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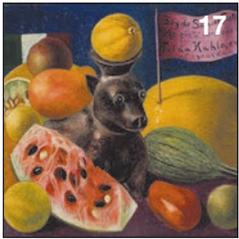


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## Senate confirms Dr. Rachel Levine



Dr. Rachel Levine made history on Wednesday, March 24, by becoming the first openly-transgender person confirmed by the Senate to a federal-level position. Levine, a pediatrician and state health official from Pennsylvania, was nominated by President Joseph R. Biden to be assistant secretary.

U.S. Rep. David Cicilline, the Rhode Island Democrat who chairs the Equality Caucus in the House, called Levine's confirmation "an historic moment for the transgender community."

Cicilline continued, "With Levine's bipartisan confirmation vote, she became the highest-ranking transgender official in U.S. history and will undoubtedly serve as an inspiration for transgender people around the world. We particularly hope that young transgender people, who are currently facing relentless attacks from opponents of equality, will see in Dr. Levine a role model that proves that their options are unlimited. We congratulate Dr. Levine, and we look forward to collaborating with her as she takes on this important role."

Lambda Legal CEO Kevin Jennings said Levine's confirmation "marks the return of science, competence and empathy to one of the most important institutions in our government and at one of the most critical public health moments in our nation's history. Throughout her impressive career as a doctor and public servant, Dr. Levine has demonstrated a commitment to equity in health care and an understanding of how public health is inextricably linked to social justice. We welcome this approach with open arms."

Jennings noted, "It is also important to mark this important moment for the visibility and inclusion of transgender people as well as their contributions to our society. ... This is an historic moment, and we celebrate the progress that it represents. Congratulations to Dr. Levine and the entire department. We look forward to working together to ensure that everyone is healthy and able to thrive."

Erin Uritus, CEO of Out & Equal Workplace

Advocates, praised Levin's confirmation "significant on many levels," pointing out that HHS has in recent years "served as a tool to target LGBTQ — especially transgender — healthcare rights. Most notably, HHS unraveled trans health protections implemented under Section 1557 on the Affordable Care Act. Dr. Levine will be able to bring new skillsets and empathy into this position to help protect LGBTQ healthcare rights."

Uritus also said that Levine's confirmation will allow transgender Americans "to see themselves in a position of profound leadership. Dr. Levine's confirmation is more important than ever. Her leadership and expertise will help guide our country out of the COVID-19 pandemic into healthier, brighter days."

— Tammye Nash

## DIFF and SAFF film festivals set dates

The seventh annual DFW South Asian Film Festival (SAFF) will join forces with the 15th annual Dallas International Film Festival (DIFF) to bring North Texas audiences a premiere-studded, gala-filled, power-packed, post-pandemic experience like none other in October 2021.

DIFF will take place Oct. 8-15, followed by SAFF on Oct. 15-17. More information will be available soon on their websites.

Festival pass holders will enjoy the benefits of reciprocal events, including physical and virtual screenings, opening night and closing night galas, cocktail receptions, panel discussions, master classes and more.

— David Taffet

## BTAC, Lyft partner to offer free rides for trans people

Transgender men and women — and especially Black trans women and trans women of color — remain a target for hate. At least 44 trans men and women died violently in 2020, and at least 11 have already died in 2021.

Now the Black Transgender Advocacy Coalition is offering a way to help trans individuals stay safer by partnering with Lyft to provide free ride credit up to \$50 to those in 600 cities in the U.S. Those cities now include Dallas, Atlanta, Cleveland, Kansas City, New Orleans and Philadelphia.

According to a press release announcing the initiative, "BTAC prioritizes the needs of the Black transgender community by working to ensure that you have access to safe and affordable transportation options."

Submit requests for ride credit with Lyft at [BlackTrans.org/Services/Free-Ride](https://BlackTrans.org/Services/Free-Ride). Allow 24-48 hours for your inquiry to process.

— Tammye Nash

## Johnson and Johnson file Medicaid expansion bill



State Rep. Julie Johnson and state Sen. Nathan Johnson this week filed bills (HB 3871 and SB 117) that would create the new Live Well Texas Program. If passed, these bills would increase access to healthcare for Texans living below the poverty level and provide hospitals and Medicaid providers with relief for uncompensated care.

The bill would provide health insurance coverage to about 1.5 million low-income

adults — about a third of the state's uninsured non-elderly population. The program would terminate if the federal government takes away the 90-10 percent match or if the costs exceed the benefits.

In addition, it encourages physician participation through reimbursement rate parity. The bills' authors estimate they would generate billions in state and local revenue.

In other legislative news, Julie Johnson speaking via Zoom said HB 610, which was slated to come up before her Judiciary Committee on March 24. The bill would take away local control over things like non-discrimination ordinances.

Johnson, a member of LGBT Caucus, said "We don't need the state to usurp local control."

Rep. Jessica Gonzalez, another member of the LGBT Caucus, said, "NDOs are all we

have in Texas."

Around the country, 174 anti-LGBT bills have been filed. Of those, 30 have been filed in Texas. Johnson and Gonzalez said that number is double what was filed last session. Democrats were expected to flip the House, they said, and when they didn't, Republicans felt emboldened to push anti-LGBT legislation this session.

— David Taffet

## pet of the week / PERSEPHONE

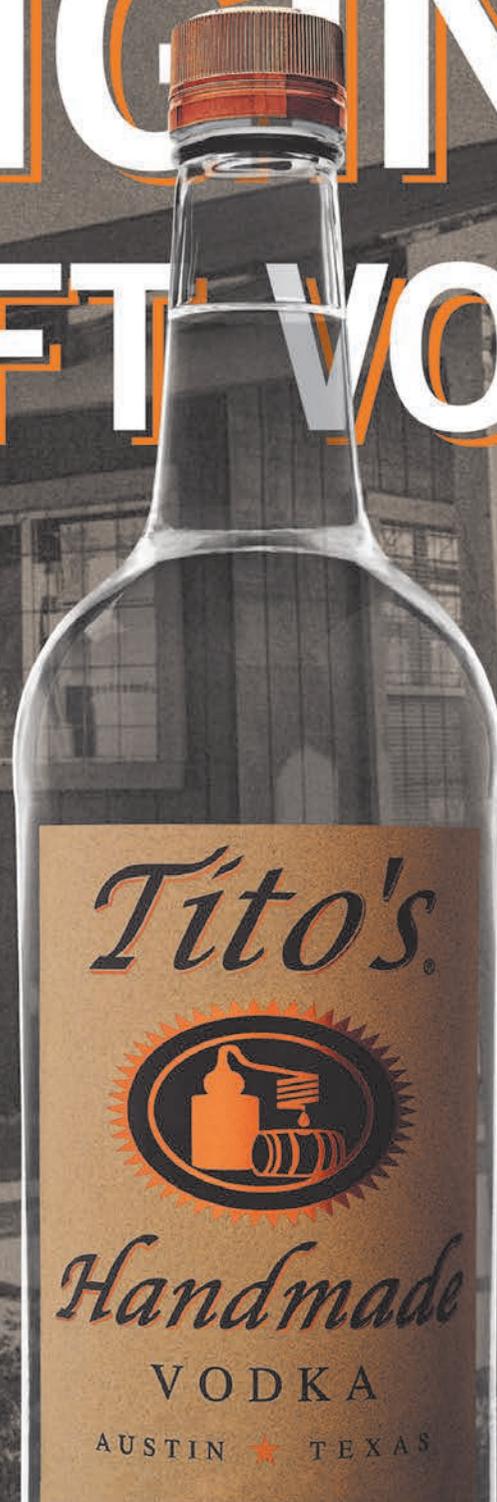


Meet Persephone, an 8-year-old female Rottweiler mix weighing 86 pounds. She may be a senior girl, but she still has a whole lotta love to give. Persephone is a gentle giant and has become

a favorite among the staff who care for her. She wiggles her nub of a tail each time you visit her and will do just about anything for treats and attention from people. She loves belly rubs, curling up for naps in a soft bed and playing with soft toys. She enjoys her daily walks, especially when they include breaks for pets and ear scratches. This sweet girl has the heart to match her size, and she really does just want to be loved, loved, loved! Persephone would prefer to be the only queen in your home without other pets. She would do well with older children and will make a loving companion to anyone looking for a giant teddy bear. She has been spayed and microchipped and is current on all age-appropriate vaccinations. To request an appointment to meet Persephone, please visit [spca.org/adopt](https://spca.org/adopt).

