Remembering Names

This week, our special AIDS @ 30 section includes interviews with Cleve Jones, who helped create the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt, and photographer Bruce Barnes, who dedicated his craft to documenting the Quilt. Photo by Bruce Barnes

Oh, Matthew!

Glee’s Matthew Morrison discusses his career in show business, including the gayest thing he’s ever done. Photo by Brian Bowen Smith

A vital “Lifeline”

Chaz Bono speaking at Howard Brown’s Lifeline Celebration, May 6 at the Palmer House Hilton. Bono also took part in a panel discussion before the event. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald, www.MysticImagesPhotography.com

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WINDY CITY TIMES

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Photos on cover (left, from top): Donna De Lory PR photo; Peter Pan poster; Rahm Emanuel image from team; Kent Bartram photo by Tully Satre; Leatherman cover by Kirk Williamson

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THE WHITE STUFF
WCT caught Betty White recently when she signed copies of new book.

Photo by Jerry Nunn

URBAN RENEWAL
See photos from the recent Urban Gateways Gala.

CAUGHT IN THE WEB
Find out about the recent 50 Faggots webisode premiere that took place at Center on Halsted.

THAT’S ENTERTAINMENT
This week’s entertainment round-up includes items on LL Cool J, Lisa Cholodenko and Glee.

BAD TO THE COHN
The movie Violet Tendencies (with former Facts of Life star Mindy Cohn, second from left) is among Five Worth Finding.

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DAILY BREAKING NEWS

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Marriage-equality fight shifts to R.I.

BY DANA RUDOLPH  KEEN NEWS SERVICE

The openly gay sponsor of a marriage-equality bill in Rhode Island said last week he would push for civil-unions bill instead, setting off a slew of criticism from LGBT groups. Six states are considering legislation that would ask voters to amend the state constitution to ban recognition of any legal relationships for same-sex couples. All this was on the heels of a dramatic loss for a marriage equality bill in Maryland in March. Has the state legislative fight for marriage equality lost momentum? Not according to Evan Wolfson, executive director of the national Freedom to Marry group.

“Both Rhode Island and Maryland are very much still in play,” said Wolfson. “...the fact we don’t win it exactly on the day we want ... doesn’t change the overall momentum that is strongly in our direction.”

The “highest priority” right now, says Wolfson, is New York. Wolfson said he is “very hopeful” a marriage bill that is expected to pass the New York State Assembly, which is under Democratic control, will also pass the Senate, where Republicans hold a 32-to-26 majority.

Wolfson acknowledges the Senate may be more difficult. While a marriage equality bill passed the Assembly three times in the past four years, an attempt to pass it in the Senate in 2009 failed by 14 votes.

New York Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos (R), who opposes marriage equality, has nevertheless said he would let a marriage equality bill come to the floor. Also, several recent polls show that a majority of voters in the state support marriage equality. An April 11 Siena College poll showed that 58 percent of New Yorkers support it, with 36 percent opposed. An April 14 Quinnipiac poll showed 56 percent support, with 38 percent opposed, and a New York Times estimated projection on the same date also showed 58 percent support.

Additionally, two dozen New York business leaders, including Lloyd C. Blankfein, CEO of Goldman Sachs, and John Mack, chairman of the board of Morgan Stanley, issued an open letter April 28 arguing that legalizing marriage for same-sex couples would help the state attract talent and remain competitive.

“Winning New York would really be transformative,” said Wolfson, “because New York has enormous cultural and political leadership in the United States and in the world.”

Freedom to Marry and several other LGBT advocacy groups—the Empire State Pride Agenda, the Human Rights Campaign, the League of Women Voters, the Log Cabin Republicans, and Marriage Equality New York—have formed the New Yorkers United for Marriage coalition, which is coordinating efforts to lobby for the marriage equality bill this session, which adjourns in June.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D), who has expressed strong support for passing such a bill this year, has asked members of his staff to work with the coalition.

In Rhode Island, openly gay House Speaker Gordon Fox (D), a sponsor of that state’s marriage bill, said in a statement April 27 that “there is no realistic chance for passage of the bill in the Senate,” that it will not move forward with a vote in the House.

However, the Providence Journal newspaper also reported that Fox said he did not have the votes to pass the bill even in the House, where Democrats hold 65 seats to the Republicans’ 10.

Fox said he will instead sponsor a bill for civil unions and is “optimistic” that such a bill could pass both chambers this session. He was expected to introduce the bill May 3.

However, Fox’s decision has not gone over well with LGBT groups. Marriage Equality Rhode Island (MERID), which supports full marriage, is holding a rally at the State House the same day to protest Fox’s decision to drop the marriage equality bill. Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, and others, issued statements criticizing Fox’s decision and calling it “completely unacceptable.”

“Nothing short of marriage equality is for Rhode Island’s gay and lesbian citizens and their children,” said Karen Loewy, a GLAD senior staff attorney. “More to the point, civil unions tell gay people and their kids that they are second-class citizens and that their families matter less than other families.”

Wolfson called Fox’s decision a “miscalculation.” He noted that polls show a majority of support among voters, that Rhode Island already recognizes marriages of same-sex couples performed elsewhere, and that nearby Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Vermont all began with civil unions and have moved to full equality.

Similar to Rhode Island, marriage equality supporters never had a clear majority in Maryland either, even with the support of Governor Martin O’Malley (D). Although the bill passed the Senate in Maryland, but on March 11, the House unanimously to send the bill back to committee.

However, several LGBT groups, including Marriage Equality Maryland, the leading state organization behind the bill, expressed approval for the move.

Wolfson noted, however, that Maryland was “within a couple of votes” of passage. With “a little more time to make the case and organize,” he thinks achieving equality could happen in early 2012.

Meanwhile, three states have enacted civil union laws this year—Delaware, Hawaii, and Illinois. Wolfson said that, while civil unions are not the true goal, they may still “sometimes be a stepping stone.”

Camilla Taylor, marriage project director for Lambda Legal, agreed, saying that civil unions are “an important step forward” in states where same-sex couples have no benefits or protections. She added that Lambda is “often very involved,” as it was in Illinois, in drafting such legislation.

Lambda also brought a suit before the New Jersey Supreme Court claiming the state’s civil union law did not provide full equality. The Court last June refused to hear the case, saying it must first go through the trial court process. Taylor said she could not say whether Lambda would be filing any further cases to contest civil unions, noting that it is important in each state to first “develop a record of the ways in which it harms people to deny them equal access to marriage.”

Six states (Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Washington) also have active legislation that would ask voters to amend the state constitutions to ban marriage—and in some cases, recognition of any legal relationships, such as civil unions—for same-sex couples.

New Mexico and Wyoming both considered but did not pass such bills this year. Wyoming also rejected a bill that sought to prevent the state from recognizing marriages and civil unions of same-sex couples from other jurisdictions.

Washington State has been a mish-mash of marriage-related bills. The state already allows same-sex couples to register as domestic partners and, on February 14, bills were introduced in both chambers of the legislature for marriage equality.

Also, on April 5, Washington state Gov. Chris Gregoire (D) signed a bill to recognize legal relationships of same-sex couples from other jurisdictions as domestic partnerships, But there is also a bill in the House that would ask voters to ban marriage for same-sex couples under the state constitution. Democrats have a majority in both chambers.

The situation in New Hampshire is also mixed. A House committee voted March 3 to table a bill that would prevent the state’s existing marriage equality law, thus postponing further consideration until January 2012. But opponents of marriage equality have said they will also introduce a bill next year seeking to ask voters in November 2012 to approve amending the state constitution to ban marriage for same-sex couples.

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Gay binational couple gets deportation reprieve

On May 6, an immigration judge in Newark, N.J., issued a ruling on the deportation of Henry Velandia, a Venezuelan citizen legally married in 2010 to Josh Vandiver, an American citizen, according a press release from Immigration Equality USA and GetEQUAL.

Immigration judge Alberto Riefkohl ordered that deportation proceedings against Henry Velandia be put on hold, granting an adjournment until December, thereby temporarily stopping the process of his deportation to his native Venezuela. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Assistant Chief Counsel David Cheng, the attorney prosecuting the case on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security, agreed to the adjournment.

The judge adjourned deportation proceedings against Velandia on the grounds that the marriage-based green-card petition filed by Joshua Vandiver was still pending and because of the potential implications of a move by Attorney General Eric Holder in a related case that may signal a shifting in the Administration’s interpretation of the law as it concerns same-sex binational couples.

On May 5, Holder intervened in the case of another gay binational couple in New Jersey who had sought recognition of their civil union for immigration purposes. That couple lost their case on appeal at Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) and had filed a lawsuit in the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. The attorney general “vacated,” or set aside, the decision by the BIA and directed the BIA to issue a new opinion focusing on whether a same-sex partner could qualify as a spouse under the Immigration and Nationality Act. This is the first time an attorney general has used the power of BIAs review to intervene on behalf of a same-sex couple. The specific instructions given to the BIA suggest that the attorney general is considering whether the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is unconstitutional when applied against same-sex couples in the immigration context.

Despite legally marrying in Connecticut in August 2010, Vandiver (a Ph.D. student at Princeton University) is currently prohibited from sponsoring Velandia (a salsa dancer, instructor and founder of a Princeton-based dance studio) for a green card, unlike heterosexual married couples in the same situation. Because of DOMA, the federal government does not recognize same-sex marriages, even if those marriages were performed in states that do legally recognize those unions.

Lavi Soloway—the couple’s lawyer as well as founder of StopTheDeportations.com and co-founder of Immigration Equality—said, “Today we have won an important victory by stopping the deportation of Henry Velandia. The immigration judge has demonstrated that it is appropriate to proceed with caution when a marriage-based green card petition is pending precisely because the law and policy impacting lesbian and gay binational couples is in a state of flux.”

Gay Repub. Calif. mayor Mike Gin (left) runs for Congress

—Anti-gay Olympic chief resigns

—Gay Repub. Calif. mayor Mike Gin (left) runs for Congress

—Playwright Doric Wilson dies at 72

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Drama in the court: Judge Walker under scrutiny

Second of two parts
BY LISA KEEN
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

Former U.S. District Court Chief Judge Vaughn Walker recently told a small group of reporters that it would be a “very slippery slope” to say that a judge’s “sexuality” should prevent him or her from handling a case such as the trial against Proposition 8. Many legal activists—gay and straight—agree. In fact, the lead attorney for the Yes on 8 coalition that is defending California’s ban on same-sex couples marrying agrees.

“We are not suggesting that a gay or lesbian judge could not sit on this case,” said Charles Cooper states, in his motion, to vacate Judge Walker’s ruling against Proposition 8. But in their April 25 motion seeking to vacate Walker’s ruling, Cooper and his team argue that, “Given that Chief Judge Walker was in a committed, long-term, same-sex relationship throughout this case (and for many years before the case commenced), it is clear that his ‘impartiality might reasonably [have been] questioned from the outset.”

The U.S. Code governing “Judiciary and Judicial Procedure” does not stipulate that a judge should recuse himself because of any specific personal characteristic that he or she has. It draws a case-specific line: The Code states that a judge should recuse himself “in any proceeding in which his impartiality might reasonably be questioned” or in any case where the judge “knows that he ... has a financial interest in the subject matter in controversy ... or any other interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceeding ....”

It is the latter directive Yes on 8 focuses on because, in an April 6 interview with reporters, Walker acknowledged having been in a relationship with a man for the past 10 years. “[I]f at any time while this case was pending before him, Chief Judge Walker and his partner determined that they desired, or might desire, to marry,” wrote Cooper in his motion, “Chief Judge Walker plainly had an ‘interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceeding.’”

Indeed, such a personal interest in his own marriage would place Chief Judge Walker in precisely the same shoes as the two couples who brought the case,” said Cooper. “Such a clear and direct stake in the outcome would create a nonwaivable conflict, and recusal would have been mandatory.”

Certainly, being able to marry provides couples benefits, including financial benefits. That has been a key argument from plaintiffs in this case and from legal groups fighting the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in other federal cases.

However, it is hard to imagine how Judge James Ware, whose job it will be to rule on the motion to vacate, can determine whether Walker has a direct personal interest in his own marriage. Census data shows the number of unmarried heterosexual couples living together numbered about 6 million—up from less than 2 million in 1977. Also, in a twist of irony, it was a 2006 study by a group that opposes same-sex marriage (the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy) that claimed only about 15 percent of same-sex couples who live in places where they can obtain a marriage license choose to do so.

Also, there’s the reality that if Walker and his partner had wanted to get married, they had a six-month window of opportunity to do so in California—between May and November 2008, before voters passed Proposition 8.

Not surprisingly, then, Cooper attempts to persuade Judge Ware of Judge Walker’s impartiality by characterizing certain of his acts during the trial as having been “marked by a number of irregular and unprecedented rulings, both procedural and substantive, that give gravely disquieting force to the ‘appearance of partiality’ created by the belated disclosure of Chief Judge Walker’s long-term, committed relationship.”

Among those rulings, said Cooper, was Walker’s request that Yes on 8 disclose confidential, internal communications of the pro-Prop 8 groups; and his ruling that the trial proceedings be broadcast and web streamed. However, neither of those rulings could have a demonstrated impact on the case because both of those rulings were overturned by higher courts.

One thing that seems painfully clear from this latest round of side issues to the Prop 8 case is that, whatever Ware decides concerning the motion to vacate, that ruling, too, will almost certainly be decided by a higher court.

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Del. gov. to sign civil-unions bill

Delaware Gov. Jack Markell will sign Senate Bill 30—which will enable couples to enter into same-sex civil unions and enjoy the same rights, protections and obligations that exist for married spouses—Wed., May 11, according to a press release. Among those slated to be at the ceremony are Lisa Goodman, president of Equality Delaware and members of the state’s general assembly.

In addition, there will be video greetings from U.S. Sens. Christopher Coons, Congressmen John C. Carney and Wilmington Mayor James M. Baker.

Last month, House lawmakers voted 26-15 in favor of the measure. Rep. Melanie George, SB 30’s lead sponsor in the House, noted that women and African-Americans fought for years to address inequalities in society, such as the right to vote and end segregation.

Catholic Charities in standoff over adoption, care

BY CHUCK COLBERT

With a new civil-unions law soon taking effect, Catholic Charities says the organization might be forced out of foster care and adoption. Robert Gilligan, executive director of the Catholic Conference of Illinois, told reporters at a Statehouse news conference May 4, according to the Associated Press.

For some time the Catholic Conference—the official lobbying arm of the Catholic Church—has been pushing to amend a Senate bill, which has been the law for years, says you can't discriminate in the provisions of public accommodations to any protected class, including religion, marital status, and sexual orientation,” he explained. “[The Catholic organizations] are trying to use this [civil-unions issue] as a lever to get themselves exempted out from under the equal-treatment provisions of the existing state statute that has nothing to do with civil unions.

The new law, which takes effect June 1, extends all equivocal spousal benefits available at the state level to registered same-sex partners.

If Catholic Charities refuses to offer adoption or foster-care services to gay couples, the organization may be open to lawsuits. Catholic Charities has more than 3,000 children in their care, according to the most recent figures from the US Department of Health & Human Services.

Sen. David Koehler, D-Peoria, sponsored the measure to pass this year, with one abstention, in effect killing the amendment. For that reason the Catholic Conference wants to amend Senate Bill 1123 with language stating, “A child-welfare agency that is religiously based, owned, and operated by, or affiliated with a bona fide religious group may decline an adoption or foster-family application, including any related licensure and placement from a party to a civil union if acceptance of that application would constitute a violation of the organization's sincerely held religious beliefs.”

The amendment also stipulates that if an agency declines an application, it must refer prospective parents to the Department of Children and Family Services for regional licensed child welfare agencies.

The Associated Press reported that leaders of the two Catholic organizations emphasize they are not trying to prevent same-sex couples from becoming adoptive or foster parents. Instead, they want gay couples to work with other agencies.

Currently, there are nearly 20,000 children in Illinois in process for foster care or adoption, according to the most recent figures from the US Department of Health & Human Services.

If Catholic Charities in Illinois decides to close its adoption and foster-care programs, it will not be the first Catholic social service agency in the nation to do so. Catholic Charities in the Boston and the Washington, D.C., archdioceses ended their programs rather than comply with state and city non-discrimination laws. In both locations, however, other public agencies took over, providing adoption services and foster-care placements.


zation to place children in homes with same-sex couples.

“It’s an issue of conscience,” Gilligan said, according to the Associated Press.

“We simply cannot be the agency that processes an application for someone to be a foster parent if they are cohabitating in a civil union,” said Tricia Fox, director of Catholic Charities of Peoria, quoted in the Springfield State Journal-Record.

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Chicago Teachers Union to debut in Pride Parade

The Chicago Teachers Union’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Committee announced that “We Teach Pride Around the World” will be the theme of the union’s debut entry in Chicago’s annual Pride Parade on Sunday, June 26, according to a press release.

“Our GLBT Rights Committee is proud to lead the first-ever Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) float in our city’s annual celebration event,” said Dennis Bales, chairperson of CTU’s GLBT Rights Committee. He added, “We are even more proud of the fact that our union officers, leaders, scores of teachers and other school staffs will be marching with us. We invite GLBT teachers and our allies from the entire Chicagoland area to march with us.”

CTU President Karen Lewis said that the June 26 parade will be an historic event recognizing Chicago’s GLBT public school personnel: “When I took office last year I was shocked to discover that our union didn’t have an official float in Chicago’s parade. It was one of the first problems I was determined to rectify.”

A pre-parade party will be held make signs and mix and mingle before Pride Sunday. The location, date and time of the party will be announced at a later date.
‘Boystown’ producer: ‘The show will go on’

BY JOSEPH ERBENTRAUT

Shortly on the heels of the news of two East Lake View nightspots withdrawing from his proposed Jersey Shore-esque, LGBT-centric reality television show due at least in part to their new knowledge of his criminal record, Boystown producer and Chitown Entertainment, LLC, CEO David Schlessinger released a statement May 5 indicating that the show will proceed.

According to Schlessinger, three bars—Circuit, Spin and Hydrate—are “very supportive and remain eager to be part of the reality show production.” Conversations with prospective cast members, he claimed, have remained ongoing, adding that none have backed out from the project and plans for additional location shoots are in the works. Essentially, he added, “the future of the show is in no jeopardy whatsoever.”

