just going to stop the show," Ferguson said.

Much like *Hell in a Handbag Productions'* Rudolph the Red-Hosed Reindeer or the Goodman Theatre's *A Christmas Carol*, the creators of *We Three Lizas* hope that the show will develop a following and become an annual tradition for About Face Theatre.

"The show takes a lot of traditional holiday shows and movies and books and sees them through sparkly queer eyes," Ferguson said about *We Three Lizas*. "It's just really a lot of fun."

We Three Lizas runs in previews from Nov. 30 to Dec. 1 with an official press opening on Sunday, Dec. 2. The regular run continues through Sunday, Dec. 23, at The Steppenwolf Garage, 1624 N. Halsted St. Performance times are 7 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 3 and 7 p.m. Saturdays and 7 p.m. Sundays (an extra 3 p.m. matinee is Dec. 16). The main event begins following a 45-minute "cocktail hour" in Liza's Lounge featuring opening acts by guest artists. Tickets are \$25 and \$15 for students. Discounts are also available for groups of 10 or more. Call 312-335-1650 or visit www.steppenwolf.org or www.aboutface theatre.com for more information.



It's a Wonderful Santa Land Miracle. Photo by Brian Work

THEATER REVIEWS

It's a Wonderful Santa Land Miracle...

Playwright: Street Tempo ensemble et al.
At: Street Tempo Theatre at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave
Tickets: 773-327-5252;
www.stage773.com; \$28
Runs through: Dec. 30

Gift of the Magi

Playwright: book by Mark St. Germain, music by Randy Courts, lyrics by Randy Courts and Mark St. Germain
At: Porchlight Theatre at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave.
Tickets: 773-327-5252;
www.stage773.com; \$39
Runs Through: Dec. 23

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Audiences for Street Tempo's holiday show may expect to be fed cookies and eggnog, garlanded with flowered leis (during the Hawaiian "Mele Kalikimaka" number), and inundated with showers of fake snow, cascades of bubbles from a jar and clouds of flour (during the "Cooking With Elves" number). Don't let the playful tone fool you—Brian Posen's hard-working squad of smart young comics have set as their ambitious goal an "all-inclusive" holiday celebration, insofar as such a thing is possible.

The 85-minute (with intermission) evening's slate delivers a few of the expected laughs—the "Cooking With Elves" sketch parodies popular chefs, a New Year's Eve party grows increasingly raucous—but a "who's on first" patter segues into a charity appeal for the orphaned pronouns providing the vaudeville turn's humor, while another PSA reveals the shockingly inhumane source of those Jean Shepherd-inspired light fixtures. We also glimpse airports following canceled flights, shelters following home evictions, and toy shops where a lonely doll-maker dances a wistful pas de deux with his creations.

The season's villains—e.g. Grinch, Scrooge, Lucifer—get their moment in the spotlight, as do the other seasonal festivals, and a gospel chorus "welcomes to the table" diners observing dietary restrictions. Indeed, even the year's other revels get their say, protesting the lack of Thanksgiving carols or Halloween feasts. Every premise, no matter how grim, ends on an up-

beat note, however. In this show, when they say, "bless us, EVERY one," they mean it.

In *The Gift of the Magi*, one scene depicts a flimsy evergreen branch festooned with kitchen utensils to simulate a decorated tree. Randy Courts and Mark St. Germain's Sondheim-esque songs also weigh heavily on a lightweight book adapted from two stories by O. Henry, but Kevin McKillip lends a touch of Shakespearean grandeur to his portrayal of a vagrant whose winter plans include a warm jail cell, while Jason Richards and Chelsea Morgan make a suitably sweet pair of lovers, ably assisted by Nate Lewellyn, Gerald Richardson and Heather Townsend delivering muscular performances conjuring an urban *fin-de-siècle* milieu steeped in romance for this Porchlight Theatre production.

CRITICS' PICKS

Down and Derby, The New Colony at Red Tape Theatre, through Dec. 8. Aaron Weissman's script may be a bit basic at times, but the atmosphere is great for this world-premiere drama about an inclusive roller-derby team that faces struggles in the face of its community-rallying success. SCM

Hellcab, Profiles Theatre, through Dec. 23. A humble hackie takes us on a tour of Chicago's Stygian darkness (with a few unexpected rays of light) in this richly textured revival of the long-running 1990s hit. MSB

The Magic Parlour, The House Theatre of Chicago at Palmer House Hilton, open run. Youthful master magician Dennis Watkins offers an intimate hour of jaw-dropping sleight-of-hand magic and mind-reading in an oak-paneled room. His clever repartee adds to the fun. \$75 with drinks. Fri.-Sat. only, 10:30 p.m. JA

The Opponent, A Red Orchid Theatre, through Dec. 2. You can smell the sweat and testosterone in the gym where a boxer with nothing but his future and a trainer with nothing but his past go head-to-head, toe-to-toe and glove-to-glove over broken dreams. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

THEATER REVIEW

Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter

Playwright: Julie Marie Myatt
At: Next Theatre at Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes St., Evanston
Tickets: 847-475-1875 or www.nexttheatre.org; \$30-\$40
Runs through: Dec. 23

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Can civilians ever truly understand what is going on the minds of injured U.S. war veterans trying to reintegrate into society after tours in Afghanistan and Iraq? Many of those veterans undoubtedly need help, but what's the best way of reaching out to them?

Playwright Julie Marie Myatt's nobly but obliquely addresses these questions in her drama *Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter*. Now having its Midwest premiere at Next Theatre, *Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter* certainly has its heart in the right place, but its dramatic approach may frustrate more than it aims to illuminate.

We first get a glimpse into the psyche of former U.S. Marine Jenny Sutter (Lily Majekwu), presumably as she's recuperating from her battle injuries. Then we're transported to a rundown California bus terminal where we find out that Sutter is struggling to work with her new prosthetic right leg.

Sutter is standoffish to people she encounters, including terminal employee Hugo (Justin James Farley) and the gregarious drifter Lou (Jenny Avery). Not wanting to return home, Sutter takes Lou's invitation to travel with her to a

desert community of societal outcasts who have formed a sort of communal collective on the grounds of a decommissioned military base.

It's here that the drama feels hijacked, since the focus veers away from Sutter to Lou and her attempts to reach out to the emotionally distanced veteran. Lou is bubbly at talking about her addiction issues of drugs, booze and sex, while Sutter recedes into the background.

We eventually learn of the traumatic event that has emotionally and physically scarred Sutter, but not without a bunch of other communal characters skewing the show's focus. The fact that the characters mention other war veterans on the commune grounds that never appear also compromises Myatt's script, since we wonder why they haven't reached out to Sutter rather than the civilian ones who do.

If the play isn't all that one feels it could be, at least Next Theatre has vividly illustrated the drama with a vivid production by director Jessica Thebus. She's aided greatly by Rick and Jackie Penrod's ingeniously practical set design and Kevin O'Donnell's standout sound design.

The acting company is also great at creating distinctive characters, particularly Lawrence Grimm as the self-taught rambling preacher Buddy, Hanna Dworkin as the low-cost therapist Cheryl and Kurt Brocker as the angry malcontent Donald. But pride of place definitely goes to Avery's outgoing Lou and Majekwu's Sutter, who keeps her emotions painfully in check largely throughout.

Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter brings to the fore issues that Americans shouldn't shy away from in light of over a decade of overseas military conflict. Too bad the play's focus feels so misdirected and compromised.

THEATER REVIEW

Santa's Dead!; Dirty Carol's Christmas

Playwrights: Tony Lewis, Aaron Michael Adamkiewicz and Karla Meyer
At: MidTangent Productions at Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St.
Tickets: www.hydratechicago.com; \$10
Runs through: Dec. 22

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Chicagoans aren't at a loss if they're looking for a strong dose of camp theater this holiday season. Just to name a few, Hell in a Handbag Productions is reviving Rudolph the Red-Hosed Reindeer, About Face Theatre has its world premiere of *We Three Lizas* and Mid-Tangent Productions is offering new musical double bill at Hydrate: *Santa's Dead!* and *Dirty Carol's Christmas*.

Now as a company famed for its drag-filled productions like *Snow White and the Seven Drag Queens* or *Twinkie and the Beast*, Mid-Tangent might confuse some of its audiences with Tony Lewis' *Santa's Dead!* since it contains no drag queens.

Instead, *Santa's Dead!* is centered around a wonderfully over-the-top performance from Katerina Papadatos as a wholly untraditional Mrs. Claus. Instead of being the background pie-making matron, Papadatos' Mrs. Claus is an all out buxom blonde bimbo whose voice mews with Marilyn Monroe-like sultriness. She also harbors a murderous intent to gain power at all costs.

Papadatos is the main reason to sit through the so-so one act that is *Santa's Dead!*, since her fellow actors aren't up to her level of camp comedy (Edlyn Griffin as the sarcastic elf narrator Boppy and Karla Meyer as the 1930s chorine elf Moppy come the closest). Lewis' murder-mystery script with songs is also serviceable rather than being truly something that's high-end camp comedy.



Dirty Carol's Christmas. Photo from Mid-Tangent Productions

Luckily the vicious camp comedy takes off in *Dirty Carol's Christmas*, co-written with plenty of panache by two of its stars: Aaron Michael Adamkiewicz (as the lusty lush title character in glitzy glamour drag that brings to mind a whacked out version of Broadway diva Christine Ebersole) and Karla Meyer (who plays the resentfully beautiful goth daughter Xmas Tina).

Like a second-rate celebrity holiday special, *Dirty Carol's Christmas* focuses on its hostess and guests who drop in to sing and exchange banter. Rather than being incapacitated by cascades of booze, the liquor only fuels Carol's ability to snap out insults and one-liners about her often spiteful guests.

In *Dirty Carol's Christmas*, the main supporting cast is firing on all comic cylinders. Katerina Papadatos once again shows off her vital comic skills Carol's pushy Christian fundamentalist sister from Texas, Candy Cane, while Noah Lederach and Nick Rinhart make for a great gay May-to-December duo of Dean and Sugar. Danny Piehocinski also provides a visually pleasing hunk of beefcake as the FedEx Delivery Man who gets ensnared in *Dirty Carol's* booze and sex-filled world.

As in many MidTangent productions, the costumes are fabulous (a great credit this time to Mimi Monee) while the sound design is unsatisfactorily patchy. But for \$10 and a few drinks, you can't complain too much for these consistent creators of pop-culture camp and drag.



At the Flash's David Leeper. Photo courtesy of David Zak

THEATER REVIEW

At the Flash

Playwright: Sean Chandler and David Leeper

At: Pride Films and Plays at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.
Tickets: 800-838-3006;
www.brownpapertickets.com; \$21-\$25
Runs through: Dec. 16

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

There's not many gay bars that can boast of having stayed open continuously for 40 years. Co-playwrights Sean Chandler and David Leeper propose such an oasis, operating under the same name from the shadowy 1960s to the out-and-

proud 2010s, its clientele over the decades representing a history of gay life in America. In this one-man show, Leeper assumes the role of performer to acquaint us with five of the ambassadors we would likely encounter at The Flash.

The Flash, you see, wasn't always the palatial gateway to the LGBT community, introduced at the beginning of the play on the occasion of its 2012 grand reopening, attended by mainstream press (some tracing its roots to neighborhood-guide handouts) in addition to owner Rod Mahoney's committed partner and their adopted daughter. Ah, but as our host fusses over preparations for the event, ghostly figures from the past emerge to remind us of the changes occurring just outside the doors of this sanctuary.

We meet blue-collar Richard in the 1960s,

Jan Kallish to leave Victory Gardens

Executive Director Jan Kallish has announced plans for her departure from Victory Gardens at the end of November.

Kallish has been with Victory Gardens since February 2009. General Manager Chris Mannelli will assume managing director duties while the board conducts a search for her successor.

Kallish, in a statement, said, "For the past four years, it has been my honor and privilege to work with the talented and fiercely dedicated staff and board at Victory Gardens, where the challenging and all important mission of new work is respected and celebrated.

"I look forward to my next chapter as I continue to teach at DePaul and embark on my next adventure in producing and managing theater."

Renaissance names new head

Greg Cameron, board president of The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, announced the appointment of Solveig Øvstebø as the organization's first new executive director in nearly 40 years.

Øvstebø is currently the director of Bergen Kunsthall, an avant-garde contemporary art space in her native Norway. She is expected to start at the Renaissance Society next June. Until that time, current longtime Executive Director Susanne Ghez will remain at the helm—a position she has held since 1974.

The Renaissance Society is a non-collecting museum of contemporary art located on the campus of the University of Chicago. See www.RenaissanceSociety.org.

'Rudolph the Red-Hosed Reindeer' Nov. 29-Dec. 30

Hell in a Handbag Productions is running Rudolph the Red-Hosed Reindeer, David Cerda's parody of the classic children's television special Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, for the 15th year.

It will run at Mary's Attic, 5400 N. Clark St. Previews are Nov. 29-30; the regular run is Thursdays through Saturdays Dec. 30, with an additional show Dec. 22.

General admission is \$12-\$22, and VIP tickets are \$35-\$95. Call 800-838-3006 or visit www.brownpapertickets.com/event/131657.

'Santaland' running Nov. 23-Dec. 30

Theater Wit's ninth consecutive outing of David Sedaris' The Santaland Diaries will take place Nov. 23-Dec. 30 at 1229 W. Belmont Ave.

Adapted for the stage by Joe Mantello with Theater Wit Artistic Director Jeremy Wechsler helming the production, Mitchell Fain will again star (with the candy-stripe tights).

Tickets are \$18-\$35; call 773-975-8150 or visit www.TheaterWit.org.

SPOTLIGHT



Now is the last chance for Chicago theatergoers to catch **Les Miserables** in a professional stage production before the much-anticipated motion picture version hits multiplexes this December. See why this sung-through pop-opera version of Victor Hugo's sprawling 19th-century novel became such a global smash hit in a return engagement of the 25th anniversary touring production. *Les Miserables* continues through Sunday, Dec. 2, at the Cadillac Palace Theatre, 151 W. Randolph St. Tickets are \$18-\$95; call 800-755-2000 or visit www.broadwayinchicago.com. Photo courtesy of Broadway in Chicago

torn between love for his family and guilty forays into the darkness of back-room sex. In the 1970s, we hear transgender Miss Sparkle exhort her cross-dressing sisters to appreciate the tolerance enjoyed within The Flash's safe confines. During the 1980s, party-boy Derrick clings to the hedonistic lifestyle in a stubborn attempt to ignore the growing threat of AIDS. ("I came out just in time for a plague!" he laments.) Finally, the 1990s find schoolteacher Mona, devastated by her lesbian lover's lonely death in a hospital only permitting "relatives" to visit, crusading for marital and filial rights.

Their progress is not presented in chronological order, but in a kaleidoscopic mosaic requir-

ing Leeper to switch back and forth between characters with often less than a sentence for the transition. Under the direction of David Zak, however, the vividly etched portraits never disintegrate into caricature, but remain distinct and immediately recognizable throughout the show's brief 80 minutes of playing time.

