DR. TOM KLEIN
Heartland Alliance set to honor physician. 
Photo courtesy of Heartland Alliance

SWEET DEAL
Lesbians make Happy Apple Pie Shop a family affair. 
Photo of Corynne Romine and Michelle Mascaro by Mascaro

Deeply Rooted’s Joshua Ishmon, Dominique Atwood, Pierre Clark. 
Photo by Ken Carl

WINDY CITY TIMES
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‘DEEP’ IMPACT

Deeply Rooted Dance Theater turns 20

BRAVE STEP FORWARD
Brave Space Alliance hosts trans-centered rally/march

Rufus Wainwright
Sun, Dec 03 at 7:30pm
“With only a grand piano and his wits, the usually maximalist singer’s majestic melodies and soaring choruses are balanced by raw, confessional material. - The Guardian

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WELCOME, DR. BRIAN ROSETT!

Dr. Brian Rosett is excited to come home to Chicago to join Shifrin Plastic Surgery. An accomplished surgeon, Dr. Rosett has performed thousands of cases and has a proven track record of helping patients realize their best vision of themselves.

His return to the Midwest comes after an advanced fellowship in Los Angeles, where he worked with some of the very best surgeons in Beverly Hills. There, he also subsequently trained with one of the most regarded facial plastic surgeons in the United States, honing his aesthetic surgical skill and brings many of the field’s newest techniques back to the Midwest.

During his plastic surgery training at the University of Illinois-Chicago, Dr. Rosett performed nearly twice the number of cases required by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, affording him a broad range of operating competency in the realms of both aesthetic and reconstructive surgery.

Additionally, his medical background includes five years of general surgery residency at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit and medical school at Rush University in Chicago. Having grown up in the Windy City, he brings an earnest Midwestern sensibility to both the office and the operating room.

At the center of his medical philosophy is the belief that strong communication leads to the best outcomes. From consultation all the way through post-operative recovery you can expect Dr. Rosett to be engaged and easily accessible for any questions or concerns.

His patients often remark that his kindness and demeanor helped ease the stress and fear that can sometimes come with surgery. Dr. Rosett’s hope for every patient is a surgical success that boosts their self-esteem allowing them to live more confident and fulfilling lives.
**Science Center**

WCT covered the Oncofertility Consortium’s conference as well as the Out in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, Inc. (oSTEM) confab.

**That’s Show Biz**

Find out the latest about Clinton Kelly, Lena Dunham and Halsey.

**Plus**

**Daily Breaking News**

**The Real Deal**

The column Bent Nights reviews concerts by Real Dom (above), among others. Photo by Vern Hester

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NCAVP, HRC/TPOCC release reports on anti-trans violence

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) has released the report “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-Affected Intimate Partner Violence in 2016.”

The report looks at the experiences of 2,032 survivors of intimate-partner violence (IPV) who reported to 14 NCAVP member organizations from nine states, including California, Texas, New York, Arizona, Illinois, Massachusetts, Ohio, Vermont and Missouri. (Chicago’s Center on Halsted was the Illinois representative.)

Among the results are:
— LGBTQ and HIV-affected people of color made up 60 percent of the reports of IPV homicides, and 59 percent of the total number of survivors who reported to NCAVP members in 2016;
— Transgender women were 2.5 times more likely to be stalked, 2.5 times more likely to experience financial violence, and twice as likely to experience online harassment within IPV; and
— There was an increase in the percentage of survivors who identified as Latinx from 24 percent in 2015 to 30 percent in 2016.

Also, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation and the Trans People of Color Coalition (TPOCC) have released “A Time to Act: Fatal Violence Against Transgender People in America in 2017.”

Since the start of the year, at least 25 transgender people have been killed in the United States—the most on record. Eighty-four percent were people of color, and 80 percent were women. This report lists those transgender individuals who have been killed so far in 2017, complete with photos and bios. There is then information about cases of fatal violence by race, gender, identity and state, among other classifications. (Illinois, for example, has three cases of fatal violence between 2013-17; California and Louisiana were tied for the most, with 10 each.)

In a statement, Center on Halsted Chief Program Officer Dr. Hector Torres said, “As a founding member of NCAVP, Center on Halsted has been providing services to support LGBTQ survivors of domestic and sexual violence since 1988, while contributing to shifting policy and practice efforts to be more LGBT-inclusive, nationally.”

“Not only are these individuals more likely to be targeted; their options for accessing safe and relevant services diminishes. This is a big reason why LGBTQ specific services are crucial to our communities,” added Rachel Tillman, AVP clinical advocate at Center on Halsted.

In Chicago, the majority (57 percent) domestic and sexual violence reported to Center on Halsted’s Anti-Violence Program, were made by those who identified as cisgender males. People of color accounted for 63 percent of known ethnicity (29 percent African American, 26 percent Latinx, 3 percent Arab/Middle Eastern, and 5 percent Asian). Of those who reported their sexuality, the majority identified as gay (49 percent) with lesbians (18 percent) making up the next largest category. Transgender survivors face particular vulnerabilities, for instance, reporting additional violence when reporting the abuse to police.


Affinity casino fundraiser Dec. 2

Affinity Community Services will host “Black Gold,” its first-ever casino night fundraiser, on Saturday, Dec. 2, 7-11 p.m., at The Connection, 4321 S. Cottage Grove Ave.

There will be a raffle and a silent auction, a live DJ and dancing. In addition, the casino game winner will take home the Affinity Community Services Black Gold Trophy.

The VIP hour is 7-8 p.m.; reduced (general) admission begins at 8 p.m.

Admission is $35-$100 each; visit https://blackgoldacs.eventbrite.com/?aff=WindyCityTimes.
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Lesbian businesswoman Donalou Hendon dies

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Donalou Hendon died Nov. 10 and, at the time of this publication; the cause of death is unknown. She was 46.

Hendon was the co-owner of Forest View Lounge Bar and Grill in Forest View, Illinois, with her life partner of 16 years, Marge Bellisario.

Hendon was born May 2, 1971, in Berwyn, and spent her childhood in Winfield, Illinois. She graduated from West Chicago Community High School and studied at College of DuPage. Hendon also took classes at Morton College in restaurant food and sanitation to obtain her restaurant and bar license.

According to her friends, she loved fishing, softball, swimming and biking. She mostly fished in the Des Plaines River near her bar and also when she visited her grandmother’s house in Kentucky. Hendon also loved watching movies and listening to music, especially her favorite singer, Wynonna Judd.

In addition to Bellisario, Hendon is survived by her parents, Betty Franso and Don Hendon, brother Bruce Hendon (Heather), nephew Timmy, grandmother Maryanne Olson, three dogs, one cat and many close friends.

“She will be dearly missed by me, her family and friends,” said Bellisario. “I loved her fishing videos and especially her closing line ‘Signing off, this is Donalou from Forest View’ and they will live on and she will stay in my memories forever.”

“Donalou was an amazing fun-loving person with an infectious laugh that made you just want to be around her,” said long-time friend Nikki Martin. “She will be missed by all who had the chance to know her. Until we see each other again, rest in paradise my dear friend.”

“Donalou was caring and generous and her laugh was infectious,” said long-time friend Marianne Rubio. “Whenever you left the bar, she would make it a point to say goodbye with a big hug. It was an honor to have known her. Even the deer are going to miss her, when she would go fishing in the woods. I am going to miss going to the White Sox games with her (even though she was more of a Cubs fan), Someday we will meet again and party up in heaven. Dona … I am going to miss you, buddy. I will never forget about you.”

“She always made me laugh because her laugh was contagious,” said long-time friend Melissa Piovar. “I always enjoyed our conversations and her videos about fishing. I once complemented her on her hat because it had a fishing hook on it. On her next trip to Kentucky, she brought me back my now-favorite fishing hat. That was Donalou. She was always thoughtful and kind-hearted. She loved playing ball and played with her heart. Her outgoing and charismatic personality will definitely be missed on the field and out celebrating after our games. My many thoughts and prayers are with Marge and Donalou’s family. God bless you Donalou and may you rest in peace.”

“Donalou could throw a mean strike and swing a mighty bat,” said friend and teammate Katie Jacobson. “She would tell you a dumb joke just to make you smile and always knew what to say. I will seriously miss all her kooky fishing videos that always began with ‘Donalou from Forest View’ … Much love to her partner Marge, their families and friends. Godspeed Donalou.”

“Donalou loved her pets, holidays and all kinds of sports,” said longtime friend Betty Slad. “Her Facebook page exemplified the challenge and joy she found in her daily fix of fishing, Donalou especially loved playing 12-inch softball. She was our very spirited and dedicated pitcher on her own bar’s sponsored team for almost a decade. I had the privilege of being coach and manager for these amazing women. Every game night, as I arrived to pick up Donalou, she could be found in her back lot warming up her pitching arm.

“Donalou was always so kind to us ladies as she poured drinks, cracked jokes with her quick wit and served meals deliciously prepared by Marge. It was always a rare and special treat to sit with Donalou and talk once her bar responsibilities eased for the evening. Our team throughout the year celebrates teammate’s birthdays, but it will not be the same without Donalou who inconspicuously turned down the music, lined up the birthday shots as she sang our off-key rendition of ‘Happy Birthday’ while singlehandedly taking our group selfie. The Forest View Softball ladies will miss Donalou. She had so much more life to live, share in and enjoy.”

Funeral services are private; however, a public memorial service is in the planning stages for extended family and friends. Location and date/time TBA.

In lieu of flowers, the family has asked people to donate to any civil-rights and/or animal-rights organizations of their choosing in her memory.

HRC: New FBI stats on hate crimes ‘harrowing’

BY MATT SIMONETTE

New 2016 statistics released by the FBI on Nov. 13 show increases in hate-crimes against persons on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation bias.

According to the report, about 6,121 hate crimes were reported in 2016, representing an increase of about five percent. Of those, 1,076 crimes were directed against persons on the basis of their sexual orientation—an increase of about two percent—while 124 were on the basis of gender identity—an increase of about nine percent.

Human Rights Campaign Government Affairs Director David Stacy said in a statement that the numbers are more than likely incomplete: “The Trump administration, state and local jurisdictions must do more to prevent and respond to hate crimes. The numbers in this report are harrowing, and we know that a majority of hate crimes go unreported to the FBI and aren’t reflected in this report.”

Stacy added that politicians must be more vigorous in addressing anti-LGBT bigotry and championing anti-discrimination policies, further noting that such strategies also “requires vigorous enforcement of hate crimes laws, which can deter and address violence motivated by bigotry. This year alone, at least 25 transgender woman have been murdered in the U.S.—a vast majority of them women of color.”

Of 111 hate crimes reported by law enforcement agencies in Illinois, 21 were on the basis of sexual orientation and three were on the basis of gender identity. About 14 of the sexual orientation-based crimes took place in Chicago, as did two of the gender-identity based crimes.

Data for the report was compiled with reports from 15,254 agencies across the country participating in the federal Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR).


Harris urges voter database withdrawal

Citing concerns regarding data security and voter suppression, Assistant Majority Leader Greg Harris, D-Chicago, issued a statement urging the Illinois State Board of Elections to withdraw from the controversial Interstate Voter Registration Crosscheck System.

In part, Harris said, “Recent findings from Indivisible Chicago have discovered an alarming lack of proper security measures for the Crosscheck program. Illinois voters’ personal information is being uploaded to an unencrypted server—putting all registered voters in Illinois at risk of failing victim to identity theft.

“The time to act is now. I strongly encourage the State Board of Elections to withdraw from this program that has placed the identity of Illinois voters at risk and threatens to substantially suppress the right to vote for thousands of Illinois residents.”
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HRC ‘rises’ to occasion at 2017 gala

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Over 600 community members gathered at the Fairmont Chicago on Nov. 18 for Human Rights Campaign’s 2017 Chicago Gala.

In the opening presentation, Gala Co-Chairs Penelope Garcia, Victor Lim and Bradley Backhaus explained the theme for the evening: “rise.”

“HRC is deepening and expanding our toes to anyone who is feeling vulnerable,” Garcia said. “… We will resist, and we will rise.”

The early part of the program placed much focus on transgender rights. HRC Press Secretary Sarah McBride, who is transgender, spoke about the challenges the LGBT community faces in such dire political times, detailing how President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence have governed with the same contempt for much of the populace that they demonstrated during their campaign.

