What’re y’all doin’?

After going viral on Instagram in 2020, Leslie Jordan has a new TV show, a new book and a new album for 2021

by Chris Azzopardi, Page 12
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House passes Equality Act

The U.S. House of Representatives voted on Thursday, Feb. 25, to pass The Equality Act, legislation which would provide protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, credit, education, public spaces, public funding and jury service. Rep. David Cicilline, a gay Democrat from Rhode Island, re-introduced the bill the previous Thursday, Feb. 18, in the House. All House Democrats and three Republicans voted for the measure.

The Equality Act passed the House of Representatives in 2019 but stalled in the then-GOP-controlled Senate. This time around, with both the House and the Senate under Democratic control, it’s chances of passing Congress are much better. And President Joe Biden promised during his campaign that he would sign the bill into law.

The Equality Act originally filed used the term “sexual preference.” Coleman on Wednesday, Feb. 24, issued a statement apologizing for that terminology and saying it would be replaced with “sexual orientation.”

The legislation as originally filed used the term “sexual preference.” Coleman on Wednesday, Feb. 24, issued a statement apologizing for that terminology and saying it would be replaced with “sexual orientation.”

— Tammye Nash

Gallup poll shows LGBTQ-identified rises to 5.6 percent; census releases LGBTQ data

The latest Gallup survey found that 5.6 percent of Americans identify as LGBTQ. That compares to just 3.5 percent who identified as LGBTQ in 2012 and 4.5 percent in 2017. Only 86.7 percent say they are straight and 7.6 percent didn’t answer the question.

Of those identifying as LGBTQ, more than half say they are bisexual. Almost a quarter identify as gay. Only 12 percent call themselves lesbian and 11 percent transgender. One reason for the lower number of women who identify as lesbian is that women are much more likely than men to identify as bisexual. Overall, more women than men self-identify as LGBTQ.

The biggest increase in people self-identifying as LGBTQ is among those who were 18 to 23 years old in 2020 when the survey was taken. In that group, one in six identifies as LGBTQ. That compares to just one in 50 who identifies as LGBTQ among those 56 and older. One reason for that lower number that Gallup fails to recognize is the number of mostly gay men from the older generations who died of AIDS.

The U.S. Census has also released new data on same-sex couples for 2019, the year before the latest census was taken. For 2019, there were 980,000 same-sex couple households in the U.S. Of that number, 58 percent were married couples. Among both married and unmarried couples, there were more female spouses than male.

The metro areas with the highest percentages of same-sex couples were San Francisco, Portland and Seattle. Both same-sex and opposite-sex married couples were more likely to have children than unmarried couples. Opposite-sex married couples were twice as likely as same-sex married couples to have children.

— David Taffet

Adoptions will be available by appointment. Adopters will need to submit an adoption inquiry form in order to begin the adoption process and schedule an appointment to complete the adoption. Please browse our available animals at spca.org/findapet and visit spca.org/dogadopt to inquire about a dog or spca.org/catadopt to inquire about a cat.

Meet CJ, a 1½-year-old, black mouth cur mix with a great personality! He spent some time in a foster home and has shown that he is a funny, curious boy who loves to explore and play with toys. He came to the SPCA of Texas last year through their Animal Cruelty Investigations Unit, so he did not have the best life before. He can still be a little scared in unfamiliar situations, but he has come a long way. CJ would thrive in a home with another dog as his buddy; he just loves hanging out with friends, and they really bring out his confidence! He’s quite a smart puppy — and has learned tricks like sit, come, stay and down from the staff at the shelter. This goofy, lovable sweetheart is sure to be a loyal companion to anyone willing to give him a chance. CJ is waiting to meet you at the Jan Res-Jones Animal Care Center in Dallas. To request an appointment to meet CJ, please visit spca.org/adopt.

Let’s get life back to normal.

Register for a vaccine at www.dallascountyvaccines.org

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Nadia Winston
MPH, MSN, FNP-BC
At least two new gay candidates seek to join two gay incumbents on the Dallas City Council

David Taffet | Senior Staff Writer

taffet@dallasvoice.com

Three Dallas City Council members have reached their term limit and will not be able to run for re-election, including openly gay Mayor Pro Tem Adam Medrano. Medrano represents District 2, which includes part of Oak Lawn.

Incumbent council members Lee Kleinman in District 11 and Jennifer Gates in District 13 are also ineligible to run. Dallas limits council members to four consecutive two-year terms. Medrano, Gates and Kleinman would be eligible to run again in 2023.

With the deadline for filing passed, each of the 14 seats on the Dallas City Council is contested, with more than 50 candidates having filed to run.

Six candidates have filed to replace Medrano on the council. They are Raha Assadi, Jennifer Cortez, Michael Fetzer, Jesse Moreno, Jonas Park and Sana Syed.

Moreno has served on the park board, and his wife, Monica, works as Medrano’s chief of staff. Park, the only openly gay candidate among the six, has started several businesses and is best known for organizing the community to keep Sam’s Club out of the neighborhood.

The Oak Lawn neighborhood is split between Medrano’s district and District 14, where first-term Councilman David Blewett is running for re-election. Blewett is being challenged by Paul Ridley and Elizabeth Viney, both of whom are lawyers. Blewett, in his first campaign two years ago, was accused of not including the LGBTQ community in his campaign. His first meeting after his election was with LGBTQ leaders in his district.

