CITIZEN JANE
Book takes a look at Jane Addams and Hull-House.

BON FOSTER
Lambda Legal holds annual celebration.
Photo by Kat Fitzgerald (www.MysticImagesPhotography.com)

MEL WILSON
Longtime Oak Park gay activist and architect dies.

WONKA BALL
About Face Theatre event has cosmic theme.
Photo by Bronson Pettitt

STUD 4 LIFE
Group marks five years with party.
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About 2,000 women and allies were in Springfield April 25 for the Illinois Women March on Springfield for a wide range of progressive legislation and a responsible budget.
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DAILY BREAKING NEWS
Longtime LGBTQ activist Mel Wilson dies

BY TRACY BAIM

Mel Wilson, one of the co-founders of the Oak Park Lesbian and Gay Association (OPALGA), has died after a long battle with severe pulmonary disease. He was 74.

He was among the most important LGBTQ activists in Oak Park history, having helped make that west suburban village among the most progressive in the state.

Wilson, partner Nathan Linsk and Bryan Findlay formed OPLGA in 1989. Wilson also wrote for Windy City Times during its early years, in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

“Of course, many others were involved in the early years so though we were the co-founders others were also founding members,” Linsk said. “OPLGA (now OPALGA—the second A stands for Area) really came about because of Mel’s efforts to contact candidates for elected office to advocate for GLBT inclusion in the Village’s diversity statement. Mel and Rebekah Levin were the initial co-chairs.”

Linsk and Wilson became a couple in 1983 and lived together since 1985. “We were both married to women at the time and met at the Chicago Gay and Married Men’s Association the same night our wives met at Straight Partners, which was kind of auxiliary for straight partners,” Linsk said. “We became domestic partners in 1998 shortly after Oak Park successfully passed its ordinance after the huge DP controversy that had occurred. We were married on Aug. 23, 2010. We were married in D.C. and came back to Chicago to find that the civil union law was just passed. Our marriage was recognized as a civil union.”

“Mel was an incredible leader, husband, father, brother and uncle, activist and an award-winning architect,” Linsk said. “His passion and advocacy in the LGBT community has become a local legend. He was in a sense the principal architect in the establishment of the Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association, having instigated a competition between two slates of village trustee candidates about how to include GLBT protections in the local diversity statement and ordinance in 1989 and then went on to help lead campaigns to include GLBT protections at all seven units of government. Mel had a very keen design sense as well as superb writing skills, focusing on international as well as domestic projects. We were on the board of the Illinois Gay and Lesbian Task Force and active in the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Parents group, he was on the Oak Park Design Commission and Board member of Community Response, the AIDS Service organization for Oak Park and Austin.

“However, in spite of all these achievements perhaps he was most distinguished as a mentor, advisor and friend to so many including not only his brothers and most of the family members but to many, many students and colleagues throughout the world. After retirement he became my companion and a volunteer on several social work training programs associated with the Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center at UIC. Our hearts are still partly in Ethiopia and Tanzania, where Mel sought out students and colleagues benefiting from the rich culture, his deep historical knowledge and his valuing of each human being as a treasure. Of course, as his husband and partner for 32 years, I probably benefited the most from his vision, wisdom and love.”

Wilson obtained a BA in architecture from the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1965. He had an internship with Skidmore Owings and Merrill and worked in the office of Mies van der Rohe in the mid-1960s before leaving to join the Peace Corps where he was an architect at Department of Public Works. He worked on all kinds of buildings including new and renovated mosques and public housing.

He then returned to the Mies office, which shifted to the office of Fujikawa Conterato Lohan (FCL) Associates, from 1968-1984. He served as the principal architect designer.

Beginning in 1984 he spent a year as an independent writer, then he became a typesetter, proofreader and writer for Windy City Times. He received the opportunity to go outside of their communities and so having in-class mentors from varying backgrounds enlightens our kids to the diversity of the world.

Of several initiatives that embraces City Year’s commitment to diversity is SLAM (the Society of Latino and African-American Men). Its mission is to strengthen African-American and Latino male AmeriCorps members by providing professional development and mentoring, creating a bonded brotherhood to overcome the rough climate for men of color in this country. Why? In the words of our Executive Director Rebeka Nieves Huffman, “They got to see us to be us!”

In addition to diversity and inclusiveness, City Year is also a champion of social justice. Our AmeriCorps members play a small but vital role in breaking the cycle of poverty that plagues low-income communities by guiding students on-track to graduate from high school and then attend college.

By harnessing the power of young people we show our students and their communities that they are not forgotten.

I am the person I am today because of this organization. My experiences have allowed me to be a light in my community, while also receiving the opportunity to advance in my career, travel the country and engage with elected officials on Capitol Hill.

Unfortunately, City Year is a program that would suffer major funding cuts under the budget blueprint proposed by the White House, leaving a lot of students on track to drop out.

This should especially raise concern for the LGBTQ community because the dropout rate for LGBTQ youth is three times the national average. Our children need City Year.

The budget blueprint proposes to cut AmeriCorps funding entirely. So there would be no funds for City Year locations across the nations or other programs such as Teach for America and Playworks. This would be very unfortunate since AmeriCorps is certainly one government initiative that’s actually working to make a difference.

When that 3rd grade student told me that no one had ever called him smart, it deeply troubled me. It made me realize that some of our youth are very discouraged and don’t always receive the love and support a child needs to flourish. It made me realize how essential City Year is for our community and our country.

There’s nothing more valuable than the energy and idealism of young people. When you have young people who actually believe they can change the world, they tend to do it. AmeriCorps helps make that possible, and it is my sincerest hope we continue to implement these programs that are inclusive and essential for a healthy and thriving community.

City Year Chicago brings diversity, inclusion

“Thank you. No one has ever told me that before.”

Hearing a third-grade student say those words after I told him he was smart is something that will always stick with me.

At the time, I was serving as an AmeriCorps Member for City Year Chicago, an education non-profit dedicated to helping at-risk students by putting young adults into classrooms serving as tutors and mentors.

During my years of service a clear realization dawned on me: City Year is not only an outstanding organization—it is a very necessary one.

From an early age, growing up in church, I felt that service was my destiny. However, it wasn’t easy to find programs that were inclusive or aligned with my personal morals and values. But at City Year I found my home. In fact, I have never felt so welcomed by an organization.

And after my life-changing experiences as an AmeriCorps member, I joined City Year as a staff member, first as a recruiter and now a fundraiser. These past nine years have brought some of the most rewarding moments of my life.

This organization not only embraces diversity and inclusiveness, but it really puts it into practice. The AmeriCorps members serving in Chicago Public Schools come from all walks of life. Many of the students we serve don’t get the opportunity to go outside of their communities and so having in-class mentors from varying backgrounds enlightens our kids to the diversity of the world.

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Fidel Williams Jr. is a City Year Chicago alumnus, and is its development operations manager. See CityYear.org.
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Twenty years at Hull-House
A great Chicago book: A guide to creating civic well-being in troubled times

BY REBECCA ANN SIVE

“…that the good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain, is floating in mid-air, until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life.” — Jane Addams

Twenty Years at Hull-House, written by Jane Addams and published in 1910, is Addams’s account of how to imagine and secure civic good in troubled times.

Since I first read Twenty Years at Hull-House in college, I have returned to it repeatedly, for there is much wisdom in its pages. I discussed its value—I went so far as to call it “every woman’s bible”—in a paper I gave to Chicago’s Caxton Club on March 8 (International Women’s Day), 2013.

At that time, I was reviewing final proofs of Every Day Is Election Day: A Woman’s Guide, my own primer for public leadership. I thought Twenty Years at Hull-House would be inspirational context. It was. It remains so today, when I share Addams’s insight again, hopeful that as Addams inspired so many Chicagoans in her gilded age to work for good, she will again inspire in ours.

In a speech to the Union League Club in 1903, Addams asked her audience: “What did [George Washington] write in his last correspondence? He wrote that he felt very unhappy on the subject of slavery.” Continuing, Addams said: “That was a century ago. A man who a century ago could do that, would he, do you think, be indifferent now to the great questions of social maladjustment which we feel all around us?”

Sadly, here we are—another century hence—feeling all around us those very same “great questions of social maladjustment”: immigration, poverty, women’s unequal rights, racial inequality, and my favorite high school essay topic: industrial statesman or robber baron?

While Jane Addams wrote a dozen books, it is Twenty Years at Hull-House that has stood the test of time. Recently, it was listed at number three by the Guardian on a list of “The Top 10 Books about Chicago.” After Sister Carrie and The Jungle and followed by Native Son, all three novels imagined from what Addams experienced firsthand in her Chicago neighborhood—one so like Sister Carrie’s, Jurgis Rudkus’s, and Bigger Thomas’s.

However, after arriving at his conclusion about the importance of Twenty Years at Hull-House, the author of the Guardian article damns Addams with faint praise, describing her as “a classic bluestocking whose sense of noblesse oblige may now seem condescendingly de haut en bas [sic],” then grudgingly admitting that “she and her work helped thousands of people have better lives, and inspired generations of women activists to come.”

Yes, Addams was, as the Oxford Dictionaries describes, a “bluestocking,” “an intellectual or literary woman.” And, yes, her language is courtly. But Twenty Years at Hull-House is in no way an account of a fancy lady’s noblesse oblige—helping, and then help bestowed—retreating to her true life among the “haut.” It is an account of a woman who not only worked for the “bas,” but lived among them, of her political awakening and lifelong work as a community organizer on their behalf.

Indeed, Addams described her purpose in founding Hull-House as nothing less than to “put things to rights.” That’s why Twenty Years at Hull-House has withstood the test of time. It describes a courageous policy agenda (for example, advocating for workers’ rights and for world peace), a revolutionary social justice strategy (creating a settlement house—more on this below), and a daily campaign for civic good by the most unlikely of candidates in the most unlikely of places, in an honest-to-goodness “slum.” (Tearing down that neighborhood and Hull-House 75 years later, Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley boasted about how quickly he had destroyed Hull-House and its surrounding community for something he viewed as so much better.)

Visits to Toynbee Hall and the People’s Palace, two East London settlement houses, had convinced Addams that a settlement house was needed in “the shame of the cities” that was Chicago in 1889: “[An experience] perhaps unconsciously illustrated the difference between the relief-station relation to the poor [the “bas”] and the Settlement relation to its neighbors, the latter wishing to know them through all the varying conditions of life, to stand by when they are in distress, but by no means to drop intercourse with them when normal prosperity has returned, enabling the relation to become more social and free from economic disturbance” (italics mine).

Addams wrote that she was driven to found Hull-House because she realized that there was no place “somewhere in Church or State [where there is] a body of authoritative people who will put things to rights as soon as they really know what is wrong.” In sum, if things were to be put to rights, she would have to do it, since neither the churchmen nor the government men had got the job done.

Though too few were as courageous as she, Addams situated her motivation to found Hull-House in a group context, “a heritage of noble obligation which young people accept and long to perpetuate. The desire for action, the wish to right wrong and alleviate suffering, haunts them daily. Society smiles at it indulgently instead of making it of value to itself. The wrong to them begins even farther back, when we restrain the first childish desires for ‘doing good,’ and tell them that they must wait until they are older and better fitted. We intimate that social obligation begins at a fixed date, forgetting that it begins with birth itself” (italics mine). Wow: from birth on, we have a duty to “put things to rights.” This is way more than “having helped.”

Muckraking writer Ida Tarbell, Addams’s colleague and friend, at the time an editor at The American Magazine, and, according to an Addams biographer, Katherine Joslin, “the book’s grandmother,” serialized Twenty Years at Hull-House when it was first published. The excerpts she chose were set up by a series Tarbell wrote, “The American Woman,” which “traces the story of female achievement from 1776 through the years of the Civil War and makes the case for female involvement in the public sphere, including the natural right to ... political power.” Tarbell had determined that she and Addams shared the same goal: to gain public power, in order to achieve social justice. They agreed: just do it.

In this context, remember that Hull-House was founded 31 years before the 19th Amendment secured American women’s suffrage. Indeed, the founding of Hull-House occurred during heated battles over how even to achieve women’s suffrage, much less women’s political power. Addams (and Tarbell) trail-blazed anyway.

Wrote Henry Steele Commager, in the introduction to the edition of Twenty Years at Hull-House I read 45 years ago, quoting Lincoln Steffens, another muckraking contemporary of Addams, writing in The Shame of the Cities, Chicago in 1889 was “first in violence, deepest in dirt; loud, lawless, unlively, ill-smelling...the teeming tough among [American] cities.”