Trump, McBride said, is “completely unfit to serve as president of the United States.”

She further noted numerous challenges to the transgender community’s safety, with 25 murders of transgender women, adding, “This is already the deadliest year on record for the transgender community.”

But she expressed confidence that that the community could rise up to such challenges, and cited the recent Virginia elections, as well as the ousting of former North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory, “if anyone doubts our power.”

Jennifer Slipakoff, an Atlanta-based activist for transgender rights, spoke about her transgender daughter, Allie, and what inspired her to become an advocate.

Her daughter had decided to mainly present herself as female at around the time she wanted to enroll in a ballet class. It was an auspicious moment: It was the first time Slipakoff would have to indicate whether Allie needed boys’ or girls’ uniforms and supplies.

“I knew I had to pull this off. I was going to give my child a soft place to land,” Slipakoff said.

When someone at the school politely inquired how her daughter identified, as a matter of business, not fear or salacious curiosity, she and her daughter reached a turning point.

“It was that moment that gave new life to Allie,” Slipakoff recalled.

Back Lot Bash founders Amie Klujian and Christina Roberts were presented with HRC’s Community Leadership Award. In her remarks, Klujian discussed both the conception of Back Lot Bash and its Pride Family Fest event. The goal of Pride Family Fest, she said, “is for these families, especially the children, to see how special they are.”

Roberts added that she and Klujian wanted every Back Lot Bash attendee to leave “invigorated, confident and inspired.”

Barilla Pasta was presented with the organization’s Corporate Equality Award, in recognition of intense diversity-, equality- and equity-awareness company officials and employees sought after an anti-LGBT remark a high-profile official in Italy flipantly made in 2013. Barilla has since achieved perfect “100” HRC corporate responsibility scores for four years in a row.

Jean-Pierre Comte, president of Barilla’s American operations, said in his remarks, “If it wasn’t for advocates like the ones in the audience tonight, we couldn’t learn and grow.”

HRC’s Ally for Equality Award was presented to actor, director and producer Carrie Preston, who appeared on the television series The Good Wife, as well as the docudrama When We Rise and a number of LGBT-focused projects. She spoke about her commitment to LGBT-rights and admitted that for many it was difficult to speak publicly about issues from a place of relative privilege.

“Now is the time for all of us to speak out for each other—to risk saying the wrong thing in order to do the right thing,” she added.

Preston said that, before she was married, “I kissed plenty of girls and I liked it.” She also mentioned becoming ordained, and officiating at the wedding of her production partner and his now-husband. “You can call me Pastor Preston,” she joked.

Comedian Dana Goldberg solicited donations for HRC’s Super PAC, which raised just over $17,000. HRC National Board member Xavier Estes said, “It’s time to get laser focused on the midterm: … We need to build a war chest now to give as a good a fight as we can.”

Trans Day of Remembrance marked with march, rally

BY VERNON HESTER

On Nov. 19, Brave Space Alliance, in partnership with Trans Liberation Collective, acknowledged Trans Day of Remembrance with a celebration of trans lives, a seminar on racism led by Andre Perez and Dezjorn Gauthier, and a short march and rally along 51st Street.

The event took place at the Brave Space Alliance community space at 1434 W. 51st St.

Events of the day kicked off with documentary series America in Transition director Perez and model/educator Gauthier leading a workshop on racism. Later, the small contingent marched along 51st Street in protest to mark the day. The event closed with a short rally featuring Stephanie Skora, Toni Marie Preston, Reginald Sawyer, Glitter and LaSaia Wade.

Affinity and The Chicago Black Gay Men’s Caucus sponsored the event.
Vandals target same-sex prep4love ads

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Posters in the prep4love advertising campaign—which Chicago PrEP Working Group (CPWG), an ad-hoc coalition of advocates and service providers, launched last year—have occasionally been defaced in various Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) locations, particularly advertisements that have featured images of gay men. According to CTA and CPWG officials, however, the defaced ads are replaced as quickly as possible.

In early October, Chicagoan Nathan Petithomme and two friends noticed a such an ad defaced at the 87th Street CTA station. Someone had written “what alls this gay shit about?” on the poster, which depicted two men in an embrace.

Petithomme reacted quickly upon seeing the poster, he recalled, adding, “I instinctively said, ‘Let’s reclaim this ad.’”

He and his friends wrote a response: “It’s love.”

Petithomme and his friends noticed the vandalism on Oct. 6. When he was at the station next, on Oct. 11, the poster had been desecrated further. The image of the men had been cut out completely.

“I was kind of heartbroken,” he said, to see what lengths people would go to ruin the ad.

According to CTA guidelines, the ad should have been replaced quickly.

“When CTA and its advertising vendor become aware of the ads that have been defaced, we take immediate action to replace the damaged ads,” said CTA spokesmen Jon Kaplan in an email to Windy City Times. “CTA and its advertising vendor also have instructed employees to be alert and report any activity that may be related to this vandalism.”

Chicagoan Timothy Garrison notified Windy City Times and CTA officials of similar vandalism later in October, this time at the Garfield station on the Green Line. Someone had similarly scrawled obscenities on the posters, and removed the images of the individuals from them. In that case, CTA removed the damaged signs but did not immediately replace them. Garrison wrote on Oct. 21 that he saw a damaged sign lying below the platform. One sign, undamaged, was still up.

Launched in early 2016, the prep4love campaign was intended to call attention to the availability of PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, and was mainly directed at persons of color, a demographic health officials and advocates is at higher risk for HIV infection.

PrEP has been proven to be over 90 percent effective in preventing new infections. In order to appeal to diverse audiences, campaign designers utilized subjects of varied ethnic, gender and body-type configurations.

Neither CTA nor Jim Pickett of CPWG could say how frequently or infrequently the vandalism occurs.

“We’ve had the campaign up in three different waves, and it has happened every time,” noted Pickett, who added that vandalism occurs primarily with images of gay men. CTA station employees are given extra copies of posters in case vandalism occurs, and are instructed to quickly replace them.

The desecration, Pickett added, “is animated by homophobia and fear of gay men.”

Nevertheless, he said that CPWG “thought long and hard about this” when they were designing the prep4love campaign, and knew the potential for vandalism would occur with a campaign that had a citywide scope. But the message was important to deliver.

“Our message was that, ‘As a community, we’re resilient and thriving, and we’re unapologetic,’” he said. “…This is what happens when we put ourselves outside our normal box.”

Though the situation was not quickly rectified in the case of the 87th Street station last month.

Ad that was tossed aside.

Photo courtesy of Timothy Garrison

Pickett said CTA usually has been responsive and fast to act when CPWG notified them of problems.

“They have a zillion ads,” he said. “I think they do their best.”

Petithomme nevertheless said that seeing the results of the vandalism functioned as “a reality check to say that there’s visible homophobia, even without visible aggression. There’s still people out there who feel this way.”

Pickett said that, with a campaign that’s intended to be joyful, “seeing it vandalized can feel visceral.” At the same time, he said the community has registered a lot of support when reporting damaged ads, and he was heartened by responses like Petithomme’s.

“It’s gratifying,” he said. “It’s another sign of our strength and ability to overcome.”

AMA approves new policies

The American Medical Association (AMA) voted last week to adopt new policies aimed at improving the health of the nation.

The organization’s House of Delegates approved items such as backing paid leave for organ donors, emergency Medicaid funding and assistance for Puerto Rico, reducing health issues associated with births and addressing the need for cervical cancer screening in female-to-male transgender patients.

Regarding the latter, the AMA stated that sexual- and gender-minority individuals may be less likely to undergo regular cancer and sexually transmitted infection screenings based on anatomy, despite their comparable or elevated risk for these conditions.

Studies have shown that direct costs to living organ donors are greater than one month’s wage for 76 percent of donors, and many donors do not have sufficient medical leave and/or vacation time to accommodate their recovery.
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Trans candidate discusses historic Virginia victory

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Danica Roem, who on Nov. 7 won an election to become the Commonwealth of Virginia’s— and the nation’s—first transgender state legislator elected as an out candidate (a previous transgender elected official, Althea Garrison, had been outed while in office), spoke with national press on Nov. 10 about her historic win.

Roem, who will soon represent the House of Delegates’ 13th District, soundly defeated incumbent Delegate Robert Marshall, who proudly called himself the state’s “chief homophobe” and had filed an anti-transgender bathroom bill. But the delegate-elect, who’s been both an investigative journalist and a heavy metal musician, centered her campaign around infrastructure and traffic-management, among other local quality-of-life issues.

She described herself as a candidate with both a “progressive heart” and “centrist sensibilities.” “What’s so nice about infrastructure is that you’re removing ideology,” Roem said. “It’s just basic problem-solving.”

A central issue in Roem’s campaign was traffic along a central artery in her district, an issue that now, by virtue of the publicity around her election, has made national news. “We’ve now made Route 28 world-famous,” she said.

Roem did reiterate her commitment to LGBT issues in the conference, however, especially as they pertained to healthcare. She said she would work on ensuring that transgender Virginians have sufficient access to hormone therapies or other treatments, and that gay men would be able to access PrEP, for example.

“LGBTQ healthcare is healthcare,” she explained. “It is not a want, it is a need.” She has had no contact with Marshall after the election. Although the incumbent never blunted his hostility towards her or the LGBT community, Roem said that she is doing her best to remain gracious.

“The fact of the matter is, once Joe Biden called me, my job as delegate begins,” she added, noting that Marshall will soon be “a constituent of the 13th District. The voters did not elect me to be rude. They elected me to get the job done.”

Cleve Jones speaks on preserving LGBT areas, politics

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Speaking at Sidetrack on Nov. 6, longtime LGBT-rights advocate Cleve Jones was asked what set him on his course to be an activist. Jones replied that two events had the most profound impacts on him.

“Meeting Harvey Milk and losing Harvey Milk,” he said.

Jones, who was promoting the recent paperback release of his 2016 memoir, When We Rise: My Life in the Movement, described his relationship with Milk, for whom he worked as an intern and with whom he was close friends throughout the ’70s. He admitted that their relationship could be fraught and said that Milk “thought I was a brat, but a useful brat.” But Jones also recalled how much Milk contributed to his own sense of self-worth: “He was the first one to tell me that I was just fine the way I am.”

Jones was interviewed by local author and occasional Windy City Times contributor Owen Keehnen. The event was co-sponsored by Center on Halsted and Sidetrack.

Jones has recently been especially involved in union activism lately, and works for UNITE HERE, a hospitality- and garment-workers’ union, on LGBT-related issues. He noted during his talk that rising inequality and inequity threaten American cities and especially gay-centric neighborhoods. Jones acknowledged in a candid moment that he’ll likely lose his longtime rent-controlled apartment in the Castro soon and he may be forced to leave San Francisco, where he’s lived for decades.

“When we lose the ‘gayborhoods,’ we lose a lot,” Jones said, adding that among the facets lost are political power, cultural vitality and “specialized social services that are vital to the people in our community.”

Jones also recounted his despair over the election of President Donald Trump in November 2016, but added that it was ultimately a moment like many others, where it initially seemed like there was no hope. “Many times, I thought, ‘It’s over,’” he recalled. Among similar times were his realization that he was gay, Milk’s assassination in 1978 and the onset of the AIDS crisis in the ’80s. But with each of those experiences, he said, others helped him overcome his despair.

“I am thinking about the future. The past is with me,” Jones said. “… But I’m not done. We’re not done. The struggles aren’t over.”

He added, “Every one of you should look inside yourselves and figure out what it is that you bring to this fight.”

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Researchers: No simple solution for crisis of youth homelessness

BY MATT SIMONETTE

A newly released brief by an area research institute is shedding light on the issue of youth homelessness, which, according to the report, is experienced by one in 10 young adults between the ages of 18-25 and one in 30 adolescents between 13-17.

Chapin Hall, a youth-centered policy research center affiliated with the University of Chicago, released the report “Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America,” on Nov. 15. It was compiled as part of the Voices of Youth Count policy research initiative.

“We have a collective obligation to ensure all young people have a chance to succeed, starting from a young age,” said Bryan Samuels, executive director of Chapin Hall in a statement. “Intervening and building stability during adolescence and young adulthood for those at highest risk will have lifelong effects. As a country, we can look for the missed opportunities in schools, communities and public services to prevent youth homelessness.”