Ridley has served on the City Plan Commission and the board of the Greater Dallas Planning Council. Both he and Blewett live in East Dallas. Viney, an attorney who was named the winner of The Dallas Foundation’s Good Works Under 40 award in November 2017 for her volunteer work with Advocates for Community Transformation, lives in Lakewood Heights.

District 14 has never been represented by someone living in Oak Lawn.

Leland Burke, who ran against Gates in her first campaign eight years ago, is running for the District 13 seat again. Burke, a real estate investor who is gay, faces Gay Donnell Willis, Dr’On Boulanger-Chatman, Ryan M. Moore and Mac Smith.

Donnell Willis is president and CEO of the Turtle Creek Conservancy that maintains Turtle Creek Park and Arlington Hall. Boulanger-Chatman is director of the Dallas City Council has two other gay incumbents: Omar Narvaez in District 6 and Chad West in District 1.

West, an attorney, faces three challengers in his bid for a second term on the council. They are marketing specialist and real estate agent Stephani A. Kyle, Walmart employee Gerardo Sanchez and teacher and community activist Giovannii Valderas. Valderas also ran for the District 1 seat against West in 2019.

Narvaez is running for a third term. He is opposed by Monica Alonzo, Tony Carrillo, Wendi Macon and Earl Thomas.

Alonzo, board chair for the Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau, was the District 6 incumbent running for her fourth term four years ago when Narvaez beat her by an overwhelming margin. Thomas is a minister at New Mount Zion P.B.C. in West Dallas. Carrillo is a construction manager, and Macon works for a charter school.

With five opponents, the first-term Councilman Adam Bazaldua for District 7 faces the most opposition. The Fair Park-area seat has had a series of one-term council members since Carolyn Davis left the office and was indicted for bribery. Davis and her 26-year-old daughter were killed in a car accident caused by a drunk driver in 2019, after she had pleaded guilty to accepting bribes when she was on the council, but before she could be sentenced.

Among Bazaldua’s challengers are real estate broker Kevin Felder, who held the seat for one term, from 2017-2019, social activist Tramonica Brown, activist Walter “Changa” Higgins, lawyer Calvin D. Johnson, pastor Donald Parish, pastor James Turknett and Realtor Israel Varela.

District 4 Councilwoman Carolyn King Arnold, who represents South Oak Cliff, is running for a fourth term and has four opponents. Arnold won a seat on the council in 2015, but was defeated in 2017 by former council member Dwayne Caraway. Caraway resigned from office under indictment in 2018. King won the special election to replace him in 2018 and was re-elected in 2019. She can serve two more terms before she is limited out.

After sitting out a term due to term limits, District 8 Councilman Tennell Atkins returned to the council last election. He’s now running for a second second consecutive term against three candidates, each of whom has run for the seat before. Atkins’ opponents are Subrina Lynn Brenham, who owns a beauty supply store and a tax services company, activist Lakolya London and activist/musician Davante “Shawt” Peters.

Lake Highlands Councilman Adam McGough, District 10, is running for his fourth and final term and has one opponent — Sirrano Keith Baldeo, owner of Dallas Pulse News.

Four candidates are vying to replace Kleinman in North Dallas’s District 11 — Candy Evans, Jaynie Schultz, Hosanna F. Yemiru and Barry Wenick. Schultz is a businesswoman who has served on the City Plan Commission. Yemiru immigrated to the U.S. from Ethiopia when she was 11. She worked on Rep. Colin Allred’s campaign and was field director for Scott Griggs’ mayoral campaign. Evans is best known for her website CandysDirt.com and is the North Texas editor of CultureMap.com. Wernick is an attorney.

In Oak Cliff, District 3 incumbent Casey Thomas faces maintenance company owner and the city’s former senior facilities manager, Irby Foster.

In Pleasant Grove, the District 5 incumbent Jaime Resendez has drawn three opponents, including HR consultant Ruth Torres, who Resendez beat in a runoff in 2019. Veterinarian and animal clinic founder Terry Perkins and paralegal and former Dallas Park Board member Yolana “Faye” Williams are the other two candidates in that race.

District 9 incumbent Paula Blackmon in East Dallas faces two first-time candidates: chiropractor John Botefuhr and project manager Judy Kumar. In Far North Dallas, District 12 incumbent Cara Mendelsohn is challenged by Elva Curl, a former employee in the office of Sen. John Cornyn and a former city of Dallas employee.

The last day to register to vote in Dallas city elections is April 1. Early voting begins April 19 and runs through April 27. Election Day is May 1, but with this many candidates running, runoffs are almost guaranteed.
Responses overwhelmingly positive to questionnaire

JAMES RUSSELL | Contributing Writer
james.journ@gmail.com

A lot of people are running for Fort Worth City Council. A lot. Nearly 60 people filed to run for mayor and council. That’s in part because Mayor Betsy Price is retiring after a decade in the office, leaving the field wide for contenders that include Councilmembers Ann Zadeh and Dr. Brian Byrd. Another council member, Councilman Dennis Shingleton, is retiring.

The Dallas Voice reached out to as many of the candidates as possible to get their takes on LGBTQ issues. Some responded by deadline; some did not respond, and others were unavailable.

We asked two questions: “Where do you stand on local protections for LGBTQ people?” And, “We have a comprehensive nondiscrimination ordinance and liaison within the FWPD. But do you think we can do more to protect LGBTQ people?”