The stories make for an engaging and surprisingly epic narrative, and although none can be said to end happily—contented, perhaps, or resolute, but hardly cheery—there is empowerment in surveying the accomplishments of the outsiders who congregated for recreation, but grew to lead a social revolution. Did *you* anticipate the importance of *your* own first step into a gay bar?

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NUNN ON ONE: TV

Zachary Quinto on 'Horror Story' and the big reveal



BY JERRY NUNN

American Horror Story's second season has kicked it into scary high gear after a successful first year on the FX Network. Set in an insane asylum during 1964, the series stars Jessica Lange as Sister Jude and Zachary Quinto as Dr. Oliver Thredson. In the first season of the horror show, Quinto played Chad, a previous gay owner of the haunted house.

The star of television's Heroes and the movie reboot of Star Trek came out of the closet in October of last year. He was a supporter of gay rights prior to that working with the Trevor Project and the It Gets Better Project. His theater credits include such LGBT notables as Angels in America and The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later, about the murder of Matthew Shepard.

His character has been key to the new season of "Horror Story" with the recent big reveal that he is the sadistic skin-fetish killer Bloody Face. Windy City Times talked to him the day after this shocking episode.

Windy City Times: Hi, Zachary. Someone was just in Chicago to help with the Obama campaign!

Zachary Quinto: Yes, I was, and happy to be there for such a positive celebration in your city.

WCT: So everyone knows the big secret in American Horror Story now. Did you know all along?

ZQ: Yes, I knew from the very beginning. It was part of the conversation that I had with Ryan Murphy about me coming back to the second installment of the show in the first place. I very much informed on the character that I was building from the beginning.

As a result, I felt like my responsibility became to create a character that people could trust, or at least trust initially, and have some hope that

perhaps he is actually the one voice of reason and sanity within this chaotic world. So it was actually more exciting for me to know from the beginning. It gave me more to play with, more to hold back and more secrets to keep.

WCT: Sylar was evil in Heroes. Were you worried about playing another bad guy?

ZQ: I think any time an actor revisits territory that they've been in before, it can be a source of trepidation, as it was for me. But part of the reason that I loved what the opportunity stood for was that I got to know, going in, I got to really build something. With Heroes, that character was built before I was ever attached to it. There were eight episodes of anticipation that were built before you met "Gabriel Gray" in Heroes, but I had no participation in that.

So for me it was really exciting to get to go in having all the information, and actually be that part of the process of creating a character. That, to me, was a difference.

It's just more rooted in character and relationship, and less rooted in the sort of peripheral elements like superpowers. I liked that this was grounded and real.

It's not a six-year commitment, as it could be with another show. It's self-contained and it was an immersion that I'm not going to be repeating or carrying on for an extended period of time. It was something I got to go do and contribute. I could benefit, grow and learn. That is an environment in which I thrive. So I was really excited about all those elements.

WCT: You had a powerful aversion-therapy scene as the doctor trying to change the lesbian journalist Lana straight. What did you think of performing that scene?

ZQ: I mean, I think the scene was very reflective of a pervasive mentality of the time. As unsettling as it is, I think it was powerful to revisit it and to present an audience with a reflection of that kind of really abhorrent thinking. Obviously, we've come a long ways since then and that's great. There's so much progress made and more work to do.

So I think it's always good when you're able to, as an actor, allow your work to be some kind of a conduit for a social discourse. I think an examination of where we are as a society. This installment of the show is really doing that in a lot of powerful ways, that being one of many. So this is another reason why I'm grateful to be a part of this kind of storytelling and this kind of environment.

WCT: He seems to be a little specific with



Zachary Quinto. Photo by Frank Ockenfels/FX

Lana and her girlfriend. Are we learning more about why Thredson [Quinto's character] is doing this?

ZQ: Yes, [the next] show is called "The Origins of Monstrosity" and so it really dives into a lot of the roots of the characters in this world in Asylum. So, yes, a lot of things will become clearer and probably even more disturbing in the next couple of weeks.

WCT: It almost seemed like some kind of test.

ZQ: Yes, I think it was a test and I think a lot of his actions in the first four and a half episodes of Asylum were serving some ulterior motive. So I think he was trying to gain Lana's trust—gain some proximity to her and some intimacy with her. I think he was definitely trying to show her that he could be there for her—that she could rely on him even through something as ugly as that and as brutal as that.

As barbaric as we can see it today, at the time it was a pervasive social mentality that homosexuality was something that could be treated medically or psychologically. So I think to that end, he was implementing the forward thinking of the time to try to help her, or try to feel like he was helping her, to make some effort to get her out of there. Then it put him in a position when it didn't work to devise a more radical approach to getting her out; that she would then be more likely to go along with because he's already tried the more prescribed route or institutional route.

She already has trust in him, so she's more likely to go along with it. I think it's kind of a manipulative tactic that worked to a tee for him. So I think that's what's that's an example of there.

WCT: I heard you are good friends with Sarah Paulson, who plays Lana Winters.

ZQ: Well I especially have a respect for Sarah as an actress, but it's a rare and unique opportunity to show up to work with a really good friend.

I think she's doing such wonderful work on the show that I also just love watching her character and the journey that she's taking. She's gone

to so many extreme and challenging emotional places, and done it so beautifully and dynamically. I just think her work is so incredible, so it's been a joy for me, really, this whole experience.

WCT: This season you are the threat, and last season a victim.

ZQ: Yes; I mean, there are different styles. I feel like the story last year was just told in a different style. This year is a period piece and there are other considerations that go along with that, just in terms of characterization I think. I don't know how much it has to do with, like, being the antagonist in a lair, the sort of threat this year myself rather than the victim. That's all just circumstantial.

There are still a lot of psychological manipulations going on from one end that makes it a little bit more veiled, or always holding something back this year, but that's just all fun. I just think of it in terms of who's the person, what's driving the person. Obviously, those motivations are very different for Chad [Quinto's first-season character] than they are for Thredson.

WCT: Will you be on season three?

ZQ: I just read today that the show got picked up for a third installment, so that's very exciting. I'm so glad it's doing well and people are really responding to it, and FX has been really great and so supportive and innovative in the stuff that they're doing. So it's great to work there and be a part of it. I haven't had any conversations with Ryan about what he's thinking for the third season, so I have no idea.

I love my job and I love the people that I do it with and I always want that to be the case. So I know he has plans and if they involve me, I'm sure I'll have a call at some point; but I don't know anything about it. I'm just focused on getting through the rest of this season and moving onto the next phase of stuff that I have lined up.

WCT: Why do you think gory shows like American Horror Story and The Walking Dead are so popular on cable?

ZQ: I think the networks already know that the boundaries can be pushed further on cable. I feel like in the world that we live in it's very complicated environmentally, politically, socially.

I think that some of these shows reflect that back. The most effective kinds of horror storytelling taps into that kind of primal fear that all of us share and that builds within a society and that need an outlet. So these shows that are able to be so bold and graphic and uncompromising—unflinching—stand to serve that purpose and be the sort of receptacle for all that collective anxiety. I think that's important in a social function, especially in a world that has as much anxiety as the one that we live in does. I think in some ways, it's exhilarating, but it's also a little bit scary that that reflects the world we live in as well.

WCT: What are you watching on television yourself these days?

ZQ: I've been watching Homeland pretty religiously. I'm a pretty giant fan of that show. It's really compelling and so well-executed.

WCT: What else?

ZQ: I've been known to watch an episode or two of The Voice, I will say that. I think it's really innovative and unique and well-done. I find there's an element of authenticity to that show and I very rarely respond to any kind of reality programming. So if I'm going to watch, it has to be people doing something that I could never do and obviously, each one of those singers that holds true for. I've watched a couple episodes of that lately.

WCT: How about the Chicago based show Boss?

ZQ: I've watched Boss, which I think is also really great television and I hope more people watch it or can see it.

WCT: Well, come back to town and do a guest spot on it. See you soon!

American Horror Story: Asylum adds the edge on Wednesdays. Visit www.fxnetworks.com for listings and details.

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MUSIC

Dionne Warwick: In the 'Now'

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

Singer and humanitarian are just two of the roles the legendary Dionne Warwick has held throughout her 50 years in the music industry—and she has no intention of ending it there.

The five-time Grammy winner spoke with Windy City Times about her successful career; her new album, *Now*, which features her older songs along with some new ones; her involvement with the fight against AIDS; and her appearance on TV One's fourth season of *Life After*.

Windy City Times: You're celebrating 50 years in music. How does that feel? Did you ever dream you'd have this career this long?

Dionne Warwick: Well, not for 50 years, for certain. [Laughs] It's quite an awesome feeling to know that I've been doing what I love to do for the past 50 years. It's wonderful.

WCT: You grew up with a lot of musical influences. Was there any advice that helped you at the start of your career that possibly you still live by?

DW: Basically, my mantra—my grandfather gave to me and I do live by that—[is,] "If you think it, you can do it." I did have the pleasure of being in the presence of the icons of our industry and people like Lena Horne, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Frank Sinatra and Sammy



Dionne Warwick. Publicity photo

Davis Jr.; they all just kind of mentored me. So I guess it kind of rubbed off.

WCT: What was it like working on your new album, *Now*?

DW: It was wonderful revisiting songs I haven't sung in ages and there were songs that people that I took a poll from decided were their favorite Dionne Warwick recordings.

WCT: How many people did you poll and whom did you ask?

DW: Oh, golly I lost count. [Laughs] It was quite a few. Not only my peers and friends, I asked my doctor and his nurse and just people in the street. So it was quite a few people. It was

kind of surprising some of the songs that were chosen.

WCT: Which songs were surprises, in particular?

DW: "(There's) Always Something There to Remind Me" is something I would have never dreamed would have been a favorite song of most of the people—or "Reach Out for Me." These are songs that were basically hidden.

WCT: Do some of the songs feel brand-new when you revisit them, even after performing them numerous times?

DW: I don't think you could ever get tired of success, can you? So, there's no way in the world I can ever get tired of singing my music. They're my children. You don't get tired of your kids. The newer ones are songs that have been recorded by others apparently that I had never gotten a chance to listen to and also written separate and apart from each other by Burt [Bacharach] and Hal [David]. So, when I requested them to come up with a couple of songs, the two songs that Burt chose and the two that Hal chose, they're the newer ones that are on the CD.

WCT: Any songs you especially enjoyed singing that you wanted on the album—maybe a favorite of yours?

DW: They're all that way. They are all very dear to me. So they're all my favorites. I just want people to know I had a wonderful time recording *Now* and certainly hope that they'll have an addition to their repertoire of CDs or however they want to download it, or however they want to get it and they'll enjoy it as much as I did.

WCT: What sparked your involvement as a humanitarian, especially with the fight against AIDS?

DW: I think it was basically at the point where we were talking so much about it, that it was time to do something about it. Then losing so many people, especially within our industry, at that time ... I'm the inquisitive one; I want to know what's going on and why. So, I decided to take a look at it and talk to some people that could give me some concrete answers, so that's how I got involved with AIDS [research and awareness].

WCT: What are your future hopes for the cause, and are there any further actions you plan to take, in particular?

DW: Certainly! I'm still in the fight against AIDS and I haven't stopped fighting for what we hope will be the ultimate, which is a cure.

WCT: You've featured your life in your autobiography and on TV One's fourth season of the series *Life After*. How did you decide to put your life out there?

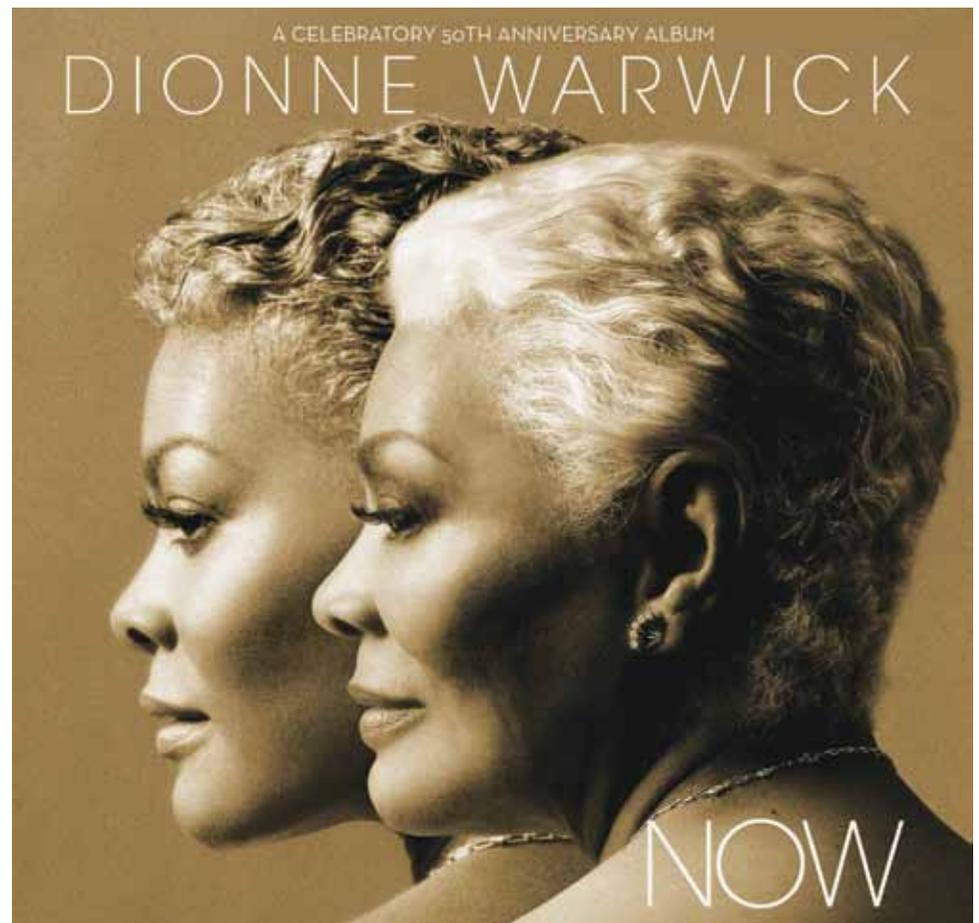
DW: People have their own opinions and they voice them, and apparently most people start believing what are not even half-truths. So I figured: You want to know the real deal, you get it from the person who can give you the absolute answers.

WCT: What is your "life after" moment, and how did things change?

DW: Basically nothing's really changed; I just matured. Again, understanding the role that I'm playing in my lifetime and apparently I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing because it's been successful in every area.

WCT: You just received the Living Legend Award at this year's "Black Girls Rock!" awards show. What does that honor mean to you?

DW: It's very, very humbling to be thought of in that vernacular, first of all. Most importantly to be given this particular reward—I don't call them awards, I call them *rewards*—for the work I've been doing and especially being given to me



by my own is the ultimate.

WCT: After all your experience in the business, are there things that still inspire you?

DW: I still have aspirations of receiving the Oscar, the Emmy and the Tony—and not necessarily in that order. I still have yet to do a great piece of television and a wonderful piece of film and, of course, the ultimate, which would be Broadway. Being in the industry as long as I have, these are the things that have yet to be attained and accomplished.

WCT: Are there newer talents you admire

along with some of the older ones who inspired you in the beginning?