Continuing his description of what awaited Addams on Halsted Street, Commager wrote: "Chicago [was where] all the evils and vices of American life seemed to be exaggerated. ... It was an America familiar to us in the novels of Theodore Dreiser ([Sister Carrie]) and Upton Sinclair ([The Jungle]), an America that accepted uncritically the grim doctrines of Social Darwinism.
that promised success to the strong and the ruth-
less, and remorselessly condemned the weak and
helpless to defeat.”15 (Sound familiar?)

Addams rejected this state of affairs wholesale. She moved into Hull-House, along with her equally
stalwart companion, Ellen Gates Starr, got to
work, and in 1910, shared what she had learned in
20 years there.

Addams remained at Hull-House until her
death. Throughout, she wrote, sharing her “so-
cial thought,” as another biographer, Christopher
Lasch, characterized her books and hundreds of
articles.16 However, it is Twenty Years at Hull-
House that best and most personally lays out Ad-
ams’s ideas for securing good for all.

Below, I’ve shared passages from this bible that
I think best illustrate her approach.

1. Be an idealist

Addams wanted to believe that “the things
which make men [and women] alike are finer and
better than the things that keep them apart, and
that these basic likenesses, if they are properly
accentuated, easily transcend the less essential
differences of race, language, creed and tradi-
tion.”17 (I confess that in our Trumpian world my
mind and heart are comforted by this glorious
idealism, We can overcome.)

2. Believe in democracy for all

Addams believed that democracy—and the
economic opportunity it presumes—is for all,
not only for the moneyed classes. “Doubtless
the heaviest burden of our contemporaries is
a consciousness of a divergence between our
democratic theory on the one hand, that working
people have a right to the intellectual resources
of society, and the actual fact on the other hand,
that thousands of them are so overburdened with
toil that there is no leisure nor energy left for the
cultivation of the mind.”18

Here, Addams’s “haut” language affirms her
belief that all Americans have an equal right to
participate in democracy, albeit doing so by
descrribing her belief that all should have “energy
left for the cultivation of the mind.”

Lest you doubt what Addams was driving at, she
then wrote: “Those who believe that Justice is
but a poetical longing within us, the enthusiast
who thinks it will come in the form of a millen-
nium, those who see it established by the strong
arm of a hero, are not those who have pre-
vented the vast truths of life. The actual Justice
must come by trained intelligence, by broadened
sympathies toward the individual man or woman
who crosses our path; one item added to another
is the only method by which to build up a con-
ception lofty enough to be of use in the world.”19

3. Befriend decision makers

Allen Davis, Ad-dams’s great biographer, de-
scribes the community organizing Addams and
Ellen Gates Starr undertook to garner support for
creating Hull-House. “Jane went from the Wom-
an’s Club to the anarchist Sunday school, from
soliciting in the salutary townhouses of
Chicago’s Gold Coast to [travels] through...slums,
from lecturing to some of the wealthiest women
in the city to teaching poor and dirty children
how to model in clay.”20 According to Davis, she
even joined Fourth Presbyterian so that she could
meet “leaders in philanthropy.”21

After she met these leaders in philanthropy, Ad-
ams built personal relationships with them, to
use to benefit the Hull-House community. (For
instance, she did so at The Forntightly Society,
where she was a member), whose other members
were Bertha Palmer and Louise de Koven Bowen,
among those who funded Addams’s projects.)22

Ponder Addams here, calling on another kind
of decision maker to enlist in her cause, recounting
an incident when she went to the defense of a
supposed anarchist: “As the final police authority
rests in the mayor, with a friend who was equally
disturbed over the situation, I repaired to [the
mayor’s] house on Sunday morning to appeal to
him in the interest of a law and order that should
not yield to panic. We contended that to the an-
archist above all men it must be demonstrated
that law is impartial and stands the test of ev-
ery strain. The mayor heard us through with the
ready sympathy of the successful politician.”23

Smartly, Addams couches her success not in her
own persistent work, or access to decision mak-
ers, but in the “ready sympathy of the successful
politician.” Like I said, make friends all over the
place.

4. Create an institutional context in which to
foster unique systemic change

Addams found it difficult to decide what to do
once she graduated college. She tried medical
school (and got sick), teaching (according to Al-
en Davis, “she went to a sewing school for poor
cchildren,” but, writing about the experience: “I
found I couldn’t make button holes very well”),24
and engaged in other charitable work (of the no-
blesse oblige sort). None satisfied. She wanted a
greater public purpose and a wider field of op-
portunity.

Describing this lost decade, Addams wrote: “I
was absolutely at sea so far as any moral purpose
was concerned, clinging only to the desire to live
in a really living world and refusing to be content
with a shadowy intellectual or aesthetic reflec-
tion of it.”25

Turn to page 8
hull-house from page 7

After attending a bullfight, she described her epiphany, in the Twenty Years at Hull-House chapter titled: “The Snare of Preparation” (a phrase Addams credits to Tolstoy): “In deep chagrin I felt myself tried and condemned, not only by this disgusting experience but by the entire moral situation which it revealed. It was suddenly made quite clear to me that I was lullying my conscience by a dreamer’s scheme, that a mere paper reform had become a defense for continued idleness. … I had made up my mind that next day, whatever happened, I would begin to carry out the plan [to create Hull-House].”

It was off to East London to visit Toynbee Hall and the People’s Palace to learn how, having visited once before and having done nothing about the plan.”

“Our endeavors [were] to make social intercourse express the growing sense of the economic unity of society and to add the social function to democracy... Hull-House was soberly opened on the theory that the dependence of classes on each other is reciprocal; and that as the social relation is essentially a reciprocal relation, [the settlement, where in people of one social class live amidst another] gives a form of expression that has peculiar value.”

5. Engage activists of complementary skills

Addams wrote: “At any rate the residents [the “residents” were mostly middle-class women like Addams] at Hull-House discovered that while their first impact with city poverty allied them to groups given over to discussion of social theories, their sober efforts to heal neighborhoodills allied them to general public movements which were without challenging creeds. But while we discovered that we most easily secured the smallest of much needed improvements by attaching our efforts to those of organized bodies, nevertheless these very organizations would have been impossible, had not the public conscience been aroused and the community sensibility quickened by these same ardent theorists.”

Addams clearly asserts that all could be—and needed to be—a part of putting things to rights.

Foreshadowing Barack Obama in Chicago earlier this year in his exhortation to his followers to focus on issues of basic, community well-being, 125 years ago, Addams did what Obama preached: “Show up, Dive in, Persevere.” Here is one example: “We also quickly discovered that nothing brought us so absolutely into comradeship with our neighbors as mutual and sustained effort such as the paving of a street, the closing of a gambling house, or the restoration of a veteran police sergeant.”

6. Choose politics—even political office—because it is requisite to improving the common good

Addams wrote: “One of the first lessons we learned at Hull-House was that private beneficence is totally inadequate to deal with the vast numbers of the city's disinherited.” Consequently, Addams became active in politics. In 1905, she was appointed to the Chicago Board of Education. She remained a political activist until her death 30 years hence, becoming an increasingly important politician in the international and national arenas, while remaining committed to local Chicago politics, albeit understanding its complexities and frustrations. For instance, describing a period when the Chicago Board of Education and its teachers were arguing over salary levels, and how teacher competency would be measured (sound familiar?), Addams wrote: “The whole situation between the superintendent supported by a majority of the Board, and the teachers’ Federation had become an epitome of the struggle between efficiency and democracy: on one side a well-intentioned expression of the bureaucracy necessary in a large system but which under pressure had become unnecessarily self-assertive, and on the other side a fairly militant demand for self-government made in the name of freedom.”

Here, Addams describes another political project: in order to pass “the first factory law of Illinois, regulating the sanitary conditions of the sweatshop and fixing fourteen as the age at which a child might be employed... a little group of us addressed the open meetings of trades-unions and of benefit societies, church organizations, and social clubs literally every evening for three months... The Hull-House residents that winter had their first experience in lobbying.”

Sadly—and too often—a woman’s life of political advocacy, no matter how mildly described, is met with disparagement. Addams experienced this when she became active in the peace movement, as an organizer of the Women’s Peace Party (in 1915), and then as founding president of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (in 1919). The University of Chicago—where she had been an adjunct lecturer, had helped found its school of social service administration, and had trained its first directors, Hull-House residents Sophonisba Breckinridge and Edith Abbott, – refused to give her an honorary degree. And, according to Commager, “the Daughters of the American Revolution stigmatized [Addams] as ‘a factor in a movement to destroy civilization and Christianity.’”

Redemption of a sort came shortly before Addams’s death when, in 1931, she won the Nobel Peace Prize, after having been nominated dozens of times. Still, she had to share the prize with a man. (Sexism ruled then, as it still rules, at the Nobel Foundation. To date, 825 men and 49 women have received prizes, including those women, like Addams, who have shared the prize with a man. In 2016, there were no women Nobel Peace prize winners.)

7. Live a life of meaning in service to others and in community with others

Addams wrote: “We do not like to acknowledge that Americans are divided into two nations... We are not willing, openly and professedly, to assume that American citizens are broken up into classes, even if we make that assumption the preface to a plea that the superior class has duties to the inferior.” In fact, Addams did not want to be a member of “the superior class” (the “haut”) with duties to the “inferior” (the “bas”). Instead, she wanted “… to share the race life,” (italics mine), not as an incidental I-passed-you-on-the-street-and-said-hello matter, but as the fundamental condition of human exchange and equality.

As to a life of service, she wrote: “… It is difficult to see how the notion of a higher civic life can be fostered save through common intercourse; ... the blessings which we associate with a life of refinement and cultivation can be made universal and must be made universal if they are to be permanent; that the good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain, is floating in mid-air, until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life…”

Need I say more about this great Chicago book?

Rebecca Anne Sive is author of Every Day Is Election Day: A Woman’s Guide to Winning Any Office, from the PTA to the White House. This article was first published in the Caxtonian, newsletter of Chicago’s Caxton Club.

Notes


4. Ibid.


6. Twenty Years, 81.


10. Twenty Years, 164-165.

11. Ibid., 81.

12. Ibid., 118.


15. Ibid., ix-x.


17. Twenty Years, 111-112.

18. Ibid., 270.

19. Ibid., 58.


21. Ibid., 54.


23. Twenty Years, 405.


25. Twenty Years, 64.

26. Ibid., 91.

27. Ibid., 194.

28. Ibid., 200.


30. Twenty Years, 315.

31. Ibid., 310.

32. Ibid., 335.

33. Ibid., 201.

34. Commager, foreword, xv.


36. Twenty Years, 41-42.

37. Ibid., 116.

38. Ibid.

Lgbt Catholic confab April 28-30

The conference “Justice & Mercy Shall Kiss: LGBT Catholics in the Age of Pope Francis” will take place April 28-30 at the Hilton Rosemont Chicago O’Hare Hotel.

New Ways Ministry is sponsoring the event. Some of the plenary and focus session leaders will include Sexual Minorities Uganda Executive Director Frank Mugisha; Leslie C. Griffin, the William S. Boyd Professor of Law at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas; Bishop John Stowe of the Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky; Cristina Traina, a professor of religious studies at Northwestern University; and Rev. Warren Hall, a gay priest who was removed from his position as director of campus ministry at Seton Hall University because of his support of LGBT equality. See NewWaysMinistry.org.
Women march on Springfield

About 2,000 women and allies were in Springfield April 25 for the Illinois Women March on Springfield for a wide range of progressive legislation and a responsible budget.

The event pushed bills involving women's rights, labor rights, immigration, LGBTQ, youth homeless, healthcare, gun safety and much more.

More than 110 organizations co-sponsored the march and rally, which included lobbying inside with elected officials, plus a closing rally in the rotunda with five of the Democratic candidates for governor.

More than two dozen elected officials spoke outside, including House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President John Cullerton. Both advocated for HB 40, the women's choice bill. Rev. Jesse Jackson also addressed the crowd, as did advocates on various issues. Trans advocate LaSaia Wade was among the speakers inside.

See many more photos and details from the event online at www.windycitymediagroup.com.

Lobbying is still needed on many bills, see www.illinoiswomenmarchonspringfield.org for the list of bills and tips on lobbying.

Event co-chairs were Jaquie Algee, Tracy Baim, Jennifer Camille Lee and Jessica Scheller.

Turn to page 10 for many more photos. Photos by Vern Hester and Hal Baim
More photos from the Illinois Women March on Springfield

Photos by Vern Hester and Hal Baim. See many more photos online at www.WindyCityTimes.com.


ABOVE: SEIU’s Shani Smith leads a chant. BELOW, LEFT: Rep. Sara Feigenholtz.

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Trans-advocacy groups demand DCFS stop stealing trans kids

BY GRETCHEL RACHEL HAMMOND

Motivated by the case of a transgender child that the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) seized from an affirming home, members of the Chicago-based Trans Liberation Collective, the Chicago BTGNC Collective and the Chicago Two Spirit Society have organized themselves under the hashtag #StopStealingTransKids.