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](https://spca.org/findapet) and visit [spca.org/dogadopt](https://spca.org/dogadopt) to inquire about a dog or [spca.org/catadopt](https://spca.org/catadopt) to inquire about a cat.

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## 'It's time to heal'



Get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as you can

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic is like no other crisis we have seen in our lifetime. It has required a unique resilience and commitment to protecting the wellbeing of our loved ones, our communities and our neighbors.

Most of us did not imagine that we would still be experiencing such dramatic changes to our everyday lives, one year after the first social distancing measures were put into place. However, we can now see the light at the end of the tunnel.

With President Joseph R. Biden's direction that all adults in every state, Tribe and territory be eligible to receive the vaccine by May 1, and with the \$7.5 billion in the American Rescue Plan dedicated to track, administer and distribute vaccines, we are entering the beginning of the end of this dark period in our nation's history.

As a student nurse, I experienced the polio epidemic first-hand. Specifically, I



**U.S. Rep. E.B. Johnson**  
Guest Columnist

administered the vaccine that ultimately led to the complete eradication of polio from the United States by 1979. Now, thanks to the incredible work of scientists around the globe, building on decades of research on virology and vaccine technology, Americans have access to three excellent, life-saving vaccines against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

All three vaccines are safe and have been proven extremely effective against severe illness and death caused by COVID-19.

Each vaccine that has been granted an Emergency Use Authorization in the U.S. has its own unique benefits, and all

together, they will help to save countless lives. Thus, I cannot overstate what an incredible achievement it is that we have three safe, effective vaccines available just one year after this horrible virus reached our shores.

However, vaccines do not save lives; vaccinations do. The best vaccine is the vaccine you can get as soon as you are eligible. With conviction, I urge every American to get vaccinated as soon as they qualify under Texas' state guidelines.

These last 12 months, we have all collectively witnessed great suffering. While many of us have been separated from our loved ones and our communities, we, as Americans, have all grieved together. Now, we can all celebrate this incredible scientific achievement, and, by getting vaccinated, we can begin the process to heal together and build back a better America.

*U.S. Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson represents Texas' 30th Congressional District and is chairwoman of the House Science, Space & Technology Committee. She is currently serving her 15th term in the U.S. House of Representatives.*

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**Veronica Zayas-Torres, MD**

# From a distance

A year into the pandemic, we look at how the LGBTQ community is doing

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer  
taffet@dallasvoice.com

**A**fter a year of social distancing and, for many people, isolation from family, friends and coworkers, there's optimism that things will start returning to normal over the summer. For LGBT Health Week, we asked several healthcare providers how the community stands one year into the pandemic.

President Joe Biden started his administration by promising to administer 1 million vaccinations by 100 days into his presidency. He achieved that goal in 58 days.

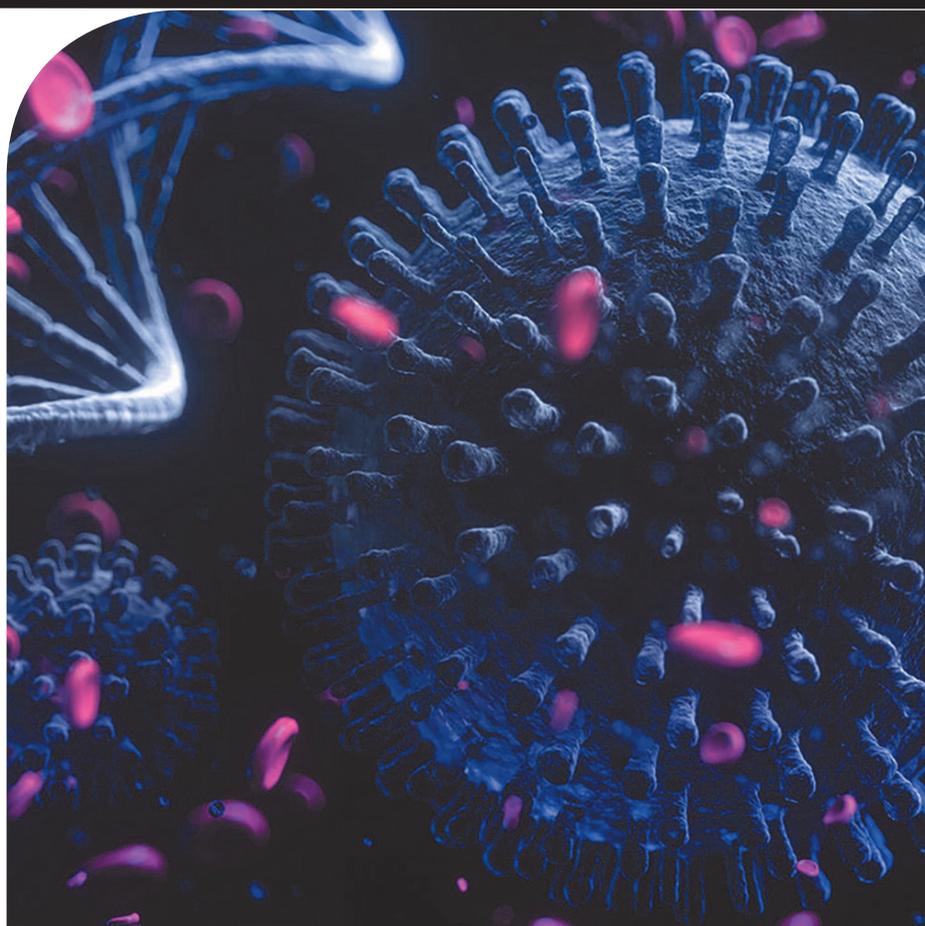
Now he has promised that enough vaccine will be available for anyone who wants to be vaccinated by the end of May. But availability isn't the same as getting vaccines into the arms of everyone immediately. So most community leaders don't see a safe return to normalcy before sometime this summer.

One of the worst fears for the LGBTQ community was that COVID-19 would have a devastating affect on people living with HIV. According to Dr. John Carlo, CEO of Prism Health North Texas, our worst fears about coronavirus and people living with HIV haven't materialized. Among his agency's patients, he said, he knows of only two deaths from COVID-19.

"Early reports from China indicated fewer people with HIV coming down with coronavirus," Carlo said. But subsequent reports from Europe didn't back up those claims.

Still, Carlo said, HIV that is controlled by medication doesn't cause more severe infection.

"People living with HIV have higher rates of hypertension and kidney disease," Carlo explained. And those are underlying conditions often cited in deaths from coronavirus. "So it's hard to



tell the effect of HIV," he said.

Carlo said early studies looked into whether drugs used to control HIV would help cure COVID, but researchers found they had no benefit. But Remdesivir, which Carlo said is similar to the HIV medication Truvada, is used in treating COVID-19, "So there may be some effect."

So how does Carlo account for a low prevalence of severe coronavirus cases and only two deaths among his patients? "Someone in care with us gets good primary care," he said.

He added that in addition to having their HIV under control, Prism Health patients understand the importance of social distancing and wearing a mask. And not only are those patients' HIV being treated, COVID risk factors they face, like high blood pressure and diabetes, are more likely to be already under control.

Carlo warned the community that even as more people are vaccinated, we shouldn't expect one big day to declare the pandemic over; things should open

back up in phases. Over the summer, he said, expect more outdoor activities with smaller groups, but not big indoor dinners with 3,500 people.

In Europe, some countries are experiencing a third wave despite being ahead of the U.S. in vaccinating their populations, Carlo noted. Germany is going through another shutdown due to infection with coronavirus variants.

Because of the way the virus is spreading, Carlo said he doesn't expect to hit herd immunity until immunization rates are in the high 80 percent range, maybe not even until we reach somewhere in the area of 90 percent.

Bryan King, vice president of clinical research and business development for North Texas Infectious Disease Consultants, agreed that those with their HIV under control are not more likely to contract coronavirus or have a more severe case. But those with a weakened immune system not controlled by medication may become sicker, he warned.