DW: I'm not really one that looks at and/or listens to the radio or the MTV shows, basically because they are geared toward the youth of our industry and that's what's dominating it now and rightfully so. It is not what I particularly listen to. It's not for my ears. It's for the younger ears. I listen to my CDs and those CDs of my peers.

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KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES

BY
RICHARD
KNIGHT, JR.

Thoughts on making 'Scrooge & Marley'

I celebrated my eighth anniversary as a film critic by doing something that most critics never do: I made a movie. It's called *Scrooge & Marley* and it's a modern-day variation on the Charles Dickens' holiday classic *A Christmas Carol*, told from a queer perspective.

The circumstances that led to this rather unexpected event were serendipitous, a product of happenstance, weighted with luck and, naturally, didn't happen without extraordinary effort on the part of our assembled production team. Now, as the film is being released (it opened in LA last week and has its red-carpet premiere in Chicago Thursday, Nov. 29, at the Music Box followed by a week's run), I've been reflecting a bit about making my first movie.



Co-directors Peter Neville (left) and Richard Knight Jr. on the set of *Scrooge & Marley* shot in May in Chicago. Photo by Hal Baim

First thing: Don't try to do this alone. And certainly don't try it when your Screen Actors Guild classification is "ultra low budget," not without a sharp, dedicated group that isn't pulling together 1,000 percent behind you. I can't imagine the result without this. Wait a minute: Yes I can and, believe me, it's a nightmare I am happy to say buh-bye to. This is not to say that there haven't been nightmarish moments along the way. You don't shoot a movie—at least not one

with all the creative challenges our script called for—in 12 days and not find yourself without them. But that's what our budget and time constraints allowed for (several of our actors had gigs out of town before, during and immediately following our shoot—kudos to our scheduler for a protean juggling act) and in 12 days in May we shot a Christmas movie, come hell, high water and, one memorable night, some falling snow.

Even as a first-time director, logic dictated a lot of preparation to meet that tight schedule and it certainly made sense to bring in Peter Neville to co-direct. Peter and I have worked on a lot of projects over the past 20 years and I knew his technical knowledge and editing experience would be huge assets. With him on board, I would be able to concentrate on the actors and other creative aspects of the movie (sets, costumes and most especially, music). Our executive producers, Tracy Baim (full disclosure: publisher of *Windy City Times*) and David Strzpek, worked tirelessly to make sure that we were supported throughout the shoot and during our intense post-production.

So, here we are, not quite six months after shooting wrapped with a finished movie. Although I can look at my calendar and tell you what day we recorded the vocals for "Welcome to Christmas Present;" what day Bruce Vilanch arrived on set; what day we finished our first edit; what day the ghostly special effects were first tested; what day Cliff Colnot conducted Lisa McQueen's gorgeous background score; what day we saw the final color corrected version; and the day the phone call came with the news that Jason Gould was going to sing our end credit song, I am still processing how all these disparate elements fused together and became *Scrooge & Marley*.

What's even more surreal for me, personally, is how I have become a screenwriter and director in the process of doing things intuitively and based on my creative experiences in related fields. They say it's good to challenge yourself—something that I clearly believe in—but I would quickly add that it's probably best to do so without giving it much thought. When I look back at what we've accomplished in such a short amount of time, I'm daunted and want to go lie down and take a long winter's sleep!

So what was the inspiration behind making the movie in the first place? Pure selfishness. I'm an unabashed Christmas movie fanatic but every year when pulling out everything from *Miracle on 34th Street* and *A Christmas Story* to the more obscure titles like *Remember the Night* and *The Cheaters*, I confess to a bit of a disappointment that there isn't a holiday movie genuinely illuminating our queer lives. Thomas

Bezucha's 2005 film *The Family Stone* took a step in the right direction by including prominent gay characters, as did Rob Williams' 2009 wacky comedy *Make the Yuletide Gay*.

When Ellen Stoneking, who was part of a writer's group with me, was looking for a new subject matter for a screenplay, I suggested a gay Christmas movie because I wanted to see one—pure and simple. And adapting *A Christmas Carol* seemed a perfect fit. Ellen agreed and, quickly, she, myself and Tim Imse (who has since passed away) set about to work. With *Scrooge & Marley*, the goal was to create a good old-fashioned, story-driven Christmas movie—one that just happens to be told from a gay perspective. This is certainly first and foremost a movie for *Our People* but when I say that I believe this is a movie for all of us, I really mean it.

The story of Ebenezer Scrooge—the dreadful skinflint who hates the holidays—is a story of atonement and is about the importance of love in our lives. All of our lives—gay and straight—are built on this foundation and Dickens' fantastic framing device—with Scrooge getting the chance to experience his past once again, glimpse into the present and future and learn from what he's seen—really lent itself to some relevant themes from gay social history. I also felt that, like Elphaba, the wicked witch character in Gregory Maguire's *Wicked*, here was a chance to explore the idea that there are two sides to every story.

Our Ben Scrooge is mean, mean, mean but in revisiting the painful circumstances of his past, audiences will understand where that poisonous world view came from and sympathize with him. Putting a new spin on the story allowed us the opportunity to imagine some delightful and



Megan Cavanagh, an Oak Park native, is an established actor in Hollywood, starring in such films as *A League of Her Own*. In *Scrooge & Marley*, she plays the Ghost of Christmas Present. Photo by Hal Baim

heartfelt surprises for Scrooge and his fellow characters as well which I hope audiences will also embrace. With luck—and a bit of Christmas magic sprinkled in our direction—perhaps our little movie will become a valued holiday tradition. Even if it doesn't, that's okay. I have been given a tremendous gift this Christmas and unlike Scrooge, I don't need any ghostly visitations to be reminded how rare and extraordinary that is. And now every year my husband and I can now watch the gay Christmas movie we've yearned so long for—as good a reason as any to go from being a film critic to a filmmaker.

Have I mentioned that now I want to see a gay haunted-house movie? Stay tuned...

Check out my archived reviews at www.windycitymediagroup.com or www.knightat-themovies.com. Readers can leave feedback at the latter website.

CULTURE CLUB

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Pictured: Mark L. Montgomery and Kate Fry. Photo by Michael Broslow.

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Actress Sheryl Lee Ralph talks HIV/AIDS activism, 'Divas'

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Sheryl Lee Ralph is known for her various roles in the realm of entertainment, including actress (TV's *Moesha*), singer and Broadway star (the original cast of *Dreamgirls*). However, she is also passionate about fighting HIV/AIDS, and has been so for decades.

Ralph recently talked with Windy City Times about "Sometimes I Cry," her one-woman play about HIV/AIDS; her upcoming show, "Divas Simply Singing;" and what she's thankful for this holiday season.

Windy City Times: You were in Chicago recently.

Sheryl Lee Ralph: Oh, my God! Yes, I was in Chicago—and it was one of the greatest attendances for my one-woman show ever. There were over 500 people, and we at capacity! They must've stayed in their seats for a full hour after the show was over with questions; it was amazing.

I really hope the [University of Chicago, which hosted the show and a related HIV/AIDS conference] or somebody will find another place to do it and make it cost-effective. To see the people come out the way they did was amazing.

WCT: Let's talk about that show. It's called "Sometimes I Cry."

SLR: Yes. "Sometimes I Cry" is all about real women and real stories about HIV/AIDS. But it's not just about that—for many of these women, there's a subplot about self-esteem, lack of information or awareness, issues of domestic violence. But it's all based upon real women.

WCT: So how did you get these stories from real women?

SLR: It literally happened the summer of 2002. Phill Wilson, who founded the Black AIDS Institute, asked me if I would go on the road to cities where AIDS was not being talked about. While we did that, I just heard so many women with their own personal HIV/AIDS stories. It just shifted everything for me.

It was hard enough for me to go through the start of the AIDS epidemic. The number of friends I had lost—I made a public statement somewhere along the way that "If sex can be a death sentence for men, women cannot be too far behind." I was ridiculed for saying that; I was told I was a fool and that I should just stop it. Now, some 30 years later, over 50 percent of new HIV cases are women, [including] women of color.

Now, I'm going to say that if we're not careful, we're going to pass this disease on to our children—and it will not be nice.

WCT: Do you think there is one factor that contributes to this rise in infection rates more than any other?

SLR: It's the same factor that plays in the rise of any disease: silence. Silence is the fertilizer [the disease] needs to grow. It's the same thing as when you're a binge eater and you think you're all alone and you're quiet about it. With breast cancer, there was a time when people would not say "breast" and "cancer" out loud. So many diseases grow in silence.

WCT: Back when we talked three years ago, we discussed complacency regarding HIV/AIDS. Do you still see it happening—for example, where people say it's OK if they get infected because they can take medication?

SLR: I see so much going on, and it frightens me. As for medication, I've never, ever met somebody who said to me, "Ah—there's nothing wrong with me. I just take a pill and I'm fine." Trust me, this is not a back pain what you're going to take some ibuprofen for and get through it.

WCT: On World AIDS Day (Dec. 1), you have something planned that you do every year.

SLR: I'm so shocked that I'm about to raise the curtain on the 22nd annual "Divas Simply Singing." If anybody had ever told me that it would be 22 years, I would've said, "You're crazy. There'll be a cure. There'll be something. There'd be no need for 'Divas Simply Singing.'"

But once again, the divas will take to the stage—the lights, the mic and the divas simply singing to the piano because we don't have enough money for a full band. [Laughs] It will be an incredible night.

WCT: Who will be performing besides yourself?

SLR: Some of the most committed women ever because this year (American Airlines is our supporter) we didn't have tickets how we used to, so we had to fly people economy. You know what I'm saying, right? You tell some of these women they're flying economy, it separates the divas from the *divas*.

Performers will include Lalah Hathaway, Faith Evans, Oleta Adams, Tramaine Hawkins, Jennifer Lewis. Jamar Rogers from *The Voice* will be there—and he's HIV-positive. El DeBarge will also be singing, and El will be presented with the [AIDS] quilt for his brother, Bobby, who died of AIDS.

That is part of another project I worked on last year. I was working with the AIDS Quilt and I found out that, out of the 55 miles, less than a mile was dedicated to people of color because they will not tell their truth. So I went all across



Sheryl Lee Ralph. Photo from David Chadwick

this country—from Mississippi to Miami to New Orleans to Alabama to Atlanta—to get people to do quilts for their loved ones. We're going to present the quilt for Bobby DeBarge.

We've been here 22 years because we're committed—and we simply dared to care.

WCT: After all this time, what keeps you going?

SLR: It's the fact that I don't want this to be my children's [problem] and the fact that, in the beginning, I lost some good friends who were kind men—somebody's son, somebody's father, somebody's lover. I refuse to let their memory just disappear.

Nobody saw what I saw. You had to see what I saw; I saw men disappear and look like they had been dragged out of concentration camps. Nobody saw when they couldn't walk—and how most [of whom I saw] were left to rot in their own shit. I saw it. I'll never forget it as long as I live.

I went to the hospital and a man had a sign at the foot of his bed that had in big red letters, "DON'T TOUCH." I saw that.

WCT: I talked with a writer who said he lost hundreds of friends in the '80s to AIDS. I

can't even imagine what that's like.

SLR: To me, the turning point was when I couldn't cross one more name off my phone book. It was that many. You would get sick and tired asking, "Whose memorial am I going to now?" It was awful.

WCT: Well, I want to switch gears with this last question. With the holiday season approaching, what are you thankful for?

SLR: Oh, my God. I'm thankful that I have my family around me. My father passed away because of prostate cancer, so I'm telling men constantly to take the test. But I'm glad to have my family; I'm happy I have a husband who supports the kind of work I do. I'm happy that my children are aware of what's going on around them and that they care to be a part of what I'm doing. I am happy that we'll spread the word about HIV/AIDS with the 22nd annual "Divas Simply Singing."

To find out more about "Divas Simply Singing," visit www.thedivafoundation.org.

MOVIES

United in Anger: A History of ACT UP

Presented in observance of Day With(out) Art/World AIDS Day, *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP* is a documentary from director Jim Hubbard about the birth and life of the AIDS-activist movement from the perspective of the people in the trenches fighting the epidemic, according to a press release.

Utilizing oral histories of members of ACT UP, as well as rare archival footage, the film depicts the efforts of ACT UP as members battle what they see as corporate greed, social indifference and government neglect.

It will screen on Saturday, Dec. 1 (World AIDS Day) at 12:30 p.m. at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State St. It is part of the organization Visual AIDS' effort to observe Day With(out) Art/World AIDS Day with simultaneous screenings of *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP* throughout the United States and Canada.

Visual AIDS launched Day With(Out) Art as a World AIDS Day initiative in 1989 as the national day of action and mourning in response to the AIDS crisis. The Gene Siskel Film Center is co-presenting the movie with support from The Art Institute of Chicago Department of Contemporary Art and School of the Art Institute of Chicago's (SAIC's) Department of Film, Video, New Media, and Animation and SAIC's Sullivan Galleries. Former ACT UP member Jeff Edwards will introduce the screening.

See www.siskelfilmcenter.org.

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WINDY CITY TIMES' 2012

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

week one of two



Dress you up

Out local designer **Borris Powell** (www.borrispowell.com; various price points) has been earning raves for years—including when Valentino said that Powell's "Black Swan" dress for the 2011 Oscars was "very nice." Men and women can feel like celebrities in Powell's items, which range from signature bags to custom shirts to sleek dresses.



Meat and greet

Although some may feel the costumes border on animal cruelty, the **Lay Z Ga calendar: Bred This Way** (www.layzgaga.com; \$13.99) will no doubt amuse others. The titular dog wears a variety of items that Lady Gaga made famous—including that meat dress. Call the "puparazzi."



Tie one on

Started by Modern Family star Jesse Tyler Ferguson and his now-fiance, Justin Mikita, **Tie the Knot** was founded "to advocate for the civil rights of gay and lesbian Americans throughout the United States and to look damn good while doing it," according to its website. To accomplish its goal, the organization sells some pretty spiffy **bowties** (TieTheKnot.org; \$25)—and Ferguson even shows you (on the website) how to knot a bowtie in case you don't know.



Bold and Haring

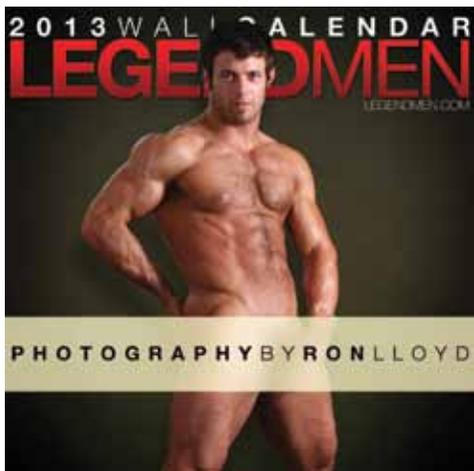
Blik, the maker of self-adhesive surface graphics, has launched **Keith Haring Pattern Wall Tiles** (www.whatisblik.com; \$50), a new eco-friendly take on Haring's repeating patterns. With the tiles, you can create an accent over a bed, on an interior door or frame a small section of a wall—and thank goodness the tiles can be moved easily (thanks to adhesives).