A press conference held in front of the DCFS Thompson Center offices in downtown Chicago April 14—which representatives from the Trans Liberation Collective and the Chicago Two Spirit Society attended—was the first of many promised actions designed to “bring awareness and voice to the plight of trans children and their families whose lives are constantly threatened by DCFS.”

“We know that DCFS is not complying with their own guidelines,” Trans Liberation Collective co-lead organizer Stephanie Skora said. “They are allowing malicious abusers to work around their system and steal trans children from loving and affirming families. We are here to tell them ‘no more.’ We will not allow DCFS to take trans children out of the arms of people that love them and place them in a foster care system which, all too often, leads them on a direct path to incarceration, homelessness and poverty.”

“Trans children are not safe in foster care,” she added. “Trans children are safe with loving and affirming families.”

Skora asserted that DCFS actions against those families “constitutes a direct attack against trans children, the trans community and we will not stand for it.”

“We believe that LGBTQ two spirit youth and their families should be able to live without worry, violence and trauma,” Chicago Two Spirit Society President Reginald Sawyer said. “We stand here today against the forces of DCFS and all other forces of the state causing harm to transgender and gender nonconforming youth. As indigenous people, we are all too familiar with these tactics of abuse and violence from DCFS. Too often, our indigenous families are torn apart and our youth have suffered because of harmful policies. We will not let this go on any longer.”

Trans Liberation Collective co-organizer Jacob Milhouse Record said they (preferred pronouns) spent some time in foster care as a child.

“I was very fortunate in that I was adopted before I realized I was trans,” they said. “When I heard about this, I was horrified. We are destroying our children by doing this. It [violates] children’s rights and their parent’s rights.”

Skora listed a series of demands which the organizations are presenting to DCFS.

“We are calling on DCFS to immediately launch an investigation into all cases where trans children are involved and ensure that there is no transphobia at work in these cases,” she said. “We are calling on DCFS to immediately reconstitute their trans-affirming and trans-competence training and policies and ensure that these policies are reworked with input not only from members of the trans community but from parents of trans children who are also under attack. We will not go away and we will not let DCFS rest until we know that trans children are safe in their system like [DCFS] claims they already are but that we know are not. We will not rest until trans children are safe and until DCFS agrees to stop stealing trans children from their families.”

For more information about the Trans Liberation Collective, visit Facebook.com/TransLiberationCollective. For more information about the Chicago Two Spirit Society, visit Facebook.com/chicagotwospirit.

National groups respond to WCT’s DCFS investigation

BY GRETCHEL RACHEL HAMMOND

Several national advocacy organizations responded to Windy City Times’ three-part investigation into Illinois DCFS and children welfare agencies nationwide removing transgender or gender nonconforming children from affirming homes.

From PFLAG’s national office: “PFLAG believes that all children, including transgender children, should have safe, fair and equal treatment both as candidates and as participants in foster care, and that is why we advocate strongly for Every Child Deserves a Family Act, sponsored by Reps. John Lewis and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen in the House and by Senators Kirsten Gillibrand in the Senate.”

From the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE): “Obviously, we are absolutely against trans children being taken away from their parents simply because they’re trans. Some of the parents we work with have brought this issue to our attention, and our policy team has already started to discuss what NCTE should do to address this awful trend. … Anyone who is working to keep a child away from their family just because that child is transgender is actively contributing to a greater risk of negative outcomes for that child.”

From GLAAD’s national office: “GLAAD works regularly with parents of transgender children in our role as an organization dedicated to pushing stories of LGBTQ people and allies that drive acceptance. We obviously oppose any practices that harm trans children and strongly believe that child welfare organizations should update training and policies with respect to the unique needs of trans youth.”

From Equality Federation: “Transgender children deserve to grow up in a loving home free from outside fear and harassment. The state has a responsibility to provide comprehensive training to its staff on how to interact appropriately with transgender children and their parents.”

Internationally celebrated trans activist Buck Angel also spoke out during a Facebook Live video and an April 23 appearance on WCPT’s Out Chicago radio show.

He called the situation “horrifying.”

“People don’t want to believe it’s happening because it seems like something out of the Twilight Zone,” Angel told Out Chicago hosts Scott Duff and Ellen Miller. “All the parents I’ve spoken to, their children were flourishing, they were healthy and going great in life until they were taken from their homes. Parents were begging me ‘please don’t say who I am. DCFS told me that if I put this out there on social media, they would make sure I never get my kids back.’ Who speaks to a parent like that? Isn’t the whole point of DCFS to help children? Somebody has an agenda to remove trans children out of homes because they personally believe that being transgender is a sickness.”

Meanwhile, Illinois state Rep. Kelly Cassidy said that “after the report in Windy City Times, I reached out to DCFS and have asked them to follow up on the allegations.”

Youth collecting votes for awareness of homelessness

Ava Santos-Volpe—the 12-year-old daughter of LGBTQ activist mothers Theresa and Mercedes Santos-Volpe—is on a mission to promote awareness of youth homelessness.

Ana has connected with with Pride Action Tank, a project of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC), and multimedia artist Sam Kirk. Together, they created Ava’s Change4Youth, an art mentorship program that raises awareness of youth homelessness—a problem that disproportionately affects LGBTQ teens.

Now, Ana and her family have teamed with AFC to enter Ava’s Change4Youth into the USA Today Network’s grant program, A Community Thrives. The online competition invites members of the community to view Ana’s video and vote to win a $50,000 or $100,000 award. If she wins, Ana plans to use the money to kick off the project to watch the video and vote for Ava’s Change4Youth, visit http://act.usatoday.com/submit-an-idea/#/gallery/60313503/.

Slain French officer was gay activist

Xavier Jugelé—the 37-year-old police officer murdered in the April 20 Islamic State attack on Paris’ Champs-Elysees—was openly gay and an advocate for LGBTQ rights.

Police fatally shot the gunman, identified as Karim Cheurff.

The New York Times reported that Jugelé was among the authorities who responded to a terrorist attack at the Bataclan concert hall in November 2015, and he attended the reopening a year later.

Mickaël Bucheron, president of the French pro-LGBT organization Flag, said of Jugelé, “He was a simple man who loved his job, and he was really committed to the LGBT cause.”

French President François Hollande has said that Jugelé—who had served on the Parisian police force since 2010—will receive an official tribute.

Jugelé leaves behind a partner.

The Times article is at https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/21/world/europe/xavier-jugelle-police-attack-champs-elysees.html?_r=0.
Personal PAC CEO criticizes Rauner’s HB 40 reversal

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Terry Cosgrove, CEO of Personal PAC, on April 19, publicly released the candidate’s questionnaire then-gubernatorial candidate Bruce Rauner filled out in 2014 that said Rauner would respect women’s reproductive healthcare and access to safe and legal abortions.

Rauner said, however, on April 14, that he would veto HB 40, legislation sponsored by state Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), that would, among other components, nullify a 1975 “trigger law” that would be activated should Roe v. Wade be overturned by the United States Supreme Court. Under that law, abortions would become illegal in the state; the new HB 40 law would ensure that does not happen. HB 40 also addresses Medicaid funding of abortions in the state, which Rauner said is his principal objection to the bill.

But Cosgrove said the veto amounts to a “betrayal” of the trust Illinoisans placed in their governor.

“I have been active in Illinois politics for over 40 years, most of it spent advocating on behalf of access to reproductive health care for all women,” Cosgrove said in a statement. “It takes a lot to shock me.”

Cosgrove highlighted several quotes from Rauner on the questionnaire. Among them, Rauner said, “I fundamentally believe that abortion should be a woman’s private decision…and that this decision should not be impeded by government.”

Rauner also noted, “I dislike the Illinois law that restricts abortion coverage under the state Medicaid plan and state employees’ health insurance because I believe it unfairly restricts access based on income. I would support a legislative effort to reverse that law.”

Cosgrove said he was “shocked” at Rauner’s reversal.

“Because this means, that then 2014 candidate Rauner lied to the voters, lied to friends, and lied to colleagues about his position on reproductive rights,” Cosgrove said. “On Friday, Governor Rauner placed himself squarely on the side of putting women’s health and women’s lives at risk. And on the wrong side of history.”

He added, “The only ethical way for Governor Rauner to move forward as the leader of this great state is to honor his 2014 commitment to the voters of Illinois and publicly state today that he will sign HB 40 when it reaches his desk.”

Personal PAC poll: Rauner ‘out of step’ with voters

Personal PAC has released the results of a statewide survey it recently conducted—and the poll showed that Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner and the majority of Illinois voters are not on the same page regarding abortion, an organizational press release stated.

Among other things, the poll revealed that 73 percent percent of Illinois voters believed abortion should be a private decision between a woman and her doctor versus 20 percent who did not, making the margin of difference 53 percent; 7 percent were not sure. Among these voters, 58 percent of them were Republicans, 86 percent were Hispanic/Latino, 71 percent were white and 83 percent were African-American. There was also strong support across all age groups, including 85 percent of 18-29-year-olds and 70 percent of those older than 65.

Of people living outside the collar counties and Chicago/Cook County, 65 percent agreed with this statement versus 27 percent who disagreed.

On the question of being more or less likely to vote for Rauner if he does not protect the reproductive health care of all women, 46 percent were less likely to vote for him while 20 percent were more likely to vote for him, while 28 percent said it made no difference and 5 percent were not sure. Twenty-one percent of Republicans and 47 percent of independent voters were less likely to vote for him.

Public Policy Polling conducted the survey April 17-18 among 855 registered voters statewide. All of the results are online at WindyCityMediaGroup.com.
ManKind group invites GBTQQ men to training

BY DAVID THILL

Chicago-area men who identify as gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (GBTQQ) have the opportunity to experience The ManKind Project’s (MKP’s) New Warrior Training Adventure (NWTA) this summer.

The GBTQQ-specific version of the three-decade-old men’s training, based on the narrative of the “hero’s journey”—in which the hero separ-

rates himself from the outside world and enters the wilderness to discover his inner self, in turn becoming stronger so he can be a positive force in the outside world upon his return—will be held in Woodstock, Illinois, July 14-16.

Boysen Hodgson, MKP’s marketing and communications director, told Windy City Times that the organization encourages the men who participate in the 48-hour training to “have their own experience.” To that end, he said, “Out of respect for the mysterious nature of the training and the difficulty fully explaining what happens, we ask men to hold this information in a ‘sacred’ way.”

This may leave readers wondering what exactly they will get with the $700 they spend on the training. Those details are largely at the discretion of the men who attend the training—many of whom refrain from providing the specifics of what actually happens there. But to persuade potential newcomers, MKP offers testimonials from men who speak positively of their experience at the NWTA.

Sixty-three thousand men have experienced the training since its beginnings, said Hodgson. MKP, he said, works with men “to be better,” to understand themselves, and build emotional intelligence.

However, the mystery cannot be denied.

Addressing the questions

Four Chicago-area men founded The ManKind Project about 30 years ago, when they began offering men the opportunity to attend a “Wildman Weekend.” Now, MKP boasts an international network of NWTA’s—mark the organization’s efforts to be more inclusive of populations such as GBTQQ men, men of color, and men with disabilities. Wentworth Miller, the star of television’s Prison Break, spoke positively of his experience with MKP in a speech he made at the 2013 Human Rights Campaign Dinner.

But an internet search resulted in a handful of articles that may raise questions, including several discussing a wrongful-death lawsuit brought against MKP’s Houston branch by the family of Michael Scinto. Scinto, 29, committed suicide after attending the mainstream (non-Gateway) NWTA in 2005.

The lawsuit, which ended in a settlement, led to changes in the application process, Hodgson said. Prospective participants’ applications are now evaluated by a “mental health resource team” that includes medical professionals.

“It is never our intention to abuse; it is never our intention to degrade; it is never our intention to injure,” said Hodgson. But, he added, “That does not mean that men won’t perceive it that way. [The NWTA] is challenging and can be confrontational.”

As for MKP’s stance on sexual orientation, and reports that the organization has been endorsed by reparative therapists, Hodgson acknowledged that men have participated in MKP activities who identify as having “unwanted same-sex attraction”—a mainstay of the reparative-therapy movement. The organization’s official statement on sexual orientation, adopted in 2009, states in part that, “We welcome men of all sexual orientations: gay, straight, and bisexual, including those who identify as having unwanted same sex attraction.”

But Hodgson said that MKP does not practice, support or endorse reparative therapy. Furthermore, he said, the organization has contacted members of the reparative therapy movement that have expressed support for MKP, “and asked them to remove all reference to The ManKind Project from their web page.”