The data was culled from a survey of 26,161 individuals and among its findings, directly addresses specific populations, including LGBT youth, who are at greater risk of experiencing homelessness. According to the report, LGBT youth are at a 120 percent higher risk of experiencing homelessness.

Chapin Hall researchers said they would specifically address LGBT youth experiencing homelessness, as well as other at-risk populations, in future reports. Other at-risk populations include black and Hispanic youths, youth who do not complete high school and youth who are parents.

Among the findings researchers said should direct future governmental actions—all pointing to broad systemic challenges—are that youth homelessness remains a hidden yet widespread issue; involves diverse experiences and circumstances; requires prevention and early intervention efforts; affects rural youth at the same levels as it does individuals in urban or suburban areas; and remains a larger risk for specific populations of youth.

“Our survey looked to give the nation—for the first time—a fuller view of youth homelessness by finding young people who don’t always get counted through systems and community-based efforts,” said Matthew Morton, a research fellow at Chapin Hall. “We know that if we stop youth homelessness early, this prevents deeper homelessness and reduces public costs in the future. With new evidence in hand, Congress can support action.”

A simultaneous Chapin Hall report focused on youths experiencing homelessness in Cook County. In that survey, 25 percent of homeless and unstably housed youth in Cook County identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, transgender or asexual. About 1,039 homeless or unstably housed youth were surveyed. Researchers noted that many youths might have felt uncomfortable divulging such information, but said findings suggested that the percentage of LGBT persons among youths experiencing homelessness was significantly higher than the percentage of LGBT persons among the general population.

Researchers included an “other” category encompassing transgender, gender non-conforming, and intersex persons, among others, when measuring gender identity numbers among Cook County respondents. About 4 percent of respondents chose the “other” category, while 56 percent identified as male and 40 percent identified as female.

Additionally, among Cook County respondents, 65 percent were African-American; 13 percent were Latinx; 12 percent were white; 6 percent were multiracial; and 5 percent answered “other.”

Men use Grindr to lure robbery victims

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Two men lured nine individuals into armed robberies in the Rogers Park neighborhood using the Grindr hook-up app, according to a Nov. 11 report on the Crime in Wrigleyville + Boystown blog.

Stephen Jackson of Evanston and Trenell Kirkman of Blue Island are being held without bail after luring nine various men into a gangway in the 7600 block of North Bosworth Avenue. Each victim was robbed at gunpoint. The men were arrested Nov. 9 after a Chicago Police Department undercover investigation.

According to CWB, Jackson has been charged with three felony counts of armed robbery with a firearm, felony attempted armed robbery with a firearm, felony unlawful possession of a credit-debit card, and misdemeanor possession of a firearm with an expired ownership identification card. Kirkman has meanwhile been charged with four felony counts of armed robbery with a firearm, felony attempted armed robbery with a firearm and misdemeanor solicitation of a sexual act.

Dr. Tom Klein talks upcoming award, HIV/AIDS work

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Longtime advocate and community leader Dr. Tom Klein is set to receive Heartland Health Outreach’s (HHO) Food For Life award at the organization’s annual holiday brunch Sunday, Dec. 3.

HHO is honoring Klein for his long history of advancing the health and well-being of Chicago’s LGBTQ community.

Klein was born in Detroit and hospitalized when he was 4 with an intestinal blockage. While Klein was in the hospital, he decided he wanted to be a doctor so he followed the doctors and nurses around and asked them lots of questions.

He got his undergraduate degree in psychology from Wayne State University and his MD degree from Michigan State University before moving to Chicago in 1978 for his family practice residency at St. Joseph Hospital. Klein worked at Howard Brown Memorial Clinic as a volunteer physician on Tuesday nights in 1979 and at the time he was one of the few openly gay doctors there. He has worked with HIV/AIDS patients in Chicago since the second recorded AIDS case in 1982.

“I am very proud to have been recognized both as a board member and a long time physician serving people in our community, especially those with HIV,” said Klein. “With this honor, I hope we can fill the room and raise good money for such a great cause. I know so many people in the community and am happy to use this strength to make this event a great success.”

“Tom is incredibly dedicated—he has shared his expertise as a leader on multiple HHO committees and is a tireless supporter of our fundraising efforts,” said HHO Executive Director Ed Stellon. “Most importantly, Tom helps HHO tell the story of our work and advance a dialogue about the unique healthcare needs of Chicago’s homeless. Tom embodies the spirit of HHO. He matches caring with skill to provide meaningful solutions to the seemingly intractable healthcare needs of Chicago’s most vulnerable population.”

Klein met his husband, Dr. David Gitomer (DePaul University professor and Eastern religion scholar), through a patient of Klein’s with AIDS who was in Gitomer’s HIV support group at Howard Brown Health (Gitomer was a volunteer and facilitator there for 27 years). They have been together for 30 years and married for the past five years.

“David was incredibly supportive of me as we struggled to care for so many gay men dying of AIDS through the mid-90s since he lost so many group members over those years,” said Klein. “Throughout this time, Dr Ross Slotten was both my medical partner, supporter and friend, as we both struggled to care for mostly dying men. There were times when we had 15-18 people in the hospital and two to three deaths a week. Thankfully, due to all the great HIV drugs available since the mid-1990s, we no longer care for many dying of AIDS although they still succumb at greater rates to cancer and heart disease years later.”

Both Klein and Slotten have worked together in their private practice, Klein and Slotten Medical Association, for 32 years.

In his capacity as an HHO board member (since 2010 with one term as board chair), Klein has been instrumental in expanding the organization’s mission to help those experiencing homelessness across Chicago, including the soon-to-be opened HHO facility (next spring) in Englewood.

“HHO is a wonderful organization that provides healthcare to mostly homeless individuals and through Vital Brides, which became a part of the organization five years ago, provides food through its pantries to folks in need, especially those with HIV,” said Klein.

Additionally, Klein has served on the boards of Howard Brown Health and before it became Center on Halsted. He is also a member of the GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality medical association. In 2016, Klein was inducted into The Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame.

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“It was an honor to be inducted into the LGBT Hall of Fame a year ago, which took place after the devastating election last Nov,” said Klein. “Many of us felt a sense that, due to our camaraderie, we would all survive these troubling times. I was surprised that my three nieces came from out of town for the ceremony.”

When Klein is not working he spends time gardening both in Chicago and in Fennville, Michigan, where he has a vacation home with Gitomer.

“I am proud to continue to serve our great and diverse community in practice and enjoy seeing new young folks and letting them know it is their safe place to be seen, since I have heard it all and seen it all,” said Klein. “I am happy to also serve as medical director for my friend Tony Miner’s developmental center, which cares for many severely developmentally challenged folks in a great caring environment. In my honor, Tony purchased seven tables for the brunch. I am grateful to Tony and everyone else in my life for their support over the years.”

To purchase tickets for the brunch, visit http://holidaybrunch.squarespace.com/.
The struggle with eating disorders

BY JOE FRANCO

Binge.

To many of us, the word is used casually and, in some cases, humorously. But to millions of people—many of them gay—that word is terrifying. This is not a Netflix binge. This is not gym bunnies eating brunch and joking that they binged on cinnamon rolls. Binge eating disorder, anorexia nervosa and bulimia are life-threatening eating disorders that disproportionately plague the LGBTQ community. Olga Mikhnyuk, a therapist at the Eating Recover Center (ERC) in Chicago, said, “Gay men were 12 times more likely to report purging and seven times more likely to report bingeing.” As for women of all sexual orientations as well as bisexual men, Mikhnyuk reported that they were “twice more likely to report bingeing.” These statistics are compared with heterosexual men and national averages.

“The most common types of eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge-eating disorder,” said Mikhnyuk. Many people are familiar with anorexia and bulimia; some symptoms include preoccupations with dieting, exercise, weight loss as well as the use of laxatives and diuretics. “Eating disorders love secrecy. The more isolated a person is the more space there is for the eating disorder to thrive,” said Mikhnyuk. However, she added, “Reaching out to others threatens the disorder and allows healing to begin.”

The exact causes of most eating disorders is not known. “They are believed to be largely neurobiological as well as having a strong genetic component. An individual’s environment, life experiences and cultures can also play a role in the onset or development of an eating disorder,” said Mikhnyuk, pointing to possibly why eating disorders are prevalent in the LGBTQ community.

“From age 12 to 18, the disorder was a way for me to cope with an abusive home, and a sexuality that was considered “sinful” and “dangerous,” said Eric Dorsa, an alumnus of the ERC program. “My eating disorder manifested because my family pressured me to lose weight. It kind of grew on its own. The binges would be compulsive making mine a double life. I would binge at school, work, diving practice and make up lies to go and purge. I would even steal my parents car to work out at 3am and 4am at a 24-hour gym.”

Dorsa is not alone in his manifestation of a double life. John (who asked that Windy City Times not use his name) recently began treatment for binge-eating disorder with a private therapist in Chicago, and acknowledged that he also felt as if he lived a double life. “Nobody knows,” John said. “I seem active but, on some days, I can sit and eat thousands of calories. I once ate a half-dozen cupcakes, a pizza, an order of Chinese food, a pie and a half-pound of chocolate in one day and that happened a few times every month.”

The eating disorder itself is only part of the problem. Mikhnyuk said that “80 percent of individuals who suffer from eating disorders are diagnosed with another disorder throughout their lives. Some of the most common co-occurring disorders include depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse and personality disorders.” Dorsa noted that, “in 2012 I entered recovery for drug and alcohol abuse through 12-step programs. I realized that so much of my addiction and my eating disorder came from the same place—a feeling of low self-worth and negative self-image.”

When asked if he believed that the ideal body image publicized in popular culture and in the LGBTQ community increased the likelihood of eating-disorder development, Dorsa responded, “Gay culture is primarily focused on the male experience—particularly, the white male experience. It is also built around sexual desirability. I think the pressure to look a certain way, the desire to be seen and accepted, and the pain associated with having to come out as LGBTQ make our community vulnerable not just to eating disorders but substance abuse as well.” John agreed that he felt significant pressure to be thin and fit: “We are already rejected. But then to be rejected by our own because we don’t look or act a ce

For additional information about Eating Recovery Center, call 877-789-5758, emailinfo@eatingrecoverycenter.com or visit EatingrecoveryCenter.com to speak with a Masters-level clinician. See WindyCityMediaGroup.com for the entire article.
viewpoints

Rev. Irene
MONROE

Donna Brazile’s revenge with ‘Hacks’

Since the election of Donald Trump, most Americans on both sides of the political aisle feel American democracy is under siege. The infighting going on in both the Democratic and Republican camps has cast a pall on the country’s future. And neither party, at present, can tamp down the support nor enthusiasm some have for establishment outsiders like U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders and President Donald J. Trump—even with his declining approval rating.

In this environment of the falling Republic, Donna Brazile has written a book titled “Hacks: The Inside Story of the Break-ins and Breakdowns That Put Donald Trump in the White House.”

Brazile, an LGBTQ ally, is the former chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), the first African-American to manage a presidential campaign, and a longtime Democratic strategist with the reputation inside the Beltway as “a one-stop shop for fixing sticky problems.”

Amazon depicts Hacks as “equal parts campaign thriller, memoir, and roadmap for the future.” But its demands. On Nov. 14, Brazile was at the Harvard Coop to talk about her book. She spoke to a not-so-rapt audience of Sanders supporters and Clinton die-hard fans. Brazile’s responses during the Q&A were lackluster, but of a much better tone than you hear in the book.

I’ve read Brazile’s book, and everyone who has read it has challenged her assertions in the book, sadly even sister-friends in her corner—Whoopi, Sunny, and Oprah’s Gale, to name a few.

I posit that Brazile may very well be speaking truth to power; however, the tone of the book and the interpretations of events read more like a revenge narrative than objectively reporting the facts in trying to salvage what’s left of this American democracy.

letters

Can’t Bear it

Dear Editor/Director,

I’m sure I’m not alone in this. I can’t be. I’m hurt. I’m offended. I’m outraged. I’m disgusted.

I heard the McCaskey family—who own the Chicago Bears—just gave a large donation to Jeanne Ives, the only anti-gay candidate in the governor’s race in Illinois. Ives says, and I quote, “They’re [gay couples] trying to weasel their way into acceptability.”