Stand up

Look fashionable and contribute to a cause simultaneously. **Stand Up to Cancer** (www.standup2cancer.org; various price points) has a variety of items to choose from, including ballerina flats, slouchy pullovers, earbuds and even bangles.





In the nudes

Local group **Earth Pearl Collective** is offering a calendar (katrina@earthpearlcollective.com at Paypal.com; \$20) filled from cover to cover with beautiful womyn of color in all shapes, skin tones, and sizes. However, those who love guys won't feel left out thanks to the **Legend Men 2013 wall calendar** (www.10percent.com; \$13.99), which shows some really hot guys in all their glory.



The zing's the thing

AquaZinger and **CitrusZinger** (<http://ZingAnything.com>; \$15.95 and \$25.95, respectively) aim to make drinking water more enjoyable—by infusing them with various flavors. From cucumber to lemon and lime, to blackberries, kiwi, strawberry, peach, ginger or even mint, the zingers can infuse them all. In addition, there's a leakproof cap so you can take these items anywhere.



Let the sun shine

You can be eco-friendly and still enjoy Rihanna's hits. The **Eton Rukus Solar Boombox** (www.etoncorp.com; \$150) is a Bluetooth-compatible boombox with a solar panel. Simply pair any Bluetooth-enabled device, from Smartphones to tablets, to begin easily streaming music wirelessly—and never run out of power. (The device also comes with an AC adapter for easy charging.) What's even better is that the Rukus not only plays music—it can also charge most devices that use a USB cable.



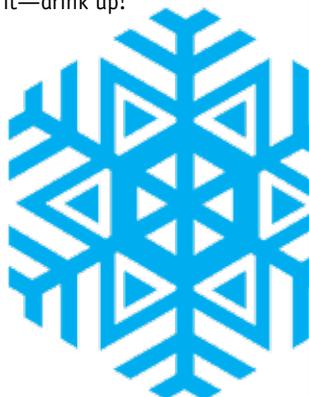
Solving puzzles

Jigsaw puzzles? Yes, indeed. **Artifact Puzzles** (www.artifactpuzzles.com; \$36-\$100) is bringing the challenging mind exercises back into vogue with eye-catching designs. Moreover, when you visit the website, you can choose puzzles by several categories, including puzzle designer, difficulty and even number of pieces (although I know some who'd opt for "one" in that last category).



Honey badger

Honey has been making a comeback with alcohol in recent years, including the rise of mead. **Bärenjäger** has managed to make items that are trendy and tasty with its Honey Liqueur (www.barenjagerhoney.com; \$27.99) and its Honey & Bourbon (\$28.99), with the latter containing premium Kentucky whiskey. Don't take my word for it—drink up!



Bi-Curious George



An Unauthorized Parody
by Andrew Simonian

Monkeying around

Inspired by the children's classic book, Andrew Simonian's **Bi-Curious George: An Unauthorized Parody** (\$14.95) shows a George who leaves jungle life to live with The Man with the Sassy Purple Beret. Along the way, he discovers adventure, heartbreak and more.

Looking good

Fashion-industry veteran Richard Dayhoff knows how to make men look good, thanks to his **slinky luxury boxers** (www.facebook.com/richarddayhoff; \$75) that are classified as "performance underwear." If the jobs are to make the wearer look good and to feel simply divine, then they're performing quite well.



Sweet success

When I initially received gluten-free items from **Sweet Sally's** (<http://sweetsallys.com>; various price points), I have to admit I was skeptical. However, everyone who tasted the macaroons, lemon bars and, especially, the cheesecake brownies raved about the items. Moreover, the people who tasted them plan on ordering from the bakery—although a couple of them plan on running to Wisconsin and back to burn the calories. (There are gluten-filled items as well.)



Rise and shine

Travelers will appreciate the **Rise and Hang** (www.riseandhang.com; \$45-\$69). This weekender bag excels where normal luggage fails: in the area of organization. The bag has everything from a collapsible shelving system to high-strength steel hooks—and even a bottom hamper for soiled clothing. Getting away has never been so easy.



Cuff 'n ready

Tracey Mayer (www.traceymayer.com; \$350-\$1,700) is a local jewelry designer who's made high-end items for men for years. She's only gotten better, as she now has exquisitely designed cufflinks, necklaces and other items for men and women. Mayer is known for working with 950 silver, which is 2.5 percent higher in purity than sterling silver and gives the metal a distinctive look.



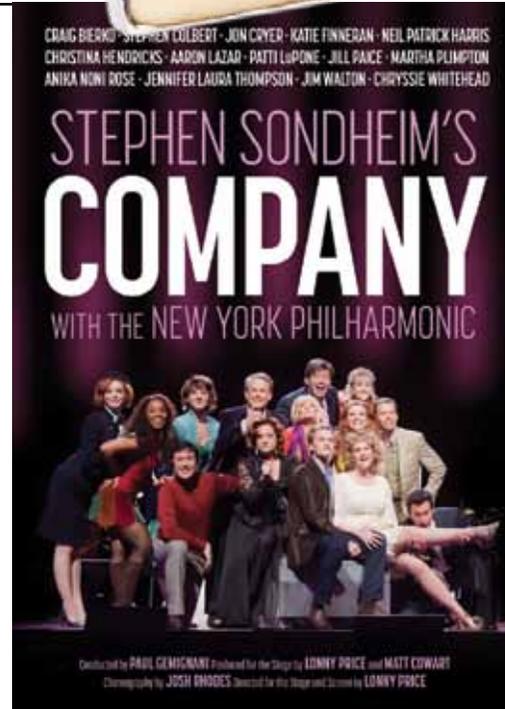
Holiday tunes

Season of Carols (www.seasonofcarols.com; \$20), a holiday album benefiting Season of Concern (the Chicagoland theater community's fundraising organization), features the collaborative efforts of more than 100 Chicago artists. Among the people featured are casts from such as Million Dollar Quartet, Hairspray, A Little Night Music and other productions—and who can resist "Winter Wonderland?"



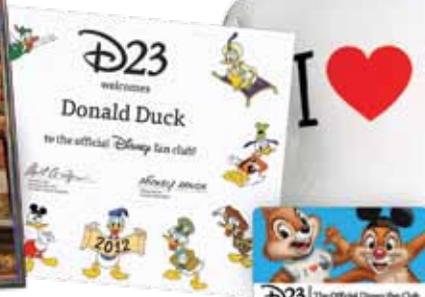
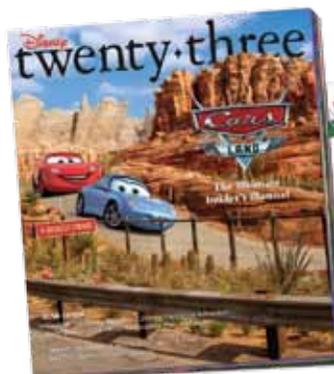
Keeping 'Company'

The DVD **Stephen Sondheim's Company** (www.amazon.com; \$19.99) features Neil Patrick Harris, Christina Hendricks (Mad Men), Stephen Colbert, Anika Noni Rose, Craig Bierko, Patti LuPone, Martha Plimpton and others in a tale about five couples. The film also features a Tony Award-winning score by Stephen Sondheim and a Tony-winning book by George Furth, so you know it's top-notch.



Convertible

The **Castro Convertible Ottoman** (www.castroconvertibles.com; \$649) is one of the coolest pieces of furniture you could get—and it accommodates overnight guests. The ottoman easily and quickly turns into a comfortable single bed (with an above-average mattress), and you can convert it back to its original form when you're done with it, saving space.



Fan about town

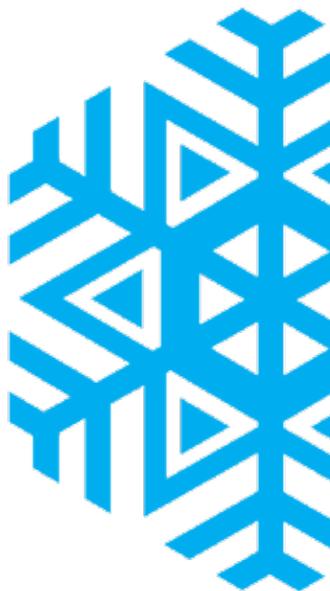
D23: The Official Disney Fan Club (www.D23.com; various price points) is perfect for children and children at heart. Among the benefits are Disney twenty-three magazine (with interviews with people such as Julie Taymor, who directed The Lion King on Broadway); special discounts and offers; weekly newsletters; annual member gifts; and access to D23 EXPO 2013.





S'well-done

The eco-friendly **S'well bottles** (www.swellbottle.com; \$35-\$45) are double-walled and insulated vessels designed to keep drinks cold (up to 24 hours) or hot (up to 12 hours). Available in a wide variety of colors and customizations, the bottle is both stylish and portable. By the way, there are wine bottles as well.



Vintage

Wolfgang's Vault (www.wolfgangsvault.com; various price points) will satisfy the most hard-to-please music fan with backstage passes, magazine covers, apparel and dozens of types of other items featuring everyone from Bob Dylan to Janis Joplin to Whitney Houston to Madonna.



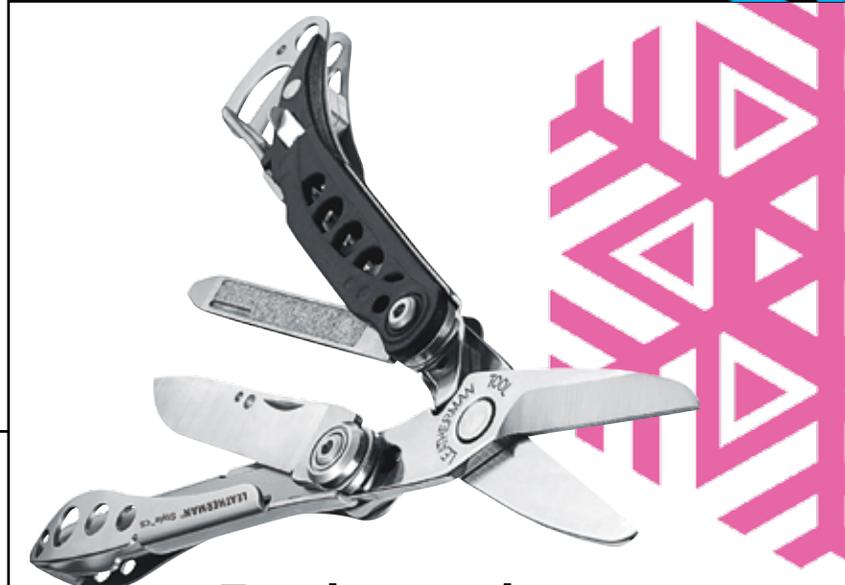
Let's dance

Ubisoft will certainly get people up and moving with **The Hip Hop Dance Experience** (www.amazon.com; \$39.99); with songs from singers/rappers including Snoop Dogg (now Snoop Lion), Drake and Pitbull, you can even have a dance-off with friends—although you should be prepared to be videotaped, knowing some people. Comic-book geeks will get a kick out of **Marvel Avengers: Battle For Earth** (www.amazon.com; \$29.99), which allows players to choose to be any of 20 Marvel characters. Hulk smash!



Prep you up

Chicago's many sports fans also include those who love their colleges. **Prep Sportswear** (www.prepsportswear.com; various price points) has sweatshirts, hoodies and other items for a variety of teams ranging from Old Dominion University to Brigham Young. However, there are also items connected with vintage teams as well as other organizations (Naperville Police Department, anyone?).

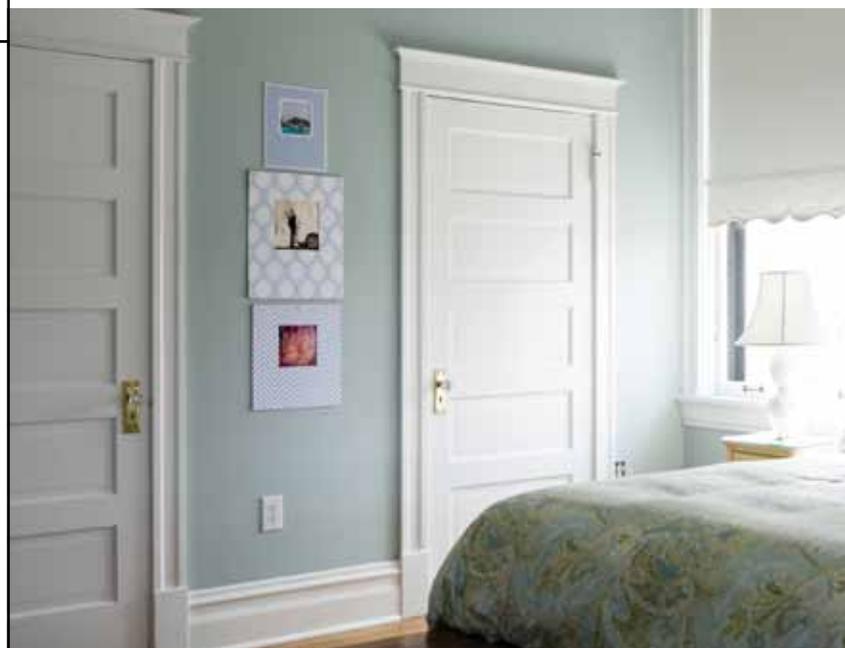


Tough enough

Leatherman (www.leatherman.com) has the greeting "Merry Fixmas"—which is very fitting considering the items it sells, which include multitools, knives and pocket tools. Among its offerings are the Piranha (\$35), a pocket tool that does everything from tighten screws to pop open bottles. There's also the LED Lenser P3 AFS P (\$40), a small but powerful keychain flashlight. With these items, you'll look tough and prepared.

Photo finish

Indie Mats (www.indiemats.com; \$29-\$39) have been called "throw pillows for walls"—and it's easy to understand why. Available in different styles and numbers (sets of four minis and three regular-sized items) and equipped with adhesives, you just put photos in the mats and put them anywhere.



Time out

The athlete (or weekend warrior) in your life would definitely appreciate the **Hyperice Knee Ice Compression Device** (www.hyperice.com; \$99.99). The technology employed may have the user looking a little like a cyborg, but the item more than does its job. In addition, there are items for the back and shoulder as well. Your man or woman will be back to normal in no time after that softball game.



MOVIES

David Pevsner plays 'Scrooge'

BY JORJET HARPER

During the making of the new film *Scrooge & Marley*, a retelling of the classic Dickens story *A Christmas Carol* "with a gay twist", I had the pleasure of interviewing David Pevsner, who stars as the greedy, bitter, perennial holiday villain Ebenezer Scrooge.

What does Pevsner think of the Scrooge he plays in *Scrooge & Marley*? Pevsner smiles warmly and says, "I sort of love him."

Yes, Pevsner concedes, Scrooge is a bit of a tyrant at the film's start. But the Scrooge in this version, he explains, "was very deeply, deeply hurt in his youth: he got kicked out by his fa-



David Pevsner as Scrooge.

ther, who found out he was gay. That kind of pain doesn't leave you very easily."