John Carlsen, Psy.D.—a licensed clinical psychologist at Englewood Mental Health Center and a board member of MKP’s Chicago branch—completed the mainstream NWTA in 2013. Four years later, he’s preparing to staff the GBTQQ Gateway NWTA this July.

Soon before his training, Carlsen realized that he had “never gone back into the larger world of men as an out, integrated gay man.” The training made it clear to him “what barriers I was experiencing,” including, most prominently, homophobia that he had internalized during his years of coming out in the 1980s.

He told Windy City Times that he is grateful for his experiences of completing his NWTA, working in his ongoing “I-Group” for men, staffing NWTA weekends and serving as an MKP board member “in a predominantly heterosexual male environment.” These experiences, he said, have been “welcoming,” “challenging,” “deeply affirming” and “supportive.”

Carlsen suggested interested readers attend an upcoming “Homecoming Celebration” that will welcome participants back from the April 2017 Chicago NWTA. This event, open to the public, will take place Wed., May 3, 7-10 p.m., at The ManKind Project’s Chicago Center.

More information on the organization is at MKP.org.

Federal judge rules against church music director

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A federal judge, on April 18, ruled that the Archdiocese of Chicago was within its legal rights to fire a suburban music director after he announced his impending same-sex marriage over social media.

Judge Charles P. Kocuras of the Northern District of Illinois ruled that Colin Collette’s duties indicated that he was amongst religious personnel not subject to certain employment protections, and granted a summary judgment in favor of the archdiocese.

Collette was, in 2014, dismissed from his post as musical director at Holy Family Parish in suburban Inverness after he publicly announced his engagement to his longtime partner. Collette maintained that he previously had no disciplinary issues with his employer and was on good terms with church personnel and parishioners, as was his partner.

After his firing, Collette met with the late Cardinal Francis George about the matter; the findings from that meeting were never publicly revealed by either side in the case. George subsequently died in April 2015 but the Archdiocese never backed down from its defense against Collette, and refused to go to arbitration.

Collette sued in March 2016, maintaining that he was not part of the church’s religious personnel, and would therefore be subject to employment protections which would not apply if he were clergy. His complaint also alleged that he was shown emails written by George that said the termination was brought about because Collette entered into a “non-sacramental marriage.”

Upon filing the lawsuit, Collette told Windy City Times that his principal duties mainly involved working with lay parishioners, not clergy.

“Holy Family was unique in that there was an incredible amount of lay involvement,” he said. “My job was to empower and ‘animate’ them, to bring my expertise and research to give them what they needed, so that it was part of them and in the spirit of the liturgy of the community.”

But Kocuras disagreed in his findings, noting that, for example, “Choosing songs to match the weekly scripture required the group, including Collette, to make discretionary religious judgments since the Catholic Church does not have rules specifying what piece of music is to be played at each mass. … [Also,] by playing music at church services, Collette served an integral role in the celebration of mass. Collette’s musical performances furthered the mission of the church and helped convey its message to the congregants. … Therefore, Collette’s duties as musical director fall within the ministerial exception.”

Colin Collette.

Photo by Tracy Baim
United Church of Christ installs gay minister

More than 100 people gathered April 15 at the Covenant United Church of Christ in South Holland, Illinois, to celebrate the pastoral installation of the Rev. Anthony W. Sullivan Jr. to lead, as senior pastor, God Can Ministries United Church of Christ at 1100 Greenwood Ave. in Ford Heights, Illinois.

Rev. Anthony Sullivan
Image courtesy of Max Smith

United Church of Christ has a vision to make known the radically inclusive love of God by reaching out in love and respect to ALL those whom the church, community and society have rejected. God Can Ministries has a mission to be a risk-taking, justice-seeking, disciple-making, open and affirming congregation, in part by valuing families in all forms, including two-parent, single-parent, same-gender-loving and blended families.

Sullivan is a doctoral student at McCormick Theological Seminary in its Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr. Scholar cohort in African-Centered Religious Thought and Ministry, and is a graduate of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union. Sullivan shares his life’s journey with his partner, First Gentleman of God Can Ministries Mr. Michael L. Joseph, as well as daughter Imani and granddaughter Amira.

The installation message was delivered by Bishop Yvette A. Flunder, senior pastor, City of Refuge United Church of Christ. Her works in this San Francisco - Oakland, California based Fellowship of Affirming ministries was featured recently in the ABC network’s 4 part series “Still We Rise.”

The installation of the Rev. Sullivan was officiated by The Reverend Dr. Vertie Power, Associate Conference Minister, Chicago Metropolitan Association of the Illinois Conference United Church of Christ. The installation celebration’s Covenant, laying on of hands, anointing and official installation of Rev. Sullivan.

Photos and text by Max Smith

May 1 Workers’ Day actions in Chicago

May 1—International Workers’ Day—will be a national day of action with large marches expected around the country. In Chicago, a coalition of organizations are planning to march to resist the rising racism and call on city residents to rebuild community.

The “Resist Racism, Rebuild Community” march, starting 1 p.m. at Union Park, on Lake Street and Ashland Avenue, will be focused on protecting communities that are under attack by the Trump regime and highlight the need to rebuild community and define what community safety means:

—Stop the criminalization, mass incarceration and deportation of Black, Latinx, migrant, Arab, Muslim, and communities of color;
—Defend workers’ right to organize, unionize and to earn a living wage;
—Defend the rights of women, people with disabilities, transgender, LGBTQ and gender non-conforming people;
—Act on climate change, to create jobs and economic opportunities in the migrant, poor, and communities of color that are disproportionately threatened by pollution and climate change;
—Defend and fully fund public services, including public education, transportation and healthcare.

For more information and to register as a host, go to www.onthetable.com
#OnTheTable2017

Your voice matters.

May 16, 2017
Changing course on child welfare

Windy City Times (WCT) just concluded a lengthy three-part series on troubles at child welfare agencies in Illinois and across the U.S. when it comes to supporting parents of children who present as transgender or gender nonconforming.

As the series unfolded, WCT was contacted by multiple additional families who were terrified of agents from the government, including the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Some had experienced a story similar to the one we first wrote about, where a 5-year-old child was removed from her family with allegations of medical abuse for what the family says was their support of her presenting as a girl, though she was labeled a boy at birth.

This case is under ongoing adjudication in the courts, and we at Windy City Times are urging that this case be reviewed without prejudice, by experts in the field, not medical personnel and social workers who come to their jobs with a bias and no training on transgender issues.

The timing of these cases is not coincidental. Because of larger social knowledge of trans issues during the past decade, more and more children are being allowed by their families to express their gender identities in public.

In the past, such behavior was likely to have been stifled at best to inside the home, but at worst was beaten out of children until they suppressed their feelings into adulthood. If they survived the ordeal.

In an age when the transgender community has become the latest target by conservative politicians, activist groups and pundits, the risk of members of the community or mandated reporters such as pediatricians or teachers calling DCFS claiming a child is being abused because parents are allowing her/him/they to explore and present in their gender identity has been increased.

Of note, transgender children who grow up without affirming families are more likely to feel leave home or school. The National Transgender Discrimination Survey shows rates of over 50 percent of transgender people whose families did not speak or spend time with them or were bullied or harassed in school; 69 percent experienced homelessness.

In October 2015, California Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law a groundbreaking piece of legislation which protected a child's gender identity when raised as a boy at birth. PAT's Kim Hunt and Baim have given recommendations to DCFS on their changing policies on LGBT youth, and PAT has been trying to push for more tracking and communication on LGBT youth in DCFS care. In fact, PAT has been trying to help recruit more accepting adults to foster children, and has wanted to help advocate for teens in foster care to get them more adequate foster families or guardians.

So it is even more frustrating knowing that some people in DCFS do want to advocate for change, but that the system overall still has huge gaps in training and understanding of LGBT youth.

Windy City Times therefore makes the following recommendations:

—DCFS frontline staff (whether hotline operators or investigators) must have mandated, culture competent training on LGBT issues. Transgender people and parents should play an active role in that training.

—More openly transgender people should be hired to work in DCFS at all levels, including as investigators, and as trainers.

—If a hotline operator receives a call either from a mandated reporter or a member of the community that a child is “feminized” into being transgender, whether as a form of medical abuse or sexual exploitation, there should be guidelines before that call is elevated to investigators.

—DCFS staff with religious or political objections to transgender or LGB children or their affirming families must not be in positions where they will come into contact with them. If they can't get past their own biases, they should not be working in an environment which provides direct contact with families who can raise children free of biases based on religion, culture, education, sexual orientation or gender identity.

—DCFS foster care and adoptive parents must have mandated, culturally competent training on LGBTIQ issues.

—The reward system at DCFS must be changed. Social workers who partner with a family to make sure the child is returned home to a safe, loving environment may be doing more difficult work than the quick-fix of removal, but this can help protect innocent families, and lower the 18,000 number of children in foster care.

—The Office of the Public Guardian, which represents children in the child welfare system, must have mandatory, culturally competent training on an annual basis for all attorneys, including by medical professionals who work with trans and GNC children.

—State legislators and DCFS must also reexamine what constitutes abuse/neglect. A bar set low enough leaves a vast opening for misunderstanding. A diagnosis of Munchausen by Proxy (a controversial and rare diagnosis) cannot be made by pediatricians—it must be made by a trained psychologist.

—The level of power DCFS wields over families has left it ripe for abuse. The agency maintains that “checks and balances” are in place. Director George Sheldon must ensure that they are being employed at all levels of the organization. Hotline calls should be randomly monitored, social workers and supervisors screened for biases, attorneys and judges policed to ensure a family’s civil rights are protected at every stage of investigation.

—Organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) can offer policy statements, but they can’t mandate training for their 66,000 members. We need to push for mandated, culturally competent training of medical personnel who work with children.

—Cook County and the State of Illinois should mandate LGBT IQ bias training for attorneys and judges, taught with people who are LGBQ and especially trans.

—Finally, Windy City Times calls for the removal of the social worker from the case of a South Side transgender child currently in DCFS custody and we are calling for a thorough re-review of that case without prejudice.

Last summer, at an LGBTQ adoption event co-sponsored by WCT and Pride Action Tank, with 10 foster care agencies leading the charge, DCFS Director Sheldon urged people to adopt more LGBQ children. How can any family be assured that such an adoption will not result in the removal of that child after one call to a hotline? If DCFS truly wants affirming foster parents, it must do more to protect affirming biological parents.

During his keynote speech at that adoption event, Sheldon said, “If you want to see the past, touch a rock. If you want to see the present, touch a flower. If you want to see the future, touch the life of a child.”

The parents of trans children are that future. Child psychologist Dr. Erica Anderson told Windy City Times, “Children who grow up with an affirming family do not have higher incidents of many of the unfortunate things that affect the transgender community including mental health problems, social adjustment, issues with bullying in school and school avoidance, family conflicts and ultimately depression, suicidal thoughts and actions.”

Why then are the parents of transgender children so frightened of DCFS taking their children when all they are doing is offering those children a chance at life?
Camp comebacks

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

Hell in a Handbag Productions’ notorious Lady X is once again plying her trade at Mary’s Attic. But unlike in 2010, the mob-battling Lady X and her “hostess” cohorts are singing and dancing in a world-premiere musical adaptation.

“When we originally did it seven years ago, we all thought this would be a great musical,” said David Cerda, the artistic director of Handbag Productions and a co-author/supporting star of Lady X—A Musical. “It’s film noir and based upon a Bette Davis movie from 1937 called Marked Woman, so it’s right up our alley.”

Lady X also helped rescue Handbag Productions’ 15th-anniversary season. Originally the famed Chicago drag camp comedy company announced a musical parody version of the 1967 film Valley of the Dolls called Valley! But a very threatening letter from 20th Century Fox put a stop to Valley!, even though Cerda points out that another California drag queen spoof is featured in DVD extras for the original film.

“It would cost about $20,000 to $30,000 if it were to go to court just to prove that it was a true parody,” Cerda said. “It’s not feasible for a small company like us. It would wipe us out for the year.”

With only about a month and a half to fill the vacated musical spot, Cerda and his composing collaborator, Scott Lambert, went to work revamping Lady X. Cerda stole lines from the original script as inspiration for songs like “The Girls,” “We Do Science” and “Bad Betty.” “I’m used to working under pressure,” said Cerda, adding that the inspiration came easy because he loves that Hollywood era filled with “dames, fast-talking guys and con artists.”

Cerda was full of praise for Lady X co-directors Steve Love and Tommy Bullington. He was also pleased to note that a few 2010 Lady X cast members are back like Elizabeth Lesinski and Ed Jones as “the world’s oldest prostitute.”

“We had such a good time doing that show,” Cerda said. “It was great to revisit it.”