As Windy City Times reported last week, Schlessinger pled guilty to and was convicted of three separate sexual-assault charges—one predatory, two aggravated—concerning the assaults of three underage boys between June 1995 and January 1997. According to court records, Schlessinger met the boys while cruising through Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood. He was sentenced to three years prison time in each case—sentences he served concurrently—and remains listed on the state’s sex offender registry.

During the weekend of April 15, following a few weeks of scouting, Schlessinger and Los Angeles-based casting directors hosted casting calls for his proposed reality series at two Halsted Street bars, Scarlet and Minibar. Management from both establishments have since backed out of the project.

Sean Kotwa, manager of Hydrate, one of the three bars Schlessinger described as “eager to be part” of his show, confirmed to Windy City Times late last week that his bar “can no longer support” the series. Management of the other two bars—Circuit and Spin—did not respond to the paper’s request for comment at press time, although Circuit owner Mike Macharello told the RedEye he has “chosen to just give the guy a chance and help him out” by working with him on the show.

Schlessinger, who did not comment on record for the original May 4 story, has hired publicist Glenn Selig, the Tampa, Fla.-based founder of the Publicity Agency. Selig, whose most well-known clients have included former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich and former suburban Chicago police officer Drew Peterson, specializes in “civic and community-involved” in reference to Schlessinger’s 2006 appointment by the National Republican Congressional Committee to the position of honorary chairman on the Business Advisory Council for the state of Illinois and a letter the 45-year-old received from the office of Mayor Richard M. Daley in 2004. The letter thanked Schlessinger for “reporting [his] City service needs” to the office, which appeared to result in the installation of a new street light.

“This could be a positive story. Instead, the media has decided to make it a negative one,” Selig told Windy City Times, adding that the show would bring new jobs to the community as well as national exposure to “what locals already know to be a good neighborhood.” All of the show participants, he noted, are at least 21 years old.

“Dave deserves to be treated fairly,” he continued. “Regurgitating a headline story from 15 years ago and implying that it somehow applies today is just plain wrong. And I will do everything I can to protect Dave’s reputation.”

In His May 6 statement, Schlessinger said he “[i]s and always [has] been truly sorry for the mistakes that I made 15 years ago. I have taken responsibility for these actions and their consequences. If anything, I have used them as a learning experience to help me grow to become a better person.”

“The reporting at this time in my life, as if it were some revelation, only serves to publicly humiliate me,” he added.

One Boystown resident, a 21-year-old gay man who wished to remain anonymous for this story, sees it differently and said he would boycott “any bar or club that does choose to do business with [Schlessinger].” The resident, who identified himself as a survivor of sexual abuse as a child, said he did “not want a man like him to represent the Chicago gay community in any way” and felt others like him would likely have a similar reaction.

“My gay friends and I look forward to any other responsible people in the Boystown community to stand up against this mockery and self-degradation,” he added.

HBHC art benefit at South Side center May 12

The Artists of EastBank will host a Re-claim Art benefit Thursday, May 12, 6-10 p.m., at the Bridgeport Art Center, 1200 W. 35th, where 30 artists will showcase work crafted from reclaimed goods purchased at one of the Howard Brown Health Center’s (HBHC’s) three Brown Elephant resale shops.

Proceeds will benefit HBHC. The exhibit will be available for viewing by appointment at 773-247-3000 through the month of May. Email roseepr@earthlink.net for more info.

Springfield Pride seeks volunteers

Springfield PRIDE and the Phoenix Center are seeking sponsors, vendors and volunteers for the city’s first annual Gay Pride festival on Harvey Milk Day, May 22.

The free festival will begin at noon with a Pooch Parade and will continue until 6 p.m. with a variety of entertainment, dancing, vendors, food and drink for all ages, including a children’s area. Scandals Nightclub will host the Pre-PRIDE Party Saturday, May 21, and Club Station House will host the After-PRIDE Party at 6 p.m. May 22.

Contact the Phoenix Center at 217-528-5263 or visit http://www.springfieldpride.org.
Legislative redistricting and the LGBT community

BY ERICA DEMAREST

With changes in Chicago's state assembly districts likely to come, some activists are concerned boundary shifts following the 2010 U.S. Census may affect the future of Illinois' three openly gay legislators as well as same-sex marriage equality in the state.

Statewide legislative redistricting takes place every 10 years, following the U.S. Census. Chicago’s population decreased by 7 percent—or about 200,000 residents—over the last decade, according to U.S. Census Bureau data, while the city's southern and western suburbs have grown considerably. That means when the state redraws its legislative districts in the coming months, the city of Chicago will likely hold fewer seats and its suburbs will gain representatives as districts shift.

"There’ve been dramatic population shifts," said Greg Harris, who represents Illinois' 13th district in the General Assembly. "There’s been some discussion about whether population really declined or whether that was really just an undercount. Be that as it may—without a doubt—boundaries of districts are going to shift."

Some of these shifts will likely occur in Chicago’s lakefront districts, which are home to Illinois’ three openly gay legislators—Harris, Deb Mell (40th) and Kelly Cassidy (14th). In Harris’ and Cassidy’s districts, for example, population has decreased by as much as 13 percent in some areas due to gentrification. The district boundaries will need to push westward and in Cassidy’s case northward to remain equitable with other districts in the state.

Some believe such a shift could create a re-election challenge for the incumbent Democrats, but longtime LGBT activist Rick Garcia does not think the legislators will have a problem.

"Maybe I’m too optimistic," he said, "but I think Deb, Greg and Kelly are going to be pretty safe. I don’t think the powers-that-be in Springfield want to lose three Democratic seats that are pretty solid."

Maps are still being drawn in the Illinois House, and preliminary versions are expected to be released later this month. A bipartisan House Redistricting Committee oversees the process, which must be completed by June 30 to avoid forming a special oversight commission.

Race is a key issue in determining how district lines will fall. Illinois law requires ethnic groups such as Asians, Latinos and African Americans to be placed together whenever possible, creating gerrymandered districts meant to address the needs of each ethnic community while consolidating political power. Detailed census data is used to determine where these communities live.

Since queer individuals were not measured in the 2010 census, and American Community Survey data suggests that LGBT citizens live in every county and district of the state, it is logistically impossible to create a predominantly LGBT district. "We can’t use the data that’s used by every other minority community," said Anthony Martinez, executive director of the Civil Rights Agenda (TCRA), a statewide advocacy group.

In the absence of an LGBT-specific district, TCRA has been working to ensure the queer community is visible during the redistricting process. The group attended three public hearings and distributed literature highlighting where same-sex couples live in Illinois. "We are everywhere," Martinez said. "We’re in every major urban center. We’re in every county in the state."

The goal, Martinez said, is to educate the House Redistricting Committee and illustrate what a viable voting bloc the LGBT community can be. As marriage equality legislation is brought to the House floor in coming years, it will be essential that all legislators—not just those who identify as gay—understand its significance, several activists said.

"It’s convenient to say ‘Call Greg Harris or Deb Mell,'" Harris said. "But we’ve got to get people used to working with their local legislators so they understand in their neighborhood, their town, there are lesbian and gay families. There are voices that need to be heard."

Still, many stress the importance of being represented by openly gay legislators. "If people work with a lesbian or sit next to a lesbian or are around gay and lesbian, bisexual and transgender people every single day,” Martinez said, "as a legislator, they’re no longer able to say ‘that community’ or put us in a box that’s over there somewhere... We need to maintain that and protect that. Those gains are hard won and hard fought.”

Garcia cited Deb Mell’s 2010 engagement announcement on the House floor as an example of the type of political progress that would only be possible through LGBT representatives. Mell told the House she had proposed to her partner Christin Baker, but was saddened that the couple would have to marry in Iowa. Republicans and Democrats alike stood with Mell and offered support.

"I do not think that if we didn’t have a lesbian woman stand and tell her story that there would’ve been the response that came,” Garcia said.

While none of Illinois’ three openly gay legislators sit on the redistricting committee, each votes on the final map before it can be enacted. "You don’t have clarity until you see the map,” said Kelly Cassidy, who represents the 14th district. "But I will be one of the people voting, and I’ll work towards a map that includes the progressive voice.”

Civil-union ceremony with 30 Illinois couples June 2

In celebration of the first day of civil-union ceremonies in Illinois, the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations’ Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues will host 30 ceremonies at 10 a.m. Thursday, June 2, in Wrigley Square at Millennium Park, at Randolph and Michigan.

The 30 couples were chosen through Lambda Legal’s Civil Union Tracker.

The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events—in partnership with the Chicago Office of Tourism and Culture, Lambda Legal, Equality Illinois and the Alliance of Illinois Judges—is sponsoring the event. Gov. Pat Quinn will attend, and Cook County Clerk David Orr; the Hon. Timothy C. Evans, chief judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County; and members of the Alliance of Illinois Judges will officiate the civil-union ceremonies.

“Civil unions are long overdue in Illinois. They provide important protections for couples and their families,” said Commissioner Dana V. Starks. "We are proud to celebrate this achievement.”

“This event highlights a small sample of the many families across Illinois that are provided protections, rights, and responsibilities under Illinois’ new law,” said Jim Bennett, regional director for the Midwest Regional Office of Lambda Legal. “Today, we congratulate the thirty couples and all those who wish to get a civil union, it’s a great day for committed same-sex couples and their children.”

“Whatever a terrific way for the City of Chicago to ring in civil unions. Having dozens of couples celebrate their love and commitment literally surrounded by the entire city is such a powerful symbol for how far we have come as a society,” said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois.

The Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Unions Act, first introduced by state Rep. Greg Harris in March 2007, and in the Illinois Senate in March by state Rep. David Koehler, passed by a 61-vote majority in the House and a 32-vote majority in the Senate. Its passage made Illinois the sixth state to allow civil unions, and includes provisions for hospital visitation and healthcare decision making.

All 30 couples participating June 2 will obtain a civil-union license from the Cook County Clerk’s office June 1, the first day they can obtain such licenses at any County Clerk’s office. By law, couples must wait until the day after they obtain their license to have their civil-union ceremonies performed.

For more information, call 312-744-7911.

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Activists distribute ‘coupons’ at Chick-fil-A protest

BY YASMIN NAIR

Pro-LGBT activists stood at the location of the new Chick-fil-A restaurant, 30 E. Chicago, May 6 to distribute coupons for Chick-fil-A’s newest sandwich, the “Bigot-Fil-A,” to passersby. The coupon reads that the fictional sandwich is “seasoned with homo/transphobia” and “comes topped with workplace inequality.” It then lists the restaurant chain’s contributions to a variety of anti-LGBT organizations.

As reported previously in Windy City Times, gay and lesbian activists, especially on college campuses, have been calling on the company to withdraw what they consider its support of anti-gay organizations like the National Organization for Marriage (NOM). They have also been critical of its exclusion of gay couples from the marriage retreat it sponsors via its Winshape Foundation.

Windy City Times spoke with Lindsey Dietzler, who is also a member of LGBT Change, before the actual store opened, Dietzler said that this is being done in order to coordinate with the other actions and that this will not be the only protest. He said that the ultimate goal was to “educate people on why they should not support Chick-fil-A if they are pro-LGBT.” He also said that the activists want Chick-fil-A to withdraw its support from anti-gay organizations and issue an apology to the community.

WCT contacted Chick-fil-A, but representatives did not get back in time for this story.

Activists distributed “coupons” like the one above at a Chick-fil-A protest May 6. Coupon design by Joyce Rice

Out at CHM exhibit to premiere May 21

Opening May 21, the exhibition “Out in Chicago” will explore Chicago’s LGBT communities against the backdrop of the forces that shaped Chicago’s development. Out in Chicago—which runs through March 26, 2012—is the latest in the Chicago History Museum’s ongoing series of exhibitions addressing Chicago’s diverse communities and neighborhoods.

The exhibition is organized into four thematic sections reflecting major chronological and historical issues in Chicago’s LGBT past. The first section looks at how Chicago attracted newcomers who resisted gender norms and found a place to live their lives differently. The second section documents how LGBT Chicagoans have made homes and formed different kinds of relationships and families, despite being subjected to harassment and discrimination.

The third section looks at the public life of LGBT communities and the city’s neighborhoods, nightlife and bars. The last area focuses on how the LGBT community became a political force in Chicago.

Chicago History Museum’s Jill Austin and Jennifer Brier, associate professor in gender and women’s studies within the history department at the University of Illinois at Chicago, curated the exhibit. The exhibition’s honorary chairs include actress Jane Lynch, columnist Dan Savage and chef Art Smith.

Chaz Bono speaks at HBHC panel

BY YASMIN NAIR

Howard Brown Health Center (HBHC) hosted a panel, “Opportunities for Holistic Trans Health: Inside and Outside the System,” May 6 that addressed the healthcare needs of the trans community.

In keeping with the topic of holistic health care, the panel’s speakers came from a range of fields and areas of expertise. The panel included Chaz Bono, who would also be the featured guest speaker at HBHC’s Lifeline Fundraiser later that evening. (A documentary about his transition, Becoming Chaz, was to have its television premiere on the Oprah Winfrey Network May 10, with his memoir being published the same day.)

The other panelists were activists and health-care professionals and advocates from the Chicago community. They included Lois Bates, trans health manager at HBHC; Linda Wesp, director of adolescent health at HBHC; Owen Daniel-McCarter, founding collective member of the Transformative Justice Law Project (TJLP); Logan Grimes, founding member of Gender Identity Foundation for Transgender Men (GIFT); Matty Rosado, lead facilitator at Broadway Youth Center (BYC); and C. Angel Torres, movement-building leader at the Young Women’s Empowerment Project (YWEP) and Shira Hassan, co-director of YWEP.

HBHC CEO Jamal Edwards addressed the packed room, numbering approximately 40 individuals, with introductory remarks emphasizing the importance of the Center to the community. He said, “What we do at Howard Brown is unique because people [come to Howard Brown] when they need quality, culturally competent and compassionate healthcare.” Calling HBHC “a place of refuge and a place of strength,” he praised it for its “innovative” THInC (Trans Hormone Informed Consent) protocol, which allows clients seeking hormone therapy to access it by stating their own choices about their transitions. This differs from the standard procedure at most clinics, where transgender clients are required to demonstrate that they are suitable candidates for therapy.

BYC manager Lara Brooks moderated the panel. Her opening remarks set the tone for the discussion when she spoke of the need to “link healthcare to institutional violence” and praised what she described as a “dream team” of a panel as “activists bravely resisting institutional violence.” Brooks began by asking what the problems might be with access to healthcare for the trans community, and asked Bono to respond first. He said “trans guys who don’t know how to access proper treatment” and recommended that people “start with your local gay and lesbian center and do research.”

Rosado spoke of the problems with not having more “open-minded medical providers” and the fact that hormone therapies tend to be expensive, as well as issues with people assuming they knew what pronouns to use and the lack of gender neutral bathrooms. Grimes expanded the point by adding that medical professionals were not sufficiently trained in working with the transgender community, and emphasized that the issues needed to be taken to the mainstream and larger institutions.

On a question of internalized transphobia, Bono spoke of his own experience, recounting that “For me, the internalized transphobia was fear and shame” and that he had once thought that his life would be “absolutely ruined” if he transitioned.

A discussion about what good trans health would look like prompted responses from Wesp, who stressed the need for medical providers to, effectively, unlearn much of what they might have been taught in medical schools. According to her, medical providers are “trained to make quick judgments” and diagnoses “and to put people in boxes,” and that can mean often ignoring the needs, wishes, and gender self-identification of their trans clients. Bates spoke of the need for providers to remember that health issues did not operate in isolation and that other matters, like sexual issues or partner issues, were also key to a holistic health program.

Daniel-McCarter returned to the issue of institutional violence raised at the beginning when asked about one of TJLP’s core values (group was asked to discuss its own), gender self-determination. He pointed out that trans people are “scrutinized more for their gender expression” and further stigmatized when they are also poor, people of color and/or HIV-positive. This also means that they have limited access to healthcare and other basic needs while at the same time facing harassment, violence, police violence and high rates of incarceration. He also pointed to the mainstream community’s tendency to see incarcerated trans people as a “stain on the movement.”

YWEP’s Hassan and Torres spoke about reproductive justice, a core value for the group, defining it as “the right to make decisions about your body and you at all times,” and their emphasis on harm reduction, which means aiding their constituents in safer practices in whatever they were engaged in (such as sex trade or the use of street hormones), instead of lecturing them to stop.

CHICAGO, IL – Content for Windy City Times by YASMIN NAIR

NEW AIDS CAMPAIGN ‘CHANGES THE STORY’

To mark the 30th anniversary of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) has launched a new public-awareness campaign to refocus attention on the disease. The Chicago-based design agency Substance (http://www.isubstance.com) developed the ad campaign called “Change the Story.”

“Too many people mistakenly believe that HIV has gone away, that it no longer touches close home,” said AFC president/CEO David Ernesto Munar. “But the truth is that every nine and a half minutes someone in America is infected with HIV. That’s a story we have to change.”

The ads look like a daily newspaper, mimicking the format of the sports, arts and business sections. But instead of baseball scores, theater reviews or market reports, the headlines feature news about HIV/AIDS in Chicago followed by the call to action, “Become a force for change.”

To view all three versions of the ads, visit http://www.aidschicago.org/changethestory.

HIV+ PEOPLE NEEDED FOR VACCINE STUDY

Rush University Medical Center is seeking HIV-positive individuals for a study to learn if the zoster vaccine (for shingles) is safe, effective and tolerable.

Subjects must have an undetectable viral load; be on two or three HIV meds from different classes; be at least 18 years old; and must have CD4 between 200 and 349. Subjects must not have ever had varicella/zoster vaccines or varicella/zoster in the past year.

See https://act network.org/ trials_open_enrollment or email Craig_Johnson@rush.edu.

FROM LEFT: Linda Wesp, Chaz Bono, Lois Bates and Lara Brooks at Howard Brown Health Center’s transgender health conference. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald (MysticImagesPhotography.com)
Howard Brown holds ‘Lifeline Celebration’

Howard Brown Health Center (HBHC) held its “Lifeline Celebration” fundraiser May 6 at the Palmer House Hilton’s Red Lacquer Room, attended by about 250 people. The event, billed as a “No Black Tie Allowed” event, was designed to spotlight the organization’s fundraising efforts, begun in November 2010. At that time, HBHC asked for $500,000 in 50 days, saying it needed that amount in order to keep its doors open.