“Hacks” has two narrative strands: one story of the Russians relentless hacking into DNC computers. And, the other story about the colossal missteps of the Clinton campaign and her tight-fisted one-sided financial control of the party a year before her nomination revealing sadly how the process was rigged against Sanders.

In Brazile’s inimitable no-holds-barred fashion she further asserts that “three titanic egos—Barack, Hillary, and Debbie stripped the party to a shell for their own purposes.”

Brazile’s assertions about the Russian hacking are not being disputed. However, it’s the rest of the story that has those inside the DNC scratching their heads that nearly 100 members of Clinton’s campaign team wrote a letter saying, “We do not recognize the campaign she portrays in the book.”

Brazile’s inflammatory “cancer” and “slave” references not only roiled the DNC but stirred up both Bernie supporters and African American voters nervously concerned, respectfully.

“I had promised Bernie when I took the helm of the Democratic National Committee after the convention that I would get to the bottom of whether Hillary Clinton’s team had rigged the nomination process,” Brazile wrote. Months later Brazile wrote Bernie back. “Hello, senator. I’ve completed my review of the DNC and I did find the cancer. But I will not kill the patient.”

With U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren concurring that the DNC was, indeed, rigged in Clinton’s favor, the perception of the DNC and I did find the cancer. But I will not kill the patient.”

And, with race being the third rail in this country, Brazile’s statement “I am not Patsy the slave”—referring to Oscar-winning actress Lupita Nyong'o’s character in the 2013 film Twelve Years a Slave—doesn’t help the DNC, already perceived as racist and cheaters. Now they certainly have an uphill battle trying to win over African-American millennials and Bernie supporters.

I get Brazile’s anger. She felt dissed by the DNC, even though she worked on every presidential campaign from 1976 through 2000. Brazile’s anger about being tethered to the tight-fisted, one-sided financial control of the party to promote Clinton’s campaign and not promote those on the down-ballot her frustration is understood. However, she lodges her complaints in a manner that appears more like out of desperation than determination.

Brazile is unarguably one of the most known and important and powerful women in politics of the last three decades. I’ve enjoyed following her political career. She’s a political icon, like Maxine Waters, and sisters like myself love and revere her and want her to stick around.

And, the Black community thanks her for her public service, too.

On Oct. 4, Harvard awarded Brazile with the W.E.B. DuBois Medal. It’s given to outstanding individuals who “have made significant contributions to African and African-American history and culture, and more broadly individuals who advocate for intercultural understanding and human rights in an increasingly global and interconnected world.”

“Hacks” hit bookshelves Nov. 7 and bookstores across the country have been trying to keep up with its demands. On Nov. 14, Brazile was at the Harvard Coop to talk about her book. She spoke to a not-so-rapt audience of Sanders supporters and Clinton die-hard fans. Brazile’s responses during the Q&A were lackluster, but of a much better tone than you hear in the book.

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how can i help

Send columns or letters to Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com. Letters may be edited for brevity or clarity.
Deeply Rooted Dance: 20 years—and counting

BY JOANNA FURNANS

Deeply Rooted Dance Theater (DRDT) is gearing up to present its 20th-anniversary season finale, “Deeply Free,” with the much-anticipated premiere of INUMBA, by South African choreographer Fana Tshabalala, along with celebrated works from its distinguished repertory (Dec. 8-10, Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, 915 E. 60th St., 7:30 p.m.).

Let that sink in for a moment: Deeply Rooted Dance Theater is celebrating its 20th anniversary as a contemporary dance company in Chicago. Twenty years is no small feet (dance pun intended)—and the company has not just withstood, but it has flourished during two decades of the country’s political, social and economic rollercoasters.

“We made it to 20 years! I’m excited about that,” Jeff told Windy City Times. “As you know, with any artistic endeavor in this country it is a challenge to make it through financially. The fact that we are still here and we are thriving is pretty exciting. And,” he continued, “if you notice, a lot of organizations do well for the first 10 to 15 years but the critical patch is whether they will make it the next 10 years.”

Indeed, the success of DRDT was not the product of luck. Jeff had plenty of prior experience as an artistic director with his own company, JUBILATION!, in New York City and then again as artistic director for the Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Theater. Although he was only with that company briefly, that gig was the catalyst that relocated Jeff and his collaborators to Chicago. Loving the city and realizing that Chicago had the potential to embrace a new voice in African-American contemporary dance aesthetics, Jeff and his co-founders Gary Abbott, LaVerne Alaphaire Jeff, Diane Shober and Linda Spriggs, established DRDT.

Over the years, Jeff has relied on the learned experiences of his dance predecessors to understand some of the dos and don’ts of sustaining a company for the long haul. “Fortunately,” Jeff explained, “I had mentors like Bernice Johnson, who had a studio in Jamaica, Queens, [and] who taught me a lot about company building from the basis of community. And I also learned from Alvin Ailey, when Alvin was alive. I saw his successes and I also saw his struggles which are not talked about a lot. The Ailey organization has a very shiny marketing approach which doesn’t necessarily hold up the history of what it took to get that company to where it is now. When he passed away, Alvin’s organization was over a million dollars in debt. They were very successful, they were renowned, but they were never financially solvent in his lifetime.”

That isn’t to say that this example of debt was the artist’s “fault.” The stereotype of the disheveled and organized artist who is capable of creative brilliance yet unable to balance a checkbook has thankfully been debunked. Great artists can certainly be terrific executives: however, it takes a unique skill set to think outside the box and consider the specific needs of not-for-profit dance companies. It’s critical for companies like DRDT to generate structures within their organizations that support both the art-making and the business of the art.

“Artists may actually know what they need, they may know how to manage,” Jeff said with a laugh. “It might look different than a traditional corporate structure. I have found, in order to make the art, we have to grow an institution that allows an artist to be free. And in order to create an organic institution, you have to grow people.”

The “people” Jeff is referring to are not only the dancers who grow up in the DRDT studios or the administrators who hone their skills with the evolving needs of the company but the audiences as well. Communities that support the arts have to be willing to challenge themselves right along side the artists. Jeff explained:

“We’ve always wanted to do work that was not only artistically powerful but also socially responsible. We really have a commitment to not only entertaining our audiences through dance but also to leave them with some thoughts about how we are living our daily lives inside our society…

The company’s premiere of Tshabalala’s INUMBA (Dec 8 only) will be one of DRDT’s most socially charged and artistically risky works to date. Originally created to explore methods of spiritual healing due to unresolved issues in the social and political climate of post-apartheid South Africa, Jeff and Tshabalala came together to create a Chicago-specific version of the work.

“I’m really excited about this work,” Jeff said. “When I saw it in South Africa, it was so beyond dance—it was so visceral, so human, so African-contemporary. I really wanted to bring that work to America, especially since we have similar histories. It is a very challenging work and it is taking the company in a different direction. I hope the audiences who are used to the traditional work of Deeply Rooted are open-hearted with INUMBA because we are forging new directions.”

The remaining two evenings of the weekend program will present DRDT favorites including “Femme,” by dance education director Nicole Clarke-Springer; “Desire,” by co-founder and associate artistic director Gary Abbott; and “Church of Nations” and “In a Child’s Eyes,” by Jeff.

For tickets and information, call 312-795-9777 or email tickets@deeplyrooteddance-theater.org.
THEATER REVIEW

Shakin’ the Mess Outta Misery
Playwright: Shay Youngblood
At: Pegasus Theatre Chicago at Chicago Dramatists, 773 N. Aberdeen Ave.
Tickets: 866-811-4111 or PegasusTheatreChicago.org; $20-$30
Runs through: Dec. 10

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

There are many powerful performances to treasure in Pegasus Theatre Chicago’s strong revival of Shakin’ the Mess Outta Misery. First staged by the late Chicago Theatre Company back in 1998, Shay Youngblood’s play is chock full of compelling scenes for a company of amazingly talented African-American women.

Director Ilesa Duncan previously staged Shakin’… before, so this Pegasus revival has the assured air of an artistic authority who knows the piece through and through. And Duncan has assembled a marvellous company of multi-talented actor/singers to fully embody Youngblood’s vivid characters.

Shakin’… is framed by the anonymously named adult “Daughter” (Melanie Loren). Just back from a funeral, Daughter lovingly reflects back to her childhood in the 1960s to honor the strong and caring women of her Southern community who raised her following her mother’s death.

The bulk of Shakin’… consists of Daughter soaking in life lessons from these characterful and experienced women. Sometimes Daughter is given a direct lecture by the likes of the Bible-quoting Big Mama (Felisha “Ekudayo” McNeil), while other times it’s just being a silent and wide-eyed observer following gospel choir members like Aunt Mae (Stacie Doublin) and Miss Llama (Toni Lynice Fountain) working out their angry rivalry over claims to the same man.

Stories about humiliating racism are shared first hand (debrah neal as Miss Corrine, who gets caught up in an unfortunate chewing-tobacco incident), or they’re passed down from generations ago (Darian Tene as the vengeful domestic Miss Shine, who has deadly method of retribution for her bigoted employers).

Daughter also learns directly from members of her own community who are shunned, including the “girl gone wrong” Maggie (Takesha Meshé Kizart), and the simultaneously coverts and overt lesbian Miss Tom (Sandra Watson).

Loren’s Daughter amusingly and touchingly taps into being a child without coming off as phony or cloying. Loren’s Daughter also skilfully masks how her generalized character largely serve as a plot device to tie all these disparate stories together.

Yet on reflection, Youngblood’s script could do with a better over-arching structure and focus. The prologue gives the impression that five particular elders are going to be the biggest influence on Daughter, but Shakin’… often steers on tangents away from these women to other characters with more significant scenes. Daughter’s takeaway from these moments aren’t always articulated, either.

So Shakin’… is best savored moment to moment. Each scene provides meaty material for each performer to shine dramatically, comically and vocally. And that’s more than enough to make this Pegasus revival of Shakin...a welcome return.

THEATER REVIEW

Fade
Playwright: Tanya Saracho
At: Victory Gardens Theater at the Biograph, 2433 N. Lincoln Ave.
Tickets: $15-$56
Runs through: Dec. 23

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

During the 1980s and ’90s, it often seemed as if every playwright venturing west of Phoenix or south of Fresno eventually wrote a scathing diatribe of show business practices in California’s motion-picture capital. Cautionary tales in this genre usually revolved around an idealistic young artist confronted by corporate philistines caring nothing for art and everything for money. Sometimes the newcomer’s ethics remained steadfast, sometimes not, but never were we in doubt as to who were the good guys and who weren’t.

Lucia is a Chicago novelist invited by the producers of a television series to join their Los Angeles writing team. When she is assigned only menial duties, Lucia suspects that she may have been a “diversity hire” but vows to stay the course, if only to earn enough to finance her next novel. One evening, while working late, she calls on Abel (pronounced “Ah-BEL”), the maintenance man, for assistance and an acquaintance is struck.

If this were an ordinary sitcom, Lucia and Abel would forge an immediate bond based in their common culture and proceed to swap satirical repartee in a mix of Spanish and English. If this were a romantic comedy, Abel’s single-father status and devotion to his infant daughter would make him the perfect match for the brainy young wordsmith.

As it turns out, however, the latter’s assumption that the blue-collar Abel is a Mexican immigrant speaking only Spanish is regarded by the native Angelino as the snobbery one would expect of a foreign-born Latina of affluent upbringing. As their camaraderie blossoms, further intra-demographical disparities are evidenced—for example, when Lucia expresses indignation over co-workers mocking her ethnicity, Abel reminds her that many of his peers are refused jobs for that same ethnicity. What neither realizes until too late is that another entitlement attached to privilege is the unrestricted appropriation of other people’s experiences.

Tanya Saracho may be the first playwright to reverse the Hollywood-Is-Full-of-Greedyheads formula in order to illustrate how easily anybody can become one of the greedheads, no matter how lofty their ideals or initially uncompromising their principles—exploitation being in the eye of the beholder, right? Under the direction of Sandra Marquez, Sari Sanchez and Eddie Martinez (his fourth time playing this role) never betray the ambiguity of their characters’ fluctuating motives, wisely leaving us to parse the moral issues engendered thereby.