The official press opening of Lady X—A Musical is at 7:30 p.m. Friday, April 28, at Mary’s Attic, 5400 N. Clark St. Performances continue through Saturday, June 10, at 7:30 p.m. Thursday-through-Saturdays with 6 p.m. shows on Sundays (no shows May 7 or June 4). Tickets are $26-$30 with $38 VIP tickets with cocktail; call 800-838-3006 or visit HandbagProductions.org.

Steam heat

Hunky comedy husbands Andy Eninger and John Loos are planning a move to Los Angeles this summer. But with the Annoyance Theatre’s revised revival of Steamworks: The Musical, these two veterans of The Second City, GayCo and Skinprov are getting one final Chicago send-off.

“It’s funny because my husband John and I adored the first process of creating the show and performing in it,” said Eninger about the 2011 original. “We were like, ‘God, if there’s one show we wish we could do before we go, it’s Steamworks.’ And then strangely it came to pass.”

Eninger says it makes perfect sense to revive Steamworks now, especially with the Annoyance Theatre’s recent move from Uptown to Boystown. And keen observers will note that the show now officially carries the actual name and logo of the famed North Halsted bathhouse rather than its previous “Steamwerkz” moniker.

[The management of Steamworks was] only on board a couple of weeks before opening, but by then all of the press and marketing had already gone out,” Eninger said. “We made the safe choice then, and this time they were on board from the very beginning since they knew what they were getting into.”

As before, parallels can be drawn between the bizarre bathhouse happenings in Steamworks and Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. But this time around there have been changes and updates to respond to the times.

Steamworks revival director Michael Gifford said the Annoyance made efforts to attract a more diverse cast for 2017—including a woman in the ensemble. There’s also five new song developments to be done, including one about the HIV-prevention drug PrEP.

“We’ve really tried to make this show as uplifting and community-based as possible,” said Gifford, noting that Howard Brown Health Center donated lots of condoms and the nearby novelty shop Taboo Taboo provided other props.

Other changes for 2017 sees Loos switching from the hayseed ingénue hero Al to the conceited hunks Stephen Stephan. Meanwhile Eninger said he has come up for a new reason for his notably altered protrusion as the older bathhouse denizen Chester.

“The prop perhaps is if nothing bigger this time around,” laughed Eninger, noting that his parents have already caught a preview performance and approved of the show’s many changes.

Both Gifford and Eninger also noted that some of the potentially hurtful language has been tempered regarding gay female friends and elderly guys.

“If it’s going to be a tour of different archetypes in Boystown and amongst the queer Chicago community, we wanted it to be much more empowering,” Gifford said. “But I mean, the whole show is silly. It’s a musical set in a bathhouse after all.”

The official press opening of Steamworks: The Musical is 8 p.m. Friday, April 28, at the Annoyance Theatre, 851 Belmont Ave. Performances continue at 8 p.m. Fridays through June 16. Tickets are $20 and $15 for students; call 773-979-9693 or visit TheAnnoyance.com.
THEATER REVIEW
Aladdin
Book: Chad Beguelin; Score: Alan Menken
with Howard Ashman, Tim Rice & Beguelin
At: Cadillac Palace Theatre,
151 W. Randolph St.
Tickets: 800-775-2000 or
BroadwayInChicago.com; $44-$153
Runs through: Sept. 10

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

There's no disguising the fact that the national tour of Aladdin is anything but a corporate Disney product. But if audiences want to shell out the big bucks for a splashy screen-to-stage adaptation of the 1992 animated feature, is it so wrong for Disney to oblige them with such a wowing family-friendly spectacle?

One thing you can't accuse Disney of is stinting on Aladdin's budget, and this 2014 Broadway musical is full of eye candy all around. Bob Crowley's alternately elegant and bling-filled set designs are full of dazzle, while Gregg Barnes' pardo of elaborate costumes are both colorful and very revealing (especially if shapely chorus girls or hunky hirsute chorus boys are your thing).

Disney also doesn't stint on talent, especially with Tony Award-winner Casey Nicholaw (The Book of Mormon, Something Rotten!) helming the production as both director and choreographer. And the Aladdin cast is full of charismatic, triple-threat performers including the original Broadway Aladdin of Adam Jacobs, the feisty Princess Jasmine of Isabelle McCalla and the overexcited Genie of Anthony Murphy.

Nicholaw also brings lots of surprises to the production, including a mind-boggling flying carpet sequence for "A Whole New World" and other tricks that can be attributed to the "Illusion Design" of Jim Steinmeyer and the "Special Effects Design" of Jeremy Chernick. True, some chase and fight sequences can feel far too cartoonish, but you have to consider the source material.

Where Aladdin is more problematic is how its film parts and new material have been conjoined together by book writer and new co-lyricist Chad Beguelin. While it's nice that some of Alan Menken's cut songs co-written with the late lyricist Howard Ashman have been restored ("Proud of Your Boy," "High Adventure"), they don't always fit in comfortably with the narrative. (Neither do the new Menken-Beguelin songs.)

There's also the issue of non-human sidekicks from the film being replaced for the stage. Regina De Leon has fun as the haranguing human henchman Iago to Jonathan Weir's erudite villain Jafar. Yet Aladdin's street-urchin sidekicks (Zachary Bencal as the ever-hungry Babkak, Philippe Arroyo as the geeky Omar and likely Aladdin understudy Mike Longo as the looker Kassim) often get saddled with some really hokey comedy dialogue.

Yet Aladdin is very upfront about not taking itself too seriously. Even the moralistic lessons of looking for inner beauty and being one's true self are played lightly and don't get in the way of all the fun, fun, fun. And as an all-ages stage spectacle, Aladdin certainly delivers what it promises.

THEATER REVIEW
La Havana Madrid
Playwright: Sandra Delgado
At: Artemisia at the Edge,
151 W. Randolph St.
Tickets: $25
Runs through: May 7

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Chicago has been described as a "city of neighborhoods"—a sobriquet suggesting a tour of the world encapsulated in a few square miles—but also hearkening to feudal ages, making its legacy a chronic of multicultural displacement as well as assimilation.

The instigators of these shifting populations nowadays are not hostile governments so much as commercial conglomerates bent on economical gain—a phenomenon not restricted to communities of color, as demonstrated by the current upheaval in Lake View and Old Town.

Sandra Delgado documents the Latinx diaspora in microcosm by focusing her ethnographic survey on a single location—the Havana Madrid club at the corner of Belmont and Sheffield Avenues, in the loft now housing the Milio's Hair Salon. Though operating for barely a decade, in the 1960s, La Havana Madrid was an urban refuge where immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries, united by their common language, congregated to bask nostalgically in the music they remembered.

Steppenwolf's 1700 Theatre space has been reconfigured to replicate this oasis. Seated at cocktail tables, serenaded by Carpacho y Su Súper Combo and guided by the shamanistic spirit of La Havana Madrid, we hear the stories of how Cuban "Peter Pan" children were sent by their parents to foster families dwelling safely distant from Castro's work camps, how a pair of Colombian lovers exchanged their marriage vows "by proxy" in separate countries before uniting in the United States and how a photojournalist first found his calling in a juvenile reformatory. It's not all happy—we also revisit the Humboldt Park riots of 1966, erupting from the shooting of a teenager by restless police officers—but the geographical specificity of these first-person experiences renders them immediately familiar to long-time residents of Chicago's North Side.

This specificity is underlined by many of the subjects themselves, attending the opening-night performance. (One of them—bandleader and bass player Roberto "Carpacho" Marín—is in the show.) The eight-member ensemble delivers uniformly excellent performances adhering to the immersive environment established by Cheryl Lynn Bruce's direction, assisted by a technical team likewise transporting us backward over decades, and by William Carlos Angelo's supple dances conveying a range of emotions from starry-eyed romance to chaos-fueled agony.

The evening features several "dance breaks" during which spectators—even those not knowing a mambo from a minuet—are encouraged to participate. Don't be shy: All are welcome at La Havana Madrid.

THEATER REVIEW
Visiting
Playwright: Ed Proudfoot
At: Artemisia at the Edge,
5154 N. Broadway
Tickets: $25
Runs through: May 7

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Bipolar disorder—the psychological infirmity once known as manic-depression, characterized by bouts of intense emotional obsession—is hereditary.

Its symptoms are manifested through behavior, rather than through any measurable pathogen. It is often found in large, quarrelsome, stress-riddled groups, the propensity of the afflicted to attempt suicide usually contributing to the aforementioned stress. It is also frequently evidenced in only one child per generation.

The women of the Smith clan fit this description to the smallest R: Rachel is a fussy spinster prone to hypochondriacal ailments. Holly is a hard-drinking biker-butch lesbian. Sister-in-law Carol is the wife of born-again Harold—the lone Smith brother—who practices chastity within marriage. This leaves Lauren the carrier of a "family curse" that has not swayed her from her reproductive duties. The picnic they propose to conduct this autumn afternoon is in celebration of daughter Penny's birthday, following the latter's filial rite of passage—hospitalization and pharmaceutical intervention after a narrowly-aborted leap from the roof of the medical facility.

Since the major part of Ed Proudfoot's world-premiere play is devoted to clinical explications of the physical and social intricacies surrounding this oft-misunderstood malady, we soon discern that three of the four Smith siblings have implemented strategies to prevent proliferation of their fractious genes. Ironically, our detached view—while mirroring the resignation of intimates too long exposed to recurring crises—highlights the fundamental selfishness inherent in Lauren's proclaiming her preparations for ending her own life. Further reducing our sympathy is the playwright's irresponsible metaphor for a life-loses-on-upbeat-ending being to provide Penny with a baby, whose doting kin promptly commence teaching the infant therapeutic mantras she will likely need someday. Have these people never heard of adoption?

Artemisia director Carrie Lee Patterson has wisely assembled a cast with the collective expertise to convey the dysfunctional fallout arising from this incurable illness without slipping into operatic histrionics (except when Lauren or Penny are in the throes of a seizure, telenevola-la-strength passion being a major component thereof). The results may emerge somewhat nebulous—those striving to follow the trajectory of its mosaics leaps back and forth in time risk sustaining whiplash—but if Proudfoot's case study sends playgoers home knowing more about the disease under scrutiny than when they arrived, it's a step toward diminishing the toll it continues to exact in our society.

CRITICS' PICKS

**Born Yesterday,** Remy Bumpo @ The Greenhouse, through April 30. Don't miss! Make sure you see this brilliantly directed, acted and designed revival of Garson Kanin's great U.S. political comedy, written in 1946 but still too timely. You'll seldom see a more perfect and polished show—and the costumes are to die for! JA

**Linda Vista,** Steppenwolf Theatre, through May 21. If you're fond of Steely Dan songs—or maybe your life resembles one—your empathy with the flawed hero of this latest dispatch from the eclectic Tracy Letts is assured. MSM

**King of the Yees,** Goodman Theatre, through April 30. Lauren Yee takes us on a whirlwind micromosmic tour of the Chinese-American experience, hosted by the most charming clan patriarch since Tevye of Anatevka (which is not in China, by the way). MSB

**Stop Kiss,** The Cuckoo's Theater Project at Collaboration Studios, through May 6. Diana Son's 1998 lesbian drama that alternates scenes before and after an anti-gay-bashing incident is back in an intimate and sometimes upsetting production. SCM

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan
THEATER REVIEW

Hookman
Playwright: Lauren Yee
At: Steep Theatre, 1115 W. Berwyn
Tickets: 773-649-3186; SteepTheatre.com; $25-$35
 Runs through: May 27

BY JONATHAN ADBARNEL

Playwright Lauren Yee unquestionably creates energetic and imaginative fantasy theater. With two plays currently onstage in Chicago (Goodman Theatre’s King of the Yees is the other), it’s clear that she’s a master of meta-theatrical devices and show biz razzle-dazzle. Folks tired of mainstream realistic drama will find refreshment in Yee’s exuberant plays. That she has something to say is an even better recommendation, although it oddly is a stumbling block in Hookman.

The problem is that Yee bills Hookman as “an existential slasher comedy,” derived from the urban legend of a hook-handed serial killer who pursues couples in Lovers Lane, or pops up in the backseat of a car. The idea is perfect for a creepy theatrical take-off on slasher movies, which is precisely what Steep Theatre and director Vanessa Stalling deliver in this well-crafted production.

However, the flippant, self-referencing style is in contrast to—even in conflict with—the play’s deeply serious actual story about guilt and grief. It’s as if Yee—still in her 20s when she wrote Hookman and only 32 now—felt she could not write a serious play about such a serious subject.

The result is a possible disconnect between what an audience expects the play to be (especially those who’ve seen King of the Yees) and what it actually is.