The event was a two-tiered one, with a VIP champagne reception and mixer with special guest Chaz Bono, followed by a main event (where Bono was also present). At both, HBHC CEO Jamal Edwards spoke to attendees, giving his updates on funding and accomplishments. He began by noting that HBHC had “been through a lot” over the last many months, and spoke of the center’s ongoing significance within the LGBTQ community as a place where they could get “compassionate, culturally competent care,” adding that “no one cares for the LGBTQ community like Howard does. No one has and no one ever will.”

With regard to fundraising so far, Edwards said that HBHC had raised $800,000 as of that day, with a goal of $1 million by the end of the fiscal year. He said that “Howard Brown must exist to serve ... all the people who historically have nowhere else to go. We are the LGBTQA community’s lifeline.”

Bono’s address at the main event was heralded by a clip from the documentary Becoming Chaz, slated to premiere on the Oprah Winfrey Network May 10. Bono spoke of his visit to HBHC earlier in the day, when he had also participated in a panel discussion about trans healthcare needs, and praised it for its THInC protocol, an informed consent model for accessing hormones. Noting that there were not many trans people in the room, he said, “For anybody who is not trans: It’s a really difficult thing to be in our society. We are 30-40 years behind the gay community.” Bono, the only child of legendary entertainers Sonny and Cher, has lived out his transition in the public eye and addressed that aspect of his personal history, saying that for years, “I mistakenly thought I was a lesbian attracted to women, but I always had a nagging feeling that I didn’t fit, that somehow I was a bad lesbian.”

According to Bono, his relative access to resources did not make the transition process any easier, saying that it was “very difficult to get the right medical care” and that it took two or three times before he finally found doctors with the cultural competency to work with him. For that reason, he said, “what Howard Brown is doing for this part of the community is amazing. It’s a gift and you should be proud that this is part of the city.”

Edwards, before making a final fundraising appeal, also made a point of thanking a list of “key” HBHC staff, including Christina Santiago, Lesbian Community Care Project manager of programming; Lara Brooks, Broadway Youth Center manager; Joe Hollondoner, vice president and chief program officer; and transgender health advocate Lois Bates, among others. Asking the audience for funds, he pointed out that the pre-event tickets this year were only $100 ($125 at the door; VIP reception tickets were $250), whereas last year’s event had been $300. Some members of the community had objected to what they considered a high price of admission to an event billed as “for the community, by the community.”

Attendees appeared to be happy with the event and Edwards’ reports. Jasmine (she would not give her last name) and Bethany Johnson, both of the Chicago Outfit Roller Derby League and sporting their team jackets, said they were there as invitees; they had chosen HBHC as their charity of the season. They said they were “glad HBHC got over the hump because it’s vital to the city’s GLBT community.” Photos by Kat Fitzgerald (MysticImagesPhotography.com); many more at http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.
Partners Keith Ellis and Todd Gagliano had been out with friends on a November night that dramatically changed their lives. Ellis was tired, so he went back to their Edgewater home. Gagliano stayed out with friends—and never made it home that night.

Gagliano was walking home when a car hit him at the intersection of Clark and Ridge. Ellis learned about Gagliano’s injury at about 6:30 a.m. on Nov. 22, 2010, getting the nightsome phone call that has drastically changed their lives—and impacted hundreds across the country, especially within Chicago’s LGBT community.

The accident occurred near a fire station, and they responded and were on the scene immediately. Gagliano never lost oxygen to his brain and was breathing on his own, but now has admitted, “I don’t even remember where we were [that night].”

Gagliano was immediately taken to the intensive care unit at St. Francis Hospital. He suffered a skull fracture and lacerations to the left side of his brain. He had brain swelling, a bruised lung and bruises on his legs.

Doctors first told Ellis that Gagliano’s bloody condition “is as bad as it can be without dying.”

“You never think it’s going to be you, or someone you know and love,” Ellis said in late April, “You never think it’s going to be you, or someone you know and love.”

Ellis described Gagliano’s first night back together.

“Gagliano was reading the signs on the side of the road, telling Ellis where things were. They stopped at Target, needing a few household items, and then Gagliano chose his first meal: McDonald’s, even though they hadn’t had McDonald’s in three years.

Gagliano started breathing heavily that first night home and Ellis started flipping over, to put it mildly. He called the nurses immediately and asked Gagliano if he needed to be taken to the hospital. Gagliano responded, “No; I’ll tell you if I need to go.”

“It was a good evening, but scary,” Ellis added.

Immediately after the accident, Ellis started a Caring Bridge website to update Gagliano’s condition. The site has since had close to 30,000 hits.

“Our friends have been amazing. They’ve all been there. Everyone has been amazing,” said Ellis, who noted that Gagliano’s dodgeball and kickball teammates have repeatedly visited and donated edibles and more.

Gagliano knows he is “lucky” to be alive, and eternally grateful. Especially to Ellis.

“To my family and friends: Thank you for all that you have done and the time you have devoted to me,” said Gagliano, who does not remember any of his hospital stay. “In fact, when recently shown a photo of himself while at Holy Family, Gagliano wanted to know, ‘Who the heck is that?”

“We focus that God, and whatever higher power you believe [in,] has given us the strength and ability to deal with this,” Ellis said.

Gagliano helps nightly with their dinner preparation. He also helps with laundry and other chores.

“I think about how much of a miracle it is that I can stand and walk and that my brain is working,” Gagliano said. Ellis and Gagliano had their first post-accident date night in mid-April, going to the Lookingglass Theatre. Hours after meeting with this reporter for the interview, they were planning to go to a movie.

“When I saw Todd in the ICU, I thought I was going to faint,” said Craig Kimberly of Chicago, a longtime friend of the two. “To see him today, it’s amazing. It’s a miracle, nothing short of that. And continuing.”

Chuck Gagliano, Todd’s brother, came to Chicago from his home in Maryland in mid-April—and hadn’t been around his sibling since February. Todd wasn’t walking, talking or eating last February—and was sipping coffee at Starbucks during this interview.

The improvements Todd has made are “absolutely amazing—a blessing,” Chuck said. “All of the little things that we took for granted before the accident are now things that we no longer take for granted. We now really appreciate them.” Chuck and his partner, Matt Chapman, have been together for almost 11 years.

The Gaglianos’ parents learned Todd was gay last November, while their son was fighting for his life. They laugh about that now. Joann and Chuck Gagliano Sr., had visited Chicago from their Florida home in May 2010, when Todd received his master’s degree. Ellis was introduced at the time as just a friend.

The night of the accident, Ellis had to tell them that their son not only had a life-threatening accident, but that they are in a relationship for seven years, and he had power of attorney.

Two days after the accident, Chuck Sr., said to Ellis, “I don’t understand, but as long as my son is happy, we’re O.K. [with anyone’s sexual orientation.]”

Everyone gets along perfectly nowadays, Ellis and Chuck Gagliano said. “His parents have been amazing,” Ellis said.

The apple, Todd, doesn’t fall far from the tree. “It would be much easier for me to say, ‘I don’t care,’ and just give up. But I don’t say those words,” Gagliano said.

Gay man on comeback trail after accident

BY ROSS FORMAN

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Aaron M. Kubey is coming home this summer. The 34-year-old now lives in West Haven, Conn., and is slated to return to Chicago in July. He is the executive director/president for the National Theatre of the Deaf, a post he is resigning, effective June 30, to pursue new endeavors.

“I first became involved with the National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD) in 1995, when I attended their summer program, The Professional Theatre School, and then was offered to work with their Los Angeles-based Little Theatre of the Deaf (LTD) that fall. He worked with LTD until 1997. After graduation from the Theatre School at DePaul in 2006, Kubey moved to New York City to do a show and he ended up running the New York Deaf Theatre. Then, in November 2007, Kubey moved to Connecticut to become the first deaf executive director/president of NTD.

“Over the past three and a half years, I’ve expanded the company, have re-established our international connections and revitalized the organization,” Kubey said. “I have, however, made a personal decision to resign and move back to Chicago in July. I am looking forward to coming back home and writing the next chapter of my life.”

With fond memories of his last 20 years, including the 1994 performance in the Netherlands and Belgium, and in 2010 to direct and teach in Finland. His most memorable theatre moment was performing Equus at Deaf West Theatre in 1996.

“I am leaving the organization,” Kubey said. “Other than coming back home to Chicago, I don’t know what will happen next. I hope to teach, consult, direct, and be an inspirational speaker of sorts.

“Deaf theatre is a very unique style of theatre that uses American Sign Language and turns it into a very expressive art form. I truly believe that people get more meaning and emotions from deaf theatre.”
Rahm Emanuel and CDPH commissioner address AIDS in Chicago

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Among the myriad topics Mayor-elect Rahm Emanuel must confront during his term, which starts May 16, are health issues concerning the LGBT community—including AIDS.

In a conversation with Windy City Times, Emanuel and Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) Commissioner Bechara Choucair talked about issues such as funding, the Office of LGBT Health and the national AIDS conference that is coming to Chicago in November. However, the talk began with a major announcement involving Emanuel and Choucair.

Windy City Times: I understand that you have an announcement to make regarding the Chicago Department of Public Health.

Rahm Emanuel: Yes. Dr. Choucair is going to remain commissioner. We had a meeting of the minds about what I think the office can do, what I think he can do to carry out the changes we need to make sure we’re doing what we need to do as it relates to public health.

WCT: Can you give me an example of the direction you’d like the office to go in?

Bechara Choucair: Andrew, I’m very excited that the mayor has asked me to continue to serve in my capacity as commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health, and I look forward to working with the dynamic and diverse group of leaders he’s putting together.

As far as direction, I’ve been in the office for a little bit over a year. We laid the groundwork and I’m really excited about taking it to the next level.

There are three items I want to highlight. First, we need to better collaborate with [Cook County] to insure services are available to residents in our city. The second piece is that when you consider a city of 2.7 million residents or so, we have to have our priorities on the right type of host.

The third piece I want to highlight is that we have to continue to be innovative in our approaches and, now more than ever, we have to continue to engage our community partners in a meaningful way.

RE: First of all, I think the doctor is uniquely qualified but he’s put together a reform agenda and I don’t think he’s had an opportunity to see the full budget. Do you know how big the shortfall is?

WCT: I was looking at an AIDS Foundation of Chicago survey you completed a while back. You supported a lot of different issues, but as I was going through I was thinking there is a difference between wanting to support something and being able to.

RE: Let me say it again: I share the aspiration, and I don’t have the full budget. Do you know how big the shortfall is?

WCT: Obviously, it’s significant.

Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) Commissioner Bechara Choucair.

RE: I know that, too. I have to get my hands around that. Making pledges I can’t keep is kinda worse than telling people the truth. So I like to share but the question is, “Can I achieve it another way?” If the only way I can do is the office, what are the choices I’m willing to make and the sacrifices I’m ready to make throughout the budget or in the department? As [President John F.] Kennedy said, “To govern is to choose.” At this point, I can say with all honesty that it’s an aspiration and a desire. If I decide to keep [the Office of LGBT Health], I gotta make some other calls where I’m going to make cuts.

I want the public to know [after I make decisions] that these are the trade-offs—that’s why I’m not ready to make a pledge.

WCT: As of March of this year, more than 36,000 Chicagoans have been reported to CDPH with HIV since the early ’80s. Of that amount, 39 percent have died. Did you think you’d be at this point—where there is no cure three decades after the virus was discovered?

BC: I think, Andrew, over the last 30 years much has been accomplished, whether on a local, national or global level. We have seen significant improvement in prevention strategies, treatment and overall policy. We’ve made a lot of progress. Are we where we need to be? We still have a lot of work ahead of us.

RE: I want to echo that even further. You can look at the fair [perspective], “Thirty years later we don’t have a cure.” On the other hand, I look, I lost a cousin to AIDS. The notion between time of contraction and death is [danger]; we have extended people’s lives. But it’s just extending their lives; individuals with AIDS can function in a normal sense. That wasn’t true for my cousin.

So, no we don’t have a cure; that’s the journey we’re still on. But when you look where we were when Ronald Reagan wouldn’t recognize it as a president to extending people’s lives. When I think of my cousin, Gary, we are light-years ahead of that on the preventive side as well. You asked the right question. I think, as any of us who’s in the midst of public policy and has been exposed to the public-policy choices [regarding] medical care and preventive care, we aren’t where we were in 1984, ’85, ’86—or, for that matter, I remember the battle for Ryan White funding in 1993. To know where you’re going, you have to know how far you’ve traveled.

Mayor-elect Rahm Emanuel. Photo by Jerry Nunn

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I want the public to know [after I make decisions] that these are the trade-offs—that’s why I’m not ready to make a pledge.

WCT: The country’s largest gathering on AIDS—the U.S. Conference on AIDS—will be in Chicago this November. That made me wonder: How is Chicago handling the HIV/AIDS crisis in comparison to other large cities around the nation?

RE: The good news is that we have until November. [Laughs] First of all, I think it’s appropriate that Chicago is hosting that conference. We have a lot to talk about as a city—not just about approaching AIDS as an illness, but as a community. I’ll be mayor at that time, and I look forward to hosting that conference and talking about what we’ve done and what we can learn to do better—and I think everybody will bring those experiences from their respective cities.

WCT: How will the department reach out to certain “at-risk” communities—minorities (especially African Americans), the transgender community and men who have sex with men (MSM)—in light of possible reduction of funding?

BC: It’s really important to note that we put the majority of our funding out to community-based organizations that do a lot of services for our residents. Actually, 64 percent of our funding goes out to a competitive bidding process for community-based organizations. You know that these three populations that you mentioned—the MSM population has been our highest priority for years. We also have a lot of interest in the transgender community and, obviously, the majority of our HIV funding goes to racial and ethnic minority populations. So we have identified and flagged these priority communities to make sure our funding is targeted appropriately.

Also, keep in mind that we do that in partnership with the community. Two bodies that actually help drive our strategy are the HIV Prevention Planning Group and the Chicago Area Services Planning Council. Walter Mal and Martine Gonzalez from the HPPG as well as Jeff Wiloughby and Peter McCoy from the Chicago Area Services Planning Council really help drive the way we invest our resources.

WCT: Is there anything either one of you wanted to add?

RE: I’m just looking forward to giving the doctor his assignment to get ready [for the AIDS conference in] November. Thank you for that, Andrew. I have to be honest: I didn’t know about that, and I want to make sure the city is the right type of host.
War Diaries: An Interview with Ernest Hardy

BY YASMIN NAIR

Ernest Hardy’s influential and outspoken body of work includes fiction, poetry, film and music criticism that has appeared in The New York Times, the Village Voice, Voice Weekly, Millenium Film Journal, Rolling Stone, the Source, Vibe, and the LA Times.

A Sundance Fellow who currently resides in Los Angeles, Hardy is a contributor to the reference books 1,001 Movies You Must See Before You Die; Classic Material: The Hip-Hop Album Guide; and Hip-Hop: A Cultural Odyssey. His 2006 volume of criticism, Blood Beats Vol. 1, which he has described as “melanin-based, pro-people-of-color, pro-queer, and unabashedly-leftist,” won the PEN/Beyond Margins award in 2007.

Most recently, Hardy co-edited, with Tisa Bryant, the Lambda Literary Award-winning anthology War Diaries, about the experiences of LGBTQs within the African diaspora, with an emphasis on their relationship to HIV. Hardy is working on Blood Beats Vol. 2, a volume of cultural criticism. He will be in town May 12 for a talk at DePaul, and we interviewed him via email.

Yasmin Nair: Could you tell us what impelled the creation of War Diaries—what historical moments, what kinds of narratives did you think needed to be examined?

Ernest Hardy: War Diaries came about simply because I sent my friend/Pato Hebert [senior education associate with the Global Forum on MSM & HIV and at AIDS Project Los Angeles] reached out to Tisa Bryant and me and asked if we’d be interested in co-editing a literary anthology for APLA. APLA publishes several literary lines (available free of charge) that target queer youth, the Latino community, and so on—communities that historically have fallen through the cracks or been poorly served in terms of HIV and AIDS outreach services. He told us they were putting together their latest anthology targeting the African American male segment of the LGBT community, with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS in that community, and asked if we’d be interested in co-editing.

Tisa and I both immediately said yes. We knew we wanted the collection to have a wide-tense focus because the issue of HIV/AIDS and the various struggles around them exist in a layered context of racism, classism, cultural redefinition within the LGBT community, homophobia in all its permutations (large-scale societal; within the African American community; internalized, etc.), as well as the huge issue of violence directed toward LGBT folk in horrifying ways and proportions. Issues of depression, suicide and bullying are major components at work in the community. (The volume is dedicated to the memories of Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover and Jareem Herrera, two pre-teen boys of color who committed suicide within less than two weeks of each other in 2009, well before the recent wave of queer teen suicides.)

We wanted a collection that encompassed all of that, on a very large scale. But we also wanted work that was playful, erotic, multi-generational, international in scope, written by lesbians as well as gay/SGL men, and representatives of our lives. We wanted to create a time capsule of now, something that captured both the insane tend and the concrete complexities of the time in which we live. But we also wanted balance. What we didn’t want was to create a world

Ernest Hardy.

in gloom, doom and despair because that’s very one-note and nowhere near the width and breadth of the realities of Black LGBT folk—neither historically nor in contemporary terms.

YN: In your introduction with Tisa Bryant, you begin with the words, “We’re in a war,” and go on to expand on that. Did the metaphor/idea of war come to you at the start? Is that what shaped the anthology? Or is it something that emerged as you gathered the materials?

EH: I wish I could give you a some dazzling recap of long, theory-driven conversations between us to arrive at the title but the truth is simply that when Deborah Richards’ amazing poem “War Diaries (loose leaf)” arrived, I turned to Tisa and said, “That’s our title.” It just fit the work that was already trickling in to us. And then in the cosmic way things like this happen, the rest of the work we received from that point on just sort of naturally fit the title and the narrative that was emerging unforeseen.