Rejection by his homophobic father is the first of a series of painful happenings in *Scrooge & Marley* that have left Scrooge an outsider even in his own community. He has to learn to reconnect with the things that are important in life—in this version, in a gay context. "It's about finding your family," says Pevsner, "and you can't find your family until your heart is open. So I think that's what it is, essentially—that you can find the people who love you and that you love."

Pevsner—a writer as well as an actor—lives in Los Angeles now but hails from Skokie, Illinois. He worked in the New York theater for many years on both Broadway and off-Broadway productions. After moving to LA, he has guest starred in roles on TV, film, and the web. *Grey's Anatomy*, *Law & Order: Los Angeles*, *Criminal Minds*, and *Desperate Housewives* are among his acting credits. As a writer, he has contributed original material to a wide range of projects, from *Primetime with Diane Sawyer* to *Playboy TV*.

"I think the whole idea that 'it's never too late, there's always time to change,' is important," he says. "You can have wealth, and you can have power, but in the end, you can't sleep with it. You can't love it—not the way our heart tells us to love."

Pevsner has wanted to do a film in Chicago. "My family lives here and I don't get to see my parents very often." Though the location sparked his initial interest, after reading the script, he was eager to be involved in the project. "When I read the breakdown of who Scrooge is in this particular film, I thought, 'I have an idea for this.' I felt there was something I could bring to it that maybe nobody else would." When he was offered the part, "honestly it felt like it was one

of those 'right place, right time' moments.

Describing the *Scrooge & Marley* version of the story, Pevsner says, "This one is contemporary; it takes place in 2012, and everybody else in the film is very contemporary. And my character is a little stuck. He's stuck in the past. He doesn't use a computer, he's very much 'this is how I always did it and this is how I always will.'"

Pevsner felt that the original Dickens classic portrayed Scrooge as "not really that mean. He's ornery and he hates Christmas, but I didn't perceive him as mean." *Scrooge & Marley* co-director and co-writer Richard Knight, Jr. told him, "No, he's mean. He's horrible to these people in his life." Playing him that way, Pevsner says, he got more range in the arc of Scrooge's transformation. "Instead of going from here to here" he says, holding his hands about two feet apart, "redemption-wise, I have to go from here to here," he gestures, throwing his arms as far apart as he can. "Out of frame, that's how big it is. And not just being mean. I hope I'm bringing many more layers to it than that, but that feels like a big difference in this particular version."

Pevsner has spent his entire career as an openly gay man. Several years ago he wrote a piece for the *Huffington Post* entitled "An Open Letter to the Closeted Leading Man." He addressed it to A-list actors. "It was an encouragement to come out of the closet. A lot of people have read it, and I've put it out periodically when things happen." As for instance, at the time of our chat, which took place the day after North Carolina voted to ban gay marriage. "It's that kind of thing that just—it makes me crazy."

"I've been out my whole life, ever since I could be out, and I get it. I get when people say 'I'm not ready yet,' or 'It's the bottom line that's going to affect me' or 'I haven't worked out my internalized craziness yet.'" But, Pevsner feels, in the face of our current struggles against homophobia, those reasons no longer carry sufficient weight. "I think it's too important. I think it's too important that everybody—all you gays, come out already! Deal with your crap and come out. Because they're taking our rights away."

Pevsner has done a number of gay-themed projects before *Scrooge & Marley*, "and I'm thrilled because I believe the ones I've chosen have gone beyond, 'oh it's a gay movie.'" He sees *Scrooge & Marley* as a film with great heart and great potential for changing things for the better at the same time it entertains.

"What's great about a film like this is that it's very nonchalant about the fact that there are many, many gay characters—lesbian mothers, and hustlers, and everything—involved in this movie. But what it comes down to in the end, we all want the same thing. We want love. That's what we all want. And that's what this movie is about: finding love."

Pevsner is much more of a good-natured optimist than his iconic character—whose signature slogan is, after all, Bah! Humbug! "The people that I've worked with are fantastic. I've watched their performances and they're just funny and heartbreaking and spirited, and it's everything you want in a movie."

In addition to his other talents, Pevsner is also a songwriter, a creative area where his keen sense of humor comes to the fore. He's contributed songs to *Adam and Steve* and *Naked Boys Singing*, and wrote the critically acclaimed one-man musical *To Bitter and Back*, *The Todd and Molly Show*, and the forthcoming *Musical Comedy Whore*.

Though still in the midst of shooting when we spoke, Pevsner tells me there have already been a number of humorous moments on set. For example, the *Ghost of Christmas Future* (played by Jojo Baby) wore an elaborate costume including an eerie, specially constructed face. In one intense scene, Scrooge was aghast to think that Tiny Tim was likely to die. "No, not the boy," Scrooge pleaded with the ominous *Ghost*. At that moment, "his eye popped off, just like that," Pevsner recalls, laughing. "That's going on the gag reel."

See and www.davidpevsner.com and www.scroogeamarley.com.

Scrooge & Marley opens in Chicago

Chicago Indie Film *Scrooge & Marley*, a modern-day variation on Charles Dickens' classic holiday story *A Christmas Carol*, will have its Chicago Red Carpet Premiere and one-week run at Chicago's historic Music Box Theatre (3733 N. Southport Ave.) Nov. 29 thru Dec. 6.

Recounted from a gay sensibility, the film will also screen in at least a dozen cities nationwide this holiday season, with a DVD and soundtrack slated for December release. Filmed in Chicago last May, *Scrooge & Marley* stars acclaimed actor David Pevsner, former *Saturday Night Live* star Tim Kazurinsky, Rusty Schwimmer, Bruce Vilanch, Megan Cavanagh, Ronnie Kroell, David Moretti, Richard Ganoung, and JoJo Baby. It is narrated by Tony award-winning actress Judith Light.

The Chicago Premiere run will kick off with a gala opening night celebration featuring most of the stars. A pre-VIP event will be held at Frida's Restaurant at 5 pm, Red Carpet at the Music Box at 6:30 p.m., and the film screening at 7 p.m., followed by a Q&A with cast and crew. The VIP after-party will be held at D'Agostino's on Addison. Philanthropist Michael Leppen is underwriting the opening night events. Tickets are now on sale for all events and screenings at: <http://www.musicboxtheatre.com/events/scroogeamarley>.

Acclaimed out actor David Pevsner portrays Ben Scrooge while former *Saturday Night Live* star Tim Kazurinsky appears as the *Ghost of*

Lora Michael, Amy Matheny and Rusty Schwimmer in a scene from *Scrooge & Marley*.

Jacob Marley. Rounding out the cast is a host of other recognized theatrical actors: Drew Anderson, Christopher Allen, Nicholas Bailey, Allison Torem, Fawzia Mirza, Peter Mohawk, Becca Kaufman, Scott Duff, PJ Powers, Amy Matheny and many more.

Featuring a wide range of music from award-winning singers and bands, Jason Gould performs a special end credit song, written for the film by Marsha Malamet, Liz Vidal and Stephan Oberhoff. Other performers in the film and soundtrack include Matt Alber, BETTY, Linda Good, Amber deLaurentis, Becca Kaufman, Jeanne Tanner and more.

Music Box Theatre schedule in Chicago:

Thursday, Nov. 29, 6:30 p.m. – red carpet, 7 p.m. screening followed by Q&A.

Friday, Nov. 30, 2:30 p.m., followed by a meet-and-greet with actors at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted, 5-7 p.m. (Pevsner, Vilanch, Schwimmer, Kroell, Moretti, Cavanagh and more.)

Sat., Dec. 1, Noon: Benefit for Chicago Gay Men's Chorus, followed by talk-back with actors.

Sun., Dec. 2, Noon (ASL interpreted), benefit for Lakeside Pride.

Mon., Dec. 3 – Tue., Dec. 4, 2:30 p.m.

Wed., Dec. 5, 7:30 p.m., benefit for Lambda Legal.

Thu., Dec. 6, 2:30 p.m.

The film will also screen over Christmas at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N., State Street, Chicago: Friday, Dec. 21, 8:15 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 22 at 7:45 p.m. and Thursday, Dec. 27, 7:45 p.m.

See www.scroogeamarley.com or www.facebook.com/ScroogeAndMarley.

SAIC School of the Art Institute of Chicago

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Thursday, December 6

6:00–7:30 p.m.

SAIC LeRoy Neiman Center
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MOVIES

Ronnie Kroell plays the Ghost of Christmas Past in new film

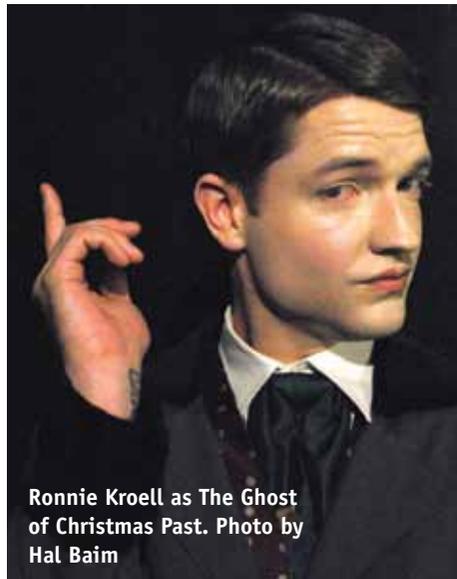
BY JORJET HARPER

Model-turned-actor Ronnie Kroell plays The Ghost of Christmas Past in *Scrooge & Marley*, the new film based on Dicken's classic A Christmas Carol. *Scrooge & Marley*, an independent film made in Chicago, is a contemporary take on the beloved holiday story—one told with a gay sensibility.

Kroell has been interested in theater since his days at Niles North High School in Skokie, Illinois, and has been out of the closet since he was 15. He appeared on the first season of Bravo network's *Make Me a Supermodel*, where he engaged in an onscreen bromance with another contestant. He came in second in the competition, but scored top marks as the show's Fan Favorite. Since then, Kroell has done modeling for a number of prominent fashion designers, and has appeared on the covers of several magazines—including his infamous nude feature for *Playgirl* magazine. In the last few years he has taken his first forays into acting and filmmaking.

In *Scrooge & Marley*, Kroell plays two roles. In the spirit realm of the film, he's the Ghost of Christmas Past, who attends Scrooge that fateful Christmas Eve, and in the everyday world, he's a buff bartender on his boss Scrooge's meager payroll.

"Of course, you know, in Charles Dickens, the Ghost of Christmas Past is actually the first ghost who visits Scrooge after Marley, and takes him back in time to show him what a jerk he was," said Kroell. "And to give him a new perspective on who he was, who he is now, and hopefully give him an idea of who he can become—and that it's not too late. And then by day I'm also Randy, the bartender, who Scrooge actually abuses. He's kind of a jerk to all of us,



Ronnie Kroell as The Ghost of Christmas Past. Photo by Hal Baim

the staff."

Kroell got involved in the *Scrooge and Marley* project through his friend Peter Neville, the film's co-director and editor. "He and I have worked together for years. I'm a Chicagoan and so's Peter. We worked on a modeling gig for *Ragstock*—several different commercial spots for *Ragstock*—and we've been in touch. He knows about my work and how I've grown from a model to an actor, and I auditioned, and here I am today."

Where we are today is in the cheerful back room of T's Bar Restaurant on Clark Street in Chicago's Andersonville neighborhood. The bar has been turned into a temporary hub—dining room, makeup room, wardrobe, conference area—for the film's cast and crew, since this afternoon, scenes are being shot just steps away

from T's, at Man's Country. Man's Country itself has been transformed into a 1970s disco club set for the movie.

"If I were to compare and contrast the Dickens' version to the *Scrooge & Marley* version that we're filming here today," said Kroell, "the same theme is there. Everyone loves a good Christmas story. It's just a modern, hip version told today and with a little gay twist," he said, smiling.

"This isn't just a gay film or an LGBT film," he added. "I really believe in this project because the storyline has a little something in it for everyone. And I think it's going to be one of those films that a member of the LGBT community can identify with, but they can also bring home to their families. It's not gratuitous in any way, it's just a beautiful story. And they're going to be able to share that with their family and friends."

Kroell has done quite a lot of gay awareness work—with such groups as Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, the Human Rights Campaign, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the *It Gets Better* project—and he's well aware of the potential positive impact of a film like *Scrooge & Marley*. "If you think about the LGBT movement and equality in marriage," he said, "I think it's an important step forward that we have a film like this, telling these stories in such a positive way. In a way that's palatable for all people to watch and enjoy. So I really think that people are going to walk away from this film having maybe a different perception of the LGBT community, and maybe embrace and welcome them in a different way."

Kroell spoke to me during a break in filming. He was wearing a lot of cake makeup and had his hair slicked back for his role as the Ghost, but he was speaking with the clearly real sincerity and charm that made him such an audience favorite

on *Make Me a Supermodel*.

Getting to play two characters is kind of a fun thing for me because I was going through the script and asking myself questions about the character and I was trying to figure out, what are the small nuances that are going to differentiate Randy from the Ghost of Christmas Past? For Randy's character, I wanted him to be kind of fun and playful, and just kind of more laid back, which allowed me to take the Ghost of Christmas Past a notch above and be a bit more flamboyant. I tried to channel a little bit of Johnny Depp—*Pirates of the Caribbean*, you know, or Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. So I just wanted to have those moments where I could add a little bit more flair and have more fun with it."

Transitioning, so to speak, from model to actor, has been a fascinating experience for Kroell so far. "I think there are a lot of misperceptions out there that actors have it really easy, and that they're celebrities walking around enjoying the food and their private trailer. But we've been working 15 to 19 hour days. It's been an incredible cast and crew, and it's all going really well. We have such talent on the set," said Kroell.

Kroell was also glad to be back in his hometown, he said, "filming this very special film. I was born and raised in Chicago, so to get to come back here and to be around Chicagoan energy, and to be a part of this incredible film, it's an honor. And it's part of my growth process as an actor as well, because my last two films have all been stepping stones to where I want to go." Kroell added that he was "learning so much on set, and to be under the direction and leadership of this team, it's incredible. I really am truly proud to be a part of this project."

MOVIES

Tim Kazurinsky speaks about playing Marley's ghost

BY JORJET HARPER

Tim Kazurinsky began his successful career in show business doing improvisational comedy at Second City in Chicago in 1978. Three years later he joined the cast of *Saturday Night Live*, where his wide range of celebrity impersonations included Franklin Roosevelt, Ozzy Osbourne, and Billie Jean King. Since then, he has appeared in a variety of films (notably, several of the *Police Academy* comedies); he has written and co-written successful screenplays; and has continued to work in television and live theater.

I interviewed Kazurinsky during the filming of the new film *Scrooge & Marley*, a contemporary retelling of the classic Dicken's tale, A Christmas Carol, "with a gay twist," that will premiere during this year's holiday season. At the start, Tim Kazurinsky wanted to clarify his role in *Scrooge & Marley*: "I am not playing Marley, who is a young, handsome, good looking guy. I am playing Marley's Ghost," he says. "So this poor kid has to look at me and go 'Yeeew, that's what I'm going to look like when I'm old and dead!'"