Lexi (oh-so-vulnerable Kiayla Ryann), 17, is a college freshman. On spring break she gets together with gal pal Jess (the versatile Karen Isabel Rodriguez), who is killed in a car accident with Lexi at the wheel when a drunk driver hits them. The 85-minute play returns Lexi to school, where she deals with vapidly weird dorm mates, fallout from a sexual encounter that may have been rape and her mother constantly calling her. Also, she repeatedly replays the crash and her final conversation with Jess, including a mocking discussion of Hookman. In Lexi’s fevered state, all people and events distort into deceptive and threatening encounters, dripping with menstrual blood, haunted by Hookman and punctuated by the shock visual and aural effects of horror films. At the play’s end, Lexi recalls an important detail of the accident that she’s repressed. It serves as an exclamation point to all that’s gone before, and it’s anything but comedic.

The cast is first-rate, with fine, drily hilarious support from Aja Wiltshire and Sasha Smith as the self-absorbed dorm mates and James Doherty as assorted males, but the tech/design team is the star: Arnel Sancianco (scenic), Pete Dully (lighting), Mieka van der Ploeg (costumes), Eleanor Kahn (props), Mark Comiskey (projections/video) and Jon Beal (violence/gore). Jeffrey Levin’s award-worthy sound design and original music ascend the heights of shock and shlock, reminding us how important aural elements can be in theater.

The Joffrey Ballet affirms its international reputation as a top-flight contemporary dance company with the repertory concert Global Visionaries. On the bill is the world premiere of Episode 47, by Swedish choreographer Alexander Ekman; the Chicago premiere of The Miraculous Mandarin, by San Francisco Ballet resident choreographer Yuri Possokhov; and a revival of Annabelle Lopez Ochoa’s LED light-filled Mammatus. Performances at Roosevelt University, 50 E. Congress Pkwy., are 7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays (also Wednesday, April 26, and Thursday, May 4), with 2 p.m. matinees Saturdays and Sundays through May 7. Tickets are $34-$159; call 312-386-8905 or visit Joffrey.org.

Caption: Lucas Segovia and Anna Gerberich in a revival of Annabelle Lopez Ochoa’s Mammatus. Photo by Cheryl Mann.
**Driehaus’ fashion awards April 28**

Driehaus Design Initiative will celebrate the future of fashion at The 16th Annual Driehaus Awards for Fashion Excellence on Friday, April 28, at 6:30 p.m. at Vintage Studios, 700 S. Desplaines St.

Fox 32 reporter/anchor Sylvia Perez will emcee the event.

The first place designer will win $7,500, including photography & make-up for the production of a lookbook, a garment display at Neiman Marcus Michigan Avenue, and additional media opportunities. The second and third place designers, as well as the five honorable mention designers, will win cash honorariums.

Admission is $175-$300 each; visit DriehausDesign.org.

**‘Our Christian Nation’ through April 29**

Our Christian Nation—a satirical two-act play written by Emmy-winning writer/Second City instructor Joe Janes, with Andrea J. Dymond directing—will run at The Cornservatory, 4210 N. Lincoln Ave., on Fridays and Saturdays through April 29.

The production tackles several subjects, including the founding fathers, religion and homosexuality. All shows are BYOB.

Tickets are $20 each; visit Eventbrite.com or purchase them at the door.

**D4L on Aug. 19, CDU changes leaders**

Chicago Dancers United (CDU)—which mobilizes Chicago’s dance community by raising funds through dance—announced changes to its administrative and board leadership and the date for its 26th annual Dance for Life Chicago benefit performance at the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University.

Dance for Life will take place Saturday, Aug. 19. Prior to the performance, CDU hosts a gala celebration at the Hilton Chicago.

Regarding leadership, CDU has hired Phil Reynolds as executive director. Also, Kevin McGirr is now president of CDU’s board of directors, succeeding co-founder Harriet Ross, who remains on the board. Patti Eylar, co-director of Chicago Ballet Arts, is now vice president.

**Queer Contra restarts April 29**

After a hiatus, Queer Contra will restart on Saturday, April 29.

The dance is 7-9:30 p.m., with an introduction for beginners at 6:30-7 p.m. at Second Unitarian Church, 656 W. Barry Ave.

To help pay for the band, caller and dance hall, attendees are requested to donate $10, payable at the door. No advance planning or experience is needed, and no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

RSVP via the Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/events/604303449764749/—or attendees can simply show up at the venue. For more info, visit http://ChicagoQueerContra.wordpress.com.

**Musical-theater fest submissions wanted**

Underscore Theatre Company is accepting submissions for its 4th annual Chicago Musical Theatre Festival, set for February 2018.

CMFT 4 will include a number of new development opportunities for participants, including feedback from a panel of local playwrights, composers and judges, as well as networking events with theater professionals from across the country.

Applications can be submitted through May 15 at CMFT.org.
OUT! Chicago and Illinois LGBTQ Visitor’s Guide available

Visitors to Chicago and Illinois have a guide to help navigate LGBTQ and mainstream events and places to see: The 2017 OUT! Chicago and Illinois LGBTQ Visitor’s Guide is now available.

The 124-page guide, published by weekly LGBTQ newspaper Windy City Times, includes sections on things to do outside of the city, from Oak Park and the total eclipse downstate this summer to the Shawnee National Forest and Springfield.

The rest of the guide focuses on Chicago and its suburbs, with hundreds of attractions, museums, art galleries, architectural locations, theaters, dance companies, restaurants, music venues, LGBT clubs and parties, sports leagues, bookstores, events and more listed. There’s also a quick reference to travel and accommodations, and a detailed guide to the city’s many neighborhoods.

While a lot of the LGBTQ community is concentrated on the city’s North Side, especially in Boystown, Lakeview and Andersonville, the guide is careful to provide things to do across the city and suburbs, from Pullman, Little Village, Bridgeport and Hyde Park to Humboldt Park, Pilsen and Evanston. And the traditional downtown tourist attractions are also included, such as Millennium Park, the Art Institute and Navy Pier.

Windy City Times partnered with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity on their tourism efforts, which include a big push for LGBTQ tourists to the state from across the U.S. and internationally. Department Director Cory Jobe has been spearheading inclusion of LGBTQ images and outreach in state tourism, and this OUT! Guide is linked from the Illinois tourism website, EnjoyIllinois.com.

“From a vibrant LGBTQ community in Chicago and beyond, to pride events in cities across the state and plenty of festivities and travel experiences, there’s so much for LGBTQ travelers to discover in Illinois,” said Cory Jobe, director of the Illinois Office of Tourism. “In a state that offers such a variety of activities to inspire travel, the new OUT! Guide helps us showcase how Illinois tourism provides something for everyone, from those who want outdoor adventures to those looking for great indoor fun.”

The guide is distributed throughout Illinois, and is available as a free download on the Windy City Times website: http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/TravelGuideFrontpage/current.pdf.

U.S. visitors can also request a free copy to be mailed to them, on a limited basis, by emailing editor@windycitymediagroup.com with the full name and mailing address for the copy to be mailed.

Windy City Times is a weekly LGBTQ newspaper founded in 1985. See WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

Bookstore challenge on April 29

Two dozen independent bookstores in the greater Chicago area—from Winnetka to Hyde Park, from Naperville to Northbrook—are collaborating for this year’s Independent Bookstore Day (Saturday, April 29) with the #MyChicagoBookstore Challenge.

Independent Bookstore Day (IBD) is a one-day national party that takes place at indie bookstores across the country on the last Saturday in April. Each store creates its own unique events—including guest authors, special kids’ story times, readings, contests, giveaways and special sales.

But this year, at least 24 stores are also jointly sponsoring the #MyChicagoBookstore Challenge, which encourages book lovers to indulge in bookstore tourism by visiting 10 or more stores on that one day. To begin their trip, readers can pick up a #MyChicagoBookstore carabiner and their first “luggage tags” from the store of their choice (from any of the independent bookstores listed below) with an initial purchase of $25 or more.

Some of the participating bookstores include Anderson’s Bookshop, 57th Street Books, The Book Cellar, Women & Children First, Volumes Bookcafe, RoscoeBooks and Quimby’s. See “MyChicagoBookstore” on Facebook.

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Honduras and the U.S.: Distant neighbors, common struggles

BY BRONSON PETTITT

Melissa Cardoza was overwhelmed by the wide selection of products while she shopped at a supermarket in the United States.

“I had no idea what to pick,” said the feminist organizer, writer and poet from Honduras, who compared the abundance of the United States to the austerity back home during a phone interview with Windy City Times.

It would seem the two countries—separated by thousands of miles and several borders—couldn’t be more different, but they share more similarities than one might realize, especially when it comes to resistance and social struggles.

Cardoza is focusing on some of those similarities as part of a month-long tour of nearly 20 U.S. cities while promoting her new bilingual book, 13 Colores of the Honduran Resistance, which tells the stories of 13 women and females in the Central American country in the years following a coup d’état in 2009.

But it’s more than a book tour—she and her friend Karla Lara, a well-known feminist activist, author and musician from Honduras, are adapting four of the vignettes from Cardoza’s book and performing them as stage productions.

They’re also speaking with religious groups, LGBTQ organizations, labor and immigrant groups and activists including Black Lives Matter to share their experiences and learn about different forms of resistance amid repressive governments and societies.

“We think it’s very important to have dialog between movements of countries that are very different from each other but which might have things in common in terms of both the oppressions we face and the ways in which we resist,” Cardoza said.

She said she also hopes to shed light during their tour on how social movements in Honduras are intersectional and inclusive of various groups—indigenous peoples fighting for preservation of their land, LGBT folks struggling for equality and peasants fighting for labor rights, among others.

Elsewhere, social movements can become scattered, with minority groups fighting their own struggles but failing to unite. But in Honduras, various groups have come together to fight a common oppressor.

The tour and Cardoza’s book are dedicated to Berta Cáceres, one of Honduras’ most beloved indigenous leaders and environmentalists, who was assassinated in early 2016.

Cáceres was one of the pioneers of Honduras’ intersectionality resistance.

“[Cáceres] was really ahead of her time in a lot of ways,” said Matt Ginsberg-Jaeckle, a friend of Cardoza and Cáceres who translated Cardoza’s book into English. “COPINH, the organization that Berta built, was an organization rooted in very rural, very poor, indigenous communities. She built an organization that was intersectional, without those words at the time, but that was inclusive of gender, sexuality—one of the only [of its kind] in Latin America.”

“[Cáceres] understood that patriarchy and neoliberalism were the same thing, but at the same time the resistance against the system was also multi-faceted, which was probably the most revolutionary thinking at the time, because political struggles tended to become fragmented,” Cardoza said.

In Cardoza’s book, all the characters share similarities in that they are resisting patriarchal or capitalist societies in one way or another.

“A lot of these stories have a deep resonance with ... the political climate in the United States ... and are inextricably linked to the United States and U.S. politics, since the coup d’etat itself was something that was largely in response to what was a perceived threat to U.S. corporate interests in Honduras by a president who was moving in a populist direction,” Ginsberg-Jaeckle said.

And now with Donald Trump as president and the setbacks for minority groups and immigrants, it is more important than ever for social movements to be united, Cardoza and Ginsberg-Jaeckle indicated.


Those who are interested in learning more about the TransWorks Program should contact Jes Scheinpflug at 773-248-5200, ext. 367, or jscheinpflug@chicagohouse.org.

The letter is online at WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

RuPaul, Grimm named to TIME 100 list

TIME Magazine named entertainer RuPaul and trans activist Gavin Grimm to the 2017 TIME 100, its annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world.

RuPaul is the Emmy-winning host and executive producer of RuPaul’s Drag Race, now in its ninth season. Grimm, 17, is a senior at Gloucester County High School in Gloucester, Virginia. He filed a lawsuit against the Gloucester County School District’s policy prohibiting students from using bathrooms and locker rooms that don’t correspond with their “biological gender.” The U.S. Supreme Court remanded the case to the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

A few of the others on the list include out actress Sarah Paulson, Donald and Ivanka Trump (as well as Ivanka’s husband, Jared Kushner), author Margaret Atwood, WikiLeaks’ Julian Assange, North Korea’s Kim Jong Un, film director Barry Jenkins (Moonlight), U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, model Ashley Graham and Chance the Rapper.

The list is at Time.com/time100.
Trans individuals honored at HIV testing-day event

South Side Help Center, Affinity Community Services and Coalition for Justice & Respect collaborated to host an event to commemorate National Transgender HIV Testing Day (April 18) by honoring individuals who have advocated for the well-being of those in the transgender community.

The program included presenting them with customized awards and an evening of food, fun and fashion.