YN: In M.R Daniel’s prose piece “Why I Needed You: Max Robinson (1939-1988),” she talks about the complex legacy of Max Robinson, expressed most vividly in the words, “He could simultaneously inhabit the postures of pretty-man and bad-ass motherfucker.” In “In the life on the down low: where’s a black gay man to go?” Keith M. Harris writes about AIDS in the Black LGBTQ community while also keeping alive that eroticism and laughter, as you point out in your introduction?

EH: We just wanted good work. It’s as simple as that. We wanted quality work—both the visual and the written fare. As I said before, we were after a massive canvas of issues, politics and aesthetics to be represented. And we were thrilled and pleasantly surprised to get poems, short stories, cultural reportage in the form of essays, great photographic work, and experimental writing that anchored the collection in history. That looked forward, and that did such a wonderful job of capturing the complex emotional, psychological and material worlds of Black queer/SGL men around the world today.

YN: Clearly, AIDS manifests itself differently—socially, economically, politically—in the Black queer community than it does in the white queer community, where it is one more chronic disease. How does that manifest itself in the care accessed by Black queers and in the literary representations? Is there a difference?

EH: That’s actually a very complex, layered question. To answer the first half of it with any degree of intelligence—before even getting to the question of literary representations—I would have to be much more versed in up-to-date, hard factual data about healthcare services/funding/resources in various arenas, about the real location of and discrepancies in those resources, and so on. Even to the casual eye there are obvious fucked up, fatal differences between the healthcare of African Americans and white Americans—though healthcare in this country is abysmal for most people regardless of race. But historically it’s always been true that African Americans are horribly served by the medical community/industry (see both Harriet A. Washington’s Medical Apostasy and Rebecca Skloot’s The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lack), and when you factor in institutional (and other) homophobia as well as racism within the queer community, it’s a recipe for disaster for the Black queer/SGL community.

I think our literature has long reflected the fallout of that reality, explicitly and implicitly—from the seminal work of people like Essex Hemphill and Assotto Saint up through and including many of the poets in War Diaries. But in my opinion this question, as posed, really needs to be answered with and centered on serious data from studies across disciplines. That’s not my field of expertise and I’m uncomfortable speculating. But as I said before, APLA does this kind of literary outreach work because the rates of infection amongst and the levels of treatment for people of color are depressingly and dangerously low—socially, economically, politically—in the Black queer community. So that’s the beauty of this kind of politically charged work. Its meanings are not static. They will continue to shift and hopefully deepen as the world around it changes.

YN: Do you think those promises, if we may call them such, made in those missives, have been kept? Or can they be kept? Should we even think about them as promises?

EH: The president is a masterful politician.

YN: And we’ll leave it at that. Several of the works are strongly erotic, and record moments of desire and laughter even as they nod to the complications of character. Thus, how do we write about AIDS in the Black LGBT community while also keeping alive that eroticism and laughter, as you point out in your introduction?

EH: We do just it. Don’t over think it. Don’t turn it into an academic exercise. At the risk of sounding corny, if you as a poet or novelist are truly in touch with the human spirit, with human nature, it will come to you. You may still suffer writer’s block and still have to wrestle with whatever you wrestle with simply to be a good writer, but because laughter and eroticism exist in real life, even in the face of the most dire circumstances, they will come and be present in the work of the writers who are open to them. Just know that both the laughter and eroticism may be dark as fuck. And that’s cool too.

Ernest Hardy will give a talk entitled “Don’t Believe the hype: Refocusing the Lens on Hip-Hop, Masculinity and Queer of Color Identities.” The event takes place at DePaul Student Center, 2250 N Sheffield Ave, Room 325, May 12, 3-5 p.m. War Diaries is available for free download at: apla.org/publications/publications.html

Hardy’s website is ernesthardy.com.

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Interview: Cleve Jones

BY SARAH TOCE

Cleve Jones, the man who once stood beside Harvey Milk and later created the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt, is filled with history. It spills out of his pores in a consistent stream of nourishing calm and unrivaled assurance. It is quite clear... his heart, his experiences, his legacy, and his unbridled heroism.

In 2011, 30 years following the start of the epidemic that took out the life of my grandmother and great-grandmother and it seemed to me to be one of those older people who were gone from the equation. I believe in traditional family values. I believe in the institution of marriage. I believe in the traditional family. We had extension ladders in the Capitol City of San Francisco, Jones remembers where he's been and where the LGBT movement is going.

Windy City Times: Many people might not know that you conceived the idea of the AIDS Memorial Quilt while attending Harvey Milk's candlelight vigil service in San Francisco following his assassination. How exactly did the two pieces of your life fit together?

Cleve Jones: Well, Harvey Milk and George Moscone were assassinated on Nov. 27, 1978 and every year since on Nov. 27, folks have gathered and made candles to remember Harvey and George. In 1985, I was one of the organizers of the commemoration and in the days leading up to Nov. 27, a headline appeared in the San Francisco daily newspaper—"The Chronicle"—that 1,000 people had already died of AIDS in our neighborhood. That number would soon grow to about 1,500 per year in our little tiny neighborhood, which was only six or eight blocks. So, I was looking at that figure and... can I ask how old you are?

WCT: I am 27.

CJ: Yes, yeah your generation just has no clue at how horrible it was. So, I was just devastated by that figure. I remember standing at the corner of Castro and Market and looking at that headline and understanding that of those thousands who had gone... every one of them lived and died within just a few blocks of where I was standing and there was no evidence. The neighborhood looks much the same today—beautiful restored Victorians, cafes, restaurants, etc. There is just really no hint of the incredible loss that we've experienced here. So, that added to what was already an ongoing theme of discussion for me and my friends. Our inability to communicate to the rest of the world what was really happening was very present.

So we marched as we always do, but in the hours before the march on Nov. 27, 1985, my friends and I had stacks of poster board and magic markers and I had Harvey's old bullhorn and I talked to the crowd. I asked them to write down the names of their friends and lovers who had died of this disease—AIDS. At first people were ashamed to do it.

WCT: What were those next moments like?

CJ: The stigma associated with the disease was so overwhelming that people were just putting up stiff resistance. So, I went out into the streets and talked to the people and asked them to write down the names of their friends and lovers who had died of this disease. At first people were ashamed to do it.

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CJ: Yes, I started it with Dr. Marcus Conant and Bob Ross and others. I didn't think I was going to be in those terms. I think at the beginning we believed we could stop it. I still think we could've stopped it if everyone had responded but they didn't. I'm very glad I didn't know at the time how long it would go on for. I am not sure I would've had the strength to continue with it if I had known that the following generations would have to suffer so terribly.

Back then, you didn't even have the luxury of thinking it all through. It was just like living in a war. When you are... our lifetime becomes very much a day-to-day and even an hour-by-hour experience. In those days I don't think any of us, certainly anyone I knew, thought or planned more than a couple weeks ahead. There was no way of knowing how long we would live or what would happen to our circles of friends. It was so overwhelming and all-consuming and it was really fought hour-by-hour and day-to-day.

WCT: Not to compare the two circumstances because they are obviously extremely different in nature, but we are in the middle of a civil-rights movement in the LGBT community where laws are changing and legislation is being repealed depending on the state and day-at-hand. Sometimes it feels like we're living hour-by-hour with DOMA, DADT, etc. It can be very overwhelming. What advice do you have for this new generation of gay advocates?

CJ: I think it's very important that young people in general, but especially queer youth, know the history of our community and our movement. One can acquire that knowledge relatively easily through many sources. There is a wonderful new documentary that just came out called "Cridad." Here about my neighborhood, the Castro, and our experience with the epidemic.

I think it's very important for your generation to understand that we don't know. You need to start from there—you don't know. I'm speaking generally, it's quite possible that you yourself know... but as a generation, you have been denied this information, history and knowledge that just came out of the civil rights movement. Here that information was not taught to you in schools. Also, the transmission of information among generation of gay men to the next was so profoundly disrupted by the epidemic. So, what your generation needs to know is that half of the men of my generation were killed and the government did nothing. There was a time when you were cut out of the analysis. I think it's very important that you know with the knowledge that I had the virus for a full 10 years before treatment was available. So, for a full decade I wondered how many days I had left. It affected everything about our movement and our politics.

WCT: The lesbian population really had a huge role during the early epidemic years. This is something not really spoken about in our history or the narratives about the epidemic. Can you tell us about their importance during this time?

CJ: People think of AIDS as the "gay men's disease," but there is very little information and discussion out there about the role lesbians played in fighting the epidemic. When I came out, women were separate from men. There was a very strong movement at the time called lesbian separatism and there was great hostility and very little interaction between men and women. The epidemic changed that forever. Women emerged first in the more traditional roles of caregiver but then very quickly took over the leadership of one organization after another as men got sick and died. Lesbian women in particular played a very powerful role in fighting back against the epidemic. It changed us in every way.

WCT: AIDS outed many people in the early days. Can you explain more about this for us?

CJ: I think it's important for people to understand that this movement was very, very young and it was very radical. We were a liberation movement and we used that vocabulary. Most of us had never been involved in any type of political movement during the Vietnam War or the early

The cover of Jones’ NAMES Project book.

Cleve Jones in 1978. Photo copyright Jerry Pritsker.
I make a joke where I say, "I joined the gay liberation front in 1972 and if you told me that in the year 2011, I'd be campaigning for the right to join the army and get married, I'd start dating women!" That was not what we were about. We were a part of a broader radical movement that we hoped would dismantle the patriarchy and end war forever. But, I think this focus on marriage equality has its roots in the pandemic. There were all of these couples who fought so hard and lost their fight, but after 20 years of grief, heartbreak, loss, and solidarity just said, "What do you mean this isn't a marriage? Fuck you. Fuck you. This is a marriage and if you think otherwise, you are wrong and I am going to fight you. I want the benefits and I want the acknowledgment. This is a marriage. This is a family. This is a community." I would suggest that the whole notion of a queer community was really a theory until AIDS. With AIDS it showed us just how strong we were.

Cleve Jones travels extensively sharing his experiences, including the AIDS epidemic, NAMES Quilt, and other LGBT topics affecting our community past, present and future. Jones authored STitching a Revolution in 2001 and served as historical consultant on Gus Van Sant's feature film, Milk, profiling the life and untimely death of LGBT political activist Harvey Milk. He co-founded the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and currently lives in Palm Springs, Calif. I'll tell you another thing that started with the epidemic—the fight for marriage equality. Now, with partner Ben Ziola, is a visual maze of his NAMES Project archive, and it conveys his passion and dedication to the quilt. His walls are filled with framed photos that tell the story of the NAMES Project and its displays in Washington, D.C. and Chicago. Barnes' own story includes losing his then-partner to AIDS, sharing that hurt, finding his closure, and how his camera snapped him into the middle of a touching national movement.

WCT: How did you get involved with the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt display in Washington, D.C. in 1989. Photos by Bruce Barnes

BB: The quilt has its own karma that sort of chart the path of the people who were affected by the AIDS epidemic. It was a virtual warehouse of all the people who were affected. I learned so much from people who were affected by AIDS in any way. I learned that AIDS is an illness that can affect anyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or lifestyle. It is important to remember that AIDS is not exclusive to certain groups.

WCT: How was it working on such a deep, emotional project?

BB: The project itself was very emotional. Once I started seeing the panels open, I knew that I would have to either become completely emotionally involved or not be able to do anything because of the impact. There's a lot of love. There is a lot of personal, heart-felt work that goes into every single one of the panels. So, I separated myself. I just sort of walked around and watched. I became aтрудник. The emotions took over, and I just kind of worked with the mechanics of it. I did take breaks throughout the day. I had to because it was just so overwhelming. If I had not, I wouldn't have been able to last.

WCT: It seems as though the quilt itself was an "activist" in the early AIDS movement.

BB: The quilt has its own karma that sort of goes with it. It's the spirit of everyone who has ever done a panel or has a panel. They are all participating in the protection of the quilt all the time. It really is a unique item in America. It keeps memories warm and memories fresh.

WCT: Did you contribute a quilt?

BB: Yes, I created a quilt for my then-partner, Mel, that was with me in D.C. in 1992. A friend of mine who does embroidery embroidered the popular dance lyric onto the panel. "If you get there before I do, don't give up on me. I'll be there when your chores are through. I don't know how long that will be, but between now and then, until I see you again, I'll be loving you love me." I didn't turn it [the panel] in until 1996 or 1997 after the display in D.C.

WCT: What took you so long to turn the quilt in?

BB: Letting go. It was part of the relationship.

Turn to page 18
Danny Sotomayor’s Quilt panel being turned in during the October 1992 NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Project Quilt Display in Washington, D.C. Photo by Bruce Barnes

**PHOTOGRAPHER from page 17**

Whether it’s a partner or a parent, no one likes to lose anyone. When you have years of bonding between you, and someone is taken away from you in a matter of seconds—which was the case with Mel—it’s very difficult. Even putting something together and remembering somebody, it’s not easy to let go.

**WCT:** How did you feel once you finally turned Mel’s quilt into the AIDS Memorial Quilt?

**BB:** I had a lot of friends with me. I had a good support team.

**WCT:** The quilt is no longer under Cleve Jones but under corporate ownership. How do you feel about that?

**BB:** I’m hurt because I think that the people who started it in San Francisco, the people who got the space donated, the people who got Kodak to document it, the people who bustled their butts every time we wanted to do a major display in D.C. should have a say.

We’re now looking at going in Chicago on behalf of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, who were some of your allies?

**BB:** Obviously. [Ald.] Helen Shiller. She was the only one who would stand up for the fact that funding was needed for people living with AIDS in Chicago. She went up against the city and demanded funding from [Mayor Richard] Daley and got that money because she was just so persistent.

**WCT:** What was Chicago’s response when the AIDS Memorial Quilt was brought here?

**BB:** It was great. They had about 60,000 people go through the display. It was featured at Navy Pier back in 1988. It was at the McCormick place twice but we were way down in the second lower basement of the original McCormick place. The floors were dirty. It was a dingy, low-ceiling area. It wasn’t a big white area where they would put the auto show or something nice like the people of the public to find it, but people still came to see it. A lot of people still came to see it when it was down there.

**WCT:** How do you feel the quilt helped people cope?

**BB:** Initially, it wasn’t so much about helping people to cope. Originally, it was about getting the word out and educating people. We still need to educate people that there is still a huge crisis out there. The NAMES Project did that very effectively with its displays.

**WCT:** So many people who were living with AIDS worked on the quilt, some even died working with the NAMES Project. How do you feel about that?

**BB:** This was a goal. This was a destination. This was a goal we worked on the quilt, some even died working on the quilt. It was an amazing process for everyone who was living with AIDS.

**w CT:** why do you think the quilt grew in popularity among supporters and volunteers?

**BB:** It was like the HIV virus; it knew no bounds. It grew because of love, care, and dedication. It was a product of people who wanted to memorialize those who have gone on and educate the people who were ignorant. It’s done a very good job.

**WCT:** How can people keep the memory of the AIDS Memorial Quilt alive?

**BB:** I would love to see the NAMES Project mount another large display. I don’t know if that can be done. I don’t know if there is the volunteerism and motivation that was out there.

**WCT:** You have a visual library of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. Where do you go from here?

**BB:** I’m working to mount a display for when the U.S. Conference on AIDS comes to Chicago in November. Eventually, the collection will go to the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University. I realize it doesn’t do anyone any good just to keep it [the pictures] in my house at this point. At least, they will have a permanent home here.

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**In Chicago, it’s always a ‘Season to give’**

**BY JOHN ACCROCO**

Although the Goodman Theatre may never sell out the Cubs, their cultural significance to this city is not to be ignored. What would Chicago be without its diverse theater community? Thirty years ago when HIV/AIDS was first striking in the United States, the theater world was particularly hard-hit. Several organizations were formed to fight back against AIDS. Season of Concern is Chicago’s answer for people in the theater community living with HIV/AIDS. The organization has evolved from helping just those with HIV/AIDS to those who are suffering from catastrophic illness or injury.

In the early 1980s the Chicago theater community lost two of its own to AIDS complications: Tom Biscotto and J. Pat Miller. Out of this tragedy The Biscotto-Miller fund was born. The Biscotto-Miller fund began as a fundraising effort by the friends of Tom Biscotto and J. Pat Miller to create a cash fund to help HIV/AIDS patients in need.

Around the same time a new organization got its start: Season of Concern. Its initial goal was similar to that of the Make-A-Wish foundation in that it helped actors dying of AIDS accomplish their last wishes. In early 1988 the two organizations merged into one and began working to raise money for direct care of actors and crew living with HIV/AIDS in Chicago and the suburbs. Today, the organizations are still their own entities but function a little differently. The Biscotto-Miller fund is the only private grant distributed by the Season of Concern organization to those who need it immediately. The grants are given all year long on a case by case basis to help support the direct needs of patients who struggle to pay for rent, utilities, groceries, medications and other necessities.

In 2010, the Biscotto-Miller grants distributed more than $16,000 to individuals of the theater community.

Although Season of Concern only supports Chicago residents, it is similar to Broadway’s Equity Fights AIDS which has its actors jingling red buckets at patrons each night following performances during the holiday season. Season of Concern works all year long and generally only solicits money from patrons one night per run of a show, as a courtesy to the patrons who may not be able to afford a donation. Chicago boasts a big variety of little theaters and companies, which works to Season of Concern’s advantage in that they are able to raise a large sum of money in little bits at a time. When larger companies like Broadway in Chicago sponsor them (even if only for one night) the result is a huge boost in funding. Through the diversity of theater types in the city, Season of Concern is able to evenly distribute fundraising throughout the fiscal year. At the end of the year, Season of Concern adds up their earnings and redirects that money into AIDS-related services.

In addition to helping individual patients with their needs, Season of Concern is partnered with several other charity groups in Chicago. The downtown headquarters for Season of Concern is a shared office space with The Actors Fund, a national organization designed to help anyone in the entertainment industry in need. Season of Concern donates a large chunk of money at the end of each fundraising year to the 130-year-old Actors Fund. This past year alone Season of Concern was able to donate $25,000. This is not the only organization being helped out by Sea-son of Concern. In 2010, they donated $5,000 to the AIDS Legal Council, an important legal group designed to protect the rights of Chicagoans living with HIV/AIDS. Another beneficiary of a $5,000 grant was Vital Bridges, a Chicago HIV/AIDS direct-care organization. Chicago Women’s AIDS Project also received a $5,000 grant to keep up in their effort to provide sup-port and empowerment to Chicago women living with HIV/AIDS. Season of Concern also provided grants in 2010 for Bonaventure House Chicago, C.A.L.I.R, Edgealliance, Interfaith and the Test Positive Alert Network.