’Tis the Seasonal Depression
Authors: Sarah Collier, Katie Cutler, Evan M. Duggan, Julie Fishbach, Clay Goodpasture, Christopher “Tito” Thies Lotito, Greg Phelps and Laurel Posakony.
At: Pride Arts Center Broadway Theater, 4139 N. Broadway
Tickets: GayCo.com; $12-$20
Runs through: Dec. 22

BY SEAN MARGARET WAGNER

The ensemble at GayCo Productions is bringing all the wonder and dread of the holiday season to life with ’Tis the Seasonal Depression, a celebration of all of the usual pitfalls of holiday gayness.

It’s an evening of sketch comedy interspersed with songs, running gags and well-worn tropes out of televised Christmas specials. (Think of your favorite celebrity addressing the camera with “Oh, hi—I didn’t see you there!”) Not every joke lands with the same ferocity; like most holiday specials, the sketches are broad—maybe even a little pandering—to an audience ready to raise its individual-sized wine bottles and “Yaaaas” loudly. However, when this ensemble gets honest and weirdly specific, it can really charm the pants off of you.

Sketch performers Sarah Collier, Katie Cutler, Evan M. Duggan, Julie Fishbach, Clay Goodpasture, Christopher “Tito” Thies Lotito, Greg Phelps and Laurel Posakony each brings heightened tales of holiday annoyances, coming out and enduring their significant other’s families to life. The production moves at a near-perfect clip for unconventional scenes like auditions for Mrs. Claus gone awry, or one family’s insistence on performing a bloody, socialist propaganda Nutcracker together, or a Bisexual Bluegrass Jamboree worthy of Hee-Haw. (Clay Goodpasture really kills it on the jug.)

The true strength of this ensemble is in raucous musical numbers, and there is no shortage thanks in large part to the efforts of musical director Kathleen Gibson. The cast members regale us with numbers like the Les Miz-tinted “War On Christmas,” a hymn titled “You can’t Jerk Off Until Your Family Leaves” and a rap song to bring Grindr body-shamers to task entitled “Yes Fits, Yes Femmes.”

Director Jeff Bouthiette has curated this evening of sketches that range from tongue-in-cheek winking to tongue-in-teeth biting, but not every sketch lands with the solid laughs this team seeks. One running gag about holiday church services for different faiths needs a more polished punch line, and another recurring bit featuring bit in which family members of each cast member submit their ill-conceived comedy sketches takes a bit of time and head scratching before it gets off the ground. Although each of these holiday sketches was unique, we spend a great deal of time musing on the white, middle-class gay experience. What I wouldn’t have given to see more representation from performers of color.

Still, the cast is strong, and where they may struggle to win you over with a laugh, the performers have no qualms about buttering you up with a little holiday cheer. Keep your eyes peeled for standout Sarah Collier as an unapreciated reindeer, Katie Cutler as a jilted Mrs. Claus and Christopher “Tito” Thies Lotito’s dramatic interpretations of Heart music videos.

CRITICS’ PICKS

Becky Shaw, Windy City Playhouse, through Dec. 17. “Love is a by-product of Use” says a cynical cad in Gina Gionfriddo’s slyly Machiavellian comedy, before leaving us to guess he difference between the lovers and the users. MSB

Bobby Pin Girls, Nothing Without a Company at the Chicago Mosaic School, through Dec. 3. The authenticity reflected in Janey Bell’s screwball urban-boho comedy of youthful error born of impulse will be immediately recognizable to audiences of all ages. MSB

Marie Christine, BoHo at Theater Wit through Dec. 10. The tragedy of Medea, retold as the tale of a beautiful Creole voodoo adept, who loves well but not wisely, in Michael John LaChiusa’s musically-complex, rich jazz opera. High musical values, handsome leads and powerful voices make this one to see. JA

Die Walküre, Lyric Opera of Chicago, through Nov. 30. Only two more chances this year to see director David Pountney’s 19th-century-framed take on the most popular work in Wagner’s four-part Norse opera epic The Ring of the Nibelung. Resist your urge to sing out “Kill da Wabbit” when the “Ride of the Valkyries” opens Act III. SCM —By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan
THEATER REVIEW

Lizzie

Authors: Tim Maner/book, Steven Cheslik-Demeyer & Maner/lyrics, Alan Stevens Hewitt & Cheslik-Demeyer/music
At: Firebrand Theatre at The Den, 1333 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Tickets: FirebrandTheatre.org; $45
Runs through: Dec. 17

BY JONATHAN ABAVANEL

The debut production of a new company often is called a “calling card,” allowing public response to determine if the troupe should be invited to stick around. Based on this Chicago premiere of Lizzie, Firebrand Theatre can stay as long as it wishes and has earned a seat at the table.

Firebrand is a musical-theater company committed to employing and empowering women. Rather than reinventing the wheel, founding artistic director Harmony France very wisely assembled a team of nationally experienced veterans for Lizzie. Lizzie serves the Firebrand mission perfectly, too, although the authors are men. Firebrand marks itself, thereby, as being pro-female rather than anti-male, which also seems wise.

Lizzie is a rock opera about infamous axe-murder suspect Lizzie Borden (Liz Chidester), acquitted in 1893 of chopping her father and stepmother. The carefully researched book and lyrics stick close to known facts but also incorporate speculations, some put forward years after the events.

Fact: Papa Andrew Borden was a rich tightwad who signed over much of his property to stepmother Abby Borden. Fact: Lizzie and her older sister Emma (Camille Robinson) resented their stepmother. Speculation: Papa sexually molested Lizzie (32 at the time of the murders). Speculation: Lizzie had a lesbian affair with her next-door neighbor, Alice Russell (Jacquelyne Jones).

The only characters are Lizzie, Emma, Alice and Irish housemaid Bridget Sullivan (Leah Davis), who purportedly said on her deathbed that she lied to protect Lizzie. Indeed, Bridget and Emma appear complicit in ... whatever happened. The four singers combine bright personalities with insightful interpretation, while Bussert’s staging suggests the intense female friendships of the 19th century, tinged with eroticism. Chidester and Jones are alluring as well.

The energetic score follows a tight pattern of up-tempo numbers separated by an equal number of slower, quieter songs. The lyrics are clearly worded and clearly delivered, helped by Deiorrio’s beautifully balanced sound design. The melodic music and orchestrations offer keyboards and a rich cello part against bass and drums in an all-female rock quartet with neither lead nor rhythm guitars.

Lizzie is odd in some ways. Act I leads to the murders that are graphically but not literally portrayed, with the women wearing spot-on late 19th-century clothing, even down to undergarments (Charlotte Yetmann’s costumes). Then, in Act II, they all are in black goth outfits and four-letter words creep into the lyrics. I don’t understand why. The short second act (30 minutes) dissipates the tension of Act I because it introduces little that’s new, although the semi-abstract staging of one number, “Burn Your Thing,” is charismatic.

Please, Firebrand, call again soon.

Get in a Broadway holiday mood by taking in the touring return of Irving Berlin’s White Christmas. The popular screen-to-stage show not only features plenty of seasonal songs like “Happy Holiday” and “I’ve Got My Love to Keep Me Warm,” but also several other Berlin standards like “Sisters,” “Blue Skies” and “I Love a Piano.” Irving Berlin’s White Christmas continues through Sunday, Dec. 3, at the Cadillac Palace Theatre, 151 W. Randolph St. Performances are 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays (no show Nov. 23), and 2 p.m. Wednesdays and Saturdays (also Nov. 24). Tickets are $18 to $100; call 800-775-2000 or visit BroadwayInChicago.com.


FROM THE CHICAGO WRITER BEHIND HOW TO GET AWAY WITH MURDER AND GIRLS

Fade

BY TANYA SARACHO
DIRECTED BY SANDRA MARQUEZ

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THEATER REVIEW

Escape to Margaritaville
Score: Jimmy Buffett; Book: Greg Garcia & Mike O’Malley
At: Oriental Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St.
Tickets: 800-775-2000 or BroadwayInChicago.org; $35-$115
Runs through: Dec. 2

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

There is no doubt about the target audience for Escape to Margaritaville. This Broadway-bound jukebox musical is centered around the tropical rock hits of Jimmy Buffett, and is custom-made to capitalize on his legions of loyal fans, known as “Parrotheads.”

So it would be fruitless to try and shush the huge Buffett fans, which is why so many of Buffett’s song lyrics have been re-purposed as dialogue or as character traits. Escape to Margaritaville centers around the free-loving island troublemaker Tully (Paul Alexander Nolan), who is surprised when he genuinely starts to romantically fall for the vacationing environmental scientist Rachel (Alison Luff). There are also two secondary comic-relief couples: the not-so-bright bartender Brick (Eric Petersen) and the weight-watching bride-to-be Tammy (Lisa Howard), plus the no-nonsense resort manager Marley (Rema Webb) and the perpetually soused island bum J.D. (Don Sparks).

Garcia and O’Malley’s script does skim some serious issues (women who are body-shamed, the importance of pursuing dreams over defeatist attitudes), but Escape to Margaritaville doesn’t dramatically delve too deeply. It’s as it too much conflict would have been a buzzkill, so let’s bring on lots of groan-inducing puns and wacky visual humor in choreographer Kelly Devine’s tap-dancing production number of zombie insurance salesmen. Yes, you read that right.

If the script is just okay as a sturdy framework for the more famous songs, at least it’s all served up well in director Christopher Ashley’s professionally competent production. The performers also throw themselves into their roles, digging as deep as they can with such laid-back material.

Whether Escape to Margaritaville proves to be a hit on Broadway will likely find a receptive future home at any one of Margaritaville-branded resorts in the Caribbean or in the South. That’s what you get when a musical feels like yet another entrepreneurial venture for a songwriter/musician who has inspired so many to relax and chill.

THEATER REVIEW

Breath, Boom
Playwright: Kia Corthron
At: Eclipse Theatre Company at the Athenaeum, 2936 N. Southport Ave.
Tickets: $30
Runs through: Dec. 17

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Once upon a time, there were four sisters—bound, not by birth, but by the sororal affiliations of York City’s South Bronx.

In this realm, adolescent-girl fantasies revolve around, not weddings, but funerals and suicides, while obituaries of murdered companions are preserved in souvenir scrapbooks. Dates with boyfriends start with flowers, proceed to punches and finish with sex and ice cream. Physicality is the medium of expression, while language is for hiding emotions, since a single misspoke word may trigger severe punishment. A stretch in juvenile detention is regarded as a vacation—but then, you want to quit the gang lifestyle at the age of 18, lest you become like the much-maligned adult prison inmates.

All right, nobody comes to a Kia Corthron play expecting Little House on the Prairie. To playgoers accustomed to gender stereotypes dividing ghetto populations neatly into male predators and female victims, however, the news that women can be as ruthlessly abusive as their menfolk may come as a shock.

Our story’s focus is on pack leader Prix, whose anger at being raped at the age of 5 by her mother’s consort is reflected in an icy composure, whether when engineering a drug delivery or ordering a beat-down on a betrayer. Her sole comforts in an environment dominated by violence and exploitation are the public fireworks displays forging beauty out of weaponry. Before her progress brings her to an end that our author deems hopeful—if simply being thirty and not yet dead fits your definition of that word—Corthron subjects us to a virtual catalogue of social and economical obstructions passed from generation to generation in a ceaseless cycle of dystopian stasis.

Two hours of bearing witness to such inhumanity (be grateful for the intermission) takes a much harder toll on its actors than its audience, but director Mignon McPherson Stewart and her steel-nerved ensemble never falter in their dedication to their material, its power rendered even more intense by the intimate proximity of the Athenaeum’s Studio Three. Acculturating to the scale of normality prevalent in Corthron’s dramatic universe is not easy, but this Eclipse Theatre Company production offers as thorough an appreciation for the fleeting moments of light to be found in a world of darkness as audiences bereft of first-hand experience could ask.

THEATER REVIEW

The Importance of Being Earnest
Playwright: Oscar Wilde
At: Writers Theatre, 325 Tudor Court, Glencoe
Tickets: writerstheatre.org; $35-$80
Runs through: Dec. 23

BY JAMES WILKE

On the evening of Saint Valentine’s Day, 1895, the audience at St. James’ Theatre in London raucously cheered a new romantic farce by a popular Irish playwright. Yet while Oscar Wilde’s The Importance of Being Earnest would go on to be heralded as one of the greatest English plays of all time, Wilde would find himself imprisoned for “gross indecency” only months later, persecuted for his homosexuality and never to write another play.