Community and organization leaders and activists such as Cosette Hampton, organizing co-chair; BYP-100: Imani Rupert-Gordon, executive director of Affinity Community Services; and Jolie Holliman, of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, made the nominations. Rupert-Gordon and lead sponsors Vanessa Smith, (executive director of the South Side Help Center) and Marc Loveless (founder of the Coalition for Justice & Respect) presented the awards.

Awardees in attendance included Reyna Ortiz, of Chicago House; Beverly Ross, facilitator of AIDS Foundation of Chicago’s Project Elevate; JT Johnson, of the University of Chicago's Organization of Black Students; Channyn Lynne Parker, care coordinator of Chicago House's TransHealth program; Tanvi Sheth, of the Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois; Pride Action Tank Executive Director Kim Hunt; Ms. Afrika Lockett, of the LGBTQ prison-abolition organization Black and Pink; Chicago’s Integrated Community Advisory’s Caprice Carthans; and Illinois Safe Schools Alliance Executive Director Owen-Daniel McCarter.

Honorees who were unable to attend included Black Youth Project (BYP) 100 National Director Charlene A. Carruthers; Xavier D. Maatra, of the Chicago Black Trans GNC Collective; BYP100 Communications Manager L’errétt Jazelle Alilith; Columbia University’s Precious Brady Davis; and activist/Brave Space Alliance Director LaSaia Wade.

Left to right Reyna Ortiz, Beverly Ross, Afrika Lockett, Channyn Parker, Caprice Carthans, Owen Daniel-McCarter, Tanvi Sheth, JT Thomas and Kim Hunt.

Photo courtesy of Creola A. Kizart-Hampton

LCHJ’s ‘May Ball’ May 6 in West Loop
Legal Council for Health Justice will host its third annual May Ball at the HGTV-featured home of Dr. Nabeela Rasheed and Fawzia Mirza in Chicago’s West Loop on Saturday, May 6.

The ball, this year named “May (Disco) Ball,” is black-tie optional. All proceeds from the ball directly support the Legal Council’s programs providing free, immediate legal help to low-income individuals with HIV, people at risk of homelessness and children with disabilities.

May Ball tickets start at $100 and are available by visiting https://mayball2017.eventbrite.com or calling 312-605-1957.

‘Proud to Runway’ April 29 at Sidetrack
The local LGBT organization Proud to Run will host “Proud to Runway” on Saturday, April 29, at 5 p.m. at Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St.

A $20 entry fee includes two drink tickets, one door-prize ticket and access to the runway show.

See “Proud to Runway” on Facebook.
NUNN ON ONE: TELEVISION

Eugenio Derbez speeds into Chicago

BY JERRY NUNN

Eugenio Derbez has risen to be one of the most influential forces in Latin America as an actor, writer, producer and director. Now he is ready to take the rest of the world by storm.

In the Latin market, his Spanish TV shows were incredibly popular and, in 1992, he hosted a variety show called Al Derecho y al Derbez.

He received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame last year and has a string of movies in the works. His latest film is called How to Be a Latin Lover, and is being released nationwide the last weekend in April.

Windy City Times: I read you started doing extra work on a TV show when you were young.

ED: That’s true. When I was about 12 years old, I got a part on a TV show in Mexico City. It was a soap opera called Chile, which was very popular.

WCT: What would you say to your 12-year-old self today?

ED: I would tell him to never give up on his dreams. When I was young, I had a lot of goals and I was working hard to achieve them. I would also tell him to never be afraid to take risks.

WCT: Did you know Raquel Welch before How to Be a Latin Lover?

ED: Yes. I had worked with her in the past and she is a great actress.

WCT: Did you study gigolos for this movie?

ED: No. I did not have to study gigolos. I just focused on the character and how to portray him.

WCT: Is it fun to be buff even though they are not. It was a stereotype, but true.

ED: Absolutely. I have been playing these roles for years and I have never been happier.

WCT: Did you take dance classes?

ED: Yes; I googled them. I am not saying names, but there were a lot of them, especially in California. They all had Italian names like Giorgio or Fabio. They dressed the same and were older. They had the leather jackets, long hair and tried to be buff even though they are not. It was a stereotype, but true.

WCT: I recently slept on an inflatable mattress like you did in Latin Lover—and mine deflated, also.

ED: They don’t work at all, right? I have one in my house and nobody wants to sleep there.

WCT: Did you have to pull back a bit and not go over the top with the humor, as opposed to some of your work in Mexico?

ED: Absolutely. We have a totally different take on humor in Mexico and Latin America. Even here in the U.S., if you watch Univision, the Spanish language channel, everything is broad, big and loud. When we were trying to make this work for both audiences—Anglos and Latinos—it was really hard. I had to be grounded, and not over the top.

It was interesting. I think we found the balance between the two areas, in Latin America and [the] U.S.

WCT: Are you starstruck by all these celebrities in your life now?

ED: Absolutely. I have been watching them on the screen since I was kid. All of a sudden, I am working with them. When I was working with Michael Cera, I was on set and it was like watching a movie instead of acting.

WCT: Did you study gigolos for this movie?

ED: Yes; I googled them. I am not going to say names, but there were a lot of them, especially in California. They all had Italian names like Giorgio or Fabio. They dressed the same and were older. They had the leather jackets, long hair and tried to be buff even though they are not. It was a stereotype, but true.

WCT: What was Salma Hayek singing at the end credits?

ED: Yes. She told me once that she could sing sad songs and we put that into the script. The song “El Triste” is a sad song, so she decided to sing it.

WCT: There is a lot of eye candy in [this movie], with men in speedos and Rob Lowe in his underwear.

ED: I know! He’s handsome, and it’s amazing how he’s in great shape. I had to gain a lot of weight for this role. I am skinny usually but I gained weight to have a big belly, since I am playing an aging Latin lover. My son is playing me when I am 25. He’s gorgeous, but he was killing himself to be in shape, and tan.

WCT: Have you played gay roles in the past?

ED: Yes; in my TV shows I had a couple of gay characters. They are one of my favorites to play and people love them. It is hard to play in a real way, and I like that.

WCT: You are going to be in the movie version of Speedy Gonzalez?

ED: Warner Bros. was worried about doing an animated movie about it, because they were worried it was not respectful and politically incorrect for Mexicans. I told them that we love Speedy Gonzalez in Mexico and don’t feel it is offensive. He outsprints the gringo cat, and brings food to all the people behind the wall. He’s an amazing character.

WCT: You are also in an upcoming film with Helen Mirren?

ED: Yes. The cast is amazing. We have Misty Copeland, who is the number-one ballet dancer in the world.

WCT: Did you take dance classes?

ED: No. I play the king of one of the realms, the Land of Flowers. Keira, Helen, Richard E. Grant and myself are all royalty.

WCT: And you are about to film an Overboard remake?

ED: I start filming next month with Anna Faris. We are flipping the roles. I am the one with amnesia and the rich one—I play the bitchy guy!

Beginning just two weeks after Springfest/17: Stuff (April 28-30) wraps up, CHFNow’s Summer programming series will kick off with Gabourely Sidibe, the star of Precious and the TV show Empire. Sidibe will be at Francis W. Parker School, 2233 W. Clark St., on Thursday, May 11, 7-8 p.m., to discuss her memoir, This Is Just My Face: Try Not to Stare.

On Monday, June 19, Roxane Gay returns to Chicago to discuss her gripping new memoir, Hunger. Closing out the CHFNow summer season, will be author Arundhati Roy. See ChicagoHumanities.org.

Filmmakers’ fundraiser April 30

Chicago Filmmakers will host a firehouse preview event and fundraiser Sunday, April 30, 3-5 p.m., at the Swedish American Museum, 5211 N. Clark St.

The cinema-oriented organization is attempting to finish renovate the historic-landmark firehouse, located in Edgewater. That site will be the new location and the headquarters for Reeling: The Chicago LGBTQ+ International Film Festival as well as the Onion City Experimental Film and Video Festival.

BY JERRY NUNN

The globally known musical Rent continues on with a 20th-anniversary tour that began last year.

The story—based on Giacomo Puccini's La Bohème—was transformed by Jonathan Larson into a tale about HIV/AIDS set in New York. On Broadway it resonated with audiences running for more than 5,000 performances and earned a Tony for Best Musical.

Newcomer David Merino is coming out in a big way as the unforgettable trans percussionist character Angel Dumott Schunard in the show. Windy City called him on the road to learn more about him.

Windy City Times: Where in the world are you touring today?
David Merino: I am in Boston. I love it here so far.

WCT: It is no Chicago, but a great city none-
theless...
DM: I have never been to Chicago, so I cannot confirm or deny. I cannot wait to go to Chicago.

WCT: Is Rent your big debut?
DM: That is exciting. I feel I am born to play this role. I feel I have a connection with Angel. There are similarities. There is a way she was written that I was meant to play. I don't know what other role I am meant for, but this is what it is!

It is so amazing to do this every day.

WCT: Did you watch the movie?
DM: The first thing I did was see the movie in late elementary school. My family was not a big theater family so I immersed myself in it. It was on TV one day and I fell in love with Angel. She was the first queer character that wasn't the butt of a joke. She wasn't laughed at or a caricature. She was living her best life the way she wanted it. She is the most open and loving person on the screen. She was my everything.

WCT: Sounds like you connected with Angel on a personal level.
DM: Absolutely.

WCT: That must read across from the stage?
DM: I would imagine it does. There is a visceral feeling I have when performing. There is a natural vibe around it. It doesn't feel like I am putting it on.

To become Angel I just put on her clothes and here I go. Whatever I feel in the moment works and I am very happy with it.

WCT: Did you try on the past costumes of other Angels?
DM: Yes. That was one of the first days of the process, before rehearsals even started. I was in tears. The costume people were so over me. I was just a queen trying on skirts, tights, and heels. I was screaming!

It was the craziest time-capsule moment.

WCT: Do you have your own take on Angel?
DM: I didn't approach Angel like any other Rents. It was what I felt and what I got from her. I think when people see Rent, especially the 20th anniversary, they see us mounting the show exactly what it was in the original. People expect Angel or Maureen to act a certain way. I think everyone in the cast, including myself, [tries] a fresh take on it while not removing any of the original charm of the character.

With the guidance of the director I was told to think of Doris Day. So I keep her gentle, beauti-

Turn to page 27
Lambda Legal event honors advocate

The Midwest Regional Office of Lambda Legal held its annual Bon Foster celebration April 20 at Morgan MFG.

The annual event honors Robert Bonvouloir “Bon” Foster, a Chicago advocate in the early days of the HIV epidemic, opposing injustice and resisting discrimination.

This year’s speakers included Joe Olszewski, Theresa Santos-Volpe, Christopher Clark, Jim Bennett and Rachel Tiven.

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Stud 4 Life marks five years

BY VERNON HESTER

The Stud 4 Life Social Club celebrated its fifth anniversary April 22 with a Royal Blue and White Affair at Simeon Alumni Hall on 89th and Halsted.

The event—which featured a dinner, dance and award ceremony—was a benefit for Clara’s House, a shelter for homeless women and children. The event also celebrated two recently deceased members of the social club, Nina Ross and Kim Hinds.

With Stud 4 Life officers decked out in royal blue suits greeting the guests, the night got started with a non-stop old school soundtrack provided by a DJ Diane. After dinner and dancing, awards were given by the officers for service to the group. Emcee Anthony Roosevelt broke the news that Kim Hinds had passed away the night before from cancer and she was acknowledged by the audience. Ricky Readus accepted the award for his niece, Nina Ross, who passed away three years earlier.

Social Club President Wanda B. stated early in the evening, “We love giving back to the LGBTQ community. We are a non-profit, completely out-of-pocket group to anyone who needs help.”

WCT: Did you know who Doris Day is, [with you] being so young?
DM: I ran to YouTube and watched every video that I could find of her. She is totally it!

WCT: Do you have a favorite song from Rent?
DM: There is a part of me that is in love with the character Mimi, so I love her music. I love “Out Tonight” and “Without You.” My favorite song to perform is “I’ll Cover You.” It is about falling in love. My partner Aaron Harrington who plays Tom Collins is so incredible. It’s so fun to perform with him every night.

With “La Vie Boheme,” we get to goof off and have fun with each other. We dive into a 10-minute long party.

WCT: Did original cast member Anthony Rapp attend the kickoff to the tour?
DM: He has not come yet, but he sent us a FaceTime message. This is the original creative team so they know everyone. Many of the Broadway and past tour cast members came. It was a huge honor that the Rent family was there. They sent us off and wished us luck to share the story across America.

WCT: I saw Rent on a small stage in Chicago recently. How does it translate with a big space?
DM: There is something intimate about it. I have been in it twice before this, once in California before I went to college, in a 70-seat house. It is so powerful when the last row of the theater is just a few feet away from you. It is a special connection.