Season of Concern raises money for its various groups through more than just audience polls during performance runs. Some individuals host cabaret shows that benefit Season of Concern, and the organization’s website provides donors with the option to send an e-card to their favorite Chicago actor for either opening night, closing night or to congratulate an award nomination or win. The e-card is an email greeting card that lets the actor know that a donation to Season of Concern has been made in their honor. The Chicago AIDS Walk is another way the Season of Concern administrative team raises awareness and money for those living with HIV/AIDS. Stephen Rader, the executive director of Season of Concern said, “the goal of Season of Concern’s fundraising is to always have enough dispensable cash on hand to help out someone who needs it now.”

With the Non-Equity Joseph Jefferson Awards right around the corner, spring is an exciting season for Chicago’s theater community. Not only is this award season a time to recognize some of the city’s best artists, but also a time to recognize those who help the community fight the effects of HIV/AIDS. Season of Concern hosts an annual ceremony for recipients of their Larry Sloan Awards. Larry Sloan was the first executive director of Season of Concern, and he passed away in 1995 due to AIDS complications. The awards are given in honor to those who have demonstrated leadership in the community’s fight against HIV/AIDS. Past winners include Rondi Reed who appeared in the original production of August: Osage County at the Steppenwolf Theatre, and William Petersen of TV’s CSI. This year’s winners are Barry Taylor for the Heritage Award, Karen Bronson for the Advocate Award and the AIDS Foundation of Chicago for the Partnership Award.

This May marks the fourth year of the Larry Sloan Awards, and Season of Concern has something special planned to combine fundraising, recognition and fun for its prestigious award. Season of Concern is replicating an idea used in an Actors Fund event in New York City by securing rights from the Actors Fund and Twentieth Century Fox to host a reading of the classic script All About Eve. This Monday, May 23, event will feature some of Chicago’s most notable actors, including Hollis Resnik, a Chicago star who regularly appears at the Goodman and Court Theatre. Other notable performers are Larry Van- do, Heidi Kottenring, Peggy Roeder and James Vincent Meredith. The Goodman is also lending their Associate Producer Steve Scott to direct.

The casting of this one-night only show makes a unique statement about diversity in Chicago theater as this multicultural cast is an obvious difference from the original film.

“Thi
Valle looks back at NAMES Project in Chicago

BY KATE SOSIN

Modesto Tico Valle remembers the moment he first saw the AIDS Memorial Quilt in Washington D.C. It was 1988, and the quilt represented 1,200 people.

“I don’t think I have ever cried so hard,” he recalled. “The sadness I had, it was overwhelming.”

Four years earlier, Valle had come out as gay. Rather than spending those college-age years partying with other gay men, he delivered meals, went to protests and cared for the sick. When the phone rang, he dreaded picking it up because he lived in fear of bad news.

“That was the way of life,” he said. “That was the way of life for so many years. Sometimes you didn’t even have time to grieve, so if you took that moment, you’d fall apart.”

Valle recalls those days matter-of-factly. It’s a story he’s told many times to the press, especially since taking on the role of CEO at Center on Halsted more than four years ago. He knows the exact dates of important events. When he wants to illustrate how his mother became an LGBT ally, he has anecdotes on hand about how she went from a mother who disliked having a dress-wearing son to a caregiver for HIV-positive men. He also knows where he’d prefer to gloss over—personal details that distract from the message he wants his story to send.

For Valle, the AIDS Memorial Quilt speaks that message. It’s a message he thinks young people still need to hear because, he says, the fight against AIDS is far from over. More than two decades after AIDS took his father, his partner was not more like him. But Valle told her that there was nothing wrong with his brother, and Valle’s mother had never talked about her suspicion until he came out. She knew already. Valle never had girlfriends, and he took a neighbor girl who was his close friend to prom. Valle’s mother had never talked about her suspicion until he came out. She wasn’t just worried that her sons were gay, she told him. She was more worried that her sons would get AIDS.

The following year, Valle, who had missed Chicago while away, transferred to DePaul University to finish college. He became an activist upon returning home. AIDS was sweeping the city, and Valle was quickly recruited in the fight against it. He rallied alongside activists like Danny Sotomayor. He brought food to sick friends and walked their dogs.

In 1988, at the urging of NAMES Project founder Cleve Jones, Valle traveled to Washington, D.C. to see the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. Jones had told him that he thought if politicians saw it, they would be moved to push for a cure. Shortly after Valle had showed his father the quilt, he learned that his father was HIV-positive. His family was shocked. Valle said he wonders if his father didn’t struggle with being gay, but he said he didn’t know or care how he contracted the virus.

“It doesn’t matter how,” he said. “It’s how we take care of each other.” While Valle’s family reacted poorly to the news at first, he said, they came around in the end.

When all was said and done, Valle had not only watched his father die. He had lost his partner of 10 years. Both died in the early 1990s. These losses are the ones that Valle is more reluctant to talk about, that those that blur his role as an advocate for others into someone who has experienced loss personally. Here, his recollection of details and dates grows fuzzier. The facts come slower and grow more vague in nature.

In the years that followed the height of the pandemic, Valle watched his community recover. His advocacy work led him to Horizons and then finally to Center on Halsted’s first CEO in 2007. It’s a role that has both brought him praise and admonishment, as the Center under his care has faced accusations that it’s out of touch with the LGBT community’s marginalized populations—youth, the homeless, people of color, and transgender people. But Valle remains steadfast in his belief that “people vote with their feet,” and that people from all walks rely on Center services.

Despite his title of CEO, Valle said he still identifies as an activist. “I’m still fighting to give people a voice,” he said. “And to give people hope.”

However, he isn’t stopping there. Valle said he is considering a run for public office one day, perhaps as state representative or alderman. He thinks that a new wave of LGBT activism is sweeping the country, and he wants to be part of it. “That’s what the AIDS epidemic taught me,” he said, a tone of both celebration and sadness in his voice. “If you want equality, you can never sleep.”

The quilt stunned Valle and changed his life. He immediately set to work on bringing the project to Chicago. The following year, Valle founded the Chicago NAMES Project and brought the quilt for its first Midwest display to Navy Pier. When his father, who had been slow to accept that Valle was gay, saw the quilt, he turned to his son and said, “You need to take this into schools.”

Valle agreed. He spent the following years dragging the quilt all over Chicago, packing it into his car and presenting it at lectures. He drafted a national curriculum around the Quilt to teach young people about AIDS.

It was the birth of a new kind of activism for Valle. The quilt was demonstrating that the disease did not discriminate, and the community response was a growing number of prevention and care services.

“The beauty of the quilt … is that from it, all these organizations were born,” Valle said. Valle became involved with the NAMES Project nationally, showcasing the quilt in Chicago and D.C. repeatedly over the years and heading up education efforts around the quilt.

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To the pantheon of LGBTQ heroes, we must add playwright and activist Doric Wilson who died May 7 at his home in Manhattan at age 72. It is a collective and personal loss. Doric was a friend and role model to me.

Doric’s list of accomplishments is long. He was the first playwright in residence at Greenwich Village’s legendary Caffe Cino beginning with his comedy, And He Made A Her. He would go on to write many popular gay-themed plays including Pretty People, Babet Babet Little Town, Now She Dance! He performed in Turnabout, The West Street Gang, A Perfect Relationship and Forever.

Both an active participant and keen observer of history, Doric was present on the front lines of the uprisings at the Stonewall Inn, generally recognized as the beginning of the gay rights movement and is featured in the 2010 documentary film Stonewall Uprising. Previously involved in the civil rights and anti-war movements, he became active in the Gay Activist Alliance and raised money for LGBT causes as a celebrity guest. However, some of his most significant activism took place in the theater. In 1974, Doric, Billy Blackwell, Peter del Valle and John McSpadden, formed TOSOS (The Other Side of Silence), the first professional LGBTQ company in the country. The company produced new plays and revivals but was primarily concerned with the writing and reading of work that would be published and produced elsewhere.

I had the good fortune to meet Doric a few years ago when the Association for Theatre in Harlem (ATH) sponsored a day-long conference, “An Investment In Our Future,” at which I presented a keynote and panel discussion. I had always heard so much about Doric. Before the conference, I had been in touch with him and had received a note from him about a film he was working on. I was very engaged by his notes and hoped that one day I would meet him. Doric was delightful and welcoming. I had agreed with everything he had to say or not, I wanted to hear it.

The last time I saw Doric was this winter, following Jill Johnston’s memorial service at Judson Church. I rushed over to attend a staged reading of another of his works that night. We had been expectation and ready to collaborate. We would be friends. The tall, handsome, radical gay activist and playwright had not always lived in New York City, although it seemed tailor made for him. He was born in Los Angeles and raised on his grandfather’s ranch in the Pacific Northwest. Doric asked me to be on the honorary board of directors of his company, TOSOS and I gave them a little money. Mostly, I would go to their readings or productions when I was in town and pick his brain about LGBTQ history and his perspectives. He found me most interested in his clarity about his own identity and disavowal of social acceptance. Last spring at a company dinner in the West Village, when I talked with him about the future of the movement, he offered a performance piece about same-sex marriage, he was black. “Well, of course they shouldn’t be telling us what to do but who cares what they think, and who needs marriage?” It was this utter unapologetic stance that kept me coming back for more. I knew I was in the presence of an iconoclastic thinker—and whether I agreed with everything he had to say or not, I wanted to hear it.

I RSVP’d to Doric last week to say I was in New York and would be at the latest TOSOS staged reading. When I didn’t hear back from him, I decided to go anyway Saturday night. It was puzzling not to see him and Kathleen Warnock told me he learned he had died when he didn’t show up.

I feel a deep depth of gratitude for his courage and mentorship to a whole generation of young artists. And I am very sad. I had seen Doric perform at the church on the night before his death. I had come to get his take on the production and on Larry Kramer’s role in the early days of the AIDS epidemic. Doric would have had a front row seat to this and would have been happy to pull up an opinion.


Joan Linkin is the artistic director of That Uppity Theatre Company. Her work is most recently featured in the new anthology, Out & Allied.

Marriage-equality film comes to Harlem

African-American LGBTQ communities have always existed in Harlem—and they have resided in Harlem since this former Dutch enclave became the United States’ Black mecca in the 1920s. The visibility of Harlem’s LGBTQ communities for the most part was forced to be on the “down low.” However, gay Harlem, nonetheless, showcased it inimitable style with rent parties, show up, and role model to me.

Given Harlem churches’ spiritual and sexual stronghold over its churchgoing communities it continues, to this day, to police the entire community concerning queer sexuality. Any healthy dialogue about God’s love and unquestioning acceptance of LGBTQ people is kept on lockdown, maintaining a “politic of silence” not only about LGBTQ sexualities but also about various expressions of Black sexuality as part and parcel of the continuum of human sexuality.

For example, while most Harlem churches won’t touch LGBTQ issues, various gay-friendly arts venues in Harlem will. The Harlem Stage is one of them, allowing a safe and uncensored space for Black queer expressions.

On April 26 the Harlem Stage premiered the new documentary short film, “Marriage Equality: Byron Rushing and the Right to Marry,” directed by Jezzy Harper, a veteran of the civil rights movement, to lowiter the largest public dialogue on same-sex marriage by LGBTQ people of color in the country. It builds upon the work of the 1965 film Stonewall, a pioneering African American gay filmmaker Thomas Allen Harris directs the film, sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign.

Harris tackles the continued hot-button issue in both the African-American and LGBTQ communities—civil rights: Black vs. gay. Harris dismantles the false dichotomy of this ongoing debate by connecting the Black civil rights movement of the 1960s with the same-sex marriage equality movement today. He focuses on African American Democratic Massachusetts State Rep. Byron Rushing, a veteran of the civil rights movement who, in the past decade, took the battle for same-sex marriage to the Massachusetts State House of Representatives in 1982, and he was an original sponsor of the gay rights bill and the chief sponsor of the law to end discrimination in many important public institutions. Rushing was also one of the leaders in the constitutional convention to maintain same-sex marriage in Massachusetts.

Harris makes a powerful case for why the struggle for same-sex marriage is indeed a civil rights struggle: “It is undeniable that the experience of African Americans dissimilar to that of gay men and lesbians; among other things, the legacy of slavery and segregation is profound. But differences in historical experiences should not preclude the application of constitutional protections to gay men and lesbians who are denied the right to marry the person of their choice.”

But the civil rights movement did 50 years ago, the marriage equality movement is dominating politics in the current national landscape.

“Like the civil rights movement did 50 years ago, the marriage equality movement will launch a movement across the country where community members use the film as a way to discuss marriage and other issues of political and social importance, especially as it relates to communities of color.”

With more than 200 people of color and allies in attendance at the Harlem Stage, renowned gay African-American Washington Post writer Jonathan Capehart moderated the conversation. The panelists included entrepreneur and activist Russell Simmons, Cathy Marino-Thomas, board president of Marriage Equality New York, Human Rights Campaign board member David Wilson, other religious and lay leaders, and myself.

Whereas many African-American ministers will continue to holdfast to the erroneous belief that the battle for same-sex marriage is not a civil rights issue, there are, however, many African-American elected officials like Rushing who know that same-sex marriage is a civil rights issue.

For example, during a June 12, 2007 Capitol Hill ceremony commemorating the 40th anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that struck down anti-miscegenation laws and sponsored by several straight and LGBTQ civil rights organizations across the country—the Legal Defense & Educational Fund of the NAACP represented a person or organization in articles or advertising in Windy City Times. The use of the name, photograph, or likeness of Windy City Times. Publication of the name, photograph, likeness of a person or organization is not an endorsement of Windy City Times. A person or organization in articles or advertising in Windy City Times may not be assumed for publication purposes and as such, subject to editing and comment. The byline is required for associated materials. All rights to letters, art and photographs sent to Windy City Times will not be returned unless accompanied by a postage stamp.

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May 11, 2011

VIEWPOINTS

JOAN LINKIN

Marriage-equality film comes to Harlem

VENDETTA

Remembering Doric Wilson

REV. IRENE MONROE

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WEB HOMEPAGE

LOYALWOMENresearch.com (e-mail: pro- grammer: Martina Marcos)
The Book of Mormon is just one production with LGBT themes that garnered a Tony nod recently. Read more below.

Barbara Streisand in her first Broadway show I Can Get It For You Wholesale in 1962, later working with the star with his screenplay for the 1973 film The Way We Were. Laurents also worked with legendary director Alfred Hitchcock on the 1948 film Rope.

However, for anyone who wants an insight to Laurents' life as an openly gay man working in the entertainment industry, be sure to read his gospel-filled books Original Story By and Mainly On Directing. Laurents goes out of his way to settle scores, and he is unabashed with his pride as a openly gay man.

Victory Gardens' new artistic director

Victory Gardens Theater recently announced that playwright and director Chay Yew is to be the company's new artistic director. Yew succeeds retiring Victory Gardens artistic director Dennis Zacek, who held the post for the past 34 years.

No doubt the news will be a disappointment for those who wanted longtime Victory Gardens associate artistic director Sandy Shinner to get the position. But with Yew's appointment it's clear that Victory Gardens' board wants to inject some new blood into the esteemed institution famed for its roster of resident playwrights.

As a director, Yew has directed world premieres of works by Jose Rivera, Naomi Iizuka, Julia Cho, Dennis Zacek, who held the post for the past 34 years.

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Colman Domingo, an occasional Windy City Queercest guest host, has snagged a Tony nomination.

musicals West Side Story and Gypsy, plus his Tony Award-winning direction on the original 1983 production of La Cage aux Folles.

It was at the urging of Tom Hatchen, Laurents’ long-term partner who died in 2006, that Laurents achieved some late-life success in directing Broadway revivals of Gypsy in 2008 starring Patti LuPone (mending a long-time feud between the irascible playwright and the famed Broadway diva) and West Side Story in 2009 (where the Sharks sang new lyrics in Spanish before this device was eventually dropped).

Laurents is also famed for helping to discover White Noise closing early

If you’ve been dragging your feet to see White Noise, the world premiere musical about white supremacist songwriters finding mainstream success, hurry now to see it. The production is closing two weeks early, May 15, at the Royal George Theatre.

Please send theater news and other related tidbits to scottishplayscott@yahoo.com and Andrew@windycitymediagroup.com.

MOVIES


Still from the movie Bridesmaids

MUSIC


PM photo of Nicole Reynolds

SPORTS

To be Frank...  Page 38.

Photo of Frank Kiner by Ross Forman

SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

Tony! Tony! Tony!

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

The 2011 Tony Award nominations for excellence in Broadway theater were announced May 3. With 14 nominations, the leader of the pack is the irreverent (and expletive-filled) new musical The Book of Mormon, by South Park creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone and Avenue Q composer Robert Lopez. It’s one of the few shows to have opened on Broadway to near-unanimous critical raves.

Following close behind with 12 nominations is the closed show The Scottsboro Boys, the final musical co-written by theater greats John Kander and Fred Ebb (Cabaret, Chicago). The Scottsboro Boys controversially used the theatrical form of a minstrel show to comment on the true-life story of nine Black teenagers who were wrongly accused of rape in 1931.

However, for Chicago theater boosters, there were a few notable local inclusions (and exclusions) in the mix.

The big news is that Chicago’s Lookingglass Theatre Company was named the recipient of the 2011 Regional Theatre Tony Award, and it’s no surprise why. Many of Lookingglass Theatre’s acclaimed productions—like Argonautika, The Arabian Nights and Lookingglass Alice—have since gone on to thrive in major regional theaters around the country, no doubt charming the many voters from the American Theatre Critics Association who help to decide on the award each year.

Lookingglass is famed for its ensemble consisting of circus-trained actors and writers who are adept at adapting literary works to the stage. Although Friends TV star David Schwimmer is the company’s most famous ensemble member, it’s probably director/playwright Mary Zimmerman who has helped bring the most acclaim to Lookingglass Theatre. Zimmerman’s 1998 adaptation of Ovid’s Metamorphoses later played on Broadway in 2002 and has been produced by other major regional theaters.