All of the candidates who responded said they support the LGBTQ community, and they all said more can be done to protect and support the community.

Zadeh is perhaps the most openly pro-LGBTQ candidate for mayor. She currently occupies the council seat previously held by Joel Burns, Wendy Davis and the late Cathy Hirt. Burns is gay, and Davis and Hirt were allies who advocated for LGBTQ rights.

Zadeh, a former planning and zoning commissioner, said as mayor she would do whatever she could to make sure no one in the city is mistreated or denied basic human rights.

“In my time on council, I’ve worked with the LGBTQ community and sought advice on issues impacting them directly,” she said. “Fort Worth has been and always should be an inclusive community. I will do everything I can to support progress.”

Chris Rector, a political newcomer, is an author and disabled veteran who is also running for mayor. He’s focused on transparency, lower taxes, public safety and revitalizing the economy following the COVID-19 pandemic. He’s also an LGBTQ ally who has also marched in the Tarrant County Pride Parade, he said.

Rector wants to review the nondiscrimination ordinance and work with local LGBTQ groups to get their input on what is included in the ordinance and if it should be updated. “It’s great that the LGBTQ community has a liaison within the FWPD,” Rector said, adding that he wants to see one at City Hall, too.

“A lot of the younger generation doesn’t know the struggle of what happened in the ’80s when gays were attacked and beaten before they had any laws or protections. I have seen this happen, and I have stood up to these attackers. Everyone deserves the same rights and protections as everyone else,” he said.

Among the candidates seeking to replace Zadeh who responded to the Voice are Elizabeth Beck, a combat veteran and attorney who ran for the Texas House in 2020, and soldier and Las Familias de Rosemont Neighborhood Association President Fernando Peralta.

Both indicated strong support for LGBTQ rights.

“I’ll do anything I can to support the LGBTQ community. I’m not gonna say I know everything, but I’d love to talk and learn their needs,” Peralta said.

He said he challenged the Catholic Church at his wedding when he chose his friend, who is gay, to be his best man.

“I grew up very Catholic,” Peralta explained. “The wedding was at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in downtown Fort Worth. I wanted to make a statement at the cathedral by having a gay best man.”

Beck praised the city for implementing, and updating, the nondiscrimination ordinance and creating a police liaison position.

“Our city has most certainly taken steps in the right direction to protect members of the LGBTQ community,” she said. “In that vein, the city should work with business and community organizations to ensure that the city is a safe and welcoming place for members of the LGBTQ community.”

Lee Henderson, a political strategist running to replace Singleton, laid out his vision: “Local protections for the LGBTQ community are imperative and necessary when striving to create a more fair Fort Worth for all,” he said. But the nondiscrimination ordinance is foundational.

“Like any city policy, we should be reviewing it to ensure maximum effectiveness, including taking steps such as funding and empowering community support programs such as LGBTQ Saves,” he said, referring to the LGBTQ youth outreach organization founded by Sharon Herrera.

The city should also conduct more outreach and be more proactive when working with the community, Henderson added. “We can also work with ally groups to understand how we can continuously support them. Additionally, we need to strengthen our Equal Rights Ordinance by making sure the Human Rights Committee is enforcing penalties for noncompliance, adding new ones as needed. “The city at large needs to stand up for protection policies made by companies and actively support schools that do the same,” Henderson said. “When elected, I am committed to taking all of these steps to ensure that every Fort Worthian has a seat at the table.”

Anne Lowe is a magazine publisher running for the open District 3 seat encompassing southwest Fort Worth. She is unabashedly pro-LGBT rights. Her response was a mantra: “The greatest thing we can do to protect each other and to promote and nurture our better selves is to prevent marginalization of all individuals. In my experience, this means promoting community and opportunities for enrichment across our population.

“When we get to know each other and work together, we find friends and allies. Together, we build a stronger, truly diverse community,” Lowe continued. “Together, we evolve and enrich our collective lives as citizens.”

Another candidate for the seat is Katie Johnson, who said she sees a need for further protections for the LGBTQ community. “I stand with protection for the LGBTQ community and feel that local and federal governments can and need to do more for community protection.”
Mansfield ISD presented with diversity audit

Advocates cautiously hopeful for progress in the district

James Russell | Contributing Writer
james.journo@gmail.com

The Mansfield Independent School District heard the results of an equity audit at their Tuesday, Feb. 23, meeting, and the report revealed what many advocates for years: The district has a lot of room for improvement when it comes to inclusivity.

The audit was conducted by Texas Association of School Administrators and Curriculum Management Solutions Inc. late last year and announced a month after the district hired Danyell Wells, its first director of diversity, equity and inclusion. Administrators, teachers, parents and students contributed to the survey.

According to the executive summary, the research team’s guiding principles centered on the following question: How is Mansfield ISD supporting and assuring equity and equality in its treatment of and services to students? Those four guiding principles included enhancing vision and policy, academic achievement, equity and access, culture and climate and curriculum.

Among those recommendations were clearly defining expectations and direction for equity and inclusion, closing opportunity gaps for low income students and students of color, stronger systems of intervention for at-risk students, a more diverse curriculum and addressing so-called “cultural blindness.”

LGBTQ identities span race, ethnicity and economic status, but, according to some respondents, homophobia on campuses is common.

“If making fun of someone because of their sexual orientation is bad, then our school is bad. And honestly, I don’t think anyone really cares, and that is disappointing,” said one high school student.