The fact is that I still feel the energy with [more than] 3,000 seat houses—all the way to the back row and balcony. This is how powerful this show is. It shows how passionate the fans are as well.

WCT: Do you have plans after the tour?
DM: I am going back to school, because I left before my senior year. I am registering for classes on Monday, so I will be back full swing. I will be graduating in December. Who knows what New York will offer me next?

Rent is at the Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St, May 9-14. Tickets can be purchased at BroadwayInChicago.com.

Studs 4 Life leaders, from left: 1st Sgt. Van, 1st Lt. Big Bro, President Wanda B, 2nd Sgt Ty and Capt Shann.
Photo by Tracy Baim

LEFT: Stud 4 Life Vice President Van and her partner. RIGHT: Ty (left) and friend.
Photos by Vern Hester

MERINO from page 25

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‘Leather Eye’ contest at Touche

BY BRONSON PETTITT

Leather Eye For the Preppy Guy, the annual preppy-to-leather makeover contest, returns this Friday, April 28, to Touche, 6412 N. Clark St. Sign up begins at 10, contest at 11. Winner receives a $500 leather makeover from Leather 64TEN. A benefit for Vital Bridges Groceryland Pantry.

Wonka Ball shows cosmic delights

BY ANDREW DAVIS

“It’s a great gateway drug, as it were, for coming to the theater,” said Andrew Volkoff, referring to Friday’s Wonka Ball, an annual gala to raise money for the About Face Theatre.

Volkoff—one of the event’s organizers and the outgoing artistic director for the community-focused LGBTQIA arts organization (who is stepping down at the end of the 2016-17 season)—said the space-themed gala was a “smash.”

Dressed as space cowboys and cowgirls, Star Trek and Star Wars characters, astronauts and aliens and more, participants danced, drank, ate and bid on silent-auction items, including cookie bouquets, martial arts packages, happy hour for a dozen people, baseball games, electronic-music concert tickets and pieces from local artists.

A live auction for a Lady Gaga concert package in Chicago went for $2,300, while a seven-day cruise package fetched $3,500. Similarly, one of About Face’s lifetime donors offered a matching $2,500 if bidders contributed the same amount in donations—and in just a few minutes, the offer was met.

“The programs [AFT] does with youth and the way they get the message out so people understand what our communities’ experiences are—they do it with such quality, with such heart, without pandering, without apologizing, and I love that,” said Vinny Cousineau, who was with husband LT Cousineau; incidentally, they were both dressed as droids during what was their third Wonka Ball.

the DISH
Weekly Dining Guide in WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR
Chicago Artisan Chocolate Show; Broken English

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Attendees were definitely living the sweet life at the Chicago Artisan Chocolate Show that took place April 22-23 at Plumbers Hall.

Several dozen vendors exhibited everything from classic treats to tasty trends in the world of chocolate. (Unlike some festivals, most vendors offered samples and sold larger items.) A few of the standout vendors were as follows:

—Sweet P’s Pantry: This Wisconsin-based chocolatier is the home of the giant peanut-butter cup, but offered some great toffees at the show.

—Terry’s Toffee: Speaking of toffee, this gay-owned business has some of the best treats in that category this writer has ever tasted (including magical lemon-flavored candies)—but, at the show, it also offered Wackerpop (popcorn smothered in toffee and drizzled in dark chocolate).

—Lemaster Family Kitchen: One of the few non-chocolate-focused vendors at the exhibit, LFK sold rubs that smelled absolutely amazing, including Backyard Blend (a blend of roughly ground root vegetables and herbs, with a hint of arbol chili pepper), South of France and Rub It Right.

—IntoxiCakes: As one might surmise, this company offers boozy confections, such as vodka red velvet (with Chambord cream-cheese frosting), whiskey chocolate (with Irish cream buttercream icing) and bourbon salted caramel (with bourbon cream-cheese topping) cupcakes.

—Somrus: There were also vendors who offered alcohol (as long as attendees purchased tickets). One of the most intriguing was Somrus, a versatile liqueur that counts cardamom, almonds and rose petals among its ingredients, and that can be used in everything from chai lattes to desserts—and, of course, drunk on its own.

—Lihy Epstein has been performing in various media for years. It all started with theater camp as child, speech team in high school, college drag performances as “Dick Then Dyke,” and numerous poetry open mics throughout. She is currently working on keeping both of her family businesses’ legacies going, and moonlighting as an aspiring poet and storyteller.

—Jackie Kaplan-Perkins is a lifelong Chicagoland. She serves as the Director of the Chicago and the Midwest for Human Rights Watch and in the evening drinking scotch and telling stories (usually in that order). She lives on the north side with her wife, Ann, their son, David and a menagerie of pets.

—Brad Lippitz is an accomplished lawyer, artist and—for the last 24 years—real estate broker. He and his husband, Yoni, have been together for nearly 30 years and have two teenaged sons. He and Yoni are active in politics and they have hosted scores of benefits for LGBT organizations and politicians over the years. Brad has served on numerous boards and remains active in political and social service organizations on both the local and national level.

—Joshua Oaks has been working on social justice issues affecting queer communities on the local, state and national level for over 10 years. Currently, he is the Digital Policy Manager for the AIDS Foundation of Chicago and in 2016 served as a co-chair for the Creating Change Conference. Joshua is a giant Star Trek dork and is prone to bursting out in long phrases of gibberish when he gets excited. Oh yeah, he is also a hugger, so give him one.

—Eitan Schechtman-Drayman lives in Evanston with his husband and two children. He is a postdoctoral fellow in Neuroscience at Northwestern University. Eitan was born in Israel and lived there almost all his life. He has volunteered at various Israeli LGBT organizations, such as Hoshen, an educational organization, IGY (Israeli Gay Youth) and the Jerusalem Open House.

—Amy Thompson performs across the country with The Second City Touring Company, and in Chicago with The Annoyance house ensemble, Baby Wine. A California native, Amy graduated from Brandeis University with degrees in English and Acting in 2011.

—Let Them Eat Candles: It sounds like one of those ideas that makes someone say, “Why didn’t I think of that?” Glencoe-based Let Them Eat Candles offers edible (and working) items that taste like milk, dark or white chocolate.

“There’s this whole generation of young Hollywood girls who can’t find love where they think it’s supposed to be, and then they come out being gay and two weeks later they have a boyfriend. It drives me nuts!”—Kelly Osbourne takes issue with girls who play gay for fun. For the record, if any young straight boys want to play gay with me, I’m in.

The Bette Midler-led production of Hello, Dolly! finally opened on Broadway—and, no surprise, the critics were dutifully impressed. Amida all the plaudits, there was some disappointment for Bette—the absence of Carol Channing and Jerry Herman. Of course, if she were keeping up with BillyMasters.com, she would have known weeks ago that these two would be unable to attend. The composer of “Dolly” said he hoped to travel from Miami for the opening—perhaps by train since he hates planes. But his health has been up and down, so he declined.

As for the original “Dolly,” Channing decided months ago that she wouldn’t be there, saying “Dolly is Bette’s, now. I’m not going to take away from that.” Altruistic as those sentiments are, she, too, was not well enough for the trip. Several sources tell me that Carol is under hospice care and has been intubated. Not so, say her people. “She’s at home in bed recovering but no means is on death’s door or connected to anything. She just had a small fall, but that’s nothing.” I suspect the truth is somewhere in the middle. We send our best wishes to Carol and hope, whatever is going on, that she’s not in any pain.

Because of her fall, Carol wasn’t able to attend two local events. One of them was an award from the Professional Dancers Society on April 23 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. Due to Carol’s indisposition, Lily Tomlin graciously stepped in. Because when I think of professional dancers, I think of Lily Tomlin.

The second event was “Hello, Jerryl!” a musical tribute to Jerry Herman that was produced by Michael Childers at the McCallum Theatre in Palm Springs and raised money for Jewish Family Service. The show, under the direction of Jason Graae, featured many luminaries giving voice to Jerry Herman songs. Folks like Lucie Arnaz Jr., Faith Prince, Hunter Ryan Herdlicka, Lee Roy Reams, Liz Callaway, David Burnham, Davis Gaines, Gary Beach, Ruta Lee, and the indefatigable Carole Cook! There were many stars in attendance as well, such as Mimi Hines, Kaye Ballard, Sal Mistretta, and Peter Marshall. Were it not for the traffic driving to Palm Springs (damn you, Coachella), it would have been a perfect trip. That mar was made up for by the terrific food courtesy of Lulu California Bistro—the short ribs, in particular, were spectacular. And the event raised a ton of money.

Now we get into a “she said, ‘she’ said” situation. I’m sure you’ve all seen Caitlyn Jenner’s latest interview with Diane Sawyer—which just happened to air four days before the release of Cait’s autobiography. Because we already told you the good stuff in advance, there weren’t many revelations. Jenner did say that she’s trying to be a better father, but is not as close to members of the Kardashian Klan as she’d like. Two days later, Keeping Up with the Kardashians dealt with Kris’ reaction to the book—and it’s not good. “Basically, the only nice thing ‘she’ had to say was that I was great socially, at a party one time. None of it makes sense. Everything she says is all made up. Why does everything have to be that Kris is such a bitch and an asshole?” Kris’ big disagreement with Jenner is whether he (at the time, Cait was a he) told Kris about his issues: “I tell Kris about my gender issues before I make love to her. This will always be a subject of dispute between us. She insists that she was taken by surprise by my ultimate transition to Caitlyn, which obviously means in her mind that she did not know enough.”

Kevin Spacey was just named host of the Tony Awards—which means either someone better dropped out or he has something to promote. Or there’s a third option. People close to Kevin say that he’s going to take this opportunity to come out of the closet in a kinda matter-of-fact way. Really? I guess we’ll find out on June 11.

Whether Spacey is gay or not, he’d be welcomed at Club Cumming, an offshoot of Alan Cumming’s dressing room at Cabaret, which kinda became a nightclub with people always dropping in. He’s teamed up with Ben Maisani (Anderson Cooper’s beau) and Daniel Nardicio (of Playgirl and various notorious underwear parties in NYC and Fire Island) to make it a reality: “Alan wants it to be a home for everyone of all ages, all genders, all sexualities, who all enjoy letting go and making mischief. No judgments, no attitude, no rules, except kindness, acceptance and fun.” The club will take over the Eastern Bloc space in the East Village and will reopen in the fall.

Danny in Maryland has an “Ask Billy” question which I enjoyed researching: “Do you know anything about the hot male escort Briana is sleeping with on Grace and Frankie? He’s absolutely incredible!”

His name is Damon Dayoub, and he’s straight. There—I just lost half my audience. But I can keep the rest of you on board when I tell you how hot he is, and how he’s not shy about showing off his assets, as you’ll see on BillyMasters.com.

When Lily Tomlin is bringing us dancers and male escorts, it’s definitely time to end yet another column. You can find all that and more on BillyMasters.com—the site that’s of no interest to Lily! The rest of you can send your questions to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before I tell you what I have in common with Caitlyn! So, remember, one man’s filth is another man’s bible.
**DISH from page 28**

A new Broken English opens

The third Broken English tacopub has opened in Chicago—this time, in Lincoln Park, at 2576 N. Lincoln Ave. Like the other two (in Old Town and the Loop), this Broken English is full of colors, unique art and vibrancy—and crowd-attracting food such as quesadilla fundido and fried-chicken tacos (the latter accompanied by ghost-pepper mayo).

As for the restaurant’s name, Adolfo Garcia (who conceived the restaurant along with Phil Stefani) says on the restaurant’s website, “I speak English with my friends, and I often find myself mixing in Spanish words because there are some phrases that simply don’t translate to English. This happens in many other languages and cultures, but that is what makes the name ‘Broken English’ fun—it is part of our daily slang.”

Note: Restaurant profiles/events are based on invitations arranged from restaurants and/or firms.
Windy City Times

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2017 JEEP WRANGLER UNLIMITED SPORT 4X4 AUTOMATIC
LEASE FOR $178 PER MONTH FOR 36 MONTHS
$3,995 cash due at delivery. Plus, tax and all applicable fees. 10,000 miles per year. For well qualified lessees. Not all will qualify. Lessee responsible for excess wear and mileage. Additional per mile charge over 10,000 miles.

2017 JEEP CHEROKEE LATITUDE 4X4
LEASE FOR $197 PER MONTH FOR 36 MONTHS
$2,995 cash due at delivery. Plus, tax and all applicable fees. 10,000 miles per year. For well qualified lessees. Not all will qualify. Lessee responsible for excess wear and mileage. Additional per mile charge over 10,000 miles.

See The All New Redesigned JEEP COMPASS