

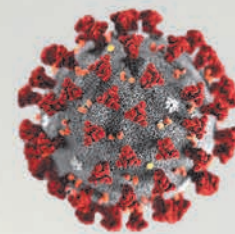
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The Premier Media Source for LGBT Texas | Established 1984 | DallasVoice.com | Volume 18 Number 1 | Friday, March 20, 2020



Life
under
COVID-19

COVID - 19



TAKE STEPS TO PROTECT YOUR HEALTH.

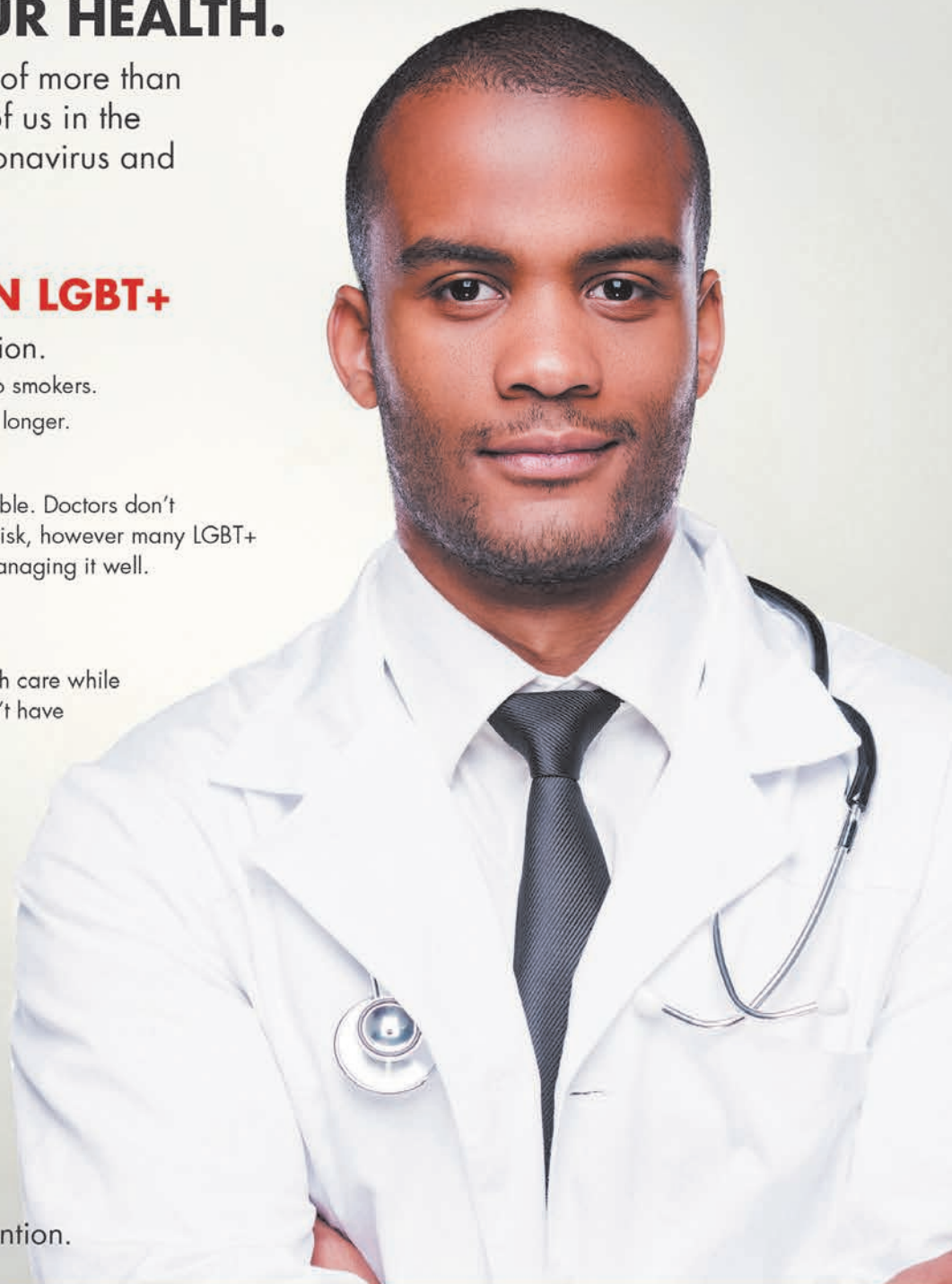
The National LGBT+ Cancer Network and a coalition of more than 100 organizations have issued a warning that some of us in the LGBT+ community maybe more susceptible to the Coronavirus and should be taking extra precautions.

MAIN FACTORS FOR HIGHER RISK IN LGBT+

1. Tobacco rates are 50% higher than the general population.
 - » Coronavirus is a respiratory illness that has proven particularly harmful to smokers. Smoking reduces immunity to respiratory diseases making recovery take longer.
2. LGBT+ people have higher rates of both cancer & HIV.
 - » Both can compromise a person's immune system leaving us more vulnerable. Doctors don't believe people with undetectable viral loads are at significantly greater risk, however many LGBT+ people either don't know they have contracted HIV (1 in 7) or are not managing it well. Knowing your status is always a good idea.
3. LGBT+ people experience health disparities.
 - » Discriminatory attitudes lead some LGBT+ people to avoid or delay health care while job discrimination and homelessness mean that many LGBT+ people don't have access to health care.

PRACTICE GOOD HABITS

- » Avoid in-person contact with people. If in public, practice "Social Distancing" and stay 6ft away.
- » Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds.
- » Frequently clean objects and surfaces with disinfectant.
- » Try not to touch your face.
- » Cover your cough, use tissues when you sneeze, and throw the tissues away immediately.
- » Take care of your emotional health.
- » Stay at home if you are sick, except to seek medical attention.



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Photo by David Taffet.

Design by Kevin Thomas.

Visit DallasVoice.com for continuing updates on the COVID-19 epidemic

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Dallas Voice is constantly updating information regarding breaking news, updates, cancellations, postponements and more related to the COVID-19 epidemic on our InstanTEA blog. Visit [DallasVoice.com](https://dallasvoice.com) for more information.*

Performers devise online solutions to self-isolation



Theater, concerts, film festivals — all around the world, these have been canceled. You simply cannot see live entertainment anymore.

Well, not so fast. Several organizations are pioneering ways to live the motto “The show must go on.”

Rather than cancel outright its upcoming production of *The Imaginary Invalid*, The Classics Theatre Project will stream it online. “When you buy a ticket to any of our perfor-

mances... you will receive a link that will allow you to watch in real time live on YouTube,” the company states. And you only need to buy one ticket for the whole family to watch it (though of course you can buy one for everybody). In addition, if restrictions are relaxed by the performance dates (April 1–19), you are still invited to attend the performance live at the Margo Jones Theatre.”

Meatball Seance by performance artist John Michael, the Dallas native who moved to Chicago a few years ago where he performed his interactive solo show at the Steppenwolf Theatre last year. The show is his effort to introduce his deceased mom to his new boyfriend via a cooking séance. If you want to see it, simply Venmo @john-colgin \$10 and he'll send you a link to the show.

Although the Dallas International Film Festival has been postponed, Dallas VideoFest has not. It is partnering with the Thin Line Fest in Denton to stream via [FalconEvents.com](https://falconevents.com). There will be intros by filmmakers, post-screening Q&As and real-time streaming during the scheduled times. Thin Line's dates are March 25–29; VideoFest's are April 3–5.

Charli XCX is bringing her insights — and that of her famous friends — into your home with a series of chats to be screened on her Instagram (@Charli_XCX). The first was Wednesday morning, and the series continues with “Girls Night Out with Rita Ora” on March 20, time TBD; “U You Rather with Kim Petras” on March 21, time TBD; and “Art Class with Clairo” on March 22 at 2 p.m.

— Arnold Wayne Jones

Texas temporarily extending expired licenses, IDs

As part of the statewide effort to stem the spread of COVID-19, the Texas Department of Public Safety has been granted the authority to extend the expiration dates on Texas identification cards, driver's licenses, commercial driver's licenses and election identification certificates for the duration of Gov. Greg Abbott's declaration a state of disaster, according to a press release from Sheri Gipson, chief of DPS'

driver's license division.

The DPS will consider a Texas-issued card with an expired date to be valid if the expiration date is on or after March 13 and if the expiration date is within 60 days of when the state of disaster is declared over, the statement notes.

The press release notes that this exemption applies only to the expiration date; a person not eligible to drive because of an “active enforcement action” such as a suspension, revocation or denial can use their card as identification only.

— Tammye Nash

Resources for the LGBTQ community

In the wake of new regulations enacted Monday by officials with the city of Dallas and Dallas County, and today by Harris county officials, that include ordering bars, nightclubs and other entertainment venues to close and restaurants to suspend dine-in service, and new regulations enacted by city of Fort Worth officials Monday that limit occupancy in public venues, those in the service and hospitality industries — including, of course, many LGBTQ people — are facing frightening economic situations.