Kazurinsky was transformed "from this good-looking guy into the horrible, ugly Marley's Ghost by [makeup artist] Lora Michael and her wonderful crew. They put about an hour's worth of work into making me look like the walking dead. I literally have mold on my face and flesh hanging from my chin," he said.

Kazurinsky didn't feel that his makeup sessions were a chore, however. Quite the opposite. He likened the experience to "getting a backrub or a massage. This is like somebody massaging your face for an hour. I invariably fall asleep in the chair and it's a wonderful feeling. Then I've got to wake up and work."

Other aspects of his Ghost costume did prove a bit of an obstacle. "My first day of shooting, there really weren't quite enough chains for

Marley's Ghost." They were shooting in a private home, and the owner, Dick Uyvari, said he thought he had some in the basement. "He went down and brought up the biggest, heaviest, ugliest rusted chains you've ever seen in your life. And so these were then draped on me. I'm like, 'oh, these look great, really terrific looking chains, mixed in with all the other chains.' But in retrospect, they weighed about a hundred pounds and I had them on me for about eight hours. By the end of the day, I think I was about three inches shorter, from lugging these chains around for the whole day." He chuckled. "And I get to do it again tomorrow!"

Kazurinsky strikes me as a good-natured man who enjoys what he's doing, who tries to see the best in, and get the most fun from, every situation. The actor made time to appear in *Scrooge & Marley* despite an already busy schedule. "Right now I'm doing *Hairspray* out at Drury Lane in Oakbrook [he's now in the *Odd Couple* in Chicago]. I'm having a great time, but I'm doing eight shows a week, and it's interfering with my film career, with *Scrooge & Marley*, because I'm not getting as much time on set as I would like. I'm also not getting as much sleep as I would like. But it's okay, because it's a fun role, and whatever it takes, I get to do it."

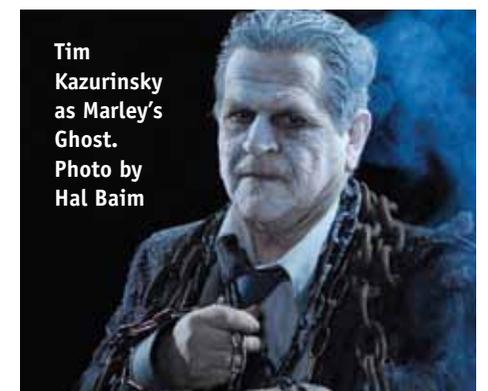
Kazurinsky, who lives in Evanston with his wife and two children, says that what drew him to the project was the script, "and more importantly, Richard Knight, who wrote the script with Ellen Stoneking. Rich is an old pal, and we have mutual friends, and we've worked together and done some crazy cabaret things. So when he asked me to get involved, I went, 'Well, let's read it first ...' and yeah, I loved the script, so I jumped onboard. And even though I was kind of too busy to do it, I'm doing it anyway, and I'm really glad I'm doing it. You make the time for the good jobs, and I'm having a blast. And it's

a wonderful crew and cast. Everybody's pulling together. You'd think you were on a Spielberg movie," he mused.

He also clearly thinks this is a project with a purpose. "A Christmas Carol is a timeless tale, and the message is really important and also timeless, much as Shakespeare's plays are done," Kazurinsky observed. "I just saw *Timon of Athens*, which was set in the now, and also I just did *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was set in the 1920s, and Puck was kind of a Freudian character. These stories and messages get transferred from generation to generation because you can't hear this message often enough. So in this version, which is a current version, the gay community, this message is important to all of us—it translates into so many different arenas. It works for us, too, it works for everybody."

Kazurinsky was born in the U.S. but grew up in Australia, and lived there until he was sixteen. "I was born in 1950, and in 1966 I ran away to America, to a small conservative town, Johnstown, Pennsylvania. I'd grown up watching *Leave It to Beaver* and the *Donna Reed Show*. That was not the America that I found when I got here. It was very racially segregated, sexually segregated—that was 1966. It blows my mind, it astonishes me, that there's an African-American in the White House. I never thought I'd live to see that. The changes that have occurred in this country in the time that I've been here—I don't know that young people can grasp it or appreciate it, or have any idea what it was like back then for black people, gay people, and women."

Coincidentally, in 1972, six years after he arrived back in the U.S., Kazurinsky and co-star Bruce Vilanch, who plays Fezziwig in the film, lived in the same building in Chicago at the corner of North and Wells in Old Town. "Now there's a big Starbucks there. Back then it was



Tim Kazurinsky as Marley's Ghost. Photo by Hal Baim

Reichstein's *Delicatessen*, and Bruce and I both lived above there, in different apartments." On the *Scrooge & Marley* set, Kazurinsky reminded Vilanch that they were once neighbors, "before he went off to Hollywood and I went off to New York."

Deeply impressed by the social changes that have occurred in America in recent decades, Kazurinsky says he believes that the push for an open, diverse society has decisively won. "It's pretty much over. We are a biracial [society], we are aware, everybody has a gay friend—everybody has a gay family member. It's over. I really think that I would love to live another fifty years to see how it flowers and how terrific things are going to be, because I think the worst is behind us."

His hopes for *Scrooge & Marley*, the film, are also high. "I hope that this film is a smashing success and that it reaches not just the gay audience but a whole wider swath. That's the great thing about film: it has the opportunity to go beyond its region. I'm hoping that it's a cross-over hit as well as a hit with the gay community—which I know it's going to be—and also travel around the world, to England, to Spain, and be an international hit."

MOVIES

David Moretti
talks Scrooge
& MarleyDavid Moretti as
Bob Cratchit in
Scrooge & Marley.

BY JORJET HARPER

I spoke with actor David Moretti while he was in Chicago shooting the independent film *Scrooge & Marley*, a contemporary retelling of Charles Dickens' classic story *A Christmas Carol* "with a gay twist." The film will premiere during this year's holiday season.

How does *Scrooge & Marley* differ from Dickens' original tale? "Well, Scrooge is gay," said Moretti. "So that's kind of the big difference from the original Dickens version of *A Christmas Carol*. We're exploring different topics for a more relevant, modern perspective. Most of the themes from the original still hold true, and that's exactly what we want to do with this. The story of redemption, getting lost and finding

yourself again through the help of others."

Moretti plays the part of Bob Cratchit. "He's kind of the eternal optimist, even though he lives a hard life, you could say. But he's a really good guy with a really good soul." Working for miserly, mean Ebenezer Scrooge is not exactly the most pleasant experience, but Moretti's Cratchit, like his Dickensian predecessor, does it because he has lots of mouths to feed, "and he would do anything for his children and his family." Cratchit has a husband in this version rather than a wife. "So there are a few differences scattered through that you will notice," Moretti observed, smiling.

"I really like this character because he definitely promotes a positive relationship, a positive gay relationship onscreen, and they have a

very functional, well-rounded family, which is a very important image for me to show."

Moretti has largely built his acting career on gay roles. "If it's gay, they call me. That's pretty much the way my career trajectory has gone so far," he mused. Moretti first came to the attention of the gay community in his three-season-long role in here!TV's "gay vampire soap opera," *The Lair*. "From there I crossed over onto their sister show, *Dante's Cove*. I've done a couple of feature films so far, most recently *Finding Mr. Wright*, which is a gay romantic comedy. And here I am in my first gay Christmas movie. Maybe next up will be a gay war film or something" he said, laughing.

Moretti's career success flies in the face of the still prevalent Hollywood 'wisdom' regarding gay actors. "I was definitely told not to come out, explicitly, from numerous people in the industry, when I was first beginning to gain success. And I definitely weighed my options in the beginning, I didn't come out the first second I landed on TV—it was something I wanted to think about. But then it basically came down to, you know, people would start to ask you who you're dating, and the press, everyone, wants to know." Moretti wasn't comfortable lying and trying to dodge the issue, he said. "Straight people talk about who they're dating all the time, why shouldn't I be able to? Why should I have to hide who I'm dating? I don't want to make it the cornerstone of what I'm about, but it came up, and so I was honest about it, and I came out, and I'm fortunate enough to have found this niche that I keep working in."

Moretti has no regrets about his decision to come out, especially with the tremendous competition for jobs in Hollywood. "It's a rat race out there. There are so many actors for so few roles. But I get to play all these beautiful roles in beautiful films and I get to dive into many different characters. Granted they're all gay, but so what? I'm working, and I get to do what I want to do, and travel and see beautiful cit-

ies like Chicago. I couldn't have made a better choice for myself."

Moretti said he hopes audiences who see *Scrooge & Marley* leave the theater feeling "warm from the spirit of the holiday in them. And happy to be seeing functional gay people onscreen" rather than media-created stereotypes. "We're just normal people involved in our normal lives, and we screw up, we do well, and at the end of the day we learn from our mistakes."

The film's characters "happen to be gay, as opposed to everything being about being gay," he said. "That's really not the point of this movie. It's still the same story of redemption, but just with a little twist in the characters. But it's definitely not thrown in your face. I think it's a story that people of any age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality can really watch and enjoy."

Moretti was also very impressed by the film's quality, as he observed it during the film shoot. "For what we're doing, with the budget we have, with the time we have, with the locations we have, this work is nothing short of a miracle." He credits everyone involved behind the scenes. "We have an amazing crew, and I was very, very pleased with what I was seeing as things were going along."

"I really think audiences are going to enjoy this movie a lot," Moretti said. "This is a story that's been told a million times—but it's never been told quite like this. The feeling, the production values, the crew—there must have been 50 people working on set at any given time. I haven't seen that in a lot of gay films. There's a lot of heart, soul, and dedication in a lot of people working on this project, and I really believe the end result is going to be something very special."

David Moretti will be appearing in person, along with other cast members, at the *Scrooge & Marley* gala red-carpet premiere at Chicago's Music Box Theater on November 29.

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Bruce Vilanch



Rusty Schwimmer



Megan Cavanagh



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Mike Wood, *Instinct* magazine

"This Christmas Carol will *gayly* ring in the Holidays and so it should!"
Janet Davies, ABC-7 News

"A sweet and distinctive spin on a holiday standard."

Alonso Duralde, author, "Have Yourself a Movie Little Christmas"

Scrooge & Marley Showtimes at the Music Box Theatre in Chicago:

Thu Nov. 29 th	6:30 p.m.	Red carpet
	7:00 p.m.	Showtime followed by Q&A*
Fri Nov. 30 th	2:30 p.m.	Showtime
	5:00 p.m.	Actor meet & greet at Sidetrack bar, 3349 N. Halsted
Sat Dec. 1 st	12:00 p.m.	Showtime, benefit for Chicago Gay Men's Chorus.
	1:30 p.m.	Actor Q&A*
Sun Dec. 2 nd	12:00 p.m.	Showtime (ASL interpreted), benefit for Lakeside Pride
	1:30 p.m.	Actor Q&A*
Mon Dec. 3 rd	2:30 p.m.	Showtime
	4:00 p.m.	Q&A with the producers and talkback with Tim Kazurinsky*
Tue Dec. 4 th	2:30 p.m.	Showtime
	4:00 p.m.	Q&A with the directors*
Wed Dec. 5 th	7:30 p.m.	Showtime, benefit for Lambda Legal
	9:00 p.m.	Q&A about the music of the film*
Thu Dec. 6 th	2:30 p.m.	Showtime
	4:00 p.m.	Q&A on making an independent movie*



* takes place at the theatre

scroogeandmarleymovie.com

"This Christmas Carol will gayly ring in the Holidays and so it should!"
Janet Davies, ABC-7 News

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Alonso Duralde, author, "Have Yourself a Movie Little Christmas"



SCROOGE & MARLEY

A HOLIDAY MOVIE FOR ALL OF US

the Music Box Theatre
<http://www.musicboxtheatre.com/events/scroogeandmarley>
 Thursday, Nov. 29 | 6:30pm – red carpet, 7 p.m. screening followed by Q&A
 Friday, Nov. 30 | 2:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 1 | Noon
 Sunday, Dec. 2 | Noon (ASL interpreted)
 Monday, Dec. 3 | 2:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 4 | 2:30 p.m.
 Wed., Dec. 5 | 7:30 p.m.
 Thursday, Dec. 6 | 2:30 p.m.

Gene Siskel Theatre
 Friday, Dec. 21 | 8:15 p.m.
 Saturday, Dec. 22 | 7:45 p.m.
 Thursday, Dec. 27 | 7:45 p.m.

Scrooge & Marley is a modern day variation on Charles Dickens' classic story of the holidays, "A Christmas Carol."

On Christmas Eve, Ben Scrooge, the man who hates the holidays, is given the chance to begin again when he is visited by three spirits. Recounted from a gay sensibility with heart, comedy and music, the magic of Dickens' timeless tale comes alive from a fresh perspective that will appeal to audiences of all persuasions.

Directed by Richard Knight Jr. and Peter Neville. Starring David Pevsner, Tim Kazurinsky, Bruce Vilanch, Rusty Schwimmer, Megan Cavanagh, Ronnie Kroell, David Moretti and narrated by Judith Light.



the **DISH** WEEKLY DINING GUIDE IN

WINDY CITY TIMES



Marie's Pizza and Liquors

BY MEGHAN STREIT

There are countless places to get a good slice of pizza in Chicago. But there are very few that will transport you instantly back to the 1940s—a simpler time when pizza always included gluten and before figs were considered a legitimate topping. Welcome to **Marie's Pizza and Liquors**, a true gem on the Northwest side.

Marie's is perfectly preserved in the past with paneling on the walls, red leather booths and banquet chairs, dark carpeting and low ceilings. Grandmotherly waitresses—either sweet or grumpy, depending on your luck—who have probably been working at the restaurant since they (and it) were in their heyday add to the authenticity. A huge smoke eater mounted on the ceiling above the bar serves as a conspicuous reminder that smoking used to be glamorous, not deadly. At first glance, Marie's appears almost a bit dingy, until you realized that you've stepped into a truly amazing relic.

One of many things to love about Marie's is the manner in which you procure your beer or wine. Not only is the place BYOB, but it's actually attached to a full-service liquor store. Score! That means no mad dashes across the street when you decide to stay for a second bottle of red (and you probably will). As adorably dated



Plenty of atmosphere at Marie's Pizza and Liquors. Photos by Shira Kollins

as the main restaurant is, the liquor store is stocked with a surprising variety of good quality wines, and the knowledgeable staff is happy to help you choose a bottle.

You won't find many surprises on Marie's menu—and that's a comfort rather than a disappointment. To tide you over while your pizza bakes, try a few of the Northwest Side starters, a smorgasbord of deep-fried deliciousness. Look for all of the usual suspects like onion rings, fried zucchini and mushrooms, chicken wings and cheese sticks. While none of the appetizers are going to change the way you look at food, there's not a bad one in the bunch. That said, I particularly enjoyed the fried zucchini, if only because it masqueraded as an actual vegetable that might lend a nutrient or two to my otherwise purely indulgent meal.

There are a few pastas, sandwiches and other entrees on Marie's menu, including one of my favorite throwbacks—orange roughly. I bet you it's been a while since you've seen that on a menu (ever since Chilean sea bass took over). But when a restaurant is famous for its pizza and even includes "pizza" in its name, well, then, you should order the pizza.