Yet we may still celebrate the genius of this man today at the Writers Theatre, with a revival of Earnest that feels as fresh, fun, and engaging now as it may have been in its own time. Wilde’s wit and command of the English language was so masterful, and the cast’s delivery of his lines so clear and crisp, it feels as if the play could have been written today. And the play’s underlying criticisms of the trivialities and vanities of Victorian society seem almost frighteningly modern.

The performance space—Writers Theatre’s must-see new facility that opened in February 2016—is itself worth the visit. And perhaps the most shining stars in this revival are scene designer Collette Pollard and costume designer Mara Blumenfeld. Both with unparalleled skill have created a visual Victorian fantasy in soft sorbet colors and cascading white marble, populated by elegant characters in a pleasing array of patterns that enhance and invigorate the play.

This comedy is a farcical tale of frenemies bumbling toward love. Two young society men, Jack and Algys, played by Alex Goodrich and Steve Haggard, both create false personae, lie and ensnare each other in predicaments, seemingly out to destroy each other while remaining friends. And their romantic counterparts, Gwendolen and Cecily (Jennifer Latimore and Rebecca Hurd), prove equal parts affectionate and adversarial. Yet the greatest obstacle for all is the formidable Lady Bracknell, craftily played by Shannon Cochran. Perhaps the only true love of the play is that between the minor characters, Rev. Canon Chasuble and the dowdy Miss Prism, played sweetly by Aaron Todd Douglass and Anita Chandwany, respectively.

This production is expertly done. Yet, while the actors show great rapport with each other and a clear understanding of Wilde’s words, my chief criticism is that they still came across as too shallow and a clear understanding of Wilde’s words, my chief criticism is that they still came across as too shallow and
OUT FRONT seeks play submissions

About Face Theatre is seeking play submissions for its OUT FRONT Series, an annual line-up of workshops and readings of new and developmental works exploring LGBTQIA themes.

This season’s theme, “Babes on Stage,” will showcase on-the-rise LGBTQ+ women-identified playwrights. Readings will begin in spring 2018.

To apply for the OUT FRONT Series, e-mail full scripts and bios to literary@aboutfasetheatre.com with the subject line “BABES ON STAGE—[play title], [author name].” Submissions may also be mailed to About Face Theatre, 5252 N. Broadway, Chicago, IL 60640.

For additional information, visit AboutFaceTheatre.com/productions/out-front-series/. The deadline for submissions is Sunday, Dec. 31, 2017.

Gift Gala on Dec. 1 at Copernicus

The Gift Theatre will present its 16th annual benefit, Gift Gala 2017: Revolutions on Friday, Dec. 1, 6-10 p.m., at the Copernicus Center, 5216 W. Lawrence Ave.

Gala co-chairs include Navy Pier Inc. Chief Program and Civic Engagement Officer Michelle Boone and Chicago’s first lady, Amy Rule.

The evening will feature hors d’oeuvres, auction items and desserts. Entertainment will include live jazz and classical music, a DJ and dancing, and a short performance charting The Gift’s evolving place in the cosmos from Copernicus to NASA, SpaceX and beyond.

The evening also includes the presentation of the Sheldon Patinkin Total Gift Award, which recognizes a key supporter and friend of The Gift. Greg and Anne Taubeneck are this year’s recipients.

Tickets ($150/individual, $1,500/table, $3,000/VIP table) are at TheGiftTheatre.org.

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Will & Grace: You can’t go home again

VIEWPOINT BY MAX S. GORDON

The return of Will & Grace is a miracle of sorts, a pinch-me moment in the history of television. The #VoteHoney video, created to support Hillary Clinton's run for president and which led to the show’s revival, reminded me again what I loved about the original show, and why with Mike Pence in the White House, as a gay man, I needed it now more than ever.

The fault in 2017 is not the talent; it's great to see Eric McCormack again bringing out the irony and passive aggressiveness in Will Truman’s shady repartee. His performance goes deeper than a straight actor’s impersonation of a gay man. Megan Mullally has a genius for line-readings as Karen. Sean Hayes still has the high voltage required to play Jack McFarland. And Debra Messing has a presence almost supernatural in its ability to reassure and a natural warmth—it's her greatest asset. We need an actress like Debra Messing on TV right now.

The first new episode, “11 Years Later,” was criticized by some viewers as too political, too anti-Trump. The problem with the episode is not that it is anti-Trump; it is that it is slovenly written, like the rest of the episodes we’ve seen so far, and seemed stale on arrival. The re-boot feels soulless, while the original show had real pathos. I was amazed after watching an episode this season in which Grace has a cancer scare, and is reunited with her ex-husband, Leo—two potentially devastating plotlines—and I didn’t feel a damn thing.

When it was announced that the show would return, fans were curious as to how the show’s creators would deal with the series finale. They ditched it, resolved in a matter of minutes with the idea that Karen simply dreamt the whole thing.

Perhaps it would have been okay, after all, to pick the show up where the finale left off—to see Grace fight with her college-age daughter and find herself saying things that her mother would often say to her. (When Grace’s daughter whines “Mom, that’s not fair,” she might reply, “Well, neither is my cottage-cheese ass” and then look at Will in horror.) Or maybe we finally get to see Karen in rehab, forced to get treatment because of a night in jail and a DUI conviction. Karen torments the staff while wearing a hospital gown and a pinch-me moment in the history of television.

The way the show is conceived now, Karen is still drunk and abusive, Jack is working temp jobs and still lying to himself, and Will seems to hover around offering support to Grace and Jack like a well-dressed fairy godfather, who smiles beatifically when his friends “see the light,” while never leaving his apartment.

The world which Will, Grace, Karen and Jack now inhabit seems underwater—everyone talks to each other, but they don’t seem to be in the same scene. It is unclear if Grace’s new Puerto Rican assistant, Tony, is there to work for her or to be the new foil for Karen’s racist Latino jokes. A bizarre scene between Grace and Tony borders on sexual harassment. In another, Karen assumes the role of a “people-of-color-as-white-people’s-playthings” scenes. In the episode “Grandpa Jack,” Jack finds out he is a grandfather after being estranged from his son Elliot, and then attempts to remove his grandson from a gay conversion camp. When father and son unite at the show’s conclusion, the audience very audibly says, “Aww.” It’s like an old episode of Silver Spoons—we’ve gone from Oscar Wilde to Oscar Mayer. Something is seriously wrong.

I guess what’s most painful is that if this continues it may affect and erode our memories of a show that we once loved. Rather than sit and watch characters you love enduring situations you hate, you might want to see it cancelled. I would rather Will & Grace not have returned to TV than to see it like this, with one broken high heel, running mascara and its wig on crooked, hobbling to catch a cab in the rain.

I’m sure that there is someone who will read this and think: who cares, it’s just a dumb TV show anyway. But Will & Grace mattered, because art matters and what art reveals to us about ourselves. And because I believe in Will & Grace, we can only hope that, in this case, “It Gets Better” doesn’t refer to bullying but to bad writing.

I would be very happy to find out that none of what we are watching now actually happened, and that the original series finale was the real ending after all—that Karen, in a state of intoxication, invented the show’s return. It would make sense. At this stage of the game, the new Will & Grace, with its lack of spirit and depth, is a show only a narcissistic addict could dream of. Now let’s hope someone stages an intervention.


Morrissey at Riviera on Nov. 25

Singer Morrissey will perform at the Riviera Theatre, 4748 N. Racine Ave., on Saturday, Nov. 25. Doors open at 7 p.m., with the show at 8:30 p.m.

His newest album, Low in High School, is slated to be released Friday, Nov. 17. The lead single is “Spent the Day in Bed.” Morrissey rose to fame as the lead singer of the indie-rock band The Smiths, which was active from 1982 through 1987. Since then, Morrissey has had a solo career, with albums such as Vauxhall and I (1994), You Are the Quarry (2004) and World Peace Is None of Your Business (2014). Tickets are $75 each; visit Ticketfly.com.
Siskel to show drag-ballet film, plus ‘Tom of Finland’

The Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State St., is presenting the Chicago premiere of Rebels on Pointe on Nov. 24-30. Rebels on Pointe is a 2016 documentary about the New York-based Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo—the gay, all-male dance troupe that has, for 40 years, satirized ballet classics.

Clips provide a look at the onstage action as the Trocks, costumed in ballerina drag, perform venerable works like “Swan Lake” with technique and athleticism while injecting their subtle and not-so-subtle trademark humor in the form of comic pratfalls, tutu malfunctions and maverick solos.

In addition, the center will present a local premiere run of the biopic Tom of Finland Jan. 5-18, 2018.

Tickets to each screening—unless stated otherwise—are $11/general admission, $7/students, $6/Film Center members, and $5/Art Institute of Chicago (AIC) staff and School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) faculty, staff, and students.

See SiskelFilmCenter.org.

SAVOR
Lesbian-owned Happy Apple Pie Shop has blended workspace

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Three years ago, Michelle Mascaro and Corynne Romine took on the challenge of starting a local and positive business and that is how Oak Park’s Happy Apple Pie Shop (226 Harrison St; http://happyapplepie.com/) was born.

Mascaro (from New York) and Romine (from Memphis) met in 1990 when they were working as resident chaplains at Rush Presbyterian Hospital and became a couple in 1991. They soon discovered they both wanted to have children and that led to adopting three newborns—Emma (now 19), David (17) and Joseph (16).

The couple was among the Illinois marriage equality plaintiffs the ACLU represented prior to it becoming law in the state. They were married in 2014.

They previously lived in Chicago; however, in 2008 they moved to west suburban Oak Park to give their children access to better education, especially their daughter Emma, who has an intellectual disability.

While Mascaro works at the shop full-time, Romine is a special-education teacher, who helps out on the weekends.

One thing that sets Happy Apple Pie Shop, a social enterprise, apart from other businesses is its blended work environment where people of all abilities work together to make and sell sweet and savory pies. Life with Emma was the catalyst for this decision.

“Emma is funny and sassy, and the world needs some of her energy,” said Mascaro. “She and her peers are wonderful young people who deserve

Turn to page 30
The Reindeer Conundrum: Part One

The Reindeer Conundrum, written by Mark Zubro and illustrated by W.S. Reed, is a Christmas story with a message from the very heart of the holiday. It appears in the anthology Shifting Through the Snow from MLRpress. These are shifter stories connected with the holidays. We’ll be serializing it in our online editions for the next five weeks. Beginning December 8, it will be available on line as an ebook and a paperback.

Today The Reindeer Conundrum: Part One.

December 23, 5:00 A.M.

“Mr. Rudolph?”
The reindeer adjusted his black, horn-rimmed glasses, but did not look up from behind his desk.
“I asked not to be disturbed.” He used a tone of voice that could freeze an elf faster than an arctic cold front at the height of a blizzard at the North Pole.
“Sir, it’s a shifting issue.”
Rudolph sighed. He checked his computer screen for a moment and then hit send. The new even more hoof-friendly mouse pad was a blessing of enormous proportions.
Rangifer, his secretary, stood next to the offending elf. Rangifer shook his antlers and said, “Sorry. He said it was an emergency.” Rangifer had worked for him for many years. If he said it was important, then it probably was.
It was barely five a.m. and Rudolph had been in front of his computer since four. He’d only gotten three hours of sleep. It was December twenty-third. In less than twenty-four hours, Santa would have to be on his way. There were a million things left to do.
“It’s okay.” Rudolph turned to the interloper and glared. “What is it this time?”
“Teenagers, sir. Um, ah, and gifts.”
“Who was in charge?”
“Blitzen, sir.”
Rudolph could have guessed.
The interrupter was an elf: second class, reindeer division, shifter sector x-1, monitor q47. Rudolph made it his business to know the names, not just the ranks, classifications, and numbers of all the elves who labored in his division. This one was Ralph.
Young reindeer, male and female, loved to show off their shifter powers. The simple embarrassments of shifting gone wrong were too numerous to mention, and there’d been a few tragedies when the far too young tried to do far too much.