For King, the year of the pandemic has



From top, Dr. John Carlo, Bryan King and Rafael McDonnell

**DISTANCE**, Page 15

# Don't break your heart



Discrimination, stress can add to heart health woes for LGBTQ people

**A**s part of National LGBT Health Awareness Week, the American Heart Association is highlighting factors affecting LGBTQ health, citing the organization's 2020 study showing the community experiences high rates of discrimination in health care settings.

During the pandemic, isolation from family and friends took an emotional

toll for sure. But it took a physical toll even on those who did not contract the virus because many people skipped routine medical exams or renewing needed prescriptions.

But LGBTQ adults have been delaying medical exams since long before the pandemic.

According to the American Heart Association, 56 percent of LGBTQ adults, including 70 percent who are transgender, report experiencing some form of discrimination by a health care professional. About 13 percent of older LGBTQ adults report actually being denied health care or being given poor health care because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Fear of discrimination leads to delays in getting proper preventive care. And evidence shows stress affecting mental health has an impact on heart health.

LGBTQ people often face unique forms of stress, including rejection by family or the stress of hiding their sexual orientation or gender identity from family. Fear of losing a job or housing because of LGBTQ status also causes stress.

And all that stress can contribute to increased inflammation, which affects heart health.

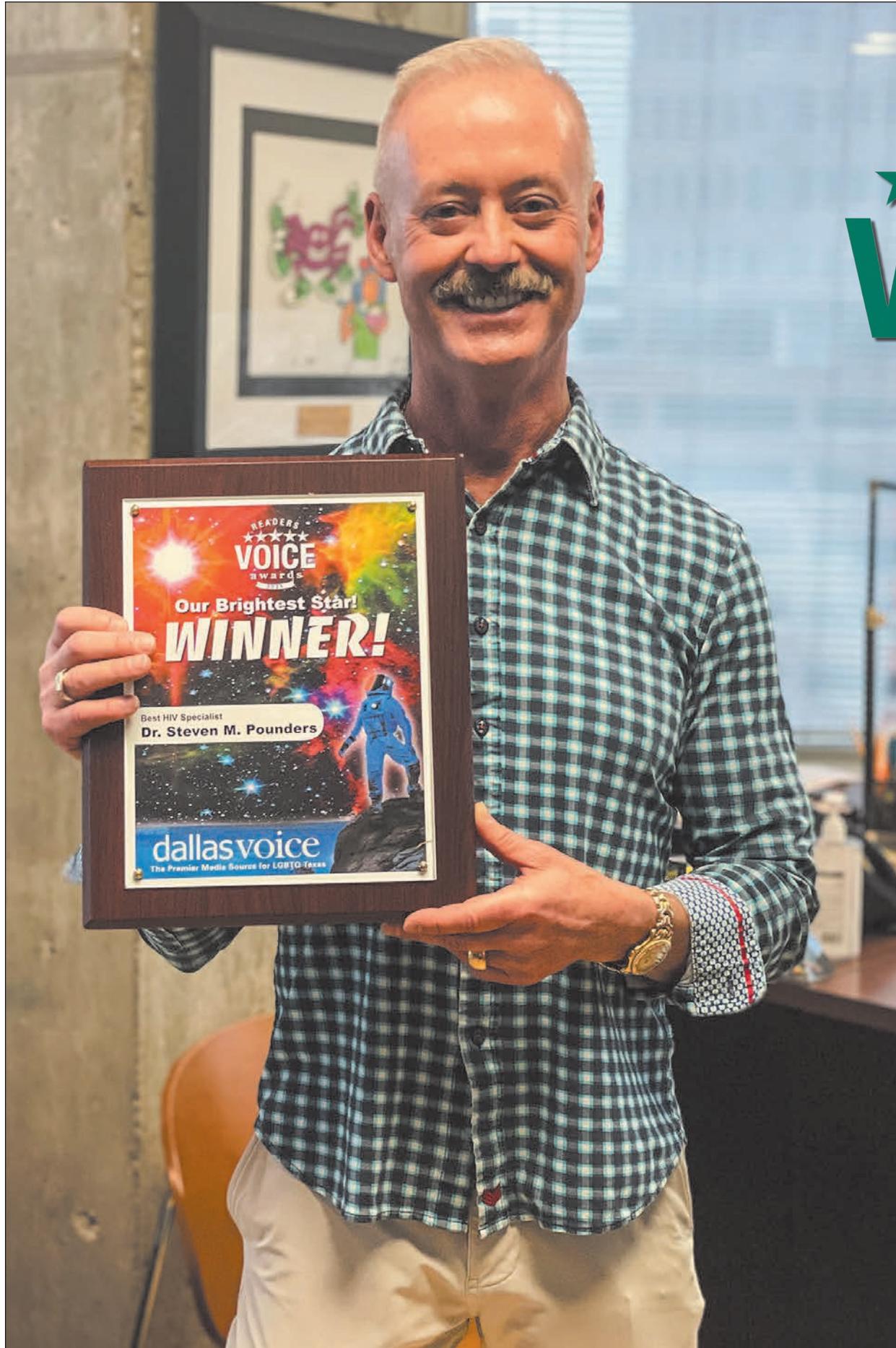
Older LGBTQ adults are more likely than heterosexuals to smoke, drink excessively and report depression, according to the study. Lesbian and bisexual

women have a higher prevalence of obesity than heterosexual women.

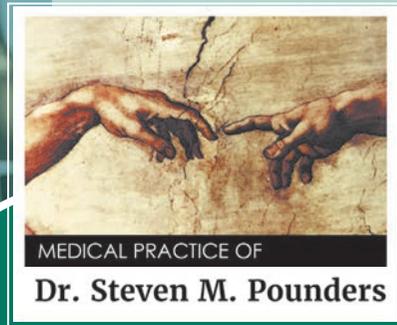
In their recommendations to improve LGBTQ health, the American Heart Association suggests adding LGBTQ-related content to health care professional training and licensure requirements. In a 2018 online survey of medical students from 10 schools, about 80 percent reported they didn't feel competent to provide care for transgender patients.

Also recommended is including sexual orientation and gender identity in electronic health records to address specific health concerns for LGBTQ patients.

— Compiled via reports from the American Heart Association



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## DISTANCE From Page 12

been one where HIV diagnoses have decreased. The bad news in that is that fewer people have been getting tested; the good news, though, may be that there are fewer new infections because people are hooking up less.

“New [HIV] cases are down thanks to COVID,” he said.

King said this year has seen a turning point in HIV treatment. Rather than using Truvada for HIV treatment or prevention, his patients are mostly taking Descovy, which is less likely to cause bone density and renal problems.

Also, his office has been part of a research trial for a monthly injection to treat HIV that would replace daily pills. That treatment has already been approved, but the medication is so long-lasting, the FDA is considering approving the injection as a once-every-two-month treatment or even as a quarterly, six-month or annual dosing treatment.

And, King said “New, long-acting medicines are on the horizon.”

The trial for the longer-lasting injec-

tions has been going on in his office for three years, and King called it one of NTIDC’s most successful studies.

King also said his office is proof that PPE — personal protective equipment, such as masks — works: No one in his office contracted coronavirus from patients or other staff. “We saw research patients through the pandemic,” he said. “PPE has been sufficient.”

He encouraged people to continue wearing masks.

For organizations like Resource Center, providing some of the services that help maintain health has taken some creativity as they worked to continue operations during the pandemic.

The food pantry was a pioneer in allowing clients to shop for what they wanted in a store setting. In fact, the North Texas Food Bank would bring people who ran other pantries to see Resource Center’s unique format. During the pandemic, the agency adopted the latest in retail service — using contactless delivery by placing filled bags directly in a car trunk.

The hot meals program adapted to the pandemic with take out meals, but the program expanded the choice to breakfast as well as lunch. When the hot meals program was first created, giving people who were often isolated an opportunity to socialize was as important as the meal. To help keep that aspect of the program in place, an HIV long-term survivors group now meets virtually, giving those with access to wifi the chance to interact.

In fact, many of Resource Center’s services are offered virtually now. Insurance replacement and case management are among the services now administered online. Telehealth allows clients to access counseling and some medical appointments with the center’s LGBTQ Health program medical professionals from the comfort of their own homes. Even though a medical exam via computer comes with some limitations, it does allow patients from a wider area to consult with a doctor or counselor.