Another reported being very uncomfortable with “students being very ignorant, homophobic or even blatantly racist.”

A middle school student had strong words for classmates and teachers: “I still see homophobia and racism everywhere, and it tires me that I don’t see anyone standing up for the victims. I wish people were held accountable for their wrongdoing, instead of [being] praised.”

The summary was more explicit about the district’s defects than the presentation, said Rafael McDonnell, Resource Center’s communications and advocacy manager.

“If you look at it, a lot of it says what advocates have been telling the district for years in terms of climate and policy. It’s a vindication,” he said if the study.

McDonnell is just one of the advocates for policy changes in the district. The Rev. Katie Hays from LGBTQ-affirming Galileo Church in Kennedale has been another as part of the Mansfield Equality Coalition, a coalition of activists who have called for policy changes in the district addressing inequities.

“We’re not advocating for programming. We’ve only asked for policies protecting LGBTQ people,” Hays said.

Of the audit, she said that she is heartened, “But the tendency of that board is to gloss over any indication of suffering.”

Activists calling for change have not made much progress, however, since the Mansfield school district drew activists’ ire in 2017 when MISD placed art teacher Stacy Bailey on administrative leave following parents’ complaints that she was promoting the “gay agenda.” Her “gay agenda” was sharing photographs of her family, including her then-fiancé-now-wife Julie Vazquez, with students.

One student mentioned Bailey sharing the photo to her mother, and the mother filed a complaint. School district officials said parents complained about Bailey’s statements to the children, not her sexual orientation. They defended the district by claiming it has many gay employees and doesn’t discriminate.

But when Bailey requested the school district add sexual orientation and gender identity and expression to its non-discrimination policy, the district refused.

While her contract with the district was ultimately renewed in 2018, Bailey was reassigned to a secondary school. She then filed a lawsuit against the district claiming discrimination based on her sexual orientation.

Bailey won the lawsuit in February 2020, and among her settlement requirements was one forcing the board to vote on adding gender identity and sexual orientation to its nondiscrimination policy.

DIVERSITY, Page 10
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One week after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that “sex” includes sexual orientation and gender identity protections under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, in the historic Bostock v. Clayton County case, the board did indeed vote on amending the policy: They unanimously rejected it.

That was despite a guidance issued by the Texas Association of School Boards about inclusive language in light of Bostock.

Mansfield ISD is one of only a handful of school districts in North Texas that has not adopted the language, according to McDonnell. The others are Grapevine-Colleyville ISD in northeast Tarrant County and Highland Park ISD in Dallas.

“It’s been a long and winding mess,” McDonnell said.

Both Hays and McDonnell are now watching what steps, if any, the district takes after this presentation. “Will they take the information and adopt new policies? Or treat it like [The Ark of the Covenant in] Raiders of the Lost Ark and put it in a filing cabinet?” McDonnell asked.

“Things that can be improved are awareness of hate crimes against the community and more thorough investigations when they do occur. The discrimination that needs to stop includes employment hiring and firing, adoption, housing, health, and education,” she wrote in an e-mail.

Tara Wilson, a nurse who is running against District 4 incumbent Cary Moon, said she “wholeheartedly supports the LGBTQ community” and praised the city for its early adoption of a nondiscrimination ordinance.

“I’d like for Fort Worth to continue being a leader in Texas in this regard. I do think more can be done to protect my LGBTQ community,” Wilson added.

“We still have a lot of conservatism here locally, and even opposition, so being proactive and understanding this will prevent complacency.”

One of the candidates taking on District 2 incumbent Carlos Flores is Jen Sarduy, the communications coordinator at the National Harm Reduction Coalition. “We see the results of the reluctance of leaders to prioritize the safety of LGBTQ people in our communities everywhere from the school board to the federal level,” Sarduy said. “It’s important to note that local positions of leadership are where people’s lived experience meets the state, so the decisions our leaders make need to be brave and thoughtful.”

She has no doubt there’s more to do for LGBTQ people at the local level.

“Of course we can do more to protect queer folks in our community — OF COURSE we can. When we adopt people-first policies that value and understand intersecting identities and oppressions, we create the opportunity to transform Fort Worth, together,” Sarduy said.

Fort Worth council and mayoral candidates and incumbents who want to participate can send more information and responses to the questions to James Russell at james.journo@gmail.com.
Biden’s first month in office has been good for our community

We are just one month into his term as president, and Joseph R. Biden has already done more for LGBTQ equality than any president in their full body of work in an entire four-year — or eight-year — term. Here’s a summary.

Even before being sworn in, President-elect Biden had made his mark by appointing an impressive group of LGBTQ people to major roles in the White House and the various departments of his administration. Among them were the secretary of transportation, deputy director of the office of presidential personnel, principal deputy White House press secretary, senior advisor and spokesperson for the vice president, deputy White House communications director, deputy counselor to the president and director of political strategy and outreach.

In addition, the spokesperson for the State Department, who serves as the official spokesperson for the United States of America, is a gay man. And Pennsylvania’s own Rachel Levine, whose confirmation hearings were expected this week, has been nominated to serve as assistant secretary of health.

Ultimately, the Biden transition team was able to announce that 11 percent of White House staff are LGBTQ appointees.

In addition to making all these cabinet and staff nominations, the then-president-elect issued a statement for World AIDS Day in December reinforcing his commitment to ending AIDS as a public health crisis.