Lookingglass brings the number of Tony Award-winning Windy City regional companies to five (the others being Steppenwolf Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Victory Gardens Theater and Chicago Shakespeare Theater). It’s a feat unmatched by any other U.S. city, so wear this Chicago win with pride.

In the play direction category, Steppenwolf Theatre ensemble member Anna D. Shapiro is a nominee for Stephen Adly Guirgis’ The Motherfucker with the Hat, which notably features the Hollywood star power of Chris Rock and Bobby Cannavale in the cast.

On the flip side, Chicago favorite David Cromer did not get a nomination for his direction of another star-studded revival, John Guare’s The House of Blue Leaves, starring Ben Stiller, Edie Falco and Jennifer Jason Leigh.

Colman Domingo, an occasional Windy City Queercest guest host, has snagged a Tony nomination.

musicals West Side Story and Gypsy, plus his Tony Award-winning direction on the original 1983 production of La Cage aux Folles.

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Laurents is also famed for helping to discover
There are a few famous scores for musical versions of Peter Pan, one by Leonard Bernstein and one of 1904 play that is not at all a musical, both dances stick out like sore thumbs, adding minutes to the running time without adding value. There are a few alterations and interpolations which one this new, multi-media musical production, and the high ticket prices. (Take a look at the Night Ministry on the talky and long side considering the family audience at which this show is pitched. The integrity of the treatment reminds one that Peter Pan really is for adults as much as for children.}

Peter Pan. Photo by Ed Krieger

**THEATER REVIEW**

**Peter Pan**

Playwright: James M. Barrie
At: Chicago Tribune Freedom Center, 650 W. Chicago
Tickets: 1- 888-772-6849; http://www.peterpanthesteshow.com; $76-$173
Runs through: June 19

**BY JONATHAN AARBANEL**

There are two famous scores for musical versions of Peter Pan, one by Leonard Bernstein and one by Mark Charlap and Julie Styne. I wondered which one this new, multi-media musical production would use. The answer is neither. This Peter Pan is not a musical, but the original 1904 play with an orchestral score. It’s Peter Pan pretty much as James M. Barrie wrote it, meaning it’s on the talky and long side considering the family audience at which this show is pitched. The integrity of the treatment reminds one that Peter Pan really is for adults as much as for children when it’s not boiled down or Broadway-ized. The somewhat-dark spirit of the work remains intact.

The gimmick this time is that it’s presented in-the-round in a circus tent, allowing the use of 360-degree animated visuals projected on enormous screens surrounding the audience. You fly through the landscapes of London, dive under water in the Neverland lagoon and sink into Neverland’s undulating Avatar-like jungle, all to the pre-recorded symphonic accompaniment of Benjamin Wallfisch’s expansive music, reminiscent (in a good way) of John Williams. The peaked tent allows flying much higher than usual, with up to five people airborne at once, but it’s not so different from flying you’ve seen before.

**CRITICS’ PICKS**

**The Copperhead**, City Lit Theatre, through May 15. A bit of history comes at you in this once-famous 1918 drama, bridging the gap between melodrama and realism. It’s about an Illinois family and the Civil War, which plenty of folks still remember in 1918.

**Erratica**, American Demigods at Second Stage Theatre, through May 14. When you’ve got the ghost of Christopher Marlowe playing cupid, the sexual reawakening of a stuffy English-lit professor suddenly acquires additional—uh, vigor in Reina Hendy’s smart, little sleeper of a romantic comedy.

**Passing Strange**, Bailiwick Chicago at Chicago Center for the Performing Arts, through May 29. JC Brooks and The Uptown Sound really rack it out in this funny and touching coming-of-age story of an African-American artist who leaves the conformity of suburban Los Angeles to find inspiration in Amsterdam and Brazil.

**Sex With Strangers**, Steppenwolf Theatre, through May 15. Writers in love—preferably from another century—are a safe study for the classroom, but Stephen Louis Grush and Sally Murphy make Laura Eason’s tale of the blogger and the novelist sizzle with immediacy.

By Ababanel, Barnidge and Morgan

**THEATER REVIEW**

**Soul Samarai**

Playwright: Qui Nguyen
At: Infusion Theatre Company at Theatre Wit, 1229 W. Belmont
Phone: 773-975-8150; $25
Runs through: June 5

**BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE**

We enter the black-box auditorium to find our selves surrounded by tagger-art, flow-morphic videos and scratchy hip-hop music, the last courtesy of stage-side DJ “Dishwash.” The first words our questioning heroine utters are, “Moshi-moshi, motherfuckers.” And with the addition of that final epithet, anticipation of Charlie-Chan accents, rec room karate or other chop-socky giggles ceases, to be replaced by the existential gloom of your favorite graphic novel.

For starters, playwright Qui Nguyen’s locale is not some idylic pastoral kingdom, but a post-apocalyptic New York City now controlled by feudal lords, Oh, hidden conclave exists within the boundaries—zenmaster Leroy’s dojo on the Lower East Side, a Christian-soldier monastery in the Brownsville district—but the Longtooth thugs who, five years earlier, kidnapped the patrician Sally December were the servants of the evil masked Boss 2K, shogun of Brooklyn (or “brook-NAM” as one character dubious it). Racked with guilt, bookish Dewdrop vowed to avenge her lost lesbian lover. Accompanied by wigger sidekick, Cert (as, he boasts, in “Death Cert-ificates”), our intrepid pilgrim ventures into the stygian realms where even those pure in heart risk falling prey to primitive bloodlust.

Indeed, that Nguyen’s cruelest archvillains (“Hey, let’s go make some war,” carols Boss 2K) were privileged idealists or white-collar drones before succumbing to the intoxication of power? Do the deaths of Dewdrop’s comrades signify the failure of education, religion and familial loyalty to provide her the answers she seeks? Is her odyssey an allegory of ambivalence over the influence exerted upon her by the arrogantly dogmatic Sally? And do the changes in the latter comprise a case study at all of anorexia gone sour?

An abundance of psychological complexity, then, lies beneath the seemingly endless array of adrenaline-pumping martial-arts spectacles—duels by flashlight, the “obligatory training montage” and the most original sword-cane stunt in Chicago stage combat history—choreographed by Geoff Coates for an athletic cast led by Christine Lin as the valiant Dewdrop. The real stars of the show, however, are the technical team of David Ferguson, Liviu Pasare, Charles Cooper, Miles Polaski and Joy Dennis, who together create a dramatic universe steeped in metaphor and mystery, where violence is not a mere enhancement but instead seamlessly integrated into their story’s very foundations. Arigato gozaimasu, muh-fuhs!

**THEATER REVIEW**

**The Original Grease**

Playwright: Jim Jacobs Warren Casey
At: American Theatre Company, 1909 W. Byron
Phone: 773-409-4125; $45-$50
Runs through: June 26

**BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE**

The easiest way to recreate a historical period is to focus on the extremes. This principle dictates that “teen culture” be defined by archetypes existing to this day, among them, the children of poor, parochial, disenfranchised, blue-collar immigrant families. The romanticizing of these economically-disadvantaged adolescents—in the 1950s, dubbed “neers,” as much for their unbarbered lanolin-heavy hair as for their predestined industrial-sector careers—into sensitive “rebels” was, in large part, motivated by the guilt that dogged those who escaped this ghetto, along with its teenage pregnancies (before legal abortion), school dropouts (before GEDs), and its gang-loyalty deception. Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey were artist/songwriters in 1970 when they wrote their homage to former high school chums whose peak years were already in decline, calling upon memories at once fond and relieved—contradictions leading to distortions growing more pronounced over time, as generational distance rendered it increasingly safe for “the way THEY were” to become “the way WE were.”

American Theatre Company purports to restore the gritty homegrown edge to Jacobs and Casey’s one-hit wonder, and to a substantial degree, makes good on its promise (almost 100% reverently, bringing the show’s running time to just under three hours). But don’t park your Suspension of Disbelief yet.

The Burger Palace Boys may speak in gruunts and the Pink Ladies in yaaps, but they sing in the dulcet tones of health-conscious warblers with threats unladen by tobacco, two-dollar wine, or deep-fried anything. Jim Coti’s dance choreography likewise leans more heavily on standard musical-comedy formations as nostalgic references—civil-defense drills, Lucky Strike cigarettes, Clearasil, Polk Broth-ers, LOTS of street names—sufficient to encompass the sound of the pre-British Invasion era, but the songs that come off most authentically are the ones rooted in a cappella duo-wop harmonies, reflecting the DIY expressions of an age before Walkmen, earbuds and iPods.

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Christine Lin (left) and Amy Delaquiliano in Soul Samarai. Photo by Anthony LaPenna

WINDY CITY TIMES
DOUBLE REVIEW
Performing
Tonight:
Liza Minnelli’s Daughter
Created by Mary Fons
At: The Neo-Futurists, 5153 N. Ashland
Phone: 773-275-5255; $10-$15
Runs through: June 4

The King and I
Score: Richard Rodgers;
Book and lyrics: Oscar Hammerstein II
At: Porchlight Music Theatre
at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont
Phone: 732-327-5252; $38
Runs through: June 5

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN
Performer and writer Mary Fons looks amazingly like award-winning star and gay icon Liza Minnelli. So it’s only natural that she would want to capitalize on that association in a funny and introspective world-premiere called Performing Tonight: Liza Minnelli’s Daughter for the Neo-Futurists.

Not entirely an impersonation act, Performing Tonight is more of a thorough and comical analysis of how a Midwesterner like Fons has become obsessed with Minnelli and the unlikely parallels between the lives of the two performers. Throughout the show, Fons attempts to bolster her argument that she is the biological daughter of Minnelli (but it’s clear that she’s more akin in spirit and longing for superstardom).

To aid in her journey, Fons is assisted by her two fey black-clad Fosse-style dancer-sidekicks Donnell Williams and Joseph Schupbach, who also take on other characters life and wryly comment on this whole strange show which is part loving homage and part true Hollywood Story-style examination of Minnelli and her ardent fan who claims to be family.

Director Scoti Moser coordinates the parade of Minnelli songs and fashions wonderfully, though there are some slow moments (the imagined conversation between Fons and her “grandmother” Judy Garland on drug abuse is a particularly weak scene—omitting the fact that MGM pushed uppers and downers on a juvenile Garland throughout her film career).

Performing Tonight no doubt fits in the line of Neo-Futurists meta-styled shows that examine a topic or subject through an odd and very personal angle. But Performing Tonight stands out with its fun and razzle-dazzle sheen to this examination of celebrity and struggling performers who long for some of that same stardust to rub off.

Meanwhile, it would be remiss not to mark L. Walter Stearns’ farewell production from his position of artistic director for Porchlight Music Theatre. Before he assumes his full-time duties with the Mercury Theatre, Stearns is helming Porchlight’s handsome first take on a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, The King and I.

Now this 1951 musical can’t really escape its original leading man Yul Brynner, or its very Western imperialistic views. But once again Stearns uses the intimacy of a Porchlight pro-
Matthew Morrison on his career, Elton and public sex

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Matthew Morrison doesn’t mind being the gayest straight man you know. The 32-year-old actor recently called being a member of a gay boy band in the 2003 film Marci X the “gayest thing” he’s done in his career.

That’s saying a lot—he’s currently starring on Glee, playing hot choir-club head Mr. Schue. His part on the musical-comedy hybrid follows years of Broadway work on shows like Hairspray and The Light in the Piazza, which earned him a Tony nomination. Now, after becoming a big deal and an even bigger teacher crush, Morrison ventures out on his own with a solo debut and summer tour.

We spoke recently with the man behind Mr. Schue, chatting about some racy photos involving a gay twin and his “chicken,” the Glee girl he’d date, and the importance of the show’s father-son relationship.

Windy City Times: Because of your musical-theater work and Glee role, do people often think you’re gay?

Matthew Morrison: I’ve been singing and dancing since I’ve been in fifth grade so I’ve gotten that quite a bit in my life.

WCT: Being one of few straight guys in the theater, how did you use that to your advantage when it came to the ladies?

MM: The odds for me were definitely in my favor, being surrounded by beautiful female dancers and being the person that they could actually, you know, be with. (Laughs) So it was a great time in my life. I really took advantage of it for a while in my younger days on Broadway, but aside from all that bullshit, I love being on the gayest show on TV. It doesn’t bother me; I wear it as a badge of honor to be accepted and loved in that community.

WCT: There are several steamy pics of you on the Internet, including ones of you in polka-dot underwear with a fluffy little poof on the private.

MM: Yeah, that’s my chicken. [Laughs] It was for a thing called Broadway Bares, a big fundraiser. And if I knew at the time how much flack I would get for those photos I probably would’ve never done it, but it raised a lot of money that night for AIDS.

WCT: There’s another picture out there of you—or someone that looks like you—getting cozy and smoochy with Anderson Cooper’s alleged boyfriend.

MM: That’s not me. It looks very much like me.

WCT: It does, indeed. Your doppelganger?

MM: Yeah, I know. Thank you for making out with Anderson Cooper’s alleged boyfriend. [Laughs] But his ears are different, and he doesn’t have the mole on the side of his face like I do.

WCT: Do rumors bother you?

MM: They used to, but it happens so much now that you have to shut it off. I know my own truth, and that’s what you have to live with.

WCT: Which Glee girl would you have dated in high school?

MM: I would’ve been the Quinn guy. I actually pretty much did date Quinn in high school. I dated the homecoming queen and she was very religious, and I went to church with her all the time.

WCT: Was your girlfriend in the celibacy club, too?

MM: Uh, well, we weren’t having sex, so yes. [Laughs]

WCT: Speaking of sex, let’s talk about the first single from your new album, “Summer Rain.”

MM: Yes! Sex on a roof.

WCT: Tell me how the song came about.

MM: It’s a true story—me and my ex-girlfriend, who was actually a Broadway dancer [laughs], on the roof of my apartment. It was a beautiful summer day, and then it just started raining—and the moment just kind of took us and we, you know.

WCT: Was your ex-girlfriend in the celibacy club, too?

MM: Uh, no! Oh my God. That’s crazy. I didn’t even know that. I wrote it as, in the ’50s you go to lovers’ lane, kind of like going to a lookout mountain in your car and making out and stuff.

Fasten your seatbelts, it’s going to be a bumpy night!

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WCT: Oops. Guess it has two meanings now. [laughs]

MM: [laughs] I guess so! I’m glad I know that little tidbit of knowledge.

WCT: You know, public sex might be trickier for you now.

MM: Yeah—I still do it. Who cares! [laughs]

No, I can’t do anything in public anymore. Honestly, I’m really happy that I—I feel bad for some of the kids on my show. I mean, they’re not kids, they’re all in their 20s, but I really got to live out my 20s in New York and do whatever I wanted and not be in the public eye, and now I’m such a homebody that I don’t really have any problem with that anymore. I feel lucky that I really got to experience my life like that.

WCT: Glee has tackled important issues like gay bullying, drinking, teen sex and so on. Which theme are you most proud of?

MM: I absolutely love the relationship between Kurt and his father. It’s so beautiful and it’s something that really needs to be seen. I mean, I don’t know how that works being a gay father, and I think it’s important that I write a lot of my own material. I didn’t want to do just covers, because that would’ve been very Glee-esque, and to be taken seriously as an artist I had to write my own songs.

WCT: For the Elton John mash-up, how did you decide on “Rocket Man” and “Mona Lisa’s and Mad Hatters”?

MM: I wanted to pay homage to him and do some of his songs. It actually took a while to pick which ones, but I knew I wanted to mash two together. I was thinking “Tiny Dancer.” The only one Elton didn’t want to do was “Crocodile Rock.” These two just kind of mesh. They don’t when you think about it, but it turned out to be this epic seven-minute song. He was just so game for anything and such a pleasure to work with. He’s such a student of music, and every Tuesday he buys every new artist who comes out. He knows anything and such a pleasure to work with. He’s the kindest woman you’ll ever meet.

WCT: Have you ever been hot for teacher?

MM: For sure. I can’t think of her name, but she was a Spanish teacher. I don’t know if it had something to do with the language, but that’s kind of hot.

WCT: Back in the day, you used to be in a boy band called LMNT. Now that you’re solo, how does it compare?

MM: Well, that was just a bad year of my life— and it was in the late ’90s, when you couldn’t throw a stick and not hit someone in a boy band. It was so manufactured and so cheesy and, as a performer, when you’re on stage and you’re embarrassed to be up there, you know you’re doing the wrong thing. But honestly, that year I was in the boy band, I learned a lot about the recording process, and it really helped me in where I am today—in Glee and in doing this solo project. It was a good experience in that sense.

WCT: [laughs] What’s she like off-camera?

MM: She’s actually my best friend on the show. I’m the closest to her out off-camera?

WCT: Have her hair jibes caused you personal pain?

MM: [laughs] No, not at all. Everyone gets hammered on the show; no one gets away unscathed. I actually made fun of her hair at some point. Lea’s nose gets made fun of; Cory [Monteith] gets made fun of because he can’t dance. Everyone gets ragged on—it’s just part of being on Glee.


Matthew Morrison on a recent Details cover.
Bridesmaids; Laurents tribute; film notes

The versatile Kristen Wiig, the Saturday Night Live regular who has a way of making the inane and just plain weird hysterically funny, has worked hard at becoming a movie star. With Bridesmaids, which she co-wrote with former Groundlings improv pal Annie Mumolo as a vehicle for herself, she’s finally made it. It’s lovely to see this fearless funny lady front and center at last and, although the movie ambles about and follows a familiar, class-conscious template jazzed up with gross-out scenes hilarious in the hands of these deft comedienne. Moreover, the charming relationship between Wiig and O’Dowd adds a sexy sweetness to the formula that lingers beyond the fade-out of Bridesmaids and helps elevate the movie beyond its male frat comedy counterparts.

The passing of theatrical legend Arthur Laurents at 93 last week was noted with effusive tributes from all corners of the media. What else to expect for the man who penned West Side Story, Gypsy, Anyone Can Whistle, Hallalujah, Baby!, Time of the Cuckoo and a host of other theatrical landmarks, and directed an equal number? Many of his theatrical successes went on to become well-regarded, award-winning movies and, although he didn’t end up scripting them, Laurents also had a respectable career writing for Hollywood.