We posted the link to USBG National Charity Foundation (USBGFoundation.org), which has established a COVID-19 Relief Campaign and a Bartender Emergency Assistance Program.

We also shared the link for the COVID-19 Trans/Queer Relief Form (at Google Docs). This is an effort undertaken by the folks at What Trans Looks Like to try to identify members of our Rainbow Family who are in need due to the COVID-19 epidemic, and to identify resources available to those folks and then link the two together.

Remember, people who need help AND people who can offer help are asked to complete the form.

And for Oklahoma's LGBTQ community, Freedom Oklahoma (FreedomOklahoma.org) is compiling a constantly-updated list of resources.

— Tammye Nash

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Take-out, delivery and more:

Restaurants adjust to dine-in ban



The city of Dallas and Dallas County, in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, have issued regulations requiring all restaurants to suspend dine-in options. But many of your favorites are now offering take-out and delivery, often with curbside service.

Also remember that you can help local restaurants by buying their gift cards to use now or later. Maybe buy a to-go meal for now and a gift card for when everything is back up and running normally.

• **Cremona Bistro** is open for delivery and take-out.

• **Tommy's Hamburger Grill and Patio** in

Fort Worth is offering curbside pick-up and to-go orders and delivery through the FAVOR app. For information call 817-920-1776.

• **Nerdvana Frisco** is closing until further notice as of Wednesday, March 18. For information, email info@nerdvanafrisco.com.

• **Taqueria Ventana** restaurants on Cedar Springs and in Addison are now both open for take-out and curbside service. Both locations are open from 10 a.m.-10 p.m.

• **Tulum**, at 4216 Oak Lawn Ave., is closed until further notice.

• **El Fenix** restaurants are now offering the \$5.99 Enchilada Wednesday special all day,

every day, for a limited time.

• **Fireside Pies** will be offering curbside services for all to-go and pickup orders.

• **Perry's Steakhouse & Grille** will be offering curbside services for all to-go and pickup orders.

• **Bob's Steak and Chop House** on Lemmon Avenue will be offering curbside and delivery services for all to-go and pickup orders. Bob's will deliver in a five-mile radius and require a minimum two-entree order for delivery.

• **UP Inspired Kitchen:** Through April 30, guests can receive \$5 off delivery orders of \$15 or more with code LIVEUP when they order through the UP Inspired Kitchen app.

• **Original ChopShop:** Guests can get free delivery on all orders over \$20 with code CHOPCARES.

• **Bellagreen:** Guests can get free delivery on all orders over \$20 with code BEL-LACARES.

• **Old Chicago Pizza & Taproom** will have free delivery with DoorDash for all first-time users and a 99-cent delivery fee for returning users through March 30.

• **The Rustic:** When ordering carry out from Bowl & Barrel, guests will receive a \$15 gift with every entree purchased during this time. The gift card is valid for dine-in only for 30 days after restaurants reopen.

• **Bowl & Barrel:** When ordering carry out from Bowl & Barrel, guests will receive a \$15 gift with every entree purchased during this time.

• **Walk-On's Bistreaux & Bar:** All third party delivery orders will receive a free cookie.

• **When using WAITR/Bite Squad:** Free Delivery for all orders over \$30 for the next 30 days with the code WALKONS.

• **When using DoorDash:** New guests get free delivery on first order. Existing DoorDash users can get 99-cent delivery. Deal is applied automatically.

• **Genghis Grill** is offering 20% off any carryout or online order when guests mention the code GGTOGO, or they can enter the code online at checkout to redeem through March 22.

• **Pecan Lodge** catering facility is delivering family-sized portions, a la carte and sides.

• **Zalat** on Fitzhugh (Pizza) offers online orders for takeout.

• **Asian Mint** offers free delivery on order \$25 or more; beer, wine and sake can also be delivered.

• **Malibu Poke** on Oak Lawn delivers fresh seafood dishes for pick-up.

• **TJ's Seafood Market** offers its entire menu available to go, either hot and ready to eat or heat-at-home family meals.

• **Knife** on Mockingbird offers a limited steakhouse menu from 5-10 p.m. for take-out.

• **La Duni.** From baked goods to meals, the menu is available for take-out and delivery.

• **Big Al's Smokehouse BBQ** on Inwood.

Offering smoked meats, focusing solely on curbside delivery, traditional delivery and take-out ordering.

• **Ten50 BBQ** on 75 in Richardson. Curbside pick-up of barbecue.

• **Applebee's** is offering free delivery through Doordash and UberEats through the end of March.

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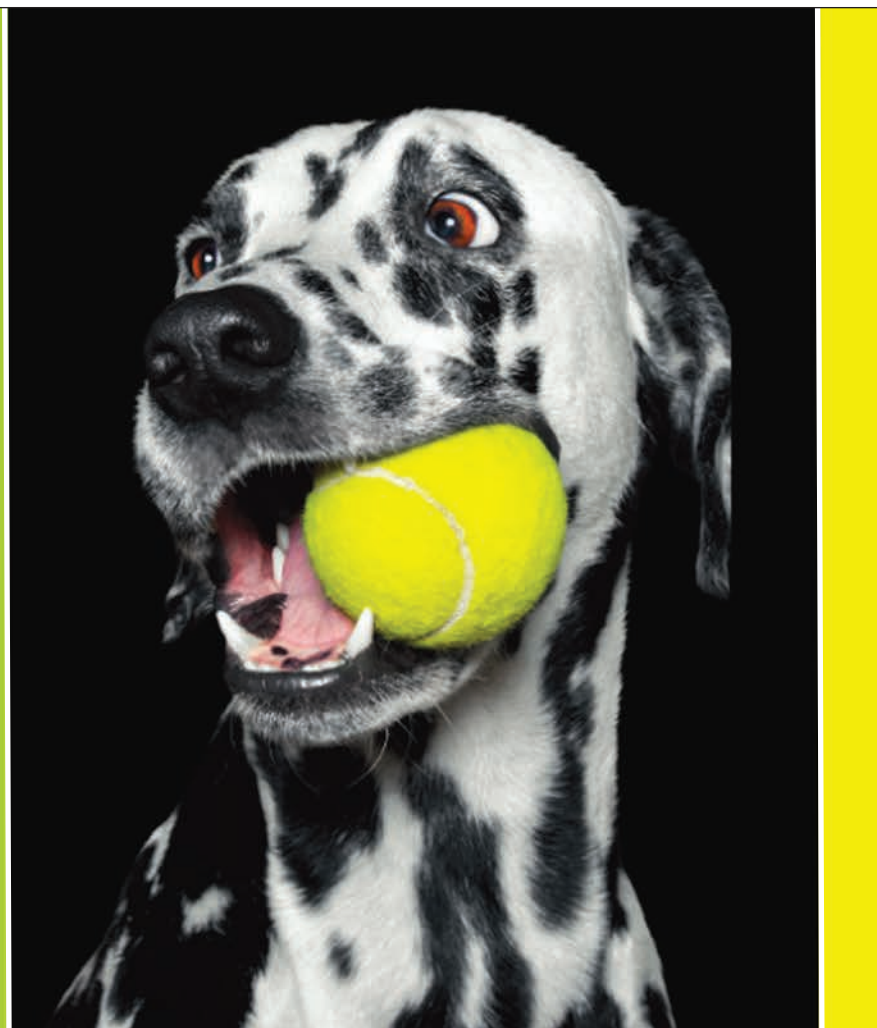
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COVID-19 and HIV

Dr. Clinton Haley talks about stopping the spread of coronavirus and who's most vulnerable

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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"This is new territory for everybody," said Dr. Clinton Haley of North Texas Infectious Disease Consultants.

He was talking about COVID-19 in general and its effects on people with HIV specifically. Even for someone who is successfully being treated with medication and whose viral load is undetectable, he began by saying, "Currently, there's not enough information."

But he also said there's no evidence that a person with HIV is at higher risk. Still, people with a compromised immune system should err on the side of caution and take extra precautions.

What is of concern are other factors that may affect people with HIV. Half of the population living with HIV is older than 50, and the death rate with COVID-19 increases for people in their 60s, 70s and 80s. The first fatality in Dallas County was a man in his 90s.

"That [age] is the big risk factor," Dr. Haley said.

People with HIV are also at risk because of other conditions they may have, either related to or independent of their HIV. Those with high blood pressure, heart conditions, diabetes and cancer, especially those undergoing chemotherapy, are at higher risk of serious illness from the coronavirus, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Here's what's interesting about any possible treatments: Many of the drug trials involve medications developed for HIV or as a result of HIV research.