“This year,” Biden said in that statement, “World AIDS Day honors the resilience and impact of advocates, activists and frontline workers who have spent decades treating people with dignity, fighting for human rights and saving lives.”

A few days later, Biden issued another statement declaring that LGBTQ rights are included as human rights: “Every American, regardless of race, ethnicity, zip code, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability, should be free to flourish in a society that values and defends equal justice for all.”

President Biden’s pro-LGBTQ actions have been equally impressive in his first 30 days in office. On Jan. 20, his first day as president, Biden signed an executive order on combating discrimination against LGBTQ people, which included directing all federal agencies to ensure that workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited.

The same day, Biden sent an immigration bill to congress which modernized the family-based immigration system by including permanent partnerships and “eliminating discrimination facing LGBTQ+ families.”

On Jan. 26, Biden released a memorandum on housing practices which called out “systemic barriers to safe, accessible and affordable housing for people of color, immigrants, individuals with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-conforming, and queer (LGBTQ+ individuals).”

On Feb. 4, Biden signed a series of executive actions designed to “restore America’s place in the world.” This included a memorandum on “Advancing the Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons Around the World.”

“This memorandum restores clarity to the U.S. position by directing all departments and agencies engaged abroad to ensure that our diplomacy and foreign assistance promotes and protects the rights of LGBTQI+ persons, including combating the criminalization of LGBTQI+ status or conduct, enhancing our range of diplomatic responses to protect human rights abuses of LGBTQI+ persons, building coalitions with civil society and international organizations, requiring annual reporting by the State Department on human rights abuses experienced by LGBTQI+ persons globally and rescinding inconsistent policies within 100 days of signing.”

And to cap off his first month in office, President Biden released a statement on the Equality Act, which he has pledged to sign in his first 100 days if Congress sends it to him.

“Oh my first day in office, I was proud to sign an Executive Order on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation. I directed agencies to implement the Supreme Court’s Bostock ruling, and fully enforce Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. Now, it’s time for Congress to secure these protections once and for all by passing the Equality Act — because no one should ever face discrimination or live in fear because of who they are or whom they love.”

President Biden is off to a blazing start when it comes to support for LGBT equality. Now it’s on the House and Senate to pass the Equality Act and send it to his desk. That would truly cap off the most pro-LGBTQ 100 days for any president in history.

Mark Segal is an American journalist. He is the founder and publisher of Philadelphia Gay News and has won numerous journalism awards for his column “Mark My Words,” including best column by The National Newspaper Association, Suburban Newspaper Association and The Society of Professional Journalists.
Thanks to Leslie Jordan’s quarantine videos, the world now knows him for exactly who he is.

“Where should I be looking? There? Or there?” His face smothering the camera as he wonders where his eyes should be, Leslie Jordan is settling into our video interview like it could be a comic routine about somebody trying to use Zoom for the first time. Puckered together in a kind of duck-face pout are his elastic lips. A delicate smile curls into formation.

Then Jordan scoots so low that only his forehead is visible. More duck face. A big, eyes-squished grin. A peculiar sound that may or may not be a fart. And finally a tickled laugh when I tell him I recognize that he’s in the same room that made him a viral sensation.

“It’s the only room I’ve got!” he chuckles, noting that he’s on video from his bedroom in West Hollywood. “I’ve got everything set up. And there’s my bed!”

Sure enough, that IS his bed. Throughout the pandemic as he’s documented his quarantine experiences, that same bed has been seen all over his Instagram feed. There, as a COVID respite, Jordan has delivered lighthearted frivolity and cheeky humor to those he calls his “fellow hunker-downers,” in, of course, his signature southern drawl. In one clip, he listens to a Katy Perry song that is his signature southern drawl. In one clip, he listens to a Katy Perry song that is “so lit,” while another finds him curious about Lizzo’s definition of “her juice.”

Internet virality might be new for Jordan, but, at least in the LGBTQ+ community, he’s always been a star. Jordan’s three-decade career has, most ironically, seen the 65-year-old actor in the Emmy-winning role of Beverley Leslie, a rival of Megan Mullally’s Karen Walker, in Will & Grace. But his career in TV and film goes back to the 1980s. More recently, Jordan starred in several seasons of Ryan Murphy’s American Horror Story, and this year he stars alongside Mayim Bialik and fellow out actor Cheyenne Jackson in the Fox sitcom Call Me Kat.

When a friend told him he had gone viral while Jordan was quarantining with his mom in Tennessee in mid-March of last year, Jordan replied no, he was fine; he didn’t have coronavirus. But his friend was referring to Jordan’s Instagram, where he has gone from just thousands of followers to, currently, around 5.6 million.

— Chris Azzopardi

Dallas Voice: Congratulations, first of all, on surviving AND thriving in a pandemic. Leslie Jordan: Give me a good pandemic, I just flourish! Ha! I don’t know why that is or how that happened, but I think people were looking for just some laughter. I started that Instagram; I was in Tennessee with my mom, and I didn’t have a lot to do. So I just started being funny. I had three rules that I realized I had and didn’t know I had: nothing about religion, nothing about politics and no products. I’m kind of wanting to rethink that “no products” part. Ha!