You won't have to deliberate over which obscure topping combinations to put on your pie (Brussels sprouts and blue cheese, anyone?). At Marie's, you can sit back with a beer and order a pizza with normal stuff like sausage and pepperoni. The crust is thin and crispy and a fine vehicle for whatever cheese-meat-veggie concoction you love most. There is also a double crust option. I tried the regular and the double crust, and frankly, couldn't detect all that much



of a difference. But, both were hot, flavorful, just greasy enough and cut into squares like in the good old days. My group of five ordered two medium pizzas and a few appetizers, and we left very full with a few pieces of pizza in to-go boxes.

Marie's unwittingly kitschy atmosphere and reliably tasty pizza would probably be enough to bring me back to the place from time to time. But, what really sealed the deal for me is the live music. On Saturdays, the Gino Fontine Strolling Trio serenades diners with Frank Sinatra songs and other music from that bygone era. This adorable Hawaiian shirt- or tuxedo-clad trio accepts requests and, based on my experience, \$20 will buy you a full night of live tableside tunes.

I eat at a lot of exquisite Chicago restaurants, but the reality is that many of them are so similar that they sometimes start to blend together in my memory. Marie's Pizza and Liquors is one place that definitely stands out from the crowd. From the moment you pick your bottle of wine from the adjoining liquor store to the first time your waitress calls you "sweetie" to the last slice of pizza you eat while humming along to live music—what you get at Marie's is much more than a meal. It is an experience, and it is one that I think every true Chicagoan should have at least once.

Marie's Pizza and Liquors is located at 4127 W. Lawrence Ave.; call 773-725-1812 or visit www.mariespizzachicago.com.

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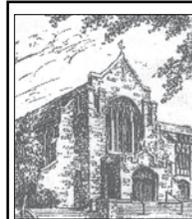


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ANGELS AMONG US WITH SOPHY BURNHAM, Friday Nov. 30, 6-8pm. \$10 admission benefits Greater Chicago Food Depository; event hosted by Swedenborg Library. Chicago Temple Building, 77 W. Washington St. (at Clark), Chicago. Author Sophy Burnham's 1990 "A Book of Angels" was an instant best-seller. She did not grow up believing in angels, but at 28 an angel miraculously saved her life. Are there really celestial beings watching over our lives? Join us as Sophy discusses the many

powerful, inexplicable forces and coincidences that affect our lives. **Reserve seats at SwedenborgLib.org or call 312-346-7003.** (11/28/12-4)

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VEHICLE REVIEW

2013 Chevrolet Spark: A better micro?

BY CASEY WILLIAMS, GAYWHEELS.COM

Americans used to look at micro cars and fantasize about flicking them off the roadways with full-size SUVs or V8-powered muscle cars. Then, gas trucked past four dollars a gallon, and we began to think, "Gee, I really don't need 5,000 pounds of steel and gas-sucking family bus to get to work." The Smart fortwo, Fiat 500 and Scion iQ soon appeared on U.S. shores. Now, Chevrolet thinks there might be room for an even better micro.

Inexpensive does not have to mean cheap. Chevy's designers couldn't get around tall, urban-friendly proportions, but they also sculpted hood edges, carved character lines, and added hood-length headlamps for eye candy. The Spark punches above its modest price point with standard 15-inch alloy wheels, exhaust that exits through the rear bumper and chrome accents. Colors like denim, lemonade and techno pink brighten gray streets. Considering its micro-price, the Spark is a very nicely styled car.

And it gets better on the inside. Unlike other micros, passengers enter through four doors and have a back seat large enough for real humans (you know, the kind with legs). The body-color trim on the dash and doors, the motorcycle-

inspired gauge cluster, French-stitched seats, and leatherette-covered steering wheels feel expensive, even if they're illusions. So what if the dash and every panel are molded plastic? If you want a Cadillac, buy one.

One thing you'll never get in a Spark, though, is a CD player. Just as Apple ditched floppies during the '90s, Chevy is kicking the silver disc to the curb. Since most drivers walk around with smartphones nowadays, all engineers had to do was create an easy interface and link them in.

Using a touchscreen your great-grandmother could understand, drivers use their USB- or Bluetooth-connected phone to access music, pictures, voice-activated calling, Pandora Internet radio and Stitcher Smart Radio. They can even watch video on the screen when parked. The just-announced BringGo app summons full GPS navigation including Local Search via Google and live traffic updates. BringGo has a one-time charge of \$50—a pittance compared to typical factory-installed navigation systems.

On the downside, if our drive through busy Chicago is any indication, the Spark should probably avoid high-speed tollways. At 2,269 pounds (minus humans), with an 84 hp, 1.25-liter four-cylinder engine, Spark drivers pilot a car 450 pounds heavier than a Smart fortwo with



The 2013 Chevrolet Spark. Photo courtes of www.gaywheels.com

just 12 more ponies under the hood. Add in another 360 pounds (or more) for a couple of passengers, and the situation gets worse. The Spark is an urban car and that's where it should stay, whether shifted through the standard five-speed manual or optional four-speed automatic transmission. Fuel economy kisses 32/38 mpg city/hwy.

If you want a swifter little Chevy, spend a couple grand more and get a turbocharged Sonic, which will fix many of the Spark's shortcomings. However, no Sonic comes with a \$12,995 sticker like the base Spark, which includes a five-year/100,000-mile powertrain warranty. Lay down \$17,500 for one with all the extras.

Chevy hopes that the Spark's roomy interior, sophisticated style, affordable price, and that

same park-me-anywhere spirit that carried Smart to our shores will buoy its bigger micro. We'll soon know.

2013 Chevy Spark

Four-passenger, FWD hatchback
Powertrain: 84 hp, 1.25-liter I4, five-speed manual transmission

Suspension f/r: Independent/compound crank
Wheels: 15"/15" alloy f/r

Brakes: disc/drum fr/rr with ABS

Must-have features: Style, touch screen

Fuel economy: 32/38 mpg city/hwy

Assembly: South Korea

Base price: \$12,995

See more at www.Gaywheels.com.

calendar

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Wed., Nov. 28

HIV Support Groups Living with HIV? Join one of our 10-week groups to share experiences, learn from one another and find support in a safe, confidential setting. Wednesdays and Thursdays: noon, Saturdays. Free; 6pm, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted St., www.CenterOnHalsted.org

The Family That Preys Screening followed by a Madea roundtable on Tyler Perry's work at the Block Museum. 1pm, Annie May Swift Auditorium, 1920 Campus Dr., Evanston, Tickets: <http://gopride.com/z704>

Shop 'Til You Drop, a benefit for Broadway Youth Center Subject to Change presents alterna-jams, cheap drinks and flattering lighting. Monthly queering of Logan Square at The Burlington raises funds for groups. \$5 suggested donation; 1:30pm, The Burlington, 3425 W. Fullerton Ave.

Palabra Pura bilingual poetry series The Guild Literary Complex (GLC) continues the seventh year of its Palabra Pura bilingual poetry series with a final 2012 reading titled, "Rooster-Footed Devils."; 7:30pm, La Bruquena restaurant, 2726 W. Division St., www.guildcomplex.org

CCPA Brass Ensemble Performance Led by conductor Mark Ridenour, students from CCPA Brass Ensemble perform a range of repertoire. This concert is free and open to the public. Tickets are not required; seating is on a first-come, first served basis. 7:30pm-9pm, 312-341-2352, Ganz Hall, 430 S. Michigan Ave., www.roosevelt.edu/ccpa

HyDrag Revue with Tajma Hall Join Hydrate for the world famous HYDRAG REVUE hosted by Tajma Hall, featuring the

EAT AND GREET Nov. 29

AIDS Foundation of Chicago's World of Chocolate will take place at the Hilton Chicago, 720 S. Michigan Ave.

Photo by Kat Fitzgerald (Mystic ImagesPhotography.com)



all star cast of Dida Ritz, Sorraya Dash, Naysha Lopez, Erica Andrews and special guests each week!!! 10pm, Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St., www.hydratechicago.com

Thursday, Nov. 29

11th Annual World of Chocolate Chocolate lovers are invited to satisfy their sweet tooth and commemorate the upcoming December 1st, World AIDS Day at World of Chocolate, AIDS Foundation of Chicago's 11th annual winter soiree. 6pm-9pm, Chicago Hilton and Towers, 720 S. Michigan Ave.; <http://afc.aidschicago.org/netcommunity/page.aspx?pid=1645>; Tickets: <http://afc.aidschicago.org/netcommunity/page.aspx?pid=1658>

Scrooge & Marley movie Chicago premiere Michael Leppen and the producers present a new Christmas classic for all of our families. Premiere features cast, directors, writers behind this new independent movie shot in Chicago. 5-6:30pm VIP pre-reception, Freda's Restaurant, 3755 N. Southport; 6:30pm: Red Carpet at Music

Box; 7pm: Scrooge & Marley Premiere; 8:30pm: Q&A; 9-10:30pm: After-Party, D'Agostino's Restaurant, 1351 W. Addison. Tickets \$250-\$1. RSVP editor@windycitymediagroup.com; send checks payable to Sam I Am Films, LLC and mail to: Tracy Baim, 1900 S. Prairie Ave., Chicago, Ill., 60616 Questions to 773-387-2394. 7pm, Music Box Theatre, 3733 N Southport Ave., www.scroogeandmarleymovie.com

Rudolph the Red-Hosed Reindeer David Cerda's parody of the classic television special now celebrating its 15th year. \$12-\$22; VIP tickets \$35-\$95; group rates, \$15 w/10 or more tickets. Runs until Dec. 30. 7:30pm, Mary's Attic, 5400 N Clark St., www.handbagproductions.org; Tickets: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/131657>

Mother Superior's Ho-Ho-Holy Night In this interactive comedy, Mother Superior wants to help you, the audience, come up with a new holiday pageant. Tickets \$30 by phone from Royal George Theatre Box Office or online. Thursdays and Fridays trough Dec. 27. 8pm, 312-988-9000, Royal George Theatre, 1641 N Halsted St., www.ticketmaster.com

Friday, Nov. 30

Santa's Dead! & Dirty Carol's Christmas The company that brought you Snow White and the Seven Drag Queens, Twinkie and the Beast, and Alex in Wonderland are premiering something new this holiday season! 9pm-11pm, Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted, Chicago, <http://www.hydratechicago.com/home/>; Tickets: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/295446>

Late Night Andersonville & Late-er Night Andersonville For four hours only, more than 40 beloved Andersonville stores and restaurants will be open late and offering great savings on distinctive holiday gifts and delectable meals. 6pm-10pm, 773-728-2995, Chicago's Andersonville neighborhood, centered at Berwyn and Clark, www.andersonville.org

Queer Tango Chicago, Beginning level 1 Individuals and couples may register- dance partners will rotate throughout the class. Two different levels of instruction. \$20/class or \$140/series. Register online. 6:30pm-7:30pm, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted St. Tickets: <http://https://community.centeronhalsted.org/queertango>

The Living Circle An interfaith GLBT spirituality group that meets weekly for discussion, meditation, prayer. 7pm-8:30pm, 847-581-9136, 825 W. Wellington Ave.

SwiftLife: VIP Speed Dating For Gay Men For Gay Men in their 30s and 40s. Every bachelor will get to spend time one-on-one with every other bachelor; 7pm-9pm,

773-242-9344, Stefani's Tuscany Cafe, 77 W Wacker Dr., <http://gopride.com/z70n>

Barlesque - The Final Tease Come to this victory party for the 12 participants of this year's Barlesque online strip-a-thon to raise funds for TPAN. Last chance to donate to your favorite bartender. See <http://www.bar-lesque.org> to donate and see the sultry shots of the titillating 12. 8pm-10pm, North End, 3733 N Halsted St., <http://www.bar-lesque.org>

@mosphere 2.0 Opening of @mosphere 2.0, an upscale dive. See what Charlie has done with the place! 9pm, @mosphere, 5355 N. Clark St., www.atmospherebar.com

Saturday, Dec. 1

ACLU:ENGAGE Four hundred activists will gather to initiate a civil liberties agenda for the next administration. The event will feature Aasif Mandvi, correspondent for The Daily Show, Steve Shapiro, our National ACLU Legal Director, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, state legislators, panels on a range of civil liberties and human rights issues, how-to workshops, interactive centers where members can take action electronically. Afterparty and concert - Rock for Rights. 8:30am-4pm, Venue SIX10, 610 S. Michigan Ave.

Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance (GLBT) A weekly peer support group for members of the LGBTQ community with depression, bipolar disorder, or other psychiatric illnesses. Free. Community Room. 11am-12:30pm, 872-216-3272, Howard Brown Health Center, 4025 N. Sheridan Rd., www.dbsa-glbtc-chicago.com

Scrooge & Marley Chicago-made film is a heartfelt, modern-day, gay variation on Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol - a holiday movie for all of us. Sat 1 Dec, 12:00pm; Sun 2 Dec, 12:00pm; Mon 3 Dec, 7:30pm; Tue 4 Dec, 2:30pm; Wed 5 Dec, 7:30pm; Thu 6 Dec, 2:30pm; 12pm, Music Box Theatre, 3733 N Southport Ave., www.scroogeandmarleymovie.com; Tickets: <http://gopride.com/z7nb>

Memorial Service for Michael Jasinski Memorial service for community friend, Michael Jasinski will take place in front of the totem pole at Addison and Lake Shore Drive. All are invited to attend as we say goodbye and share his memory and stories. White balloons will be released at the end of the ceremony. 3pm-4pm, Totem pole at Addison and Lake Shore Drive; www.facebook.com/michaeljonline

World AIDS Day annual prayer service. Theme: "Getting to zero: Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS related deaths." Alexian Brothers Bonaventure House as well as the Archdiocese Gay and Lesbian Outreach Ministry will be joining St. Joseph and Immaculate Conception parishes in organizing and supporting the prayer Service. 7pm, St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church, 1107 N. Orleans St., www.ic-sjchurch.org

Windy City Gay Chorus and Aria in Wholly Family This year, Windy City Gay Chorus and Aria invite you into "our home" for our 2012 holiday concert that explores and embraces a myriad of possibilities of what family is and what family means. 8pm-10pm, 773-661-0928, Senn Hall, 5900 North Glenwood Ave., www.windycitysings.org

Queer Fest America Showcase to benefit EL Rescate Independent Transitional Living for Homeless LGBTQ Youth on World Aids Day. Bring donations of blankets, winter coats and other items to benefit the shelter. Free. Over 21 only. More information by phone or queerfestamerica@gmail.com; 8pm, 224-221-9213, The Mutiny, 2428 N. Western Ave.

Sunday, Dec. 2

Urban Village: Wicker Park Service LGBT-welcoming worship services at Urban Village Church are eclectic and experiential, practical and intelligent, relevant and,



SCROOGE DEAL

Thursday, Nov. 29

David Moretti (above) is among the stars of Scrooge & Marley, which will screen at the Music Box Theatre.