If they brought a problem to his level, Rudolph knew something was very wrong and could escalate to a first-class-disaster very quickly.
Rudolph was not in charge of Reindeer Rearing, but he was the head of the Deer Shifting Division, which meant he had to put up with young reindeer far more often than he cared to. Being part of an operation that handled the complexity of getting several zillion gifts distributed once a year to all kinds of kids was enough of a pain in the neck. He couldn’t stand dealing with both human and reindeer youth most of the rest of the time.
But it came with the job. That’s what they did, when you were competent, you got promoted. Lead a sleigh one year, and poof, the next thing you knew, you were in charge of half a damn department (tinsel and candy canes that first year), and not long after that you were stuck in a desk job in a leadership position. When mostly what you wanted to do was to shift into being a cow in a herd in Iowa with plenty of lush grass to eat. This time of the year, those thoughts always came to Rudolph.
He glanced up at his wall with all the pictures of celebrities from around the world, his relationship with the other reindeer, he’d confide in one of the Magi. They were well known for their discretion, but it had been years since he’d felt the need. This time of the year, between the elves and reindeer seeking help, the lines to see them could be half a mile long. It was a stressful time.
The North Pole Santa Complex was a generally happy place. In summers, the Magi had little to do. At those times, they occasionally dabbled in forming a rock band but with indifferent success. One year, they’d tried calling their ensemble “Stars of Heaven.” Didn’t work. They were still awful.
This time of the year, especially after Thanksgiving, the nights were eternal and the work unending. Consulting one of the Magi at this time took hours of waiting in line that could rarely be spared.
Rudolph was as content as a once-famous, some even whispered has-been, reindeer could be.
Yes, he’d saved Christmas. It was a hell of a thing to put on a résumé. He had felt good about it that night, still sometimes did, but the nature of reindeer and what some of them could really be like, herd mentality and constant complaining, was all too true.
His doctor had suggested that they put some tranquilizers in his lichen for a while to make the memories go away. Rudolph had refused.
That Christmas Eve had been great. He didn’t want to forget that. He didn’t think about it often. Except moments like this when he had to trudge down to Blitzen and solve a problem someone else at a lower level should have been able to fix.

“It’s okay.” Rudolph turned to the interloper, “What is it this time?”
After that night, he’d been stuck for ages playing in their stupid reindeer games. Oh, sure, they were fun for a while. He found out he was quite good at them. But, he’d rather be home reading a book. Sure, every Christmas Eve since then was a great time. He did enjoy them. He couldn’t deny it. Bringing all that joy to the world felt great.

But all that jolly ho, ho, ho the other three hundred and sixty-four days of the year? It was too much, and now he had tons of work and responsibilities. So there were no longer any reindeer games of any kind, and not a lot of ho, ho, ho for a very over-worked Rudolph.

He sighed and stood up. Now this shifting issue would have to be dealt with. Blitzen of all reindeer!

It had been years since the foggy night episode. The elite eight, as the original contingent of reindeer was often known, had gotten old. Some had aged gracefully. Not Blitzen. He was still jumping from tops of porches to tops of walls and trying to dash away, and he could barely make the leap to the lid of a trash can. Now it was more of a wobble to the upper branches of a small pine tree and a then an iffy and very chancy dash to the next. If he even got that far. Blitzen’s shifting abilities were starting to wane. Yes, it was possible to shift and transport yourself at the same time, but it took great expertise. The skill also tended to fade with age, in some worse than others.

It didn’t do to find yourself jumping from one roof to the next and realize you weren’t going to make it, and then try to transport yourself while several hundred feet in the air and going at full speed. It was like trying to fasten your seatbelt only when you knew you were going to be in an accident. Far too late.

No one knew exactly how the shifting worked: definitely mind control mixed with physical ability developed over years, but which precise neurons mixed with athleticism, will power, and desire were a mystery.

Shifting and transporting took concentration, time, skill, experience, andnumbing hours of practice. It isn’t just poof, you’re gone from here to there and turned into something else.

It wasn’t easy, and the skills weren’t learned all in a day. All strove to be in the elite eight for Christmas Eve. This was the pinnacle of reindeerhood. Only eight earned the privilege and some of those eight stayed on year after year.

Most of the rest of the others from that foggy Christmas Eve were old, tired and didn’t even try many shifts or transports. There were younger reindeer who could do all these things. Sure Blitzen, Cupid, etc., got all the hype and publicity, but most of them were retired. Let the younger deer do it. They enjoyed it even without getting the well-deserved renown. The competition was fierce and only the most athletic, best coordinated, and expert shifters and transporters could make the elite eight for the sleigh for that magisterial night once a year.

The older reindeer mostly used their powers so they could shift in the blink of an eye to being part of a flock of geese heading south and spend the winter in Mexico. Many of them often did just that with the group-averse Blitzen holding out. Rudolph realized he was out of sorts. He didn’t like anyone who took out their frustrations on others, and he’d just done so. He said, “I apologize for snapping at you both. We’ve got a long day ahead of us.”

Ralph looked surprised and mumbled, “Thank you, sir.”

Rangifer smiled.

Rudolph asked Rangifer to hold his calls, then slammed down the halls of the complex, his hooves clicking on the marble tile. He enjoyed the sounds of toys being made, elves and deer in harmony together, machines whirring, and beating, and tooting, and singing.

There had nearly been a revolt, years before. They’d installed a new complex-wide system of piped in music, which after Halloween, became Christmas tunes twenty-four/seven.

As a reindeer, you couldn’t be mucking about with shifting while you were trying to get your work done. Elves couldn’t shift at all, so they were subject to the eternal carols worse than being chained inside the biggest mall on the planet.

That’s how they’d gotten Steve Jobs to invent the iPod. Now they all had their own music to listen to. Or humming or singing to themselves, or just working in silence. Rudolph loved it.

You could shift into slowly growing things, like a tree, but Rudolph always wondered what the point was. If you’re a tree, you just kind of stand there and get another ring around your butt every year. You could shift into inanimate objects but once you were stiff, you stayed stiff. You could never come back.

“What happened to Santa?”
Blitzen said, “He put his finger up aside his nose and the next second he was gone.”

“Maybe he rose up the chimney.”

“You know that chimney reindeer-waste is horse.”

“No if you’re a true believer.”

“And you are?”

“Just tell me exactly what happened.”

“The night was silent, almost holy.”

“They are like that around here.”

“I thought he was napping by the chimney. He does that a lot.”

“I know.”

“When by damn, he stands up, and like I just said, puts a finger aside of his nose, and pa-fooey, gone.”

“You sure he didn’t go up the chimney?”

“I checked. No.”

“Maybe he’s stuck in the chimney?”

“No that either.”

Rudolph placed his nose at the top of the opening for the cold fireplace. He smelled nothing but ash.

“You don’t trust me?” Blitzen asked.

“You got something against checking things twice?”

“No.”

“We’ll have to get a full-fledged investigation team in here.”

Blitzen hung his head. “Oh woe is me, I think I’m going to shift into a cactus and stick to living in Arizona for the rest of the season.”

“We’ve got a missing Santa, and you want to abandon sleigh? Not on your life, Mr. Blitzen. You stay and face the carols.”

There were rules for shifting. Just like there were rules for everything. Most reindeer lived ordinary reindeer lives: big herds, lots of lichen, too many bugs in summer, and wolves waiting to devour you at all times. Basically, deer-muggles were subject to the eternal carols worse than being chained inside the biggest mall on the planet.

There were rules for shifting. Just like there were rules for everything. Most reindeer lived ordinary reindeer lives: big herds, lots of lichen, too many bugs in summer, and wolves waiting to devour you at all times. Basically, deer-muggles were subject to the eternal carols worse than being chained inside the biggest mall on the planet.

Then there were the special ones. These were carefully watched for. Some reindeer at the North Pole had children and all of them, over the many years, had inherited their parent’s shifting abilities, but there were some welcome additions from around the North. These had to be found and treated carefully.
RUDOLPH from page 25

From just after they were weaned, all these special reindeer were educated in everything reindeer including shifting and transporting.

Harry Potter and all the magicians had rules in the Harry Potter books. It doesn't do to break the rules. Sure, sometimes you get away with things. The same applied to reindeer shifting and transporting.

Among those who could shift and transport, there were problem reindeer, difficult, or wild, sometimes both. They had one egotistical moron of a reindeer who changed himself into a politician. Of course, no human had noticed. You wouldn't believe what he got elected to. It had shocked them all when he achieved such power.

“Of course, no human had noticed. You wouldn’t believe what he got elected to. It had shocked them all when he achieved such power. He came to a bad end. Just missed setting off World War III, but the Shifting Police caught him just as he was turning into part of the Harry Potter books. It doesn't do to break the rules. Sure, sometimes you get away with things. The same applied to reindeer shifting and transporting."

No, better to turn into a nice cuddly puppy, or a Clydesdale. Those were good. Manageable.

And the Shifting Police! Strict enforcers. All the North Pole bambis of the reindeer world had been threatened one time or another with the Shifting Police when they were naughty.

Rudolph was forced to deal with the Shifting Police in his regular duties. They were the most unpleasant part of a North Pole job description. The chief of the Shifting Police was a deer who'd broken his leg the day before the first Christmas Eve he'd been eligible to be one of the elite eight. He'd never flown again. He was a bitter reindeer.

“Okay,” Rudolph said. “He was tired. He did the finger/nose thing,” prompting Blitzen to resume his story.

“You know he’s always talked about wanting to be able to shift.”

“Only when he’s really tired.”

“You know he’s always totally exhausted the weeks after Thanksgiving. It all started with that stupid Macy’s parade and that goddamn movie. After that movie, he feels obligated. It’s been getting worse and worse, more burdensome every year.

“Kids love the parade. Millions love the movie. The old guy who plays Santa is great.”

“Fine, but now he’s gone for nearly four whole days between parades and special appearances, everything from malls to sporting events. The weather is rarely congenial, and the holiday season is in full gear by then. He’s got work here.”

“I know all this.” Rudolph kept his voice low and calm and tried to put as much kindliness into it as he could. He asked, “What happened recently?”

Blitzen shrugged. “So when the old guy got back from the Thanksgiving rush, he was neither right nor jolly. He blew through enough eggnog to float every toy boat on all the Christmas lists.”

“He usually rests for up to a week. He’s not getting any younger. None of us are.”

“You know how they always show him drinking those fizzy drinks?”

“Yes, the ads for colas and specialty liquors. I know. The legal department says there’s nothing we can do to stop them.”

“And how he puts spirits into his own fizzy drinks?”

“Yes.”

“And how he used to like mulled wine?”

Rudolph waited.

“He put a whole lot of spirits into his cola water this year and drank nearly a gallon of mulled cider.” Blitzen’s worried look deepened. “I called Mrs. Claus. She told me to just let him get a few extra days of rest. He’d catch up on sleep and all those cookies and goodies and so the liquor wouldn’t get better. Santa kept saying he wanted to try shifting.”

Rudolph shook his antlers.

Blitzen said, “I told him it wouldn’t do any good, but he’s magical in a lot of ways. How does he get all those toys around the world in one night?”

“We’ve all been there. He just does.”

“Well, he wanted to shift. Kept trying and trying and then today, poof he was gone.”

Jolly old elves weren’t supposed to be able to shift. There wasn’t a rule against it. It just never happened.

Now, Blitzen segued into one of his more chronic complaints. “On Christmas Eve, he gets all those cookies and goodies and so the liquor doesn’t get to him. We never get any cookies and goodies.”

“Sweets make us sick. You know that. You want a flying, puking reindeer?”

“You think it’s easy pulling a sleigh filled with that many presents and an enormous fat guy? Around the entire globe? In one night? You think it’s easy? They’ve got to be trained.”

“I was there, remember? I know. What does any of this have to do with our Santa shifting disaster?”

Blitzen dithered.

“Did you check his tracking device?” Rudolph asked.

Blitzen held up a tiny computer chip. “This was on the floor where he was standing when he shifted. I sent a few of my more trusted staff to hunt for him. He shook his head. “They took hours. They were discreet and checked every place twice. He is nowhere to be found. Heat sensors outside show that no one has wandered out into the cold.”

The Santa Complex at the North Pole was enormous, but it was finite. The sensors for outside the perimeter were state of the art. Whether someone went accidentally or deliberately out into the bitter cold, they would freeze in minutes.