I had a conversation with my housemate recently about being aging gays and how I look to you as inspiration because you are 65 and in your prime. And so people telling me that, for gay people who get older, there’s nothing left for us after a certain age, you have completely turned that upside down. Oh, that’s so kind to say. Because I remember my 50s were tough. As you get older, you walk down the street, and people don’t even look at you. It’s weird the way we treat people that are older, and especially in West Hollywood, where everybody wants to be young and beautiful.

I think we’re past that as a gay community. I hope. You know, I think that also had a lot to do with the bar scene, which has been curtailed. But even before that, back in my day — I got here [to California] in ’82 — all you had were the bars; you’d go to the bars. That’s just where you went to see other gay people and meet other gay people. Now I think, “My gosh, we have everything. We have choirs. And we have gay camping. We have gay this, we have gay that.” There’s a lot of ways, plus the internet, where you can meet people.

My generation, we went through so much. I remember I walked up to these young kids holding hands in Kitchen 24 [in West Hollywood], and I just said, “You have no idea what we went through so you guys could...” — and then all of a sudden it hit me: Oh my god, I don’t want to be that, like your granddad who would say, “You kids have no idea what we went through!” I thought, “Oh my god! It’s the same thing!” They were like, “Yeah, uh-huh, go on, Pop-Pop.”

Does it feel like right now is kind of a new beginning for you? Or just THE beginning in a lot of ways? As you said, I’m 65. I have achieved everything I came to Hollywood to achieve. I’ve done Broadway; I’ve done film; I’ve done a lot of television. And I have this series now on the air (Call Me Kat), and it looks like it’s pulling some numbers. It may stay around for a little while, which is a wonderful thing to know as an actor. I have a job!

People think that you’re rich, you’ve said. And I’m not. Listen, she works hard for the money! I think what it feels like is that I have achieved everything. And also, I’m more comfortable with myself. I’m perfectly comfortable. I got sober 22 years ago. I had a little drinking problem, and I might’ve done a tiny bit of crystal meth. I got clean and sober and realized that I was just riddled with internal homophobia.

I was 42 years old, and here I was, the life of the party, this and that. But all of a sudden, I’m faced with that. And my journey into my sobriety, which has been the last 22 years, has also been a real good journey into my queerdom. It was a lot of therapy. You go to your meetings, and then I had to go to a recovery program because I had too many meetings. I was going to so many meetings, I thought, “I’m addicted to meetings!” Ha! No, I’m
Bruce Wood Dance premieres new works — on film — choreographed by its dancers

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

Bruce Wood Dance rolls out the first of three installments of new works choreographed by its own dancers this weekend. WOOD/SHOP is the result of the dance company offering its dancers the opportunity to create by offering studio space and dancers to any Bruce Wood company member interested in choreographing a new work.

“We encouraged them to play, explore and expand on any and every idea in which they were interested,” Artistic Director Joy Bollinger said.

On Sunday, Feb 28, the first round of dances on film premieres, with works by Gabriel Speiller, Megan Storey and Cole Vernon. Storey and Speiller worked with filmmakers The Digibees, while Vernon explored filmmaking on his own to create the five short dance pieces included in this first installment.

Bollinger explained why she loves the work of The Digibees so much, saying they’re helping define dance film. The works were shot in many takes and edited using lots of close-ups, including close-ups of dancers’ faces, something an audience can’t see in such detail in a theater.

Speiller’s work deals with grief, and Storey’s is about loss. But neither is particularly about loss as a result of the pandemic, Bollinger said. But after rethinking for a minute, she noted that the pandemic has had an effect on everything we’ve done for the past year.

“They’re stories of their own life, not COVID,” she said. Then again, modern dance can be interpreted however the viewer sees it, so that may be your take away. And a viewer might just get swept up in the dance.

Storey’s piece uses the entire ensemble and should be an exciting premiere. Vernon put together five short videos that will air and did the filming and editing himself.

“Cole had just dipped his toes into film last spring,” Bruce Wood Executive Director Gail Halperin said. “He used an iPhone.” She said his hi-tech gear included a magnet to attach his phone to his car as he filmed himself.

So when this opportunity came along, Vernon jumped at it, using the additional resources offered by Bruce Wood Dance to expand his work. He hopes to use his films to get grants to use toward even more ambitious dance film.

Halperin described Vernon’s videos as “absolutely hilarious” pieces done in vaudevillian style. Some are in color. Others are black and white.

While Storey’s choreography took weeks of rehearsal, more of Vernon’s time was spent in the editing process.

Bollinger called this a first step project for these dancers and emerging choreographers. And, she added, “We want to keep evolving.”

Parts two and three of WOOD/SHOP, featuring work by four other dancer-choreographers, will be featured in April and May. All will be on Zoom webinar so the audience will be able to interact with the dancers and choreographers after each dance film.

And, Halperin said, she is delighted to announce that with Moody Performance Hall tentatively set to reopen in April, Bruce Wood Dance is preparing for a live, indoor, hour-long, no-intermission performance in June. Dates aren’t finalized.

The three WOOD/SHOP presentations will be presented as a Zoom webinar on Sunday, Feb. 28 from 4-5 p.m. The performances are free but register for Zoom room admission at bit.ly/3qFgZsD.
Will any tea be spilled? Well, I don’t think so. Certainly not about anybody else. I made sure. I don’t like that, when people talk ugly about other people. That’s my New Year’s resolution: to be really, really sweet and nice and not ever talk ugly. I’m gonna try to stop cussing. I don’t know how I’m gonna do that. Ha! I cuss — not a lot, but I just don’t want to cuss at all.