So, for filmgoers, too, Laurents’s passing is equally noteworthy. He adapted Rope (1948), with its coded queer subtext for Hitchcock (starring then-lover Farley Granger); adapted Anastasia (1956), which brought Ingrid Bergman back to America; scripted The Way We Were (1973) for Barbra Streisand (after bringing her Broadway success at the outset of her career when he cast her in 1962’s I Can Get It For You Wholesale, which he directed).

For a generation of gay men, this old-fashioned, unlikely romance between a fearless, independent Jewish girl and her blonde, fairytale WASP prince (Robert Redford, inspired casting) was the perfect movie upon which to project unrealized gay fantasies. Laurents later penned 1977’s The Turning Point as an homage to his longtime friend, ballerina Nora Kaye; it starred Anne Bancroft and Shirley MacLaine.

Laurents also leaves a legacy of sexual bravado. He was as famous throughout his career for being openly, unapologetically gay (as he and his lover of 50 years, Tom Hatcher, are prominently featured in the fascinating tome The Gay Metropolis, Charles Kaiser’s history of New York gay life). Laurents was also known for his feisty, forthright opinions (his interview segments in The Celluloid Closet are a prime example). A new film version of Gypsy staring Streisand, which Laurents had reportedly signed off on, is in the works. Upon his death, Streisand commented in part, “He created people you care about because he cared about people.”

Film notes:

—Dyke Delicious, the popular, long-running monthly social/screening event series co-presented by Black Cat Productions and Reeling. The line-up for the free event features 12 experimental, documentary and fiction shorts from “the subcontinent and the diaspora, exploring a broad range of ideas, images and identities.” See http://www.knightatthemovies.com/projects/nlr/nate-and-margaret.

—Save the date: Trikone Chicago, a group created for Chicago-based LGBT Asians in association with the Columbia College Center for Asian Arts and Media, and the Kaltish-Mumbai International Queer Film Festival are jointly presenting KalaKranti 2011, a festival of queer South Asian short films Saturday, June 4, from 12-5 p.m., at Columbia College Film Row Center, 1104 S. Wabash, 8th Floor. The lineup for the free event features 12 experimental, documentary and fiction shorts from “the subcontinent and the diaspora, exploring a broad range of ideas, images and identities.” See http://www.trikonechicago.org.

Check out my archived reviews at http://www.windycitymediagroup.com or http://www.knightatthemovies.com. Readers can leave feedback at the latter website.
New ‘Leatherman’ book: The story of sexual renegade/businessman Chuck Renslow

CHICAGO — A prominent Chicago gay activist and entrepreneur is the subject of an in-depth biography, Leatherman: The Legend of Chuck Renslow, by journalists and authors Tracy Baim and Owen Keehnen. The book contains more than 300 images, including murals and drawings by Dom “Etienne” Orejudos, posters for International Mr. Leather (IML), and photos from the Gold Coast, Pride Parades, IML contests, physique magazines and more.


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The story of sexual renegade/businessman Chuck Renslow

In the mid-1950s, after having a portrait and then cheesecake studio, Renslow began experimenting with beefcake photography and began Kris Studio. With his longtime lover, the artist Dom Orejudos aka Etienne and Stephen, at his side, Renslow created Kris Studio a leader in male physique photography, resulting in such magazines as Triumph, Mars and The Rawhide Male, producing thousands of erotic images as well as several films.

In 1959 Renslow took over the Gold Coast Show Lounge and transformed it into one of the most lowdown libidinous gay leather bars in the world. With Etienne’s murals adorning the walls, a leather/Western/uniform dress code for patrons, and a dark Pit that featured all sorts of goings-on, the Gold Coast set the standard for raunchy kink and gay sexual liberation. It was the birthplace of motorcycle clubs and sex groups, but above all a place for people to meet, connect, and explore themselves and their sexuality.

The Gold Coast was also the birthplace of the first leather contest, which in the span of a few short years evolved beyond the bar’s capacity and became International Mr. Leather in 1979. More than three decades later, it continues to be one of the world’s most popular gay events.

Renslow was also one of the pioneers in taking a bathhouse beyond merely the borders of a mere sex club. Man’s Country became something truly unforgettable in the 1970s - a sex-and-entertainment complex with a variety of rooms, shops, and a Music Hall that attracted top names touring in the “K-Y circuit,” from Sally Rand to Rudolf Nureyev, from Divine to Grace Jones, and from Sylvester to Quentin Crisp. In their heyday Chuck Renslow’s annual White Parties were celebrations beyond compare.

When Chicago’s gay community faced the loss of its newspaper, Renslow bailed out and ran GayLife. He gave the community a voice at the critical time when AIDS was first discovered and began its devastation of the community. Though Renslow had always donated to gay causes, with the emergence of the epidemic he drastically increased his contributions and helped host major benefits for AIDS organizations.

Seeing such loss and the frequent erasure of these vibrant lives, Renslow knew he had to do something more. His co-founding of the Leather Archives & Museum (with Tony DeBlase) and his tireless devotion to the institution have helped ensure that the voices of so many who have lived and loved and ultimately passed can be heard for ages to come by all those who wish to listen. It was but another way to serve his community.

Through it all Renslow has also been Daddy of the Family, a unique created group of lovers, tricks, and friends who were bound by sex and oftentimes love and by a goal of providing comfort and support to one another. Unique and controversial, Chuck Renslow is still doing his work and activism, more than six decades after he first opened shop as a photographer.

Authors Tracy Baim and Owen Keehnen uncover the truths and myths of a living legend in this compelling new biography about the man many know, but few understand.

Senior editors of the book are William B. Kelley and Jorjet Harper. Book design is by Kirk Williamson.
Kent Bartram on Frank Lloyd Wright and old Hollywood

BY TULLY SATRE

It is four o’clock on a Sunday afternoon in Oak Park as clusters of tourists gather in the shade of an overpowering ginkgo tree central to the courtyard of Frank Lloyd Wright’s home and studio.

“Wright believed that a house should reflect the sight, not the other way around,” said Kent Bartram, referring to the courtyard centerpiece. Bartram explains that when Wright first purchased the property in 1899, the ginkgo tree was a mere four inches in diameter. Freshly certified as an “interpreter,” Bartram was about to guide a small group of eager tourists through the renovated home and studio of one of America’s most famous and beloved architects.

For Bartram, working in Wright’s Oak Park home and studio is just another facet to his already diverse and accomplished career, many of which stem from his love for Chicago. Put simply: Bartram is an amateur historian and genealogist who loves architecture and old Hollywood.

Bartram began his work with the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust as a volunteer. Volunteers founded the trust in 1974. They have since then restored Wright’s home and studio as closely as possible to its original state in 1909. As a volunteer, Bartram learned the ins and outs of the extensive and on-going restoration of the property. In spring 2008, after three years working as a volunteer, Bartram was hired to re-vamp the trust’s volunteer program.

Initially, the trust was apprehensive to hire Bartram, as his resume did not exhibit the standard criteria for the job; the trust was used to choosing a team of volunteers. However, they soon realized that much of what Bartram did outside of his professional life contained the necessary elements.

Bartram is no stranger when it comes to organizing and utilizing a team of volunteers. However, they soon realized that there was very little information available. “Gay men were keeping her alive…small cliques of urban gay men…primarily on the East Coast.”

The movie was picked up by HBO and released in April 2009 starring Drew Barrymore and Jessica Lange. It was Bartram’s first big break.

“It was serendipitous. It was like being dropped on the moon. It was utterly fascinating,” Bartram said of his involvement with Grey Gardens. Bartram noted that there were several people interested in Little Edie’s life at the time, “Different groups of people were trying to get Edie to market.” At the same time that he and Sucsy were working on the film, Doug Wright was adapting the story of Grey Gardens as a musical, completely independent from Sucsy and Bartram’s project. Wright’s musical went to Broadway and starred Christine Ebersole as Little Edie.

Bartram said he would be hard pressed to believe any gay man wouldn’t fall in love with Edie after seeing the film. He describes Edie’s fashion sense as innate, saying that she was in so many ways magnetic. Edie was able to start a trend without little effort or care for what society thought. Bartram argues that Edie’s influence was similar to the chic sway her cousin held for the unmistakable garments of her time, which were not as simple as fashion or clothes. “Jackie was more like Edie than she [Jackie] would want you to know,” Bartram said, fascinated with the broader historical implications and pop culture Edie’s story holds. “The big thing that I learned is that pop culture does not happen by accident.”

Bartram has one more year with the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust before he will commit full time to finishing writing “Staunach Character,” which he expects will take another two years before it is completed. In the meantime, he and his partner are preparing to move back into the city, to the Andersonville neighborhood, to be closer to friends.

Kent Bartram. Photo by Tully Satre

“When I open up Vanity Fair, I want to be the person who writes those stories about old Hollywood that reveal things that nobody ever knew was actually happening behind-the-scenes,” Bartram said.

Seven years ago, Bartram began writing a book. What started as a small research project has turned into a comprehensive biography on Little Edie Beale, the late first cousin of Jackie Kennedy Onassis. Currently titled “Staunach Character,” the writing has brought him back to the Hollywood he knows best.

His fascination with Little Edie was not homegrown; in fact, it was not until much later in his life that he even came across her. “Friends at dinner parties would talk about this movie about Jackie’s cousin and Aunt and it was this crazy film [called Grey Gardens],” Bartram recalled seeing segments of the documentary but remembering it was weird and never being able to finish it. After watching it through, Bartram wondered, “Why is no one talking about Edie Beale? People on the street should be talking about her, she is so fantastic!” Bartram started digging only to find that there was very little information available.

“Gay men were keeping her alive…small cliques of urban gay men…primarily on the East Coast.”

Bartram began piecing together Little Edie’s story and soon connected with her family. It was through Edie’s family that he met Michael Sucsy who had been developing a movie treatment of the actual story of Grey Gardens and the Beales. Sucsy and Bartram joined forces and Bartram became the official research consultant for the new Grey Gardens. The movie was picked up by HBO and released in April 2009 starring Drew Barrymore and Jessica Lange. It was Bartram’s first big break.

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Singer Donna De Lory stretches her talents

BY JERRY NUNN

"Who's That Girl?" It's Donna De Lory, who toured for years with Madonna and continues to stretch her legs as an artist with new albums, is now focusing on the world of yoga. De Lory has finally found sanctuary in California, where she chatted about her new life.

Windy City Times: Hello, Donna. After all this time are you still talking to Madonna?

Donna De Lory: Yes; over the last few years we have been hanging out when we work together. I have my family and she has her family. She was always telling me what it was like before and now that I have mine we just look at each other and know. We can relate now.

WCT: Is it hard having a career and a baby?

DD: Of course; I have an 8-year-old, too. I took her on two Madonna tours—crazy—when she was 1 and 3. I was doing my own shows on my days off, which was completely insane. We got through it and have a lot of amazing memories. My daughter is funny: "I have been on three world tours with Madonna!" I tell her it's two, not three.

WCT: Would you like your kids to go into the music business?

DD: Only if it is their heart and soul. The little one, Lucianna, who is two, is musical. I had to fight her from playing my keyboard today. She literally pushes me off and has to play.

WCT: What a little diva!

DD: She has to sing, too. Sometimes when I put her down to bed she sings the lullabies back to me. It's incredible.

WCT: You have always had a musical family. DD: Yes, I have. My dad was a producer at Capitol Records when I was growing up. He was already a legendary keyboard player because he has played on so many rock 'n roll records. We would work on films and we would go to the premieres. We always be backstage and being around musicians. I was shy when I was little but my sister started singing professionally when she was a kid. She sang on The Carpenters song "Sing" so I grew up behind her wanting to sing. I started when I was 8 but was painfully shy. At a very young age I knew that's what I wanted to do.

WCT: Were you influenced by musicians when you were younger?

DD: I was getting into artists like Pat Benatar and The Go-Go's so it made me want to be like them. With Blondie and Chrissie Hynde there were enough really cool rock singing singers that I wanted to do that whole thing.

WCT: Did you go to school for it?

DD: Not really; my high school was pretty mediocre with the arts. They gave all the parts in school to people that would never get opportunities like the ones I had growing up. I had to really fight for things. My mother died a week before my 16th birthday and I moved to Nashville with my dad because he was producing records there. I changed from wanting to be Pat Benatar to a country singer. At night I would go dance at this place called The Warehouse.

WCT: I know that place. It was one of the first bars I went to in Nashville.

DD: It was the only gay club in town back then. I would be the only girl there. No one would bother me and I could dance. I needed it. My brother wound up going there later and it was his place to hang out.

WCT: Is your brother gay?

DD: Yes; he moved from Nashville to West Hollywood. He works at a restaurant and his own company and met a cellist, Cameron Stone, who was my musical partner for a long time. This when I made my record, Bliss. There are electronic beats but also eclectic and classic styles. The whole Madonna, Belinda Carlisle thing was not happening for me. I got more into yoga and spiritual studies, I was able to release a record of mantras that did really well in the yoga market. It is a huge community. I eventually did an album called Sanctuary.

WCT: Now you have remix album out.

DD: I wanted to release this record because I was getting back into dancing. Since I am not into partying I started going to trance dance classes. It is going into a studio and it is free form and no alcohol. The place I was going was an old rehearsal room for Fred Astaire. The music was so powerful and tribal. It reminded me of dancing all night at The Warehouse. I was inspired and wanted to make more of that music.

WCT: So tell me more about your journey as a musician.

DD: After Nashville, I moved back to L.A. and used my skill of singing. I would go to every studio and drop off my demo tape. I would sit on the couch and wait for the producer to walk out. I would do my spel and try to get hired. With my dance experience it all came together when I auditioned for Madonna. I got that tour and it was a huge thing, opening my eyes to performing for the world and not just in the studios.

WCT: That must have been amazing.

DD: It was; I really grew up with her. She was like a big sister that I wanted to be like. I realized I was a performer. I got to work on that aspect of myself for many years working for her but in that time I started developing as an artist. My first release was in Japan from the band Berlin when they wanted to do a side project.

WCT: You have really evolved since then.

DD: It took a while. I eventually got away from my label because I was into world music and they were not into it at all. I started my own label in the late nineties, then I was able to release my record. I went on my own tour and did the whole Ani Difranco thing and sold my records. This was a huge shift for me because I grew up thinking I had to get signed to a huge company. There was always such pressure to have a huge hit right off the bat.

WCT: The music business is just set up like that.

DD: It is. So—flash forward—I started my own company and met a cellist, Cameron Stone, who was my musical partner for a long time. This when I made my record, Bliss. There are electronic beats but also eclectic and classic styles. The whole Madonna, Belinda Carlisle thing was not happening for me. I got more into yoga and spiritual studies, I was able to release a record of mantras that did really well in the yoga market. It is a huge community. I eventually did an album called Sanctuary.

WCT: Who's That Girl? It's Donna De Lory, who stretches her legs as an artist with new albums, is now focusing on the world of yoga. De Lory has finally found sanctuary in California, where she chatted about her new life.

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Nicole Reynolds in ALT Q’s line-up

BY JOSEPH ERBENTRAUT

In the 11 years that have passed since Chicago’s out singer-songwriter Scott Free first embarked upon his ALT Q Music Festival, the event has featured some of the most talented and engaging queer performers in the business. This year’s incarnation—taking place Saturday, May 14 at the Old Town School of Folk Music—promises to continue that trend.

Among the 2011 lineup is Pittsburgh, Penn.-born musician Nicole Reynolds, whose music carries a whimsical ease somewhat comparable to the folk stylings of Kimya Dawson.

Windy City Times spoke with Reynolds, whom Free described as “one of those unique artists who I predict will become very big—she was born to be.”

Windy City Times: When did you recall having your first inclination of your musical talents?

Nicole Reynolds: I probably had no inclinations I had a musical ear when I was growing up.

Music was just not part of my life at all. I took a trip with one of my uncles when I was 15 to New Orleans and I feel like that was the first connection with music I really had, while listening to some of the jazz music down there at Preservation Hall and watching street performers. I really connected with that.

WCT: And how did you first get into writing songs and performing?

NR: My first album was done before I had ever sang for anybody in public and it was just kind of something I liked to do as a pastime. I never intended to actually perform but a friend of mine heard some of my songs and encouraged me to go to an open mic. The response was really pretty great.

WCT: Did you, or do you still, get stage fright?

NR: Oddly enough, I don’t get too nervous, which is really strange because I definitely am nervous most of the time for most things, but playing usually ends up being a really fun experience.

WCT: What has been keeping you busy since your last album, 2009’s A Fine Set of Fools, dropped?

NR: When that was finished, I went on a six-month tour across the country and basically lived out of my car. I did that whole trip with my girl-friend and then we decided to buy a condemned house in New Jersey. This whole past year we’ve been pretty much building a house. I’ve been writing here and there but I’m not ready for an album yet.

WCT: You said in a YouTube interview that art and music are what separate us as humans from the animals. Does the current political environment surrounding arts funding inform your music?

NR: It definitely fuels me as an artist to push harder to promote art. It’s what got me through certain times in my life and I think it’s one of the most important things to have around to inspire other people to utilize it in their lives. I think it’s crazy that it’s often the first thing that gets cut, but I think as more people speak up about it, it can change.

Visit http://www.altqfestival.com for tickets.

Arenda Franklin in Chicago May 19

Legendary singer Aretha Franklin will perform at the Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State, on Thursday, May 19, at 8 p.m.

Franklin is one of the most honored artists by the Grammy Awards, with 18 competitive Grammys and two honorary awards. She has 20 number-one singles on the Billboard R&B Singles Chart and two #1 hits on the Billboard Hot 100: “Respect” (1967) and “I Knew You Were Waiting (For Me)” (1987), with George Michael.

Rolling Stone magazine named Franklin number one on its list of the top 100 singers of all time. In 1987, she became the very first woman to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Tickets are $47.50-$52.50, and are available at The Chicago Theatre Box Office, all Ticketmaster outlets; online at http://www.ticketmaster.com and http://thethechicagotheatre.com; and by phone at 800-745-3000.

Pet Shop Boys’ CDs out May 17

Astralwerks will release Pet Shop Boys’ first-ever double CD live album, Concrete, as well as Battleship Potemkin, their original music for the film Sergei Eisenstein’s classic film, May 17.