Resource Center Advocacy Manager Rafael McDonnell said he remembers

how, a decade ago, he was flying all over the state to do LGBTQ sensitivity training for Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission after the botched raid on the Rainbow Lounge in Fort Worth. Now he is able to accomplish even more: He and Leslie McMurray recently trained a law firm in St. Louis, and McMurray did trans training with the NHL’s Arizona Coyotes — all via Zoom.

McDonnell said Resource Center has seen a slight uptick in new clients since the beginning of the pandemic. People have lost jobs, and losing their jobs means they have also lost their insurance and access to HIV medications. Despite that, he said, Resource Center has managed to continue serving its clients using a little creativity.

“We’ve learned about doing the best you can with what you’ve got,” McDonnell said, summing up what has been probably the most important lesson for everyone that has come out of 12 months of pandemic.

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# Kahlo at the DMA



Frida Kahlo, Still Life, 1951

Delight in the details of the famed artist's work

**DAVID TAFFET** | Senior Staff Writer  
taffet@dallasvoice.com

**F**ive works by bisexual artist Frida Kahlo from a private collection are on display at the Dallas Museum of Art.

One is a still life featuring a watermelon sliced open, other fruit and vegetables and a ceramic dog with a Mexican flag inscribed with a message that translates from the Spanish as, "I belong to Samuel Fastlicht. I was painted with great affection by Frida Kahlo in 1951. Coyoacán."

Fastlicht was Kahlo's dentist and the canvas was painted in payment for dental work.

Another interesting piece is a collage created with shells Kahlo had collected framing a portrait of Kahlo and her husband, muralist Diego Rivera. Rather than the two side-by-side, the artist has taken half of her head and spliced it with half of Rivera's.

A pencil drawing offers a view out Kahlo's window, with the steam radia-

tor below the window most prominent in the picture.

It was drawn in New York in 1932, and high rises and the Arch Bridge seen in the distance through the window, though faint, show the complexity of her work.

Kahlo, born in 1907, contracted polio as a child and was injured in a bus accident at 18. She suffered health problems throughout her short life.

She joined the Mexican Communist Party at 20, and that's where she met Rivera. Two of his great murals are at 30 Rockefeller Center in New York and inside the Hall of State at Dallas Fair Park.

Kahlo's first art exhibition took place in New York in 1938. It was followed by an exhibit in Paris. But Kahlo died in 1954 at age 47, and interest in her work didn't revive until the late 1970s. ■



Frida Kahlo, Diego and Frida East River 1929 - 1944, 1944

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WELCOME

## An unprecedented year

What a year, right?

Over the last 12 months, we have watched the COVID-19 pandemic ravage not just our country, but our world. To date, more than 2.7 million people have died worldwide, and more than 540,000 here in the United States. It is a pandemic unprecedented in more than a century.

But that wasn't the only upheaval in 2020.

The May 25 death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, at the hands of Minneapolis police who knelt on his neck and back as he struggled and begged for breath, was streamed live on social media. It set off unprecedented waves of protest against racism, led by Black Lives Matter and other social justice activists in cities across the country — including here in North Texas — that lasted throughout the summer. And beyond.

Both the pandemic and the protests in the streets played their part in the other major events of 2020: The U.S. elections. Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden and U.S. Sen. Kamala Harris won an unprecedented election that included red states flipping blue, recount after recount after recount and finally, on Jan. 6, an unprecedented act of insurrection, that left five people, including a U.S. Capitol Police officer, dead, many others injured and hundreds facing federal charges for their roles in the attack. It also resulted in Donald Trump being impeached an unprecedented second time.

All that, and we haven't even mentioned the unprecedented "Texas Snowmageddon" that struck in February.

Anybody else tired of living in "unprecedented times"?

With all that was crammed into the last 12 months weighing on our minds, we at Dallas Voice sat down to plan our 2021 Readers Voice Awards. These last 12 months have been a year like no other, and we knew that these RVAs could not be "business as usual." That is why we went over categories with a fine-toothed comb, trimming down those that did not fit into this topsy-turvy, unprecedented year. We beefed up other categories, and we created one whole new category: Pandemic Pivot.

And that is why we chose our theme of looking to the future and honoring our brightest stars.

Just like the past year, this 2021 Readers Voice Awards issue looks different than in years past — a portent of things to come and a look into our own future.

We live in unprecedented times. Let us all step up and, like the bright stars we honor this week, meet the challenge.

— Tammye Nash

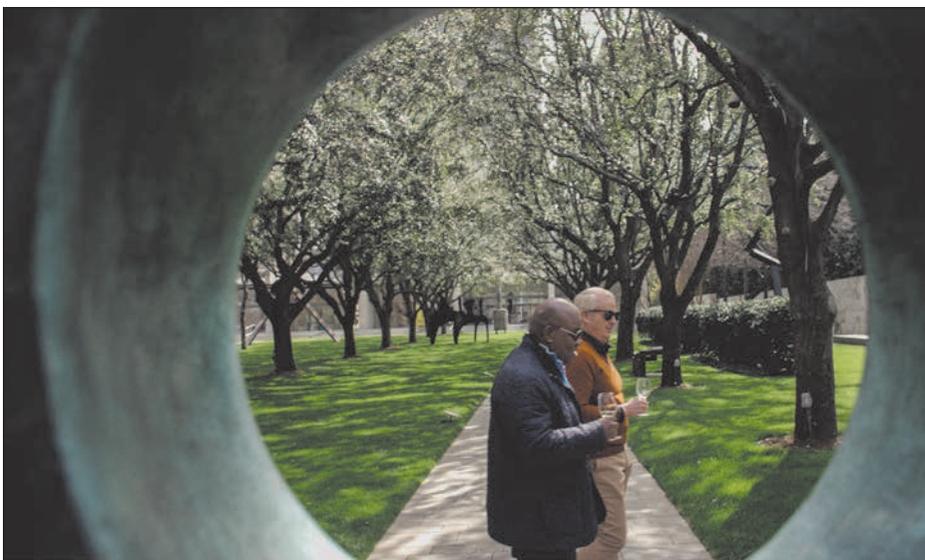
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nashersculpturecenter.org

Best Local Museum



## And the winner is ...

Brooke Stelmazewski is the lucky winner in Dallas Voice's annual Readers Voice Award drawing — and just in time, as her prize includes all the makings of a great night out for dinner and a show, just as everyone is getting their COVID-19 vaccines, and restaurants and theaters are looking forward to re-opening safely.

Brooke works as a project manager for a company called YourCause, a software company that helps other companies donate to nonprofits and facilitates volunteer programs. She said she participated in RVA voting specifically because she wanted to vote for her friend's company: Green Pet in Oak Cliff features health, safe and eco-friendly pet products. Once she had cast her ballot for Green Pet, Brooke said she decided to check out the other categories and vote in them, as well.

As this year's RVA drawing winner, Brooke won a \$100 gift card to Cremona Bistro Italian Kitchen, 2704 Worthington St. in Uptown, and two tickets to the Uptown Players show of her choice, once Uptown — which won the RVA for Best Theatrical Presenter — resumes in-person shows in July.



Brooke also won \$500 in cash, and she said she has a very specific plan for that money: "I am going to put that toward buying a new car! There's a Toyota RAV4 Hybrid that I've had my eye on!"

— Tammye Nash



**Best LGBTQ Role Model, Best Local Sports Team**  
*Todd Maria and Lost Souls Rugby*

The pandemic hasn't changed Todd Maria's passion for the LGBTQ community; it's only intensified it. And Lost Souls Rugby's performance as a team has been nothing short of miraculous with Maria as team captain. In a few short years, Lost Souls went from scrappy newcomers to international titleholders. And that's with players who have all sorts of builds, not just the big, burly men you'd expect on a championship team.

Just four years after the team's founding, Lost Souls won the Challenger Cup, the tier-three level of competition in the Bingham Cup, the gay rugby world championships, held in 2016 in Nashville. Two years later, not only did Lost Souls return to the biennial competition, the team moved up to compete for the level 2 Hoagland Cup held in Ireland — and won!

Then in 2020, Lost Souls Rugby was headed to defend their title when everything was shut down.

Maria took that as a challenge. To keep his team together, he needed to keep the players engaged. Service to the community has always been a core value for Lost Souls — and for Maria. And during the pandemic, lots of people needed some cheering up.