Photo from the film

hopefully, inspiring. 10:30am-11:45am, Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division St., www.urbanvillagechurch.org/wicker-park/

Asians and Friends Chicago monthly First Sunday Dim Sum Monthly First Sunday Dim Sum; 12:30pm, 312-409-1573, Furama 4936 N. Broadway, www.afchicago.org

Windy City Gay Chorus and Aria in Wholly Family This year, Windy City Gay Chorus and Aria invite you into "our home" for our 2012 holiday concert that explores and embraces a myriad of possibilities of what family is and what family means. 2pm-4pm, 773-661-0928, Senn Hall, 5900 North Glenwood Ave., www.windycitysings.org

Madonnarama: 8th Anniversary Kick off Berlin's 29th anniversary week with DJ Riley York's famous Madonna night. Commemorative T-shirt giveaway. 10pm, Berlin Nightclub, 954 W Belmont Ave, Chicago, <http://www.berlinchicago.com>

Monday, Dec. 3

i2i new API Coming Out Group! Open to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and queer APIs. Adoptees, hapas, and multiracial folks welcome too. First Monday of every month. Free. Snacks. More info at chicagoi2i@yahoo.com; 6pm-7:30pm, Asian Human Services, 7th flr conference room, 4753 N. Broadway

"Season of Carols": The Concert Kick-off event for the "Season of Carols" CD. Hear Chicago's best perform their "Season of Carols" CD selections live! Proceeds from the CD & the concert benefit SoC. 7:30pm, 773-325-1700, Mercury Theater Chicago, <http://seasonofcarols.com>; Tickets: <http://gopride.com/z7pr>

Tuesday, Dec. 4

Lakeside Pride Symphony Orchestra : Schrader & Sibelius 5 Accomplished pianist David Schrader joins the Lakeside Pride Symphony Orchestra for a performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 9. The richly romantic Symphony No. 5 by Sibelius and the swirl of the Emperor Waltz by Strauss completes the program for this special evening. 7:30pm-9:30pm, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted St., www.lakesidepride.org

Wed., Dec. 5

Cooking Class for Gay Guys This class is open to 21 and over and will include a cash bar party afterwards. Advance Registration and payment is required. \$31 per person. Send your first name and email address to chef@bestchefs.com for further details or call Bill. 7pm, 224-353-3300, Raw Bar & Grill, 3720 N. Clark St., <http://bestchefs.com>



LIFT EVERY VOICE

Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 1-2

Windy City Performing Arts (Windy City Gay Chorus and Aria) will sing at Senn High School, 5900 N. Glenwood Ave.

Photo from the Windy City Performing Arts

BILLY MASTERS

While you were all snuggling with your loved ones, warming your bodies by the fire, and otherwise enjoying the holiday, I was working right up until Thanksgiving dinner. If I wasn't peeling sweet potatoes for Big Mama Masters, I was glued in front of the TV set watching the sexy Rob Wilson's stint as the first male spokesmodel on The Price is Right. There he was, the Monday before Thanksgiving, giving us all something to be thankful for. As an added treat, we're happy to tell you that he'll be returning for a Christmas episode next month. Until then, you can take a gander at Wilson's body of work at BillyMasters.com.

You may not believe this, but I like to give people the benefit of the doubt. When the allegations against Elmo puppeteer Kevin Clash surfaced, I waited a week or so before I jumped on the pedophile bandwagon. And I was glad I waited because before long we knew who his accuser was, had photos of him and had his statement recanting the allegations. For a few moments, it looked like the whole thing was over and Clash could return to Sesame Street with his reputation intact.

But then another person came out of the woodwork with a similar tale. Cecil Singleton has filed a lawsuit in NYC saying that he had a relationship with Clash when he was 15 years old. They met in 1993 after talking on a gay phone sex line. Singleton lists some of their physical activity in the suit: "groping, masturbation, intense kissing, dry-humping." By those standards, I may have grounds to sue my best friend's cocker spaniel! Cecil is suing for \$5 million and, given this latest development, Clash has resigned from his position to focus on clearing his name. Incidentally, the first accuser (Sheldon Stephens) reportedly accepted a \$125,000 settlement. He now claims to have been "pressured" to recant and would like to return the money and pursue a legal case—perhaps in light of Mr. Singleton's \$5 million lawsuit. I don't think it works that way.

For years, Greg Louganis has been trying to get cast on Dancing with the Stars. And for some reason, one of the most notable athletes in American history has been snubbed. But fear not—all of Louganis' efforts with ABC may yield unexpected fruits ... as it were. The network has announced that Louganis will be a part of Celebrity Splash, a new competition show based on a hit in the Netherlands, which finds celebrities attempting Olympic-style diving. Louganis will be a judge and help coach some of the contestants. Who will join him on the judging dais? Well, these shows usually like a quick-witted gay-ish personality with a background in the event. Have I mentioned lately that I earned my letter in springboard diving ... prior to my stand-up career? I'm just sayin'...

Hold onto your hats (or whatever else you can get your hands on)—it's time for Billy's Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions. Yes, each week until Christmas/Hanukkah/Kwanzaa, I will share some unique ways to make the spirits bright and, of course, gay. My first choice is a DVD that makes me very happy ... and proud. Hollywood to Dollywood is a documentary about the official Billy Masters twins, Gary and Larry Lane. (Yes, I'm so big, I have my own twins.) This film follows my boys on a cross-country journey to present Dolly Parton with a screenplay that they wrote. OK, it's mildly stalker-ish (not that I'm one to judge) but the real heart of the film is the story of these two brothers and their relationships—with their boyfriends, their parents, and each other. Even as a close friend, I found myself often really touched. The film also features other pals of mine, like Leslie Jordan and Chad Allen. I hear you can even catch a glimpse of *moi* in some previously suppressed segments—in addition to a nice shout out in the final credits. As usual, you can pick this DVD up at Amazon.com.

I bet many people on your list would like to have sex with a celebrity, right? Well, have we got the gift for you—a Justin Bieber sex doll! Now, to be accurate, it's not called that. To find it, you must look for the "Just-In Beaver Love Doll," with the subtitle "I'm NOT GAY (ok maybe a lil')." Well, that should keep the lawyers away. The doll, which has numerous points of entry, is made of some special puncture-proof plastic—like they use on blimps! And it's dishwasher safe, which I think is a must in our busy world. Best of all, it's only \$26. But, wait, there's more—for



Billy says that Greg Louganis (above) is set to make a splash on TV. Photo courtesy of Louganis

you ladies out there, the same company makes a female doll called the "Finally Miley Love Doll." That variety touts "3 Achey Love Holes." And I believe it's toothless.

We recently received two "Ask Billy" questions about a hit HBO series. Larry in Washington, D.C., asks, "Did you see Bobby Cannavale's nude scene on Boardwalk Empire? Was that really his dick? WOW!" And Karl in New York City wrote, "Was Billy Magnussen really nude during his sex scene last night? It was really hard to tell."

Little Billy Magnussen's sex scene primarily showed his delectable derriere. But our techs were able to reveal a quick glimpse of his nether regions. However, since it's after post-coital, don't expect much. Bobby Cannavale is a different matter entirely. His nudity occurs while having sex ... and while using restraints. I think this is a perfect example of coitus interruptus ... with the addition of blood. As he walks down the hallway, his penis has not completely deflated, exhibiting a good amount of "swing." You can see for yourself on BillyMasters.com.

When Elmo's cruising phone sex lines, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Before signing off, I want to acknowledge the passing of Larry Hagman. He was diagnosed with cancer just prior to shooting the reboot of Dallas. This led to him being used sparingly during the first few episodes. However, towards the end of the season, he suddenly was the old J.R. and reminded us why he was the man we loved to hate. Rest in peace. For the rest of you looking for a piece, be sure to check out www.BillyMasters.com, the site that delivers the whole package. If you have a question you'd like me to investigate, drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Louganis is considered quick-witted! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

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Lesbian bikes 1,000 miles for a cause

BY ROSS FORMAN

Erin O'Fiel Stevens spent the summer bicycling for a cause, one that many even within her industry aren't too familiar with.

Stevens, 27, a lesbian who lives in Chicago's Edgewater neighborhood, is the founder and chair for the Facial Prosthetics Initiatives Network. Her goal this summer, which she accomplished, was The Worthwhile Mile. She set out to ride more than 1,000 miles on her bicycle to help bring awareness and financial support to a clinical field known as anaplastology, the practice of prosthetic restoration of facial or body anatomy when surgical reconstruction is unachievable or undesired, she said.

"Essentially, our patients are missing or have lost an eye, ear, nose, or portion of the face, hands or feet due to cancer, accident- or abuse-related trauma, or congenital origin, and for a variety of reasons, the most favorable option is to replace it with an artificial, life-like prosthesis," Stevens said. "I pledged to ride 1,000 miles in hopes of bringing attention to this field, which is largely unknown by the general public and, unfortunately, by many health care professionals.

"While a graduate student and employee at The University of Illinois at Chicago's Craniofacial Center, I continually encountered patients who had gone years before ever becoming informed of prosthetic treatment as an option. What is, perhaps, even more shocking is how I often I come across doctors, many very experienced, who have no knowledge of facial prosthetics. This is not a new field; we were creating

facial prostheses for soldiers mangled by trench warfare in World War I. I'm not sure why this field receives so little attention in the medical field, but it has become my mission to change that."

She founded the non-profit organization last April to educate the world about treatment options and innovations in the field. The Worthwhile Mile served as a kick off event to bring attention to the field and this new organization, she said.

"The biggest highlight of the 1,000 miles was most definitely the people I met along the ride," Stevens said. "Most of the rides I participated in involved riding 60- to 100-miles per day, and when you're in the saddle for that many hours, conversation is the best distraction from the number of miles ahead of you. I was able to share The Worthwhile Mile with people from all over the country."

About half of Stevens' miles came in the Register's Annual Group Bike Ride Across Iowa—a seven-day, 471-mile trek from the western to eastern border of Iowa.

"The distance of the [Iowa] ride was not so much the challenge, but the heat was unbelievable," she said. "The first four days of the ride, we rode in temperatures over 100 degrees, in the middle of Iowa's scorching drought. It was like riding in an oven. Despite the heat, it turned out to be one of the coolest things I've ever done. There were 25,000 riders from all over the country, pedaling for all different reasons. Every day was better than the [previous] and the support you received from other riders was insanely motivating."

Stevens raised several thousand dollars over



Erin O'Fiel Stevens. Photo courtesy of Stevens

the summer, with donations from more than 100 people.

She's already planning The Worthwhile Mile 2013.

"My goal is to turn The Worthwhile Mile into a multi-person event, so that others can pledge a distance of their choice and dedicate their ride, or rides, to a cause," she said.

Stevens is accepting donations through the end of 2012, and all funds will be donated to the Walter Spohn Education Fund, established to support research and education in anaplastology.

"It always feels good to achieve a goal you've made for yourself, especially a big one," Stevens said. "I don't know that I was personally changed through this experience, but I'm certainly more motivated to encourage people to give their activities a purpose. If you feel like running a 5K or climbing Machu Pichu, dedicating that adventure to a cause gives you a great well of motivation along the way.

"I really do feel like I've made a difference,

not simply by raising money, but I think this project has energized members in the field and it is generating opportunities for me to invest creatively in the growth of anaplastology outside of the clinic."

Stevens said most of her rides were among other registered riders, though she did not know them. She did, though, ride across Iowa with a Northwestern University group coordinated by Caryl Drohan, associate head coach of Northwestern's women's softball team. "Caryl encouraged me to do my first century ride a couple years ago, and I've been in love with riding ever since," Stevens said.

"I received a ton of support from local businesses in promoting this event. Kitchen Sink Cafe (Edgewater) and Finch's Beer Co. (Chicago) helped us put on a hugely successful celebration and fundraiser at the end of the 1,000 miles."

Donations to the Walter Spohn Education Fund in honor of Stevens' 1,000 miles can be made online at www.worthwhilemile.com.

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CIVIL UNION – KNOW YOUR PROPERTY RIGHTS

Q. My girlfriend and I just became civil union partners. She makes a lot more money than me and I want to quit work, have children together and stay at home while we raise our kids. Since I am quitting my job I want to be protected financially. If we split do I get half of everything?

A. In the world of heterosexual marriage there is an established history of divorce terms, broad experience with breakup rights and duties that are different from the rules that LGBT couples have lived by. It seems that every divorce client I have ever had already knows the trials and tribulations of a friend's divorce, the property settlement they got, what their lawyer could or could not do for them and their responsibilities for payment of money for maintenance and child support. Unfortunately, these rules are new to LGBT couples entering civil unions. They are important and everyone who plans to "tie the knot" should be aware of them.

First, if you want to break up – divorce – you need a reason. You need "grounds" for divorce such as adultery, mental cruelty and physical cruelty which are commonly used. Couples, however, can stipulate to a reason to satisfy the separation requirement. There is also irreconcilable differences which requires a two-year separation of the couple or six-month separation if the parties waive the two years. Parties, however, can be separated within the same home.

Second, the conduct of the parties is not to be determined in the resolution of financial issues. This means if your wife is out cheating on you with the other moms from the PTO, you are not entitled to receive more of a property settlement. However, if funds are expended for purposes unrelated to the union (typically, an extra civil union relationship), such expenditures are dissipation of the couple's assets and can be assessed against the spouse who has spent the funds.

Finally, Illinois is an equitable distribution state which means property is not necessarily divided equally or 50/50; there is no guarantee you will get half. The court considers relevant factors in determining how assets are to be divided, such as length of the union; age, health and employability of the spouses; contribution, both financial and non-financial, to the acquisition of property.

Next week – what you need to know about marital/union property.

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Force tryouts Dec. 1

Tryouts for the Chicago Force women's football team will take place Saturday, Dec. 1, at the University of Illinois at Chicago's (UIC's) physical education building, 901 W. Roosevelt Rd.

The event is 2-4 p.m. Participants must arrive by 1:45 p.m. to register.

Tryouts will consist of various sprints, agility and strength assessments and football basics; there is also a Q&A session. Women must be at least 17 years old. Participants should bring workout clothes, shoes, water and a towel.

There is a one-time \$20 fee for new players. Call 312-405-4130 for more information.

Sports shorts

Olympic diver **Matthew Mitcham**, a gay Australian, reveals in his new autobiography *Twists and Turns* that he battled an addiction to crystal meth in the years leading up to the London Olympics, according to Towleroad.com. He reveals that he started doubting

himself after winning gold in 2008; coupled with an injury, he turned to smoking crystal meth to boost his moods. Eventually, he became addicted; he recovered with the help of Narcotics Anonymous, a drug rehabilitation clinic, hypnotherapy and the support of his inner circle.

Race-car driver **Danica Patrick** is divorcing her husband of seven years, CBS News reported. On Facebook, she posted, "I am sad to inform my fans that after 7 years, Paul [Hospenthal] and I have decided to amicably end our marriage. Hospenthal, 47, is a physical therapist who met Patrick, 30, while treating her for a non-racing injury.

Soccer star **David Beckham** announced his departure from the Los Angeles Galaxy as a player after the MLS Cup during a press conference at The Home Depot Center in Carson, Calif., according to JustJared.com. "In my time here I have seen the popularity of the game grow every year," Beckham, 37, said. Beckham's last competitive game with the Galaxy will be on Dec. 1, but he has said he hopes to continue with the team in an ownership role.

CONNEXIONS

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

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