Concrete was originally recorded live for Radio 2 at the Mermaid Theatre in London with the BBC Concert Orchestra, and released in the United Kingdom in May 2006. The show features songs Pet Shop Boys had previously recorded with orchestral arrangements, including huge hits, album tracks from their album Fundamental and a few surprises, including a song from their musical Closer To Heaven.

Battleship Potemkin, composed by Pet Shop Boys members Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe, is performed by the Boys and the Dresdner Sinfoniker, conducted by Johann Stockhammer. Orchestrations are by Torsten Rasch.
HANDS OFF

HIV Prevention

By Michael Weinstein, President, AIDS Healthcare Foundation

The sexual health of gay men belongs to us. Not to drug companies, who want us to take expensive medication instead of taking precautions, so that they can make another billion dollars. It does not belong to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which is under orders to do HIV prevention, “without promoting homosexuality.” It does not belong to the academics.

If we are going to protect our community’s health, it is going to have to come from us.

The drug company Gilead wants us to take a $10,000-per-year pill (Truvada) to prevent HIV, even though their study showed it was only 44% effective under optimal circumstances. The CDC wants us to believe that collecting a group of men in a room for a few sessions of “sharing” is going to have a permanent benefit. Academics write endless papers that have nothing to do with the real world.

Gay men have unsafe sex for a variety of reasons. They love a man and think that having unprotected sex is the best way of showing it. They are too drunk or stoned. There is no condom around. Or, they don’t think that their life is important enough to protect.

In the ‘80s and ‘90s, safer sex was almost universal. We were so freaked out by watching our friends get sick and die we wouldn’t take the chance of getting infected.

So, where are we today? About half of all new infections in the U.S., some 28,000, come from men who have sex with men. More than half of those come from men who are unaware they are infected. So, with half a million men who know they are HIV-positive, only about 12,000 actual new infections happen each year from a man infecting another man. That is too many, but it indicates that most gay men are taking precautions most of the time.

We need a grassroots movement led by young gay men. We need an individual commitment to protect ourselves and our partners. We need to get as close to the heat of the moment—when people are actually making these decisions—as we can get.

So when a drug company tells you that prevention has failed and a pill will protect you, hold on to your wallet. When the CDC tries to prevent sexually transmitted disease without speaking frankly about sex, ignore them.

We ourselves have to reinvent HIV prevention in a new generation’s image for our own benefit.

For more information or to send a letter to Gilead CEO John C. Martin, Please visit nomagicpills.org.
WCQ: Jennifer Beals on the Dalai Lama

Author, speaker, respected leader, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, His Holiness the Dalai Lama comes to Chicago for two public events July 17-18 at two locations: the UIC Pavilion and the Harris Theatre for Music and Dance. The Theosophical Society in America is presenting both events. Windy City Queercast’s Amy Matheny shares an in-depth conversation with actress /activist Jennifer Beals and president of the Theosophical Society, Tim Boyd, about His Holiness, The Dalai Lama. For more information and tickets, visit http://www.dalailamachicago.com. To hear Matheny’s entire interview with Beals and Boyd, visit http://www.windycityqueercast.com and see Show #416. Pics of (top) Beals and Matheny; and Beals, Matheny and Boyd by Kat Fitzgerald.

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Steppenwolf brings the glam

Chicago staple Steppenwolf Theatre Company threw its annual gala May 7, providing a gourmet dinner and entertainment, the latter courtesy of Gary Sinise and the Lt. Dan Band. Last year the group raised more than $1 million; this year the event was well on its way thanks to live-auction donations from their star-studded ensemble. Attendees bid for a chance to have lunch with The Good Wife’s Josh Charles or a walk behind the scenes of Raising Hope with star Martha Plimpton. Six hundred attendees of the community, including Mayor-elect Rahm Emanuel, were on hand to support the special evening that stretched late into the night. Current production The Hot L Baltimore and upcoming production Middletown promise to keep audiences on the edge of their seats for many years to come. Catch all of the drama at http://www.steppenwolf.org. Text and photos by Jerry Nunn

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**BAR NONE**

**Thursday, May 12**

Celebrate bartendress Paté’s birthday at Parlour, 6341 N. Clark.

*Photo of Paté with her dog, Elvis, courtesy of Paté*

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**Thursday, May 12**

**Paté’s Birthday Bash!** Please join Parlour in celebrating the birthday of legendary Chicago bartendress Paté! In honor of Paté, you can make a donation to ASPCA. 8 p.m., Parlour, 6341 N. Clark

**Reunion: Tales of a Traumatized Tomboy** Keise Kuflf brings to the Chicago stage the true story of how a misplaced tomboy blossoms into an even more awkward adult. 8 p.m., 773-598-4549, Gorilla Tango Theatre 1939 N. Milwaukee, http://www.gorillatango.com

**Friday, May 13**


**Impromptwo - Club for Gay Swingers** New, a private club for committed, non-monogamous gay singles, looking for friends or a quiet night out - Binary is for YOU! 9 p.m., 3458 N. Halsted, http://www.impromptwochicago.com

**Saturday, May 14**

**Center on Halsted Hosts Human First Gala** Center on Halsted hosts Human First, an annual gala performance supporting Center on Halsted. Comedianne Wanda Sykes and Linda Vaughn will perform at the event, held at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance in Millennium Park. 7:30 p.m., 312-334-0963, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph, http://www.centeronhalsted.org

Scott presents free ALT Q featuring an evening of music from national and local LGBT artists, the event’s mission is to raise visibility and awareness of non-patrons among the general public and the LGBT community. Meet-the-artists reception will follow the event and proceeds from ALT Q will be given to St. Leonard’s High School of Chicago, a free community-based alternative high school for formerly incarcerated men and women. http://www.slmimsmart.org/mbcd-education/; 7 p.m., Old Town School of Folk Music, 4444 N. Lincoln, http://www.ostsfc.com

**SAGE Milwaukee’s 7th Annual Spring Film Festival and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)’s Milwaukee’s popular 7th annual Spring Film Festival, 5 p.m., 414-224-0517, MUNIS, 1407 S. 1st, Milwaukee, http://www.sagenewmilwaukee.org**

**Dyke Delicious Screening Series: May - “Short Shorts”** A complete look at the hilarious to the heartfelt, many of the filmmakers in person, social at 7 p.m., screening at 8 p.m., 7 p.m., Chicago Filmmakers, 524 N. Clark, http://www.chicagofilmmakers.org

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**Bar None - Chicago**

**Miss Stonewall 2011-12** As the first-year Miss Stonewall Impromptwo, Categories Include presentation, evening gown, talent and OQ&A. Prizes include $500, mandatory bookings of the club and a spot in Stonewall’s float in the Pride Parade. 10 p.m., Stonewall Inn, 8143 N. 47th St., Lyons, http://www.stonewallchicago.com

**Sunday, May 15**

**Windy City Gay Idol** Now in its ninth year, Windy City Idol showcases the best amateur LGBT singers in the Chicago area. $10 sign-up fee, and a $5 fee for audience members at all preliminary events, 7 p.m., sign up and go on stage, 8 p.m. - start, T’s Restaurant and Bar, 5053 N. Clark

**American Cancer Society’s 40th Annual Walk & Roll** Walk & Roll participants raise funds to support the event, often to commemorate friends and family who have lost their lives to cancer or honor those who currently struggle with the disease, and then take part in a 5-mile walk, 10-mile in-line skate or 15-mile bike ride. 8:30 a.m., 312-279-7651, Grant Park, http://www.walkroll.org

**Monday, May 16**

**United House: A Night of Unity in House Music** Join Equality Illinois for their Civil Rights Forum. Contact EQIL at info@eqil.org or 773-747-7173 for more information; 6 p.m., United Center, 525 S. State, http://www.unitedcenterchicago.com

**Tuesday, May 17**

**Suicide Karaoke** Take your chance at a vicious round of suicide karaoke, where you don’t know what song you’re singing until it’s too late. 8 p.m., 312-279-7261, Grant Park, Center on Halsted’s Human First gala at the Harris Theater in Millennium Park. 7:30 p.m., http://www.hardtheatrechicago.com

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**Good Knight**

**Friday, May 13**

Gladys Knight will perform at The Venue at Horseshoe Casino.

*Promo photo*

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**Friday, May 20**

**Engendering Change: First Annual Chicago Graduate Gender Conference** Two days, open to graduate students in any field related to the study of gender/genders and will coincide with a performance art event that includes Holly Hughes, Rhode- dessa Jones, and Lezlie Moe; Chris- tine Wood, c-wood@northwestern.edu; 12 p.m., Northwestern University, http://www.northwestern.edu

**Chicag Gay Men’s Chorus Presents: BI-VAS!** The women we love! The icons we adore! Barbra, Aretha, Madonna, Liza. The songs that make us weep, the hits that make us move. I Will Survive, Fever, Lady Marmalade, Ain’t No Mountain High Enough. Diva’s is a fabulous side to over forty feminine superbats and the music they made famous. Continues May 21 8, 8 p.m., 773-296-0543, Athenaeum Theater, 2936 N. Southport, http://www.cncmg.org

**Saturday, May 21**


**Thursday, May 26**

**International Mr. Leather IHL** begins to- night with a roast of Tyler McCollum Leather, 6418 N. Greenview. IML runs through May 30; see www.iml.org for information; 8 p.m., in Chicago exhibit at Out in Chicago gallery, http://www.outinchicago.org

**Sunday, May 22**

**Springfield’s 1st annual Gay Pride Fes- tival on Harvey Milk Day** Being a Pooch Parade on Capital Avenue between 5th and 6th streets and will continue until 6 p.m. with entertainment, dancing, vendors, food and drink for all ages including a children's area. Scandroid Nightclub will host the Pre-Party Parade Saturday night May 21st and Club Station House will host the After-Party Parade at 6 p.m. Sunday, 12 p.m., 217-528-5253, Capital Ave., Springfield, IL, http://www.phoenixcenter- springfield.org

**Thursday, May 26**

**Windy City Pride Group**

*Get calendar online*

**GOOD KNIGHT**

*Friday, May 13*

Gladys Knight will perform at The Venue at Horseshoe Casino.

*Promo photo*
"Arthur Laurents told me the three actresses he had in mind for the role, and of the three, Streisand was the best choice... Singing 'Rose's Turn' is all about giving control and discovering it every time. I think Streisand's very in control. She would be like, 'I'm going to fort, and every-one's going to hear it!'-Patti LuPone gives her thoughts on the possibility of Babs filming a remake of Gypsy, something that will likely not happen due to the death of Arthur Laurents.

Lately I've been in some dental distress. Now, I have a high tolerance for pain—just ask anyone who's dated me. But if there's anything worse than being in pain at home, it's being in pain away from home. I had no idea what to do or who to go to. While some fans had some extremely helpful advice, I faced the very real possibility of blindly picking a dentist off the Internet. That's when my colleague Lynn Samuelson recommended her own dentist who had relocated to Fort Lauderdale, FLA. Within a couple of days, I was in the trusty hands of an adorable Nova Southeastern University Dental resident who took care of my gaping hole. Come to think of it, it wouldn't be the first time I've said that about somebody I found online!

I was literally in a waiting room when I heard the bizarre story about a woman arrested in neighboring Pompano Beach. Ann Marie Hernandez was taken into custody after police learned that she was concealing a fraudulent credit card and driver's license in her vagina. Yes, IN her vagina!! You'd think this was an isolated incident, but some cursory research revealed that women use their vaginas to carry a variety of things. Why just last month, Gloria Esther Perez of Fort Myers, FLA., ended up in the big house after police discovered a bottle of prescription medication and a knife up there! Well, I suppose it's easier than carrying a purse. It also means that the dentist who tended to my cavity had absolutely nothing to complain about!

However, it's not just ladies with gifted crotch-eyes. Sexy actor Alex Pettyfer (from that movie I Am Number Four, which nobody saw) admits that the dentist who had relocated to Fort Lauderdale, FLA. Within a couple of days, I was in the trusty hands of an adorable Nova Southeastern University Dental resident who took care of my gaping hole. Come to think of it, it wouldn't be the first time I've said that about somebody I found online!

It's a Celebration!~Madonna

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BILLY MASTERS

“Windy City Times”
Frank Kisner: Basketball player finds groove in Chicago

BY ROSS FORMAN

Frank Kisner, a lifelong basketball player, discovered Team Long Beach in 1990—the team run by Mark Chambers, who founded the National Gay Basketball Association (NGBA).

Kisner played for the Long Beach Rebels for eight years moving to Chicago, including traveling to tournaments and also multiple Gay Games. He won a silver medal in 1990 and a gold in 1994. And in the first two years of the Chicago Hoops Classic (now known as the Coady Roundball Classic), Kisner’s Long Beach team won the championship.

In 1998, he moved to Chicago and naturally started playing in the local gay league. Since arriving in Chicago, he’s run or assisted with the league numerous years—“more than I can remember,” he joked. Kisner often has been responsible for creating the schedule for the basketball league. Plus, he’s coached a few teams.

“(Coaching) was my greatest satisfaction and I really did enjoy the guys, even when I became known as the crazy coach,” Kisner said, laughing.

Kisner played for the Roadhouse 66 Old School team during the recently-completed 2011 season, with many of his close friends on the team and some new, younger players, too.

“The young [players], we made them run the fast break while we seniors picked our spots of running,” he joked. “We started out slow this year, but, by mid way in the season, we got our groove and went on to win our last five games.

“I might be one of the taller guys on the team, but I usually played small forward or shooting guard. There’s never been a shot that I didn’t like [to take]. What can I say, I love the game of basketball and even though I might be getting [to take]. What can I say, I love the game of basketball and even though I might be getting

you make which can last a lifetime. You can play hard against one another during the game, then, when the game is over, you leave it on the court and you head out for a burger and beer.”

Kisner’s dedication to the local gay basketball league was honored this spring, when he was awarded the Greg Walsh Award.

“I was very shocked that I was given the award,” Kisner said. “I would like to thank the entire board for the award. I volunteer for the league because I enjoy basketball and the guys who play and run the league. I really don’t know how to put it into words, but, to be recognized for the things that you enjoy doing, is a great honor, I knew Greg Walsh and how much he gave to the league, [particularly] growing the lower division to where it is now, so this is just amazing. I will honor and cherish this award in his name.”

Kisner, who lives in Andersonville and has been partnered for almost 15 years to Chris Kinkead, is the assistant director of consumer education for the Illinois Department of Insurance.

“It’s so hard to say what it has meant to me playing in different gay sports over the last 25 years,” Kisner said. “The only word I can describe it as would be: amazing. To have discovered the different leagues back in the 1980s, before the Internet, has opened my eyes to a new world.

The Jessica Springer Show was freakishly good May 7, as the Chicago Force running back almost single handedly carried the host team to a 34-26 win over the Kansas City Tribe. Springer rushed 50 times for an amazing 312 yards and three touchdowns, highlighted by a 45-yard gallop for the first points of the game. The Force is now 4-0, while the Tribe falls to 4-1—and the 34 points scored by Chicago were the first points Kansas City has allowed all season.

“This was a very good game, good win,” said Springer, named the Spin Nightclub Game MVP. “This definitely was a good game for me personally, but not my best ever. I still can improve, as can the whole team.”

The Force built a 13-0 lead in the first quarter after a Sami Grisafe touchdown pass to Kim Marks. Springer rushed home from 5 yards out in the second quarter as the Force led 19-14 at halftime.

Grisafe scored on a 3-yard quarterback keeper with seven seconds remaining in the third quarter as the Force led 27-14 heading into the final period. Springer scored the team’s final touchdown, a 6-yard run.

“I just ran hard throughout,” the game, said Springer who, for the first time in her career, took snaps as the quarterback—so she could immediately rush the ball.

“We were able to hold our compression throughout the game, which was good.”

The Force wraps up the regular-season with three road games—at the St. Louis Slam, at the West Michigan Mayhem and at the Indianapolis Crash. Regional playoffs start in late June and the league championship is slated for July 30. Photo of Force alumni and text by Ross Forman.

Contact Alukwe Moore at 773-677-1170 to make a general donation or to bowl.

Chicago Outfit season opener May 14

The Chicago Outfit Roller Derby will roll into the Windy City Fieldhouse, 2367 W. Logan, on Saturday, May 14, to kick off its 2011 home season with a double header.

The Syndicate, The Chicago Outfit’s A-Team, is scheduled to play The Tri-City Rollergirls from Ontario, while the Shade Brigade, B-Team, will play the Southern Illinois Roller Girls. Doors at 6 p.m., and the bout will commence at 7 p.m.

Following the bout, The Chicago Outfit will host an afterparty at Cobra Lounge, 235 N. Ashland.


**Frank Kisner, Photo by Ross Forman**

The Jessica Springer Show was freakishly good May 7, as the Chicago Force running back almost single handedly carried the host team to a 34-26 win over the Kansas City Tribe. Springer rushed 50 times for an amazing 312 yards and three touchdowns, highlighted by a 45-yard gallop for the first points of the game. The Force is now 4-0, while the Tribe falls to 4-1—and the 34 points scored by Chicago were the first points Kansas City has allowed all season.

“This was a very good game, good win,” said Springer, named the Spin Nightclub Game MVP. “This definitely was a good game for me personally, but not my best ever. I still can improve, as can the whole team.

The Force built a 13-0 lead in the first quarter after a Sami Grisafe touchdown pass to Kim Marks. Springer rushed home from 5 yards out in the second quarter as the Force led 19-14 at halftime.

Grisafe scored on a 3-yard quarterback keeper with seven seconds remaining in the third quarter as the Force led 27-14 heading into the final period. Springer scored the team’s final touchdown, a 6-yard run.

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It’s all about Shawn and Chad, the two new finalists who advanced May 9 at Parlour, 6349 N. Clark. Check them out at the semi-finals at Sidetrack on Sat., June 4.

Photos by Dave Osano. See more photos at facebook.com/windyctygayidol.

Check out this week’s Nightspots for photos of Windy City Gay Idol at Jackhammer.

Miller is the presenting sponsor of Windy City Gay Idol.
To purchase tickets to the Bud Light Bleachers, visit Cubs.com or visit the Wrigley Field ticket office.

*Also available at select concession stands in the seating bowl*