For this new generation of fans you have who’ve discovered you on Instagram, what is something about your career you would like them to know? My first job ever was [the 1980s TV series] The Fall Guy with Lee Majors and I played a killer. I did six episodes. Murphy Brown came around about that time. What interests me [about] my Instagram, which has just jumped to about 5.6 million, is how many people discovered me there that didn’t know me. I think: “I’ve been around forever! Foreveeeeer I’ve been doing this!”

But I like the fact that I mistakenly thought that people would know me from my roles. So they would think, “Oh, Beverley Leslie on Will & Grace and, you know, [my line] ‘Well, well, well. Karen Walker.’” But my new fans know me as me. I think that’s kind of nice that people are responding to ME, not some character that I play.

What do you want to be remembered for? I want to be remembered like a Dolly Parton — [somebody] that nobody had a bad word [about]. “He was a nice guy.” And the fact that I’m fairly talented in this and that, that’s OK. But I just want people to know he was good. He was a nice guy. He was a good guy. I think that’s most important. And that I was raised right. I want to say to these kids now: “Who raised you? Who raised you?”

Was your Southern accent and what you’ve called your “gay voice” always embraced like it is now? I got to Hollywood and there was a casting director that told me, “You’re such a character actor already, and if you could lose your Southern accent….” And I tried, and I couldn’t. The day that I decided, “Well, this is just a marketable package here” was the day that I started working. But I worried more, I think, because of my internal homophobia, about my gay accent. I would listen to myself and think, “Oh, girl, you’ve gotta calm down a little bit.”

My favorite of all of them is when I got to throw the first pitch out for the Washington Nationals, having never thrown a baseball in my life. And it’s the craziest story, and it involved Pulse nightclub. Because it was part of my one-man show, I got to tell it to Mrs. Obama. She was in the audience. Michelle Obama came to see me! I got to tell that story. It’s in the book. It ends the book.

I don’t think that I ever lost a job [because of it]. I was on Star Trek, and they hired a linguist to teach me how to say the words, and she got so exasperated she said, “Mr. Jordan, ‘feather’ doesn’t have four syllables!” I don’t think I’ll ever be like Robert De Niro or Meryl Streep. I’ll never just disappear into a role. I just do what I do and various forms of it, and it’s worked thus far, and kept me afloat.
Will any tea be spilled?

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**SUN 02.28**

**Dallas Museum of Art** offers patrons a rare chance to explore a selection of works by acclaimed Mexican artist Frida Kahlo through the exhibition *Frida Kahlo: Five Works*. The installation features four of Kahlo’s paintings, including *Still Life 1951*, pictured here, and one of her drawings all on loan from a private collection and each acting as a vehicle for understanding her unique visual language and more aspects of her work.

**SUN 02.28**

At the end of 2020, after more than nine months of empty stages and darkened theaters, the folks at Bruce Wood Dance Company opened up rehearsal time and offered studio space and dancers to any company member interested in furthering their choreographic experience. The result is WOOD/SHOP, the first installation of which premieres virtually this Sunday featuring works by Gabriel Speiller, Megan Storey and Cole Vernon. 4-5 p.m. via Zoom webinar; free, but registration is required at https://bit.ly/3qFgZsD.
Hello nurse! As I sit down to write this, we have just survived the Snowmageddon 2021, or the Snowpocalypse — whatever you wanna call it, it was a pain in the ass. Between my gas bill, my water bill and the jackdaw-way-up price of the little electricity we got, next month’s bills are going to ass rape me with no lube. And not in the good way.

We actually had it way better than most people; we only lost power for about 60 hours. Luckily, my sweet husband installed a gas fireplace about eight years ago, and it was a lifesaver. Those of you without even a gas stove, I don’t know how you did it. I’m not sure how cold a witch’s tit is, exactly, but I think it was close.

I want to say thank you for all the people checking to see how Ruby, our 125-pound tortoise, has done with the electricity turned off. To be honest, it was very worrisome. The first night, when the power went out at 2:45 a.m., we put a portable propane heater in the greenhouse with her. Usually she sits under a heating lamp and stays content until it warms up enough for her to come outside. We have a remote temperature gauge that tells us what the temperature is in the greenhouse all times. But bitch, we ain’t ever had to deal with 5-degree weather and no electricity before!

The propane heater scares me. It just produces heat with no real regulation to shut off if it gets too hot or tell you when the propane runs out. So we were constantly having to check the temperature every 30 minutes or so — fuck even trying to sleep.

Finally, we decided to bring her into the house and let her sit by the gas stove in the kitchen. That was a chore and a half. Ruby is a big bitch and does not like to be picked up. She kicks like a donkey and can really be a pain in the ass.

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The moment she was outside in the sun, she let it out. The sun for her is like Metamusicalic for me. Let’s just say I am thankful to have her back in her house. We were extremely fortunate that she never, you know, pooped in the house. She pissed one day, like a freakin’ racehorse, but I had towels down in anticipation of the grossness.

She has been in our kitchen all week. I love my Ruby, so I was very worried about her. It took the brute strength of my Superman and a wheelbarrow to get her inside. Luckily, she didn’t fight us. I think she knew we were trying to help her. She has been in our kitchen all week. I wanted to wait until we were past the freezing temperatures and were sure the electricity would stay on before we put her back in her house. We were extremely fortunate that she never, you know, pooped in the house. She pissed one day, like a freakin’ racehorse, but I had towels down in anticipation of the grossness.