In Australia, trials of a two-drug cocktail of the malarial drug Chloroquine

and the HIV medication Lopinavir have begun. Trials of Gilead's antiviral drug Remdesivir have begun in China and at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and, according to Dr. Haley, will begin soon in Dallas.

Remdesivir is in the class of nucleotide analog antivirals that have been used in treating the Ebola virus and the Marburg virus that works by hindering entry of the virus into cells making replication inside the body harder.

So, HIV medications may have some effect protecting people from coronavirus, we actually don't have any proof of that yet, and the drugs in the trials are not those most people with HIV are taking.

To keep people with HIV from contracting the virus, Dr. Haley said those HIV-positive individuals should be very careful about practicing social distancing. He called that the most effective defense we currently have against the virus.

"Don't forget usual health maintenance," he said. That includes getting a flu vaccine and, for people 65 and older, a pneumonia vaccine.

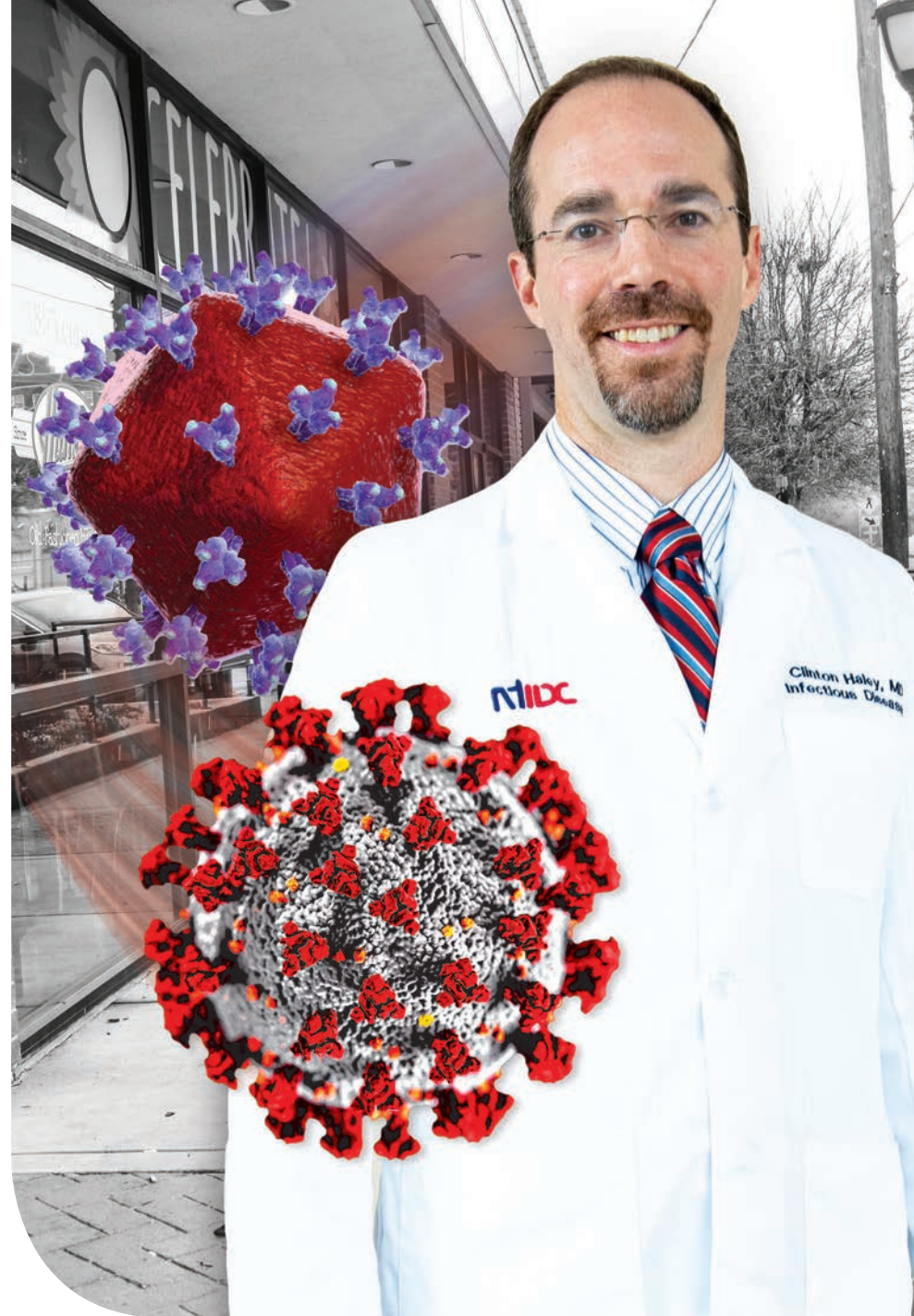
The latest evidence is that Coronavirus can travel more than six feet, so cover a cough or sneeze. The virus can live on a surface up to 45 hours, so wash carefully — but be careful what you touch after that. Washing is useless if you handle a doorknob that has the virus on it immediately afterwards. And Dr. Haley said using a paper towel from the bathroom may only offer a small amount of protection.

If you are suffering from flu-like symptoms, call your doctor. For a respiratory illness, an emergency room will be more prepared to treat you than your doctor. And visiting your doctor's office could infect the office and pass the virus along to all of that physician's other patients.

For an emergency room visit, Dr. Haley suggested calling that ER in advance.

One reason this virus is easier to pass along to others is the period of contagion. Dr. Haley said that with the 2003 SARS outbreak that peaked with 8,000 cases, you knew you were sick quickly. With COVID-19, you may show no symptoms for up to a week. And even then, symptoms may be mild before more serious respiratory illness appears. Some people won't get very sick from the virus, but they can still spread it if they have it.

As of Tuesday, March 17, there have been 4,226 cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. and more than 145,000 cases around the



Dr. Clinton Haley

world. In the U.S., 75 deaths have been reported as of March 17. That's almost a 2 percent death rate in the U.S. SARS had about a 10 percent death rate and the flu has about a .1 percent mortality rate.

Dr. Haley called this week's closings of bars, restaurants, theaters and gyms a step in the right direction, although he would prefer a coordinated approach throughout the DFW area. Tarrant County has limited occupancy in public places, but restaurants and bars are open, and no restrictions have been announced yet for Collin County and Denton counties.

If the U.S. is successful in lowering infection rates, and if any of the drugs in trial are successful, Dr. Haley expects to see a turnaround in three to four months. He said it's possible there will be a sea-

sonal subsidence as there is with the flu, but then we can expect COVID-19 to reappear next winter as the flu does.

It's also unclear if this coronavirus lingers in the body and if so, instead of developing immunity, some people could suffer a relapse.

To protect yourself, Dr. Haley suggested social distancing, avoiding crowds, coughing into your elbow, washing your hands frequently and avoiding common surfaces like door handles, elevator buttons.

And what's the safest way to patronize restaurants that are now only open for take out? Delivery avoids contact with other people standing in line but adds another set of hands touching the bag the food is packed in. A drive through window is probably the safest. ■

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Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

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- ▶ **Severe liver problems,** which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark “tea-colored” urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
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Ignoring good advice

Becoming healthy sometimes involves disregarding everyone else's two cents

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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Ruby Walker was 16 when she began writing *Advice I Ignored*, stories about how she went from being numb, silent and miserable to becoming a joyous, loudmouth lesbian (her description of herself, not mine) in just a year.

At 19, Walker is a freshman at Trinity College in San Antonio as well as a published author and is delightful to talk to — more joyous than loudmouth.

(Two years ago, after my husband died, I was given lots of advice about grief that I had to ignore at the time. So the title of her book instantly attracted me. The advice she had to ignore was about depression.)

"I got good advice," she acknowledged. But she greeted that advice with a certain amount of arrogance mixed with a dose of depression that made her unable to accept the good advice at the time.

People kept telling her, "Ruby, you need to be less hard on yourself." And that was good advice. But at the time, she just wasn't ready to follow it.

Walker said her depression was a combination of things. For one, she hated the school she was attending. In addition, she had suffered some sexual abuse when she was younger. And there was a chemical element to her depression that runs in her family.

But she was able to make herself more healthy.

"I had to start getting exercise three times a week to stimulate my endor-

phins," Walker explained. So she started walking 30 minutes a day. Then she began running; it took a year before she was able to run a mile.

But it helped, she said, because she was doing "something measurable to see progress."

Walker ran alone, because she didn't want to compete with anyone else, and

"My mom is the best person I know," she said, adding that her mother told her, "If you turn out to be gay, I'll love you."

She said her mother's guidance and support are important to her and are one reason she wrote the book. As many in the LGBT community know, she said, if your family isn't your support, your friends can become your family.



she achieved a nine-minute mile. While she'll never be fast, that wasn't her goal anyway.

So what is her advice about exercise? Do some. Do something more than you're doing now. Do something measurable, so you can see improvement, but don't be hard on yourself if you don't see dramatic improvement quickly. For Walker, that time she's running alone is time to just think.

And yes, Walker said she understands this is advice you might ignore. But like her, when you're ready to take that advice, you will.

Walker said that being lesbian wasn't a factor in her depression — at least not directly.

Today, Walker said she takes advice differently: "Sometimes it's not the right time for advice," she explained, but rather than just dismiss the advice, "keep it in your pocket."

As Walker came out, she got to release some of her fears that contributed to her depression. When she was younger, she worried about men thought she was pretty. But, "Being lesbian, I got to let go of what men thought of me."

Still, that gave way to other fears — fears more tied to being a woman than to being a lesbian. For instance, Walker said, she fears she'll be out somewhere, a guy will hit on her and, when she rejects him, he'll attack her.

For teen girls, Walker explained, being

afraid you aren't desirable is the same kind of fear as being afraid you aren't worthy of love. And when she was able to disentangle that, she said, she felt more self worth.

While bullying is certainly a problem, Walker said bullying from the inside can be the most dangerous to your health. "I used half my brain to criticize what I was doing," she said, describing how she would look in the mirror and think she had the ugliest face.

So she decided to peel off layers of bullying and figure out how to redirect her thoughts to be kinder. She made a consistent effort to find things that made it better. Those little bits of progress, she said, made her happier and healthier.

"When I recovered from depression, I returned to how I was as a kid," Walker said. Of course, she explained, she knew she was becoming an adult, but shedding her depression let her enjoy the world the way she did as a child. She enjoyed her friends in a way she did when she was younger. She learned not to blame herself or worry about things she couldn't change.

She cited the situation with her best friend as an example. Her best friend's mom was worried Walker would turn her daughter into a lesbian, too, and she didn't like when Walker called. Of course, Walker said, that wasn't going to happen, because her daughter was already a lesbian.

"Being lesbian can be healthy," Walker said. "Let yourself be lesbian unapologetically. Enjoy your life and the good things about it."

She had some more advice that you may ignore until you're ready to accept it: "Care for yourself," she said. There's nothing about me I have to fix. I learned how to love myself from my friends. You are just as deserving of love, respect and care."

Advice I Ignored by Ruby Walker is available from Amazon.

COVID-19 in North Texas

Where things stand now

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Less than a week after declaring a public health emergency state of disaster, Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson and Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins on Monday afternoon (March 16) announced new regulations intended to stem the spread of COVID-19 in the area that included requiring most public entertainment venues — including bars — to close temporarily, while restaurants can continue take-out and delivery but must suspend dine-in options.

Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price also announced new regulations on Monday requiring public venues, including restaurants and bars, to restrict occupancy at any given time to 50 percent of the maximum occupancy allowed on their city permits, but no more than 125 people at a time. Both Price and Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley have declared public health emergencies in their jurisdictions last week.

Officials in all four jurisdictions were meeting this week to vote on extending the state of disaster dates while the Plano City Council on Tuesday, March 16, voted to close all restaurants and bars in that city beginning at 5 p.m. Wednesday through April 27, and to extend the declaration of emergency, after Mayor Harry LaRosiliere issued a seven-day declaration on Monday.

In other recent developments, in Dallas, Johnson announced on Wednesday the creation of the Ad Hoc Committee on COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Assistance and the Ad Hoc Committee on COVID-19 Human and Social Recovery and Assistance. Both of the new committees will recommend strategies to help the city mitigate the impact of

COVID-19 and to recover from effects of the disease’s spread.

Each committee will have seven members and two co-chairs.

Councilmembers Paula Blackmon and Casey Thomas will co-chair the Ad Hoc Committee on COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Assistance. The committee’s members are City Councilmembers Tennell Atkins, Adam Bazaldua, Lee Kleinman, Chad West and Mayor Pro Tem Adam Medrano.

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Adam McGough and Councilmember Cara Mendelsohn will co-chair the Ad Hoc Committee on COVID-19 Human and Social Recovery and Assistance. The committee’s members are Councilmembers Carolyn King Arnold, David Blewett, Jennifer Staubach Gates, Omar Narvaez and Jaime Resendez.

As of March 18, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services, there are 83 cases of COVID-19 and two deaths. One of the deaths was in Tarrant County where officials said “a senior man” died in Arlington. The other death was a Matagorda County man in his 90s.

So far, Dallas County, with 15 cases, has the largest number of COVID-19 cases, followed by Harris County with



Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins

10. There are nine cases in Fort Bend County; six in Collin County; five each in Tarrant and Smith counties; four each in Bexar, Denton and Travis counties; three each in El Paso and Montgomery counties, and two each in Brazoria and Galveston counties.

Bell, Bowie, Brazos, Gregg, Hays, Lavaca, Matagorda, Medina, Rusk and Webb counties have each reported one case of COVID-19, and one case is still pending county assignment.

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Getting through this together

The COVID-19 epidemic is hitting all of us hard, and we have to support each other to get through it

As I sit here and write this, holed up alone in my apartment, I'm scared — scared not only for my own future, but also the future for family and friends that I love so much. This world that I live in has changed drastically in almost the blink of an eye.

I'm terrified at the things to come, and, frankly, it consumes my every thought. I've had more than my fair share of people say to me, "This virus is nothing," or "This is all hoax."

I can assure you, it is neither of those things! This is real, and it is real fucking awful.

This virus has turned my life upside down, and I'm sure it's done the same for yours. We all have people in our lives that we care about and love who are at a higher risk of serious illness; right now, we should be thinking about them more than anything else.

We need to listen to the CDC and do what they tell us. We need to stay safe and take the necessary precautions to stay healthy.

Do NOT take this thing lightly! I don't care if you're young and healthy and think it hasn't affected you much yet. Look where you were two weeks ago; I bet your life was different then. I bet you could go do things you can't do now. I bet your mindset on life has changed a bunch in the last 14 days.

I know mine has.

Right now, it's VITAL that we support each other. Quarantining myself is not going to be fun. It's going to be very lonely. It's going to be scary. It's going to be very sad.

I worry about my family 500 miles away. Are they taking the necessary steps to protect themselves? I wish I could be closer to support them!

I worry about my friends. Do they have enough food to weather the storm? Are they sick or healthy? How are they hold-



Chad Mantooth
Contributing Columnist

ing up mentally?

Support is what we all are going to need to come out in good shape on the other side of this. Your mental health is

They're the ones that are hurting the most right now. We have taken a HUGE hit at Dallas Voice, so I've seen this devastation first hand.

Small businesses will be the first ones that will have to shut their doors. Financially, this is going to hurt EVERYONE. But I feel like most people are like me and want to help those that are in need in desperate times, so I hope that you will do the right thing and shop the mom and pop shops of the world before going to a chain restaurant or big box store.

Real talk here: This is going to be



every bit as important as your physical health. So, it's imperative that you take care of yourself and your loved ones mentally and emotionally, too. Check in with them. FaceTime them. Text, email, call them.

We have the tools to stay in touch, and so we should. We all are scared, and, in the midst troubling times, it's important to lean on those in our lives for support.

Don't be too proud to also say you need help or just want to talk.

I started writing this because I felt it was important to remind people to support the small businesses that have supported our community over the years.

rough. It's going to SUCK! It's going to get crazier every day, and things will seem out of control. The best piece of advice I can give to you is to not only take care of yourself physically but also mentally. You've made it this far in life, so you're a tough cookie, and together we can make it a few months more.

If you get bored and want to chat me up, you can find me on facebook or instagram @chadman2th, or you can drop me an email if you wanna talk: chadman2th@gmail.com. We can get through it together.

Chad Mantooth is advertising director of Dallas Voice.

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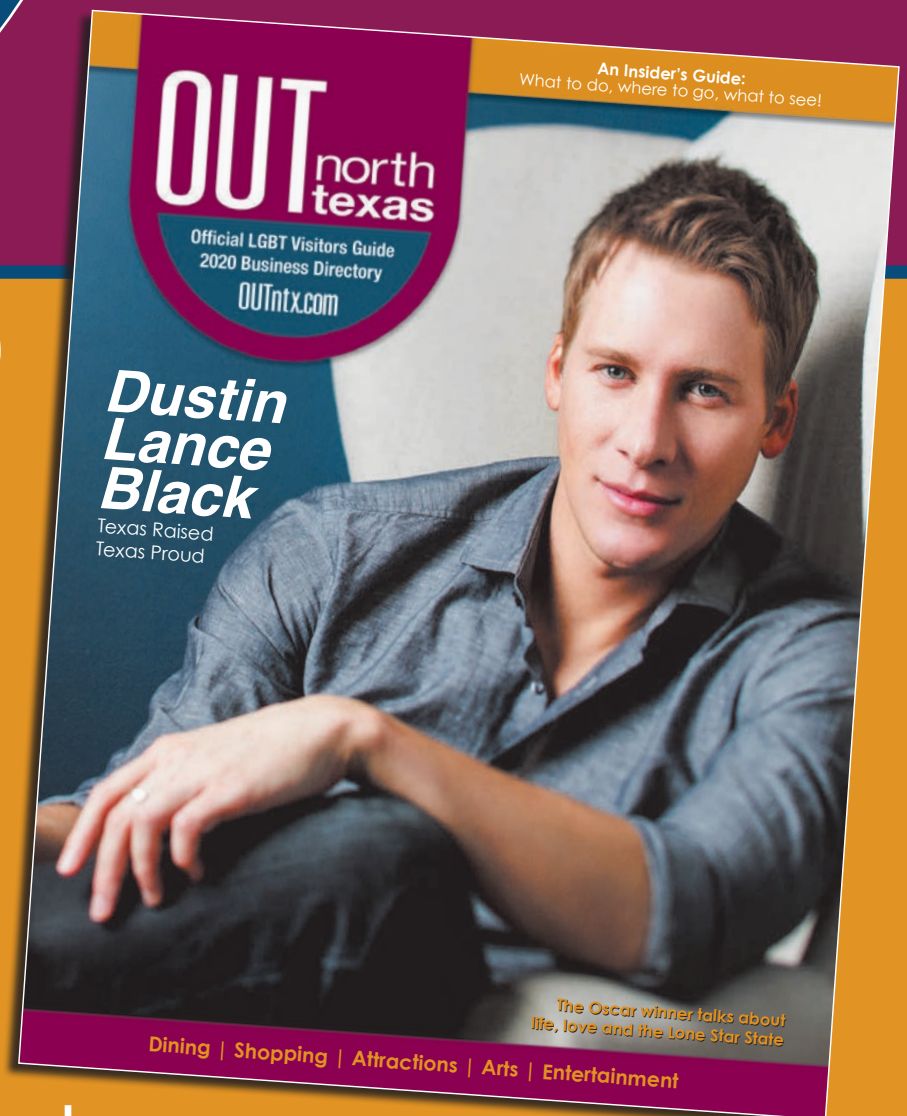
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Imaginary worlds

Gay poet Richard Blanco's life has straddled many worlds, but his work always brings him home... wherever that may be

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES | Executive Editor
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When Richard Blanco stepped onto the podium atop the Capitol steps on Jan. 20, 2013, to deliver a reading of his new poem "One Today," he simultaneously stepped into the history books: Only the fifth inaugural poet ever, and the youngest, the first immigrant, first Latino and first openly gay one. And since then, it has been just one step after another. The inaugural experience threw him into the public consciousness like few poets have been since Robert Frost was a popular cultural figure. He has published several books of poetry since then as well as written poems commissioned specifically for several milestones in gay life: "One Pulse — One Poem" in honor of the victims of the Pulse nightclub massacre; and "Until We Could," celebrating marriage equality nationwide.

For his scheduled (now canceled) appearance at the Dallas Museum of Art during National Poetry Month — April, which Eliot called "the cruelest month" — Blanco was to debut yet another original poem, one inspired by artwork contained in the collection of the new exhibition *My | gration*, acknowledging the immigrant experience. (Public events have been put on hold in light of COVID-19, which has impacted his reading; we spoke beforehand, while he was working on the poem.)

Blanco — conceived in Havana, born in Madrid, reared in Miami and now a resident of Maine — had just decided on the subject matter of his poem when we talked but had not yet begun to write it. But he shared his thoughts on the role of poetry in contemporary America, its musical roots and the one term that defines every poem he's ever written. ■

Dallas Voice: When you get a commission, especially one where you have to be essentially inspired by a particular topic or occasion, what is your approach to writing? Richard Blanco: Each one is a little bit different. I often get commissions for occasional poems — usually for nonprofits or in celebration of a cause, like freedom to marry. But I've also been commissioned by advertising agencies for artful kinds of ad campaigns, which I find amazing and phenomenal that they can incorporate poetry into that space. My last book actually has 12 poems based on photographs. So I've had a lot of practice [with commissions]!

Any poem based on a work of art is called an ekphrastic poem, and I find them fascinating to work on because it's a different kind of prompt. My process is to think about it, breathe with it. [In the case of the DMA], I looked through all the pieces of the catalogue [before deciding what to write about]. And I decided not to write about a single piece but the larger story of immigration — to pick little elements from the various pieces. I was inspired, in part, by a pair of leather shoes made in Peru between 1,000 and 1,400, even though that doesn't speak [to my immigration story personally]. I will speak more broadly about what this is about the constant patterns of migration, the struggles and dreams involved in all of that. I want to claim a lot of different pieces of [the immigration experience].

If you were commissioned to write a song, you'd probably write something that took about three minutes to perform, but a poem can be 17 syllables or a multivolume epic. How do you know when a poem is "done?" The interesting thing about an occasional poem is, you always have to find the parameters. That's also the horrible part about [writing in] free verse — no one's telling you the [rhyme scheme], or what it should include versus exclude. You can make the mistake of thinking the poem is *just* about the occasion, when you are a *part* of the occasion. Every poem is different — but is it a personal narrative? Can it be a first person plural poem? I'm thinking [for the DMA] about addressing the listener directly. Poems are ultimately an expression of your feelings [and] making the audience care and feel what you're feeling. At the end of the day it's like music — if the poet



isn't feeling anything, the audience won't. The poet is always the emotional guide who tells you how to feel with him. It has its DNA in music.

Interesting you say that, because Bob Dylan famously said he only became a musician because he wanted to make a living as a poet, and that was his "in." I gotta say, I find it interesting that no American poet has ever won the Nobel Prize for Literature ... except Bob Dylan! I've written the lyrics for a Gershwin orchestra piece called *Cuban Overture* [which really wasn't meant to have lyrics]. But poetry has a tradition in music. What gets replaced is that your voice is the instrument. When someone is reading it [aloud], he can use inflections and hold a note like you would on a song. But slowly our access to music [on our phones especially] has replaced the desire poetry used to fulfill. Poetry has enjoyed the lesser limelight [compared to music]— it's a matter of page versus stage. Access to [poetry] decreased.

So what is the role of a poet in modern American society? Like any other art form, poetry has gone through many stages; we got a little heady there for a little while [in the Renaissance]. We see how powerful that vein of the poet being the voice of the village's conscience. There's something about poetry... we understand without understanding. But we aren't being taught how to appreciate poetry like we used to. If we have a bad experience with a poem, often as a kid, we say we "hate poetry." But that's like reading a bad book and saying you hate books! In other countries, [the people are more connected to poetry]. Also, more poems tend to have a lot more repetition and rhyme [in Spanish-language poetry]. And more poets get

jailed! But all art forms — poetry, music — are related because they spring from a need to connect to another human being and serve different needs in our society.

It's ironic, to me at least, that your training is in math and engineering, yet you write free verse. I'd expect you would have loved the discipline of meter.

People think I'm kinda nuts, but I started writing *because* of engineering. I grew up in a working-class immigrant family — we had no books in the house, at least none that weren't related to learning English as a second language. My first engineering job was, like, 50 percent writing — reports and letters and such. The success of the firm depended on winning a proposal, which you did by writing a compelling narrative, so I started geeking out on language. There's more left-brain stuff going on in poetry that many people understand. It's like problem-solving — the pieces of an emotional puzzle. But also, when I'm designing, say, a bridge, there's a moment of flow where all the pieces are coming together. Everything isn't siloed and separate; it's the synthesis of knowledge and skills.

So the one-line summary of you is: Immigrant, Latino, gay — a trifecta of marginalized identities. Do you have a connection among those — or others — that inspire you more, propel your poetry? Even in poems about gay topics, you tend to include references to the Caribbean and/or Latino culture or terminology. I always say — though I may have stolen this from somebody — that every poet is rewriting one poem all their lives: that there's one kind of centralized obsession that informs your entire

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Outrageous Fortune



Queermedian Fortune Feimster brings her salty sweetness to stage and screen

Comedian and actress Fortune Feimster is practically everywhere these days. Her hilarious Netflix special *Fortune Feimster: Sweet & Salty* premiered in January and is so funny you may find yourself repeatedly falling out of your seat. But that's just a tiny fraction of her comedy domination of late. She provides the voice of Brenda on the animated Fox series *Bless the Harts*; can be seen as Heather in the reboot *The L Word: Generation Q*; has two new movies scheduled to open in theaters this year (*Deported* and *Friends-giving*); and is currently embarking on a multi-city comedy tour, which was supposed to bring her to Dallas; it has, like most public events, been postponed due to coronavirus concerns. Nevertheless, the out personality carved out some time to chat about her love of the South, playing a Fairy Gay Mother and her shout-outs to Hooters and Chili's.

— Gregg Shapiro

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Dallas Voice: What do you enjoy most about performing at a Pride festival?

Fortune Feimster: I like it because to me it's a big celebration. The community comes together to be proud of who they are and to celebrate with each other; how far we've come and to remember what work needs to be done still. To get to be part of it is a really special thing because I remember how important the Pride festivals were when I was first coming out. How good it felt to finally find my own community, where I felt like I fit in.

You have been increasingly busy, beginning with your Netflix standup comedy special *Sweet & Salty*. Your mother does your introduction for *Sweet & Salty* and she also figures prominently in your standup. Does she have a good sense of humor? Oh, 100 percent. My entire family has a really great sense of humor. I don't know where that stems from. I guess my parents liked to joke and they passed that down to us. When life would get difficult or there were challenges — money was always an issue, paying bills was hard, tragedy would happen or losing a loved one — somehow my family managed to find the silver lining in it or we would crack a joke to break the tension or the sadness. No matter what we were going through, there was always some-

body in my family who would make a joke or try to make people happy. I think that I just naturally got that from growing up that way. Now that I'm a comedian, my mother loves the jokes, even if [laughs] she's the butt of the jokes sometimes. She knows it comes from a place of love. She's able to laugh with everybody else. She comes to my stand-up shows when she can. I'll tell jokes, and people will look at her like, "Is that true?" and she's like, "Yeah, it's all true!" She wears that stuff as a badge of honor.

Has anyone at Chili's or Hooters corporate reached out to you after your shout-outs to their dining establishments in your special? [Laughs] Chili's has reached out because, for a couple of years now, I have expressed my love of Chili's. Their social media person has been acquainted with me and would send me stuff from Chili's. They saw my special and sent me a package with tequila and margarita mix and Chili's margarita glasses saying they enjoyed my special and the margaritas are for celebrating the sweet and salt. That was really nice. I like that they have a good sense of humor, too. But I haven't heard from Hooters! I can't believe it because I've talked about them everywhere, even on the Colbert show. And nothing! I don't know where their so-

cial media person is, but they need to hook a girl up with some chicken wings.

Your coming out story is a part of *Sweet and Salty*, and you also mentioned being raised Methodist. That church has been in the news lately due to the split over gay marriage. How do you feel about that? That vote was a tough one. I always looked at the Methodist church as being a bit more open and accepting than some of the other denominations. I was hoping that they would lead the way in being more inclusive. People in the congregation are split over it. There's talk of it dividing the church with people starting their own part of the denomination. I'm not sure what will happen. I was obviously very disappointed. My mom said she's not sure if she wants to keep going to church there because, if that's how they feel, she doesn't want to be a part of that. In my opinion, I say that having someone like my mom who is inclusive and open-minded, who is showing people how to be in the South, [it] is more important that she is there. Then she's helping change minds one-on-one. She's showing them, here's how you do it. To me, that's powerful and maybe, in the end, can make a big difference. If everyone says they're leaving, then they're not forced to face the decision they made. If you love the church

for many other reasons, stay there and keep being a good advocate for us. Maybe in the end, that will end up being what makes the change.

In *Sweet and Salty*, you talk about how representation matters. Kate McKinnon, who got her start on *Big Gay Sketch Show*, along with Bowen Yang, are breaking ground as out cast members on *SNL*. What would it mean to you to be invited to be a guest host on *SNL*? That would be an amazing thing! I tested twice for that show. They flew me out to New York in 2009 and 2010. I think any comedian grows up watching that show, and it was a big part of their love of comedy and where they learned a lot about comedy. Yes, that would be a huge honor to get to do that. I don't know that I'm close to getting to do that, but if it ever happened one day, obviously that would be the dream.

You are playing one of three Fairy Gay Mothers, along with Margaret Cho and Wanda Sykes, in the upcoming movie *Friendsgiving*, written and directed by Nicol Paone, another of *The Big Gay Sketch Show* alums. What was that experience like? That was fun! I've known Nicole for years. She asked if I'd come

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Rebel with a cause

Bisexual mezzo Jamie Barton adds some queer flair wherever she goes

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES | Executive Editor
jones@dallasvoice.com

Tenors get the love scenes and sopranos get the death scenes, but mezzos? Oh, they have all the fun.

"I love the mezzo roles," coos Jamie Barton, who for the last decade or so has been one of the most in-demand interpreters of parts characterized as "bitches, witches, whores and britches." "Usually I am killing someone. I never do death scenes — I'm the one causing chaos. Mezzos are often third wheels, the women not fully in control of their own destinies... which is basically every woman in history."

That's sort of true for Barton herself. Ever since her early career successes — including being the first female classical singer to win both components of the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition (the "singer" and the "song" prizes) — Barton has been booked for opera performances and recitals years in advance... which may explain why it took so long to *finally* book a performance with the Dallas Opera's *Don Carlo* — which, unfortunately, has been postponed due to social quarantining. (We spoke before the cancellation of public events.)

Her role in *Don Carlo* is one of those chaos-causing parts — Princess Eboli, the lusty, eye-patch-wearing, scene-stealing, vengeance-seeking jilted lover in Verdi's historical grand opera. "I love the part, because I get to steal the show," she laughs.

This isn't the first time Barton has taken on Princess Eboli; like many specialists in Verdi or Baroque opera, finding a singer with the personality





and vocal chops to deliver means opera companies compete for her appearances. “When you sing a specialty like I do, if companies wait too late [to book you] then they don’t have the [artists] available to put on a good show,” she says. And while that means she has job security, it also leaves her less time to explore her side projects — recitals of songs *she* chooses.

“I’m lucky, but it’s also a pain in the butt,” she says about being brought in for a part. “But [my schedule] is clearing up in the next few years, which is great — not because it’s ‘Yay! No jobs!’ but because people are coming to me and saying, ‘What are *you* interested in doing as a creator?’ There have been so few points in my career [before this] with people asking me what I want to create. Recitals are where the singer and her collaborator have control.”

She has recently concluded what she refers to as a “feminist, gender-bending recital tour,” and is already starting to plan the next one. “We are really interested in bringing in the female creative genius [to the classical concert stage],” she says. “I’m not kidding when I say we will have everything from Florence Price to Tori Amos, Fiona Apple and Dolly Parton.”

If Dolly seems a far cry for an opera singer, well you have it backwards. Barton grew up in northwest Georgia on the edge of Appalachia, reared by hippie parents whose idea of “classical music” was Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Rolling Stones; her rebellious teen years were spent learning opera. But she has never been far from American folk music.

And she still has a lot of the rebel in her. Last fall, she caused a stir when she appeared on the last night of BBC Proms — a huge classical music fest — bedecked in a custom-made dress inspired by the bisexual flag.

“For me, the most unifying thing was the Pride flag, designed by a queer designer, Jessica Jahn, and built by the woman who built the *Hamilton* costumes,” she says. “It was studded with Swarovski crystals, so very Elton John.”

The night was magical; Barton calls being able to sing “Rule Britannia” festooned in Pride colors to be one of the signature moments of her public performances and her life. She’ll have to wait to see if performing in Dallas might make a similar impact. ■

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and do it. I was happy to do it just because Margaret and Wanda are both buddies of mine and comics that I respect. To get to do something like that was fun. We were in and out in one day. We weren't a big part of the movie, but it was cool to pop up and play this silly part in the company of two great performers like that. It was awesome.

You have also been on *The L Word: Generation Q* as Heather. Describe that experience. I was such a fan of the original show because, going back to representation matters, they were iconic in that not a lot people had seen a show like

that when it came out. I certainly hadn't. I wasn't out yet when it first came out, so to see women in relationships and dating and doing all kinds of things, it blew my mind. It certainly had an effect on me back when I first watched it. Then to come full circle, now I'm out, I'm an out comedian. I'm hopefully being a part of someone else's representation experience. I was such a tiny part of it; honestly it was just a cameo. But for me it was cool to be on set. It's cool to be a part of a show that's having another moment with a new generation.

***Sweet and Salty* was filmed in Charlotte, N.C., and you are a Belmont, N.C. na-**

tive. What makes that area so appealing to you? I really wanted to do my special there because I think when people think of the South they have a preconceived notion of what that's going to look like and what people are like there. I just wanted to show that there are people like that, but there are also people like me there. Here's my experience as a Southern person. I think that's an important story to tell and see because you forget that there are all kinds of people in every part of the country. I wanted to represent my area in that way as an out gay person. Also, it was important to me because the story is autobiographical,



and it made sense to tell stories about my childhood 30 minutes from where I grew up. I wanted my family to be there, but also the people in my hometown of Belmont have been so supportive of me and so accepting of me from day one. I've never gotten any negativity from my hometown for being gay. Long before I was hired to do comedy, they would let me perform in the back of bars. A hundred of them would pay five dollars to watch this newbie stand-up practice being a comic. They supported me long before anybody cared, and it felt right to share that big moment with them.

■ WORLDS From Page 15

body of work. For me that comes down to the word "home" — community, belonging, being marginalized, cultural identity and even sexuality. No matter what I'm writing about, it always comes back to those central pieces. It's a mélange of things that are circling around that [idea]. You grow up with a longing for a sense of place where you can finally live your life without fear and supported by a community. That's why [the Pulse nightclub massacre was so horrific, and inspired his poem "One Pulse — One Poem"]. As a gay man of my generation, gay clubs aren't just a place to dance and pick up men but where you navigate your coming out process, where you learn the ropes. I've been married for 20 years, but I still go into clubs to check in once in a while.

There was a video made of your poem "Until We Could" that has some big Texas connections: It was co-directed by two Texas filmmakers, Yen Tan (who is gay) and David Lowery (who is straight). That's awesome! It was a really interesting project. I knew it would be a film from the start, so the poem was really like a script for a short film. So as I wrote it, I imagined what it would look like as a film. But [the filmmakers] didn't involve me in the creative process at all. I had something more artsy-fartsy in mind — black and white with Angelina Jolie and something ethereal! But I'm glad they did it their way — they knew their audience.



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Just because most public events have been postponed, canceled or scaled back doesn't mean there aren't still ways to spend your free time... with an emphasis on "free." In this space in the coming weeks, we will suggest activities to maximize your self-isolation — TV, music, books, games, movies, podcasts

and the like. So don't fret! We got you covered ... starting with shows to stream in your down time.

We all love to binge-watch series, but with so many options out there — and only so much time in the day — just culling through the choices can be paralyzing, especially when it comes to new shows. Here are some suggestions.



The Outsider.

We're not quite sure when Stephen King moved from the category of guilty pleasure into literary fiction, but the fact Hollywood has treated so much of his oeuvre respectfully in recent years puts it far away from the campy miniseries and quickie horror films of the past. HBO's adaptation of his book about a mysterious entity committing atrocities in other people's bodies just concluded its 10-episode run. Hmm... a deadly force that jumps from person to person but people don't believe it exists...? Sounds familiar.



Little Fires Everywhere.

Reese Witherspoon, who in recent years has rivaled Oprah and Ellen in her near-domination of TV, returns to the miniseries format with her fourth outing in as many years (following two seasons of *Big Little Lies* on HBO and *The Morning Show* on Apple+). This one, based on the 2017 book, has already dropped the first three of its seven eps on Hulu, with the fourth to come in a week and one each Wednesday until April 15 ... by which time, hopefully, you'll be out of quarantine.



Killer Inside: The Mind of Aaron Hernandez.

If you're not a sports gay, you may not have followed the brief but exciting career of NFL tight end Aaron

Hernandez, who committed suicide in prison following his conviction for murder. How could an athlete at the top of his game go so wrong? This thoughtful three-part miniseries cogently and deeply explores the factors contributing to his behavior, including repressed homosexuality and traumatic brain injury. It's a compelling and sympathetic portrayal of a human being in crisis without diminishing the horrors of his actions.

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Girl on girls

Jenny Block contemplates love in the time of coronavirus

Being with someone in the best of times is easy. It's when things get not too pretty that you learn an awful lot about yourself, about the person you're with and about whether or not a relationship between the two of you can really work. I'm a thinker (read: "over-thinker," i.e., someone whose brain is constantly spinning) and a hypochondriac. My wife is serious Type-A and a fixer above all else. I can tell you one thing for sure: Those two personality types have *verrrrry* different responses to a pandemic. I can tell you something else for sure too: The pair do just fine together.

The coronavirus panic seemed to spread much like the virus itself — quickly through the air with each breath, doubling its reach as it went. It seemed like in a flash it went from idea to reality, from "It won't affect us" to "Looks like we're going to be home for a while." And, well, now, I don't know what to think about *anything*... other than the fact that I know for sure I picked the best person in the world to be hunkered down with (for me, at least).

My wife and I balance each other out in a lot of ways. Facing this impending crisis is magnifying that fact now more than ever. Part of me wants to lock myself in my study and not come out. In fact, part of me wants to isolate in every way. I don't want to hear any more news or watch any more reports or even talk to anyone else — virtually or otherwise — because it seems like the only thing anyone can talk about is the virus and how screwed we are or how it's no big deal or how Trump is literally responsible for the death toll that rises every day, which is 100 percent true.

But our TV is on. And I am on social media. And I am continuing to be a part of the conversation for one reason and one reason alone: my wife. She is the voice of reason. She keeps the TV and the radio on, but she also keeps her filters on high alert so that she can take in what is useful and block out what is just noise. It's the filter thing that I have the most trouble with. I have ageing parents and a daughter who is away at college. I'm scared to the core, and it would be easy to fall off the deep end... fast.

My wife is in a tough spot. She won't let herself get scared, because that means I'll be scared too, and then all is lost. So, I have to do my best to allow her to be a little afraid, because, come on, we are all a little afraid. An incompetent fool is at the helm. It's a scary time.

I'm looking for ways to help her to let go, and I am working at allowing her to help me to stay calm, but, more than anything, I am feeling grateful for having a partner who helps me stay grounded and who I can help to accept that sometimes things are tough and there's no fix and it too will pass.

In some ways, it seems like there is very



little we can do right now. Events are cancelled. Travel is not recommended. Large groups are to be avoided. But suddenly, we have something that we so often find ourselves longing for. Down time. Time at home. And, best of all, time with our partners. How you choose to pass that time says a lot about you both and about your relationship.

This is the time to do the things we always say we want to do and to reconnect with the person with whom we don't get to spend enough time. We're *finally* going to clean out our storage unit. I'm going to reorganize my craft closet. We're going to do puzzles. (Don't tell my wife. I haven't told her yet...) We're going to play backgammon and Scrabble and Rummikub. We're going to sit in the sunroom and read those books that have been beckoning us and yet gathering dust nonetheless. We're going to talk and laugh and cry and hold each other up and get through this.

Things are not good. They're just not. And I don't think I'd be wrong in saying that they will likely get worse before they get better. But we have a choice right now: We can choose to be part of the problem or part of the solution, and we can choose to let this time slip away from us, or we can make good use of it. Really, really good use.

Wash your hands. Stay at home or at least away from crowds as much as possible. Be kind to everyone, including yourself. Take a breath. Check in on your neighbors, especially those at high risk. Allow yourself to cry or dance or scream or hike or whatever you need to do to get through this. And, above all else, be gentle with your partner. Show some grace. And find one another again. That may be the one gift we get out of this whole disaster. So, at the very least, we should have that.

Contact the author at GirlOnGirls@gmail.com.

this week's solution

T	R	A	C	I	B	I	R	D	I	C	E	S
A	I	D	E	N	A	L	O	E	M	A	T	T
S	C	E	N	E	L	A	N	A	P	R	A	Y
T	H	E	T	R	U	L	Y	N	T	U	P	L
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					G	I	F	T	E	D	A	R
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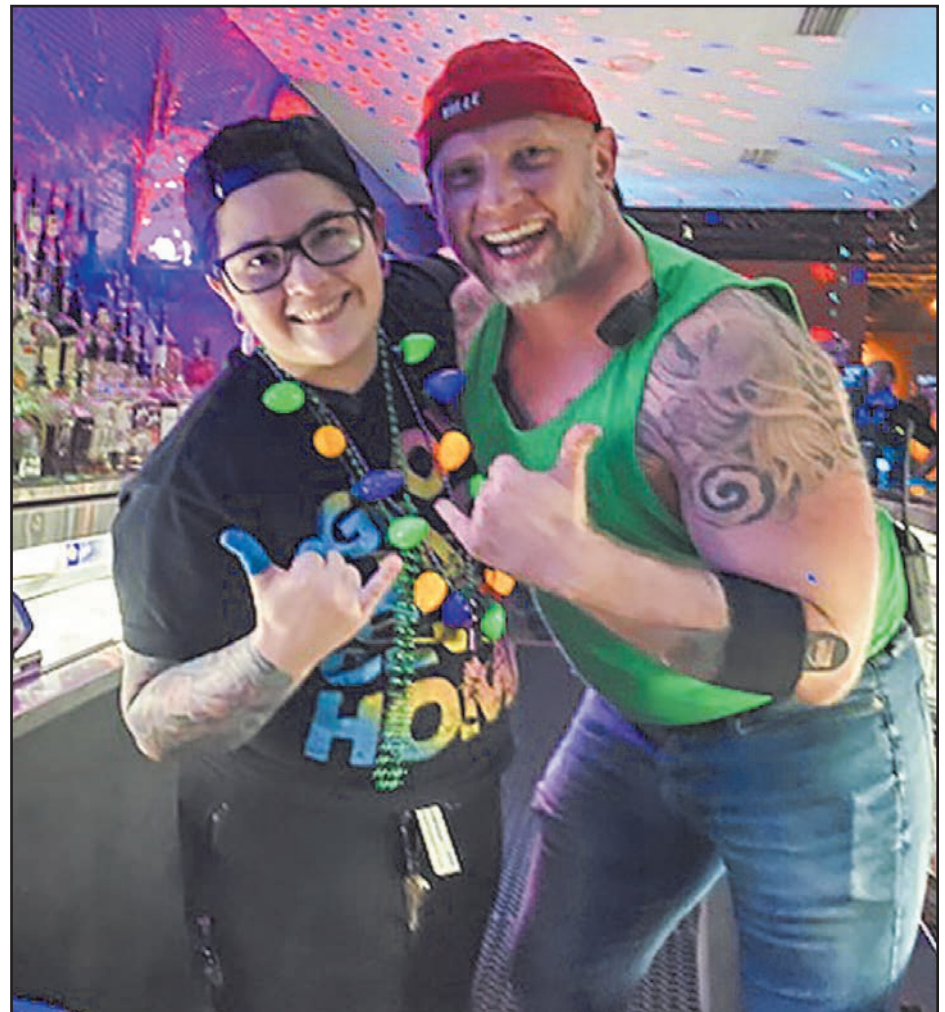
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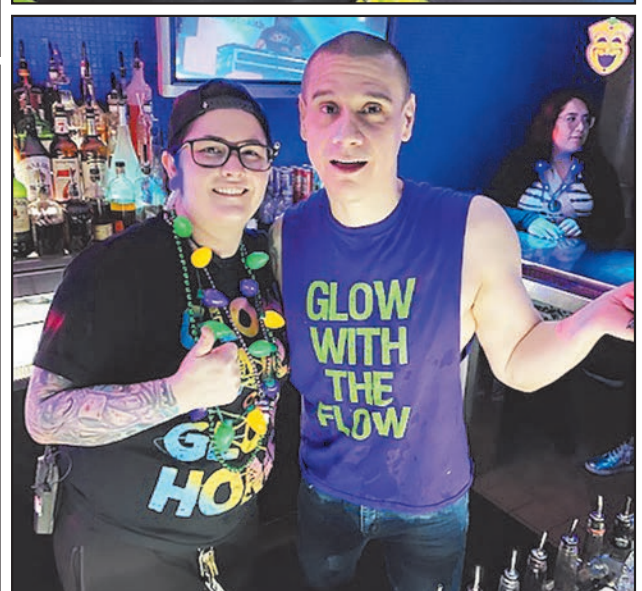
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Tasha Khol at Entertainer of the Year contest.

Looking forward to the bars re-opening





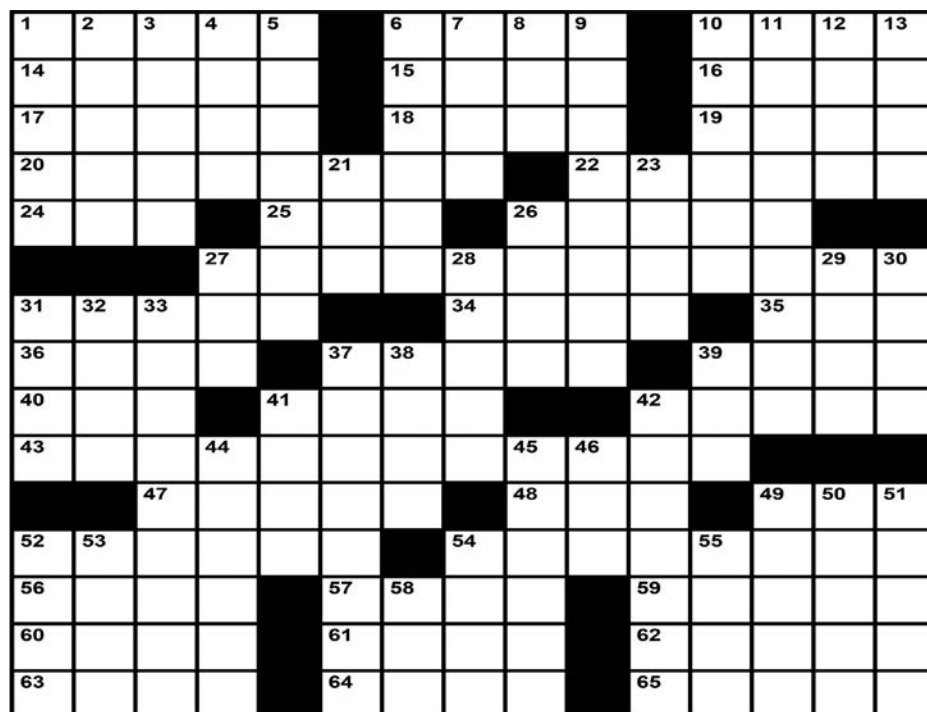
Classic Chassis Car Club

Photography by Leo Cusimano



q-puzzle

The Purpose of Homosexuality



Solution on Page 22

Across

- 1 Chef Des Jardins
- 6 Shuttlecock
- 10 Tops cakes
- 14 Quinn of *Practical Magic*
- 15 Personal lubricant ingredient
- 16 *South Park* cocreator Stone
- 17 Public spectacle
- 18 *Boys Don't Cry* character
- 19 Ask for it while kneeling
- 20 Start of the purpose of homosexuality, per 58-Down
- 22 Sequence of unknown length
- 24 Suffix with profit
- 25 Dickinson's howe'er
- 26 Words of empathy
- 27 More of the purpose
- 31 Mapplethorpe's "Dark ____ Rose"
- 34 Steed stopper
- 35 *In Cold Blood* writer, informally
- 36 "Take a crack ____"
- 37 Bugs or Erin
- 39 One with a foamy head
- 40 Went down on
- 41 Cocksure Aesop character

- 42 Composer Copland
- 43 More of the purpose
- 47 Queens in Las Vegas
- 48 Essen exclamation
- 49 TV spots
- 52 Baum's good witch
- 54 End of the purpose
- 56 WKRP actress Anderson
- 57 Poet Kitty
- 59 Remarkable hole
- 60 Quiche ingredients
- 61 Make money
- 62 Pirate's stash
- 63 Enjoy an Oreo
- 64 Nemesis of Tinkerbell
- 65 Return key on a PC

- 12 It comes at the bottom of a list
- 13 Lid problem
- 21 TV trigram
- 23 Mountain pool
- 26 It comes out of your head
- 27 "Scram!" to Gomer
- 28 Goofed up
- 29 Bite it
- 30 Alternative to "Go straight"
- 31 Swedish import
- 32 Caesar's invite to a threesome?
- 33 Navel adornments
- 37 The guys you're seeing?
- 38 Unrefined metals
- 39 Ebenezer's exclamation
- 41 Bunch of stallions
- 42 Button or Bean
- 44 Like Hans Christian Andersen
- 45 Polynesian woman
- 46 Here to Rimbaud
- 49 Inside tongue?
- 50 Dig (into)
- 51 Look from Snidely
- 52 One side of Ed Wood
- 53 HRC's equal sign
- 54 Treat meat
- 55 "Nuts!"
- 58 Composer/lyricist Austin

Down

- 1 *Queer Eye* discernment
- 2 Nouveau ____
- 3 Maria's "Do" equivalent
- 4 Relief of Lincoln
- 5 Staying power?
- 6 Weapon to use against Trump in November
- 7 "Now ____ me down to sleep ..."
- 8 Political analyst Reagan
- 9 Clark Kent portrayer on TV
- 10 Tainted
- 11 "Top of the World" singer Karen

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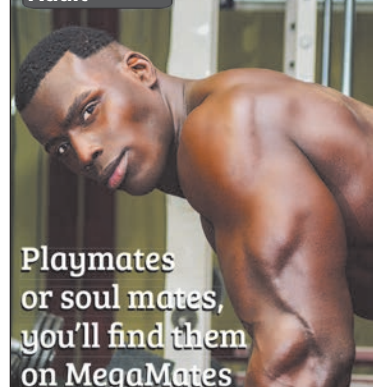
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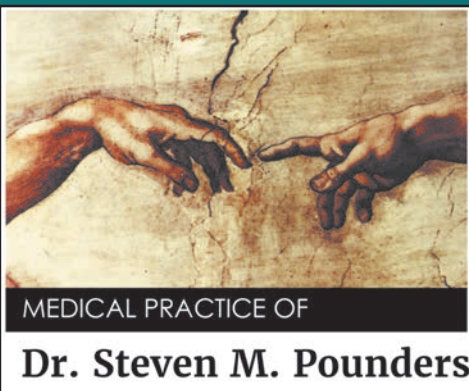
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