“The last one just got back. They couldn’t find him. He did the nose thing a little after two. I thought it was a joke. Then it wasn’t funny. Around three, I sent out searchers. We’re especially good at finding young lost reindeer and elves for that matter. Seconds after the last one got back before five, I sent for you.”

Rudolph made his voice as soft and consoling as he could. “No one’s going to blame you.”

Blitzen began to blubber and weep. “It’s all my fault. All those kids won’t get presents. I’ll be more famous than you, but in a bad way.”

See www.windycitymediagroup.com in the coming weeks for additional excerpts from this short story.
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‘Sound of Music,’ AIDS movie at Music Box Theatre

The Music Box Theatre tradition of “The Sound of Music Sing-A-Long” will return Nov. 24-Dec. 3 at 3733 N. Southport Ave.

It all starts before the film, with a vocal warm-up led by the evening’s host and our house organist on the famous Music Box organ. Every member of the audience receives a complimentary Magic Moments Pack, containing various props to be used at strategic points throughout the film—and there’s a costume contest as well.

Meanwhile, the film BPM is showing at the Music Box through Thursday, Nov. 23.

The critically lauded film (the Grand Prix winner at this year’s Cannes Film Festival) is a drama about the AIDS-activist group ACT UP, and it is set in Paris in the 1990s. The 140-minute movie is in French, with English subtitles.


Riva Lehrer among grant recipients

The Joan Mitchell Foundation has announced its 2017 Painters & Sculptors grant recipients, a group of 25 artists who will each receive $25,000 in unrestricted funds—and Chicago artist Riva Lehrer is among said recipients, according to ArtNews.

Established by the foundation’s namesake in 1993, the grants are awarded annually to under-recognized artists working in the United States through a nomination and subsequent jury vote. Another Chicago artist, Amanda Williams, also made the list. A 2016 Windy City Times article on Lehrer is at http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/ART-Riva-Lehrer-and-the-evolution-of-Risk/55207.html.


Chicago setting tourism record

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced that the city is on track to reach the goal of 55 million visitors annually at the end of this year—three years early, according to a press release.

Chicago has been setting tourism records every year since 2012. Last year, more than 54 million people visited the city.

The release added that, to build on that progress, the Institute of Food Technologists—with members representing more than 95 countries from virtually every discipline related to food science—will begin a decade of meetings in 2020.

LOOSE ENDS @ MAN’S COUNTRY

A historic night at the baths with DJ Harry Cross, Toyota Corona, Lucy Stoole and more.
Saturday, November 18.
Photos by Kirk Williamson

NSFW @ SOFO TAP

Take a picture. It’ll last longer.
Photos by Kirk Williamson
Regarding allegations. Regarding Haps that's why it's cancelled! Anyhoo, all three have paid had I not downloaded it illegally. Per-
er had a dream role—the Forget about billy eich-
ner and even Julie Klausner BillyMasters.com. In case you missed it, you can see the smooching on Wilson Cruz and Anthony Rapp. In lock between Trek: Discovery to feature the first same-sex lip ner in the last film—but it was cut. That left Star
Cho, his Sulu did share a kiss with his male part-
Trek history that we've seen. According to going before: the first gay kiss in Star Trek his-
blame it on a beef burrito bowl with guacamole!

don't make it to the end of this column, you can a few hours, I am telling you up front that if I blamed his recent hospital stay Jeremy Jordan are obsessed with ass play. But, hey, as long as they enjoy it.

Only your beloved Billy would read that sexy Jeremy Jordan blamed his recent hospital stay on Chipotle and think, “Mmmm, that sounds good.” While I have no symptoms and it’s been a few hours, I am telling you up front that if I don’t make it to the end of this column, you can blame it on a beef burrito bowl with guacamole!

This week, man has gone where no man has gone before: the first gay kiss in Star Trek his-
45 pounds. If you got that right, you may qualify to get into your local community college.

Speaking of sizes, Kathy Griffin has once again gone after Andy Cohen—and this time her target is the size of his package. In a recent tweet, she shared an email she received from someone cur-
rently living in Croatia who claims to have had a one-night stand with Andy back in college—no, not in Croatia. Forrest (last name suppressed) says, “Andy Cohen is a little guy. I happen to be 6 feet tall. He rather assertively had his way with me. It was very one-sided.” In other words, he confirmed what Anderson Cooper already told us—that Cohen’s a top. “By the way,” Forrest adds, “Andy is a small guy, not just in height.” Kathy sums it up with, “Do you know me now, b*tch?”

Andy Cohen recently had Rosie O’Donnell and Joy Behar on Watch What Happens Live, which was a riveting interview. Seeing the two former The View co-hosts together was fascinating—par-
ticularly in the after-show, when Joy interrogated Rosie about the fight with Elisabeth Hasselbeck and why Ro really left The View. Her illuminating comments are required viewing, on BillyMasters.com.

Speaking of The View, within days of original co-host Star Jones announcing her engagement, ex-hubby Al Reynolds made an announcement of his own: “I have come to a point in my life where I am ready to discuss my truth. I wasn’t ready to do this then. I wasn’t even ready to think about it, let alone process it. I have learned that sexual orientation is not binary, at least not for me. I am capable of loving both sexes, and I have done both. Today, I accept myself as a bisexual man.” The only thing shocking about that is the “bi” part!

You know who else came out as bisexual? Tyler Posey. OK, not exactly Tyler Posey, but the character he plays on Jane the Virgin. His character, Adam, tells Jane (the virgin), “I had a boyfriend in our school when everyone was experimenting, and another in Fort Green when everyone wasn’t.” For those of you playing at home, that's two boy-
friends. But that's just his character, right? Well ... let's not be too hasty. After all, he's previously admitted to being on Grindr—and how many straight men can say that? Hands? Well, it's really not a fair question—how many straight men are reading this column? But how many straight men have seen Posey's penis? Again, I see no hands—although they may be otherwise engaged. Since Tyler has said he doesn't care that his nudes (and the videos) fell into our hands, why not share them with you—on BillyMasters.com.

When we've rung around Rosie to a pocket full of Posey, it's definitely time to end another col-
umn. As we close, time to pay respects to anoth-
er legendary lady. Ann Wedgeworth, best known from Three's Company and Evening Shade, was my kinda gal. Rest in peace. As we enter the holiday season, the most ho, ho, ho's can be found on-BillyMasters.com, the site that'll require the use of both hands. After washing them, feel free to reach out to me at Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before my next Chipotle run! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.
**Thrive: Weekly group for HIV-positive**

**Wednesday, Nov. 22**

40+ Monthly Peer-Led Support Group and Potluck This support group is open to women who are 40 years old and older, and the discussion centers the experiences of LGBTQ women of color. Fourth Wednesday of the month. Bring a dish to share. 7:00pm - 9:00pm Affinity Community Services 2850 S. Wabash Ave., #108; http://www.affinity05.org

Cathy Richardson w/opener Andreas Kapsalis Songs by Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, Heart, Fleetwood Mac, The Pretenders, Pat Benatar, and her own catalog of original songs. Doors open at 6:30pm 7:30pm - 10:00pm Chicago Art Department, 1932 S. Halsted http://www.facebook.com/events/53995756372997/

**Thursday, Nov. 23**

**Thrive: Weekly group for HIV-positive**

YMSM Open process group facilitated by a licensed counselor open to all HIV-positive young men who have sex with men, 18-29. A safe space to process one’s HIV status, emotional and mental health, relationships, identity, and personal growth. Also fun activities and cultural outings once a quarter. 6:00pm Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) 5537 N Broadway St Chicago http://tpan.com/events/thrive-edition

PoChop will be among those performing at the drag-king event “Queer Lines.”

**Friday, Nov. 24**

Queer Lines: Drag kings, spoken word performances from: Switch the Boi Winner, Nikki Pattin + Marta Cook, Po’Chop, Bella Bahhs, Niki Gee, O Snap!, Tiff Beaty, Nova Sparkx, Roman Empire, Lilly Rascal, Music by DJ Dapper, Photography by Tori Brown Rice, Promo Design by Chi Nwosu. Doors open at 6:30pm 7:30pm - 10:00pm Chicago Art Department, 1932 S. Halsted http://www.facebook.com/events/53995756372997/

Alter Boy Good little Catholic boy says his prayers, makes good grades, performs in school plays, wins participation trophies... He’s Catholic, he’s gay - what could go wrong? Through Dec. 30, 2017. $25 7:30pm The Buena, Pride Arts Center 4147 N. Broadway, Chicago 800-737-0994 Tickets: http://www.pridefilmsandplays.com


Rebels on Pointe screening Inside story of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo-the gay, all-male, New York-based dance troupe that for 40 years has stylishly satrizeded ballet classics. Runs through Nov. 29. First show today 2p.m. 8:00pm Gene Siskel Film Center 164 N State Chicago Tickets: http://www.siskelfilmcen-ter.org/rebelsonpointe

**Saturday, Nov. 25**

**Frontrunners, Frontwalkers Chicago** Frontrunners, Frontwalkers Chicago City’s LGBT running and walking club. Meet at the totem pole 9:00am Addison and Lakeshore Dr. http://www.frontrunnersfrontwalkerschicago.org/Christmas Bingo: It’s a Ho-Ho-Holy Night Written by Vicki Quade, co-creator of Late Nite Catechism, Christmas Bingo is the second installment in Quade’s bingo series with new material and a special twist on the story of the Announcement. Through Dec. 31, 2017. $30 8:00pm Royal George Theatre 1641 N Halsted St Chicago 312-988-9000 http://www.runs4fun.com

**Sunday, Nov. 26**

Sober Horizons Group of Alcoholics Anonymous All persons with a desire to stop drinking are welcome. 9:30am Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago http://www.chicagoaa.or/about-caso

Women Aging with Wisdom & Grace Discussion & Potluck Suggested Readings: The Life and Loves of Lena Gaunt by Tracy Furr 11:30am - 1:30pm Women & Children First Bookstore 5233 N Clark St Chicago http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com/bookgroups

**Monday, Nov. 27**

**Black & Pink Holiday Card Party** An opportunity to elevate the voices, stories, and leadership of incarcerated LGBTQ folks and inspire immediate collective action towards abolition. This year, there are nearly 14,000 Black & Pink members, which means 14,000 holiday cards need to be sent out to incarcerat-ed LGBTQ individuals. The cards we make will bring joy, connection and kindness to incarcerated LGBTQ individuals while telling prison staff that people on the outside are watching. Free event. 6:00pm - 8:00pm Center on Halsted 3656 N Halsted Chicago http://www.centeronhalsted.org/newevents-details.cfm?ID=14617

**Wednesday, Nov. 29**

**LGBT Chamber of Commerce Winter Soiree** Full open bar (sponsored by Sidetrack), heavy appetizers, dessert station. Drawing for $250 Shaw’s Crab House gift card. After party at Sidetrack. Business casual or festive winter attire. $90 through Nov. 23; non-members $100. 6:30pm - 10:30pm Straford on the Park, 2300 N. Lincoln Park; http://lgbtcc.us3.list-manage.com/track click

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**DISH from page 23**

what others have—the ability to be contributing members of our community. We are grateful for the support we have gotten along the way from friends, other parents, Oak Park River Forest High School, other organizations and even strangers.

“Like many parents, we are concerned about where Emma will work and live as an adult,” said Mascaro. “Only about 15 percent of people with disabilities have employment—a shameful statistic. The old sheltered workshop model (where people work in an environment exclusively for people with disabilities away from their community) is inadequate. When I lost my job, it was time for a different adventure. Creating a business to include all kinds of workers was an exciting idea.”

During the daytime, the employees are mostly adults with different abilities, and in the evening a number of high school students help make the pies, while on the weekends everyone works together. Mascaro noted that having a happy, accepting workplace makes all the difference in someone’s life.

Mascaro explained that she feeds people in her personal life, so having a food business was always in the back of her mind. One of Mascaro’s friends suggested a cupcake business but that was not the right fit for her.

“The next day, the idea about pie came clearly to mind,” said Mascaro. “Pie needs some exactness—the crust—and some creativity—the filling. It seemed to me that it would speak to the strengths and abilities of people who would work for us. That began a three-year process of learning and developing the business, and we keep learning every day.”

“We wanted to have a business where employees are visible in the community,” said Romine. “A place where everyone would feel welcome and comfortable and a pie shop fit that idea.”

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