Something else I learned during the Texas grid failure of 2021 is the meaning of the saying “three-dog night.” It’s not just a band name; it means it’s so cold you gotta sleep with three dogs on you to stay warm.

I normally have a five-dog night. Those little beauties really came in handy during this mess.

I don’t know about the rest of you doggie daddies (or mamas), but we have two little ones that refuse to even step outside if they see snow. There was a whole lotta nopes at our house last week. One of them would actually make it all the way to the welcome mat before he peed or pooped. I guess he figured, “The porch is outside, so I’m good right?” Yes, you little fucker, you are good.

On a lighter note, Saturday, Feb. 27, is MY BIRTHDAY!!! AIR HORN BLAST! I’m not sure how to spell BUURRRRRRRM BUURRRRRRRM! I will be 49 years old. It is so weird to think of being this old. I remember being in my 20s and thinking, “Oh my Gawd! 50 years old is soo old!” Well, I am a year away from 50, and I don’t feel that old. Sure the wrinkles and the aches say otherwise, but I am thankful for all of it. I know a lot of people that didn’t make it to 49, so I’m grateful I am still here and still fabulous!

I remember my 22nd birthday: I was doing a show at a little bar called The Anchor Inn. I got so drunk that I ended up emceeing the end of the show in just my pads — no wig, no dress, just a dance belt that looked like really tight panties.

It was not my finest moment, but I did learn one thing: Grand Marnier is the devil. Even thinking about it now I want to throw up. We all have that one liquor that we will never touch again because of the time it made you projectile vomit. Mine is that bougie, orange-flavored death juice. What was yours?

They say what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger? Well, after 2020 and the bullshit 2021 has brought us, we should all be superheroes.

Stay strong beautiful people. Remember to always love more, bitch less and be fabulous. XOXO, Cassie Nova
Bear helped his people keep warm by snuggling under the covers with them.

Brandon stayed under the blankets to keep warm.

Chaselyn and John bundled up against the cold.

Dallas’ First United Methodist shines in the snow. (Photo courtesy Wesley Fryar)

Jay at the John Neely Bryan Cabin.

Iris stays bundled up against the cold.

Jay and Wesley with Chilly Willie.

Larry the Fairy braves the big freeze.

A brisk 23 degrees in Dallas. (Photo courtesy of Larry the Fairy)
Dreaming of keeping warm

Trudie's granddaughter Addyson gets ready for her first snow

Simm and his fur baby check out “Dallaska”

JFK Memorial (Photo courtesy Wesley Fryar)

The Wilson Building (Photo courtesy Wesley Fryar)

White Rock Lake foot bridge (Photo courtesy Wesley Fryar)

Diego and Danny snuggle for warmth

Maxwell on a mission

Marshal Casey on the job
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of Andrew Christian

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Across
1 Balls of queens
5 Chooses not to come
10 Film thickness units
14 Petty of “OITNB”
15 “Gentleman Jim” star Flynn
16 Prissy temper tantrum
17 Start of a Tilda Swinton quote
18 More of the quote
19 What 50 million Frenchmen drink
20 Convention address
21 Convention address
22 Burmese statesman
23 “Kissing Jessica Stein,” et al.
25 Rent what you rent
27 Socrates’ market
28 Duke’s conf.
31 Bridge fees
32 Bits of oral history
35 More of the quote
39 Singer Zadora
40 Partner of doom
41 Drink with fruitcake
43 Eva Gabor’s “Green ___”
46 Dr.’s org.
47 He wrote on Friday
49 Capital of Lorca’s country
51 Like Jay’s Bob
52 End of the quote
56 “The Way We ___”
58 Sap supplier
59 Handle loads
62 Some bitches eat it
63 Writer Dykewomon
64 Get wind of
65 What you feel it at a gay bar
66 Fruit eaters’ serving
67 Spuriously cultured

Down
1 John’s “Grease” costar
2 Crew activity
3 “The Godfather” star
4 Sibling, in brief
5 Palindromic Monica
6 Reverend Perry
7 “East of Eden” son
8 Artist/singer Ono
9 Narrow cuts
10 Where the NY Liberty plays
11 Completely
12 George’s son on “The Jeffersons”
13 Walks in a cocky way
14 Keep from being a breeder
21 Reeves of “My Own Private Idaho”
24 Desert Storm site
26 Fruit with a peel
28 Speedy train
29 Stick it in your PC drive
30 Aprés-ski treat at Aspen
31 Start of a quote
32 Curry of Rocky Horror fame
33 Rock that’s easily split
34 Curly of Rocky Horror fame
35 Rock that’s easily split
36 Rigging supports
37 Release from bondage
38 Shakespeare’s “anon”
39 Cager Parsons
42 Catch on to
43 Wilde man
45 Funny Caesar
47 Had sex with, in slang
48 Inventor Otis
50 Reliefs of Eleanor’s husband
51 Golf great Sam
53 “...our gay apparel, ___...”
54 Silica stone
55 Bone in a limp wrist
56 Wheaton of “Star Trek”
57 Bonheur bathed in it
60 Granola bar tidbit
61 Like Wanda Sykes’ humor

Solution on Page 18

Reesh is ready for spring

Riley working the bar at 1851 Club

Dean celebrating his birthday in Uptown

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