Maria knew lots of events had been canceled, and many organizations weren't accepting donations of collected items. But Lost Souls regularly did a toy drive around Christmas for the children at Adelfa Callejo Elementary School in Pleasant Grove, where about 95 percent of the student body is disadvantaged. So he checked with school officials, who said they'd be delighted to receive toys for their students. Maria was sure those kids had been disappointed enough in 2020; he wasn't going to hand them one more disappointment.

In a year of lockdowns and layoffs, Lost Souls promoted the toy drive and set up a collection stand behind the Round-Up Saloon. In one afternoon, the team collected more toys than ever before for the school.

But identifying a community need and rallying the team to do something about it is second nature to Maria. He's collected socks in winter for people in homeless shelters; school supplies for students who wouldn't have them otherwise and always toys, toys, toys at Christmas.

And when a group needs volunteers for their event, Lost Souls is there. Team members have helped with hosting at Transgender Day of Remembrance events and made the Silver Pride prom more festive just with their presence.

For his work, Maria's been honored before. He was named grand marshal of the Alan Ross Texas Freedom Parade in 2016. And this year, Dallas Voice readers rightly recognized him as an inspirational leader during an especially gloomy year, naming him as Best LGBTQ Role Model, and naming the team he leads Best Local Sports Team.

**Best Straight Ally**  
*Melissa Grove*

It was more than 25 years ago when a young woman named Melissa Grove signed on as the second intern to work at a newly-formed agency, Legacy Counseling Center and Legacy Founders Cottage, which focused on counseling for people with HIV/AIDS and hospice care for those with HIV/AIDS who were in their final days. Then 24 years ago, Grove went to work for Legacy full time, and she has been a beacon for those with HIV/AIDS and for her friends in the LGBTQ community ever since.

"I feel like my role as an ally is to be a bridge between the straight community and the LGBTQ community," Grove said. "It should not be the burden of LGBTQ people to 'explain and teach' understanding to each person they encounter who is misinformed or uneducated. That is unfair; no one should have to 'explain' themselves."

Being an ally is a role "I happily take on to help people move forward in their understanding of something that is unfamiliar to them," Grove continued. "People fear what they do not relate to or understand. I like putting things in simple, easy terms and analogies to build understanding. When someone tells me being gay is a choice, I ask them when they decided to be straight and if it was a hard decision. When they say, 'Well now, I've always been straight; I didn't have to decide,' I tell them that is how it is for most gay people. They just ARE."

Grove said her job as a therapist with LGBTQ clients and her experience as a confidant to her LGBTQ friends have shown her quite clearly the damage that has been done to the community. "There is a great quote that goes something like this: The therapeutic work of a gay person is to detangle the parts of them that are truly them from the parts they had to develop to survive in a heteronormative world.' I have found this to be true — and profound," she said.

Being voted as Best Straight Ally in the Readers Voice Awards "means a great deal to me," Grove said, because in her 31 years working in and with this community, "I have made a lot of professional contacts, acquaintances and — most of all — friends. And I like it that people see that I am trying to do the best I can to help."



### Best Public Space

*Klyde Warren Park*  
2012 Woodall Rodgers Freeway  
214-716-4500  
KlydeWarrenPark.org

### Best Architecture or Landmark

*Legacy of Love and Rainbow Crosswalks*  
Oak Lawn Avenue at Cedar Springs Road

### Best Art Gallery

*Craighead Green Gallery*  
1011 Dragon St.  
noon-5 p.m., Mon.; 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Tue.-Fri.;  
11 a.m.-5 p.m., Sat.  
214-855-0779  
CraigheadGreen.com

### Best Local Museum

*Nasher Sculpture Center*  
11 a.m.-5 p.m., Thur.-Sun.  
2001 Flora St.  
214-242-5100  
NasherSculptureCenter.org

### Best Party for a Cause

*Black Tie Dinner*  
BlackTie.org

### Best Local LGBTQ Nonprofit

*Resource Center*  
9 a.m.-5 p.m., Mon.-Fri.  
5750 Cedar Springs Road  
214-521-5124  
MyResourceCenter.org

### Best LGBTQ Community Role Model

*Todd Maria*  
M.Facebook.com/LostSoulsRFC

### Best Local Straight Ally

*Melissa Groves*  
LegacyCares.org/About/Legacy-Staff/  
Melissa-Grove

### Best Local LGBTQ Sports Organization

*Lost Souls Rugby FC*  
M.Facebook.com/LostSoulsRFC

### Best Party for a Cause

#### Black Tie Dinner

Staging a fundraising event is difficult in the best of times. Doing it during a deadly pandemic turned out to be more than many organizations were able to do. But the folks at Black Tie Dinner not only moved ahead with staging an event, their event — Black Tie LIVE — turned out to be a rousing success.

As 2020 Co-chair Brad Pritchett said, “If there was anything that my fellow 2020 co-chair Jeremy Hawpe and I learned in 2020 it was that all plans or roadmaps were null and void, and ‘pivoting’ became our most used word. Through chaos comes clarity, and 2020 was one chaotic year. That said, the clarity of what our board needed to do was never clearer — re-imagine our efforts during the most uncertain of times to raise as much money as possible for our beneficiaries.

“In producing our first-ever televised Black Tie LIVE, we developed new strategies that will carry into the future and realized that sometimes it’s ok to totally start from scratch when you have the right group of people behind you,” he added.

Pritchett noted that winning the Readers Voice Award “means so much” because BTLD takes great pride in “our relentless service to our community,” and knowing that RVAs are based on votes by “our LGBTQ families allies” makes winning the award mean even more. “To be the best at anything, especially when selected by our peers, only drives our board of directors to do even better and raise the bar even higher,” he said.

While 2020 was a huge challenge, incoming co-chair Terry Loftis said, “it also became a year of innovation” for BTLD. “Moving forward we expect another year of innovation and change as we determine a safe and responsible path forward. ... The people our beneficiaries serve depend on them now more than ever, and it is crucial that we do our absolute best in supporting them. As we continue to navigate the impact of the pandemic, we have strategic options for putting on a program for our sponsors, beneficiaries and supporters that is creative, thoughtful, financially impactful and entertaining.”



Brad Pritchett



Terry D. Loftis

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## Best Local Nonprofit Resource Center

Over the last year, the folks at Resource Center have learned that “the communities we serve are incredibly resilient and supportive of each other,” according to the center’s senior marketing and communications manager, Jennifer Collins. “Our staff didn’t always know what would lie ahead or what new turn we’d have to take, but, every step of the way, our clients, members and supporters were there to take care of us and each other.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic started shutting everything down, the center stepped up quickly to “implement new technology and safety precautions to protect the health of our community. Volunteers continued to step up to help our Nutrition Program provide fresh, nutritious groceries and hot meals to our clients living with HIV. Our LGBTQ Health, Dental Health and Behavioral Health programs elevated their services to telemedicine so that patients could continue to receive affirming care from the comfort of their own home. Our in-person community activities switched to virtual gatherings so that social interaction and support was not lost. And our monthly Get Centered mission tours switched to a virtual platform so that we could continue to educate and inspire future supporters of the center.”

Now, as more and more people are being vaccinated against COVID and as the world begins to return to some semblance of normality, Resource Center is gearing up for a bigger and better year in 2021-22. “We can’t wait for the day we will be able to safely gather again,” Collins declared. But that doesn’t mean the center will abandon virtual activities or telemedicine altogether. “Even after we can gather in person, we will continue to provide virtual programming so that our community, wherever they are located, can access the services they need,” she said.

In fact, one of the center’s signature fundraising events, the 23rd annual Toast to Life set for May 1, will be 100 percent virtual. “This year’s theme is Venetian Carnival, and the event will include free, streamed entertainment and surprise celebrity guests, Collins said, directing folks to [MyResourceCenter.org/ToastToLife](http://MyResourceCenter.org/ToastToLife) for more information.

Winning the 2021 Readers Voice Award for Best Local Nonprofit is “incredibly meaningful to the center’s staff, clients and supporters, Collins said, adding that “It is validating for our community to recognize the center’s efforts to serve, especially in this last year of COVID. This recognition gives us the drive to keep up our mission of improving health, building community and providing vital advocacy for the LGBTQ and HIV communities.”



Resource Center

**Best Place to Be Seen in A Mask**  
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**Best Local Virtual Show**  
*DJ Ronnie Bruno’s Clique*  
Tuesdays, 9-11 p.m.  
[Twitch.TV/DJ\\_Ronnie\\_Bruno](https://www.twitch.tv/dj_robbie_bruno)

**Best Streaming Service**  
*Netflix*

**Best Binge-worthy Show**  
*Schitt’s Creek*  
All seasons of the award-winning comedy are available on Netflix.

**Best/Safest Workout**  
*WiL Turner, Living Well with WiL*  
Fitness, Health, Wellness, Lifestyle consultant  
[LivingWellWithWil.com](http://LivingWellWithWil.com)

**Safest Travel Option**  
*Southwest Airlines*  
800-435-9792  
[Southwest.com](http://Southwest.com)

## Best Workout/Safest Workout WiL Turner, Living Well With WiL

“When faced with adverse challenges, we learn to adapt,” said Wil Turner of his work in not just maintaining but expanding his business as a fitness instructor and lifestyle coach. “This past year, we’ve all had to overcome emotional, mental and socially challenging obstacles. As an educator, lifestyle coach and fitness, health and wellness program specialist, I sympathize with those who feel stuck at a crossroad — stressed, overwhelmed, overworked, under-appreciated, anxious, alone or wanting to start a new life.

“The mission and success of Living Well with WiL and the growth of this brand is a result of the support I received from my friends, my LGBTQ family and my social media partners.”

Faced with the challenges of life in the pandemic, Turner said he shifted his focus, time and energy into creative alternative ways to provide safe, top quality services in fitness, health and wealth to his clients in a virtual setting. And that led to the creation and launch of his Live More podcast and blog page, his virtual fitness, health and wellness support group and his Living Well With WiL video channel.



Wil Turner

**Best Grocery Delivery**  
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6 a.m.-1 a.m. daily  
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(and other locations in DFW)  
[Kroger.com](http://Kroger.com)

**Best Takeout & Delivery**  
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11 a.m.-8 p.m., Tue.-Sat.;  
11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sun.  
839 Singleton Blvd., #150  
214-238-0551  
[LocuraDallas.com](http://LocuraDallas.com)

**Best Curbside Service**  
*Dallas Public Library*  
10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Tue., Thu., Fri., Sat.;  
noon-7 p.m. Wed.  
Oak Lawn Branch:  
4100 Cedar Springs Road  
(and 27 other locations)  
[DallasLibrary2.org](http://DallasLibrary2.org)

**Best Outdoor Dining**  
*Mario’s Dallas*  
11 a.m.-9:30 p.m. Mon.-Thur.; 11 a.m.-  
10 p.m. Fri.-Sat.; 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sun.  
4123 Cedar Springs Road  
214-599-9744  
[MariosDallas.com](http://MariosDallas.com)

**Best Airline**

*Southwest Airlines*  
800-435-9792  
Southwest.com

**Best Local Hotel, Best Romantic Getaway**

*The Adolphus Hotel*  
1321 Commerce St.  
214-742-8200  
Adolphus.com

**Best LGBT Destination**

*Puerto Vallarta*  
VisitPuertoVallarta.com

**Best Local Travel & Cruise Agency**

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972-241-2000  
ThePauerGroup.com

**Best Weekend Getaway**

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888-875-7596  
RainbowRanch.net



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## It's nice to be chosen!

Thank you to the Dallas Voice readers for selecting the SPCA of Texas as the best place to adopt a pet.

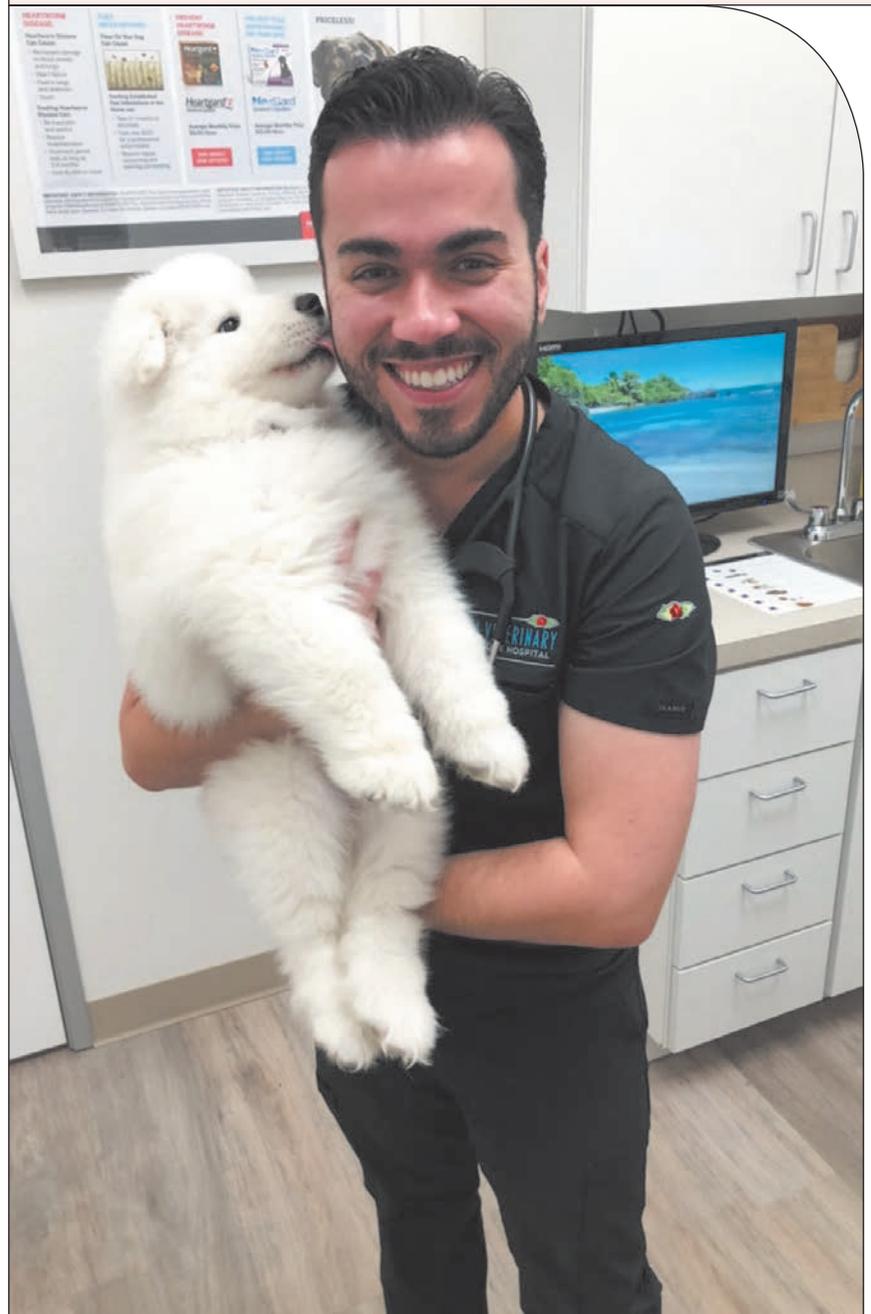
### Best Veterinarian

*Dr. Josh Sanabria at Isla Veterinary Boutique*

For Dr. Josh Sanabria, being named as Best Vet by Dallas Voice readers for the second year in a row, especially considering that Isla Veterinary Boutique Hospital has only been open for two years, “feels amazing. It is a big honor to be able to show people that we truly care about their pets and them, and I am so proud to have this amazing team that shares my values and my goals.”

Dr. Josh said he believes what sets him apart from other veterinarians is his devotion to spending time with pets and with those pets’ parents, making sure all their questions are answered and their concerns are addressed. “I have a fear-free approach, so I always go slow and take my time to make sure that fur babies are as comfortable as they can be. I love being thorough while never being pushy; I like giving options. And I believe being bilingual — Spanish and English — lets me serve different communities with a more personal touch.”

Dr. Josh also pointed out that he is the owner of Isla Vet, making it one of the few veterinary clinics in the area not managed by a corporation. “This is a huge advantage, as we set goals with high standards and focus on the quality of care every step of the way,” he said.



Dr. Josh Sanabria

### Best Veterinarian

*Dr. Josh Sanabria,  
Isla Veterinary Boutique*  
7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.;  
10 a.m.-2 p.m., Sat.  
14380 Marsh Lane, Ste. 110, Addison  
972-738-1111  
IslaVet.com

### Best Pet Supply, Best Pet Grooming

*Pet Supplies Plus*  
9 a.m.-9 p.m. daily  
2525 Wycliff Ave., #126  
(and other locations)  
972-807-6317  
PetSuppliesPlus.com

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*MUTTS Canine Cantina*  
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214-377-8723  
5317 Clearfork Main St., Fort Worth  
817-377-0151  
Hours vary  
MuttsCantina.com

### Best Boarding & Kenneling

*Ruffit Oak Lawn*  
2732 Oak Lawn Ave.  
7 a.m.-7 p.m. Mon.-Fri.;  
8 a.m.-6 p.m. Sat.; 4-6 p.m. Sun.  
214-526-5638  
Ruffit.com/oak-lawn  
Ruffit Uptown  
3101 McKinney Ave.  
214-754-0808  
7 a.m.-7 p.m. Mon.-Fri.;  
8 a.m.-2 p.m. Sat.; closed Sun.  
Ruffit.com/Uptown

### Best Animal Adoption Organization

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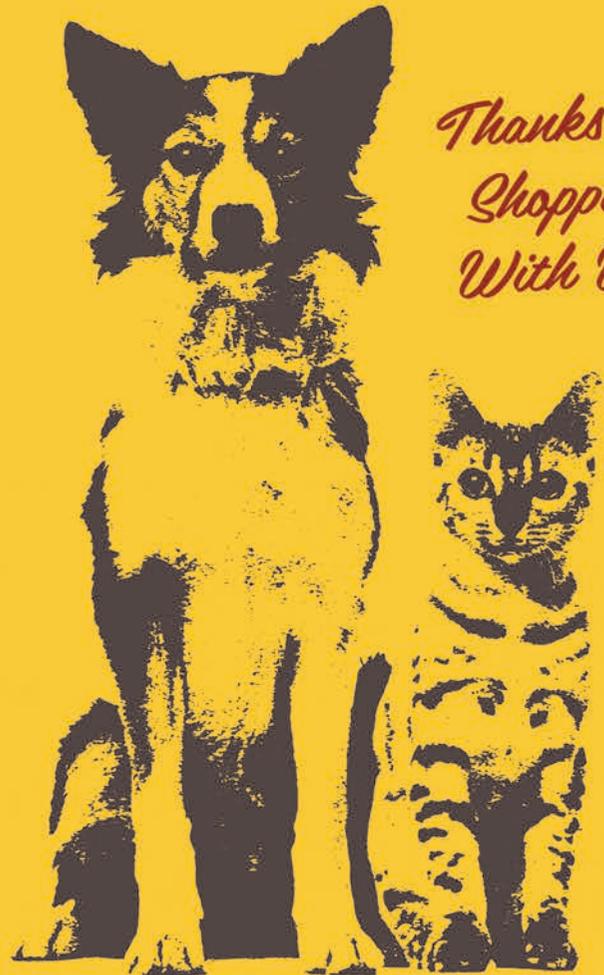
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839 Singleton Blvd., #150  
214-238-0551  
LocuraDallas.com

## Best Brunch

*Cedar Springs Tap House*  
11 a.m.-midnight, Fri.&Sat.; 11a.m.-11 p.m.  
Sun.; 21+ Tue-Fri @ 6 p.m., all day Sat.-Sun.  
4123 Cedar Springs Road, #100  
214-377-7446  
CedarSpringsTapHouse.com

## Best Burger

*Hunky's Old Fashioned Hamburgers*  
Sun.-Thur., 11 a.m.-10 p.m.; Fri.-Sat 11  
a.m.-midnight  
3930 Cedar Springs Road  
214-522-1212  
Sun.-Thur., 11 a.m.-9 p.m.;  
Fri-Sat 11 a.m.-10 p.m.  
321 North Bishop Ave.  
214-941-3322  
Hunkys.com

## Best Steak

*Knife-Dallas*  
Dining Room: 6:30-10:30 a.m.,  
11:30 a.m.-2 p.m., 5-11 p.m. daily  
Bar: 10:30 a.m.-midnight daily  
5300 E. Mockingbird Lane  
214-443-9339  
KnifeDallas.com

## Best BBQ Restaurant

*Terry Black's Barbecue*  
11 a.m.-9 p.m., Sun.-Thu.;  
11 a.m.-9 p.m., Fri.-Sat.  
3025 Main St.  
469-399-0081  
TerryBlacksBBQ.com/Dallas

## Best Asian/Sushi Restaurant

*ZEN | Modern Japanese Cuisine*  
5-9 p.m., Sun.; 5:30-10 p.m.,  
Mon.-Thur.; 5:30-11 p.m. Fri.-Sat.  
380 W. 7th St.  
214-946-9699  
ZenSushiDallas.com

## Best Italian/Best Pizza

*Cremona Italian Bistro*  
Lunch: 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Sun.-Fri.  
Dinner: 5-10 p.m. Sun.-Thu.;  
5 p.m.-2 a.m., Fri.-Sat.  
2704 Worthington St.  
214-871-1115  
CremonaBistro.com

## Best Tex-Mex Restaurant

*Ojeda's Restaurant*  
10 a.m.-9 p.m., Sun.-Thu.;  
10 a.m.-10 p.m., Fri.-Sat.  
4617 Maple Ave. in Dallas  
(other locations in DeSoto and Plano)  
214-528-8383  
OjedasRestaurant.com

## Best Taqueria

*Taqueria La Ventana*  
11 a.m.-10 p.m., Sun.-Thu.;  
11 .m.-11 p.m., Fri.-Sat.  
3847 Cedar Springs Road  
(other locations in Downtown Dallas,  
Dallas Farmers Market and Addison)  
972-432-5945  
TaqueriaLaVentana.com

## Best Vegetarian Restaurant

*Spiral Diner & Bakery*  
10 a.m.-10 p.m., Mon.-Sun.  
1101 N. Beckley Ave., Dallas  
214-948-4747  
1314 W. Magnolia Ave., Fort Worth  
817-332-8834  
SpiralDiner.com

## Best Diner

*Mama's Daughters Diner*  
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MamasDaughtersDiner.com

## Best New Restaurant/ Best Lunch Spot

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11 a.m.-6 p.m., Sun.  
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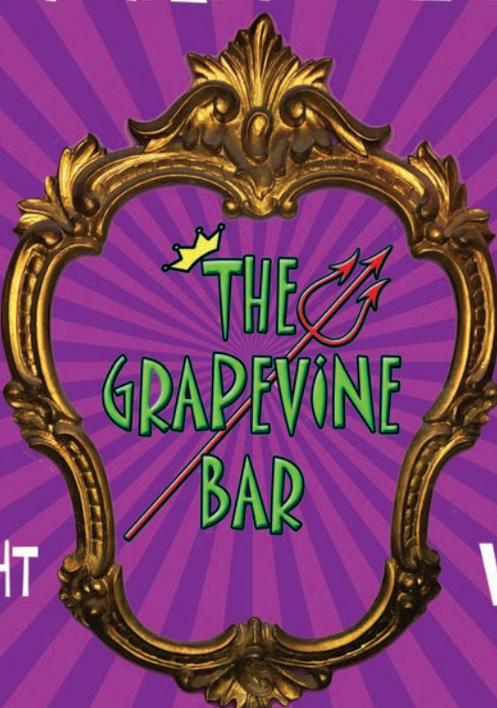
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RoundUpSaloon.com

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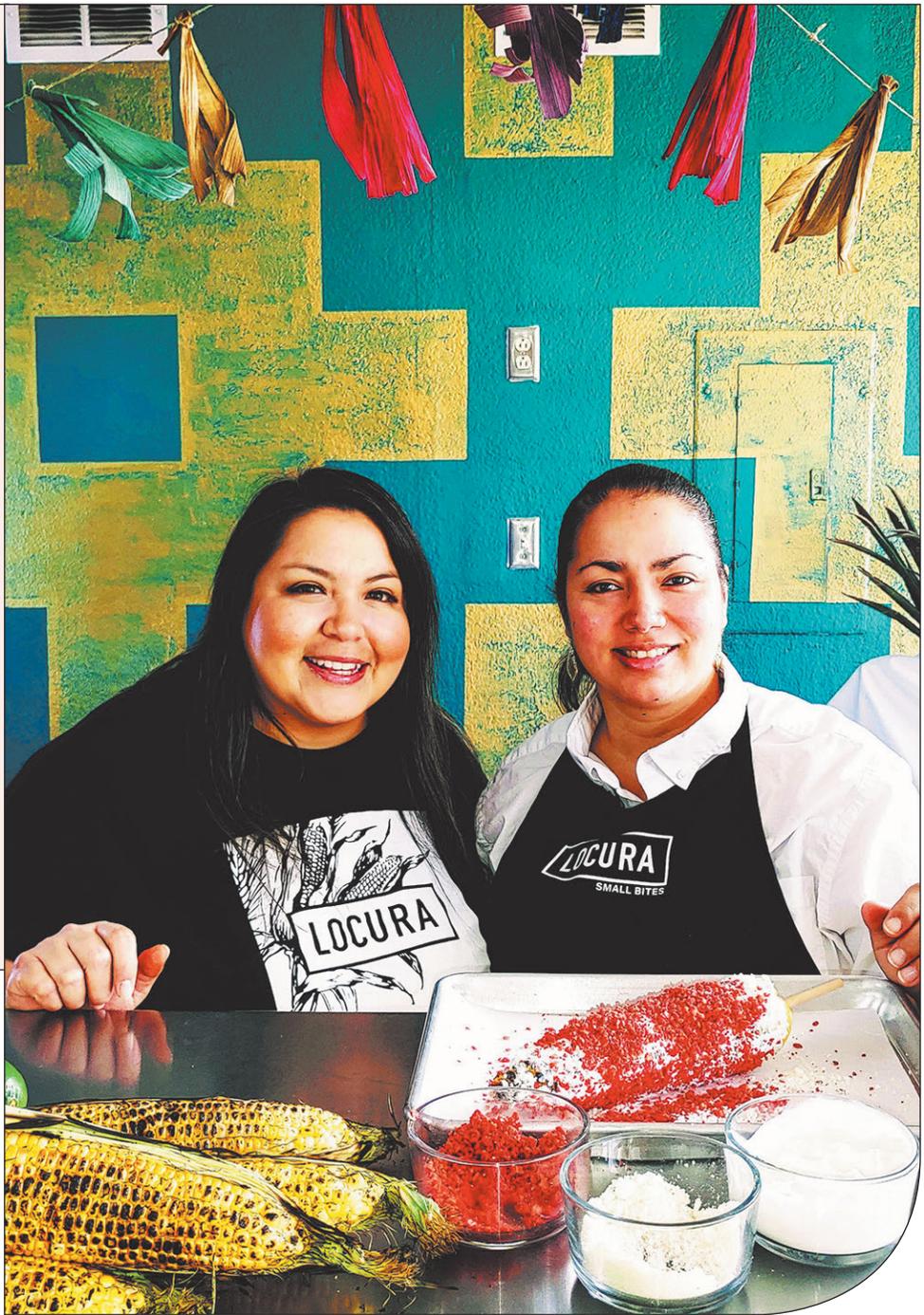
**Best Local Chef**  
**Best New Restaurant**  
**Best Lunch Spot**

*Locura Small Bites, Chef Laura Carrizales*

North Texas' LGBTQ community already knows couple Laura Carrizales and Mel Arizpe as the award-winning musical duo Mi Diva Loca; over the last year we've gotten to know them as the owners of and, in Carrizales' case, chef at Locura Small Bites restaurant. "Locura" translates into English as "craziness," which the women said is a nod not just to the name of the musical collaboration but also to the concept and menu at their restaurant: Mexican-inspired bites with new, unique and worldly combinations. "Imagine looking at elotes through an Italian, Thai or Middle Eastern lens," Carrizales said. "The basic elements of elotes, like chile, crema and lime, are all still there, but the perspective has changed. The Strawberry Thai Chili, for example, hits all the same notes as a traditional Mexican elote but with its own sound. ... That approach is taken with all 10 flavors of elote on the menu, and come summer, we'll elote in a cup with fresh watermelon, pickled watermelon rind, lime crema and tajin, called the Summertime Jam."

Carrizales said she and Arizpe have always enjoyed being adventurous as possible when dining out, and going with a "small bites" approach at their own restaurant allows foodies to "come and try several items without having to commit to a full entree with the usual two sides." Their top sellers include a truffled elote with parmesan, melt-in-your-mouth chimichurri, loaded fries with pork stewed in Mexican spices called the Pozole Frito Pie and a fried corn rib called La Bamba, "because it looks kind of like a rattlesnake tail, and the movie La Bamba has a rattlesnake theme."

Carrizales earned her stripes as a chef by working in restaurants since she was 16 — everything from fast food to fine dining — doing everything from waiting tables to managing entire restaurants, before going to culinary school at El Centro and finishing up with a bachelors degree in culinary and food service management at TWU. She said that she and Arizpe knew it would be hard to open a restaurant in any case, but doing so in a pandemic "has been brutal. We opened three weeks before the shutdown, and We've been hanging on by a thread almost since the beginning. ... The only reason we've been able to hang on is because of our friends and family and even perfect strangers' willingness to champion our efforts. Friends, family and those supporting Latina, women-owned, LGBTQ-owned small businesses have kept us afloat. We especially thank my sisters, Adelina Carrizales and Magdalena Carrizales, who have fought consistently alongside Mel and I for the last year. We are forever grateful."



Locura Small Bites, Chef Laura

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## Best Theatrical Presenter

*Uptown Players*

There is no denying that 2020 was a TOUGH year for the entertainment industry. And local theatrical companies were, in many cases, on the toughest end of that tough year. But there were some who stepped up their game, coming up with innovations that kept their audiences entertained and the lights on, even when the lights weren't actually on.

Uptown Players, Dallas' LGBTQ-centric theatrical company and the winner of the 2021 Readers Voice Award for Best Theatrical Presenter, did exactly that. Uptown, founded in 2001 and now housed in the historic Kalita Humphreys Theater on Turtle Creek, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on "presenting plays and musicals that challenge audiences artistically and create greater positive public awareness and acceptance through the performing arts.

"We have learned that we need to keep our patrons engaged during difficult times," said producer Craig Lynch, who co-founded Uptown with Jeff Rayne, of the lessons from the pandemic. "We have also learned how to produce our shows virtually on multiple platforms to keep our patrons engaged during this difficult time.

"We plan on possibly keeping this format to do some new works and readings on new plays and musicals," he continued. "We understand there is an appetite for some virtual theater, and we hope to expand on this in the future."

With three vaccinations already in use and more expected to come on line any day, and with President Joe Biden's administration focused on getting those vaccines in people's arms, hopes are high that people can begin gathering by mid-summer. And that means theaters — including Uptown Players — are looking to begin staging shows again soon.

"We are planning on producing a show — a comedy — on stage in July, if the case counts remain low and the union — Actors Equity Association — allows," Lynch said. "We plan on finishing out the 2020 season this fall and announcing our 2021-22 season later this year. And all CDC guidelines and protocols will be followed when we open.

Uptown Players is "excited, proud and humbled" to win the Readers Voice Award for Best Theatrical Presenter, Lynch said. "We have been in contact with our patrons since the pandemic hit, and the comments have all been similar to 'We can't wait to come back!' 'We miss theater,' and 'We love you guys.'" Receiving this award validates that support and the recognition that Uptown Players is a valuable part to them and this community."



B.J. Cleveland in Uptown Players' virtual production of "Application Pending."



Turtle Creek Chorale

## Best Local Arts Organization

*Turtle Creek Chorale*

The last 12 months have been hard on everyone — individuals as well as businesses and organizations. But for performing arts organizations, "It has been agonizing," said Sean Baugh, artistic director of the Turtle Creek Chorale. "However," Baugh continued, "we have learned lessons, and we have reconsidered much of what we do and why we do it."

For the Chorale, winning the 2021 Readers Voice Award for Best Local Arts Organization is "an acknowledgment that that thinking is valued and recognized. It shows us that the community is pulling for us to succeed — even in times where our entire product has been turned upside down," he said.

Baugh continued, "In the end, the pandemic has forced us, as musicians, to consider the ways we present our product, and it has forced us to open new doors and try new things — which has been terrific, believe it or not. They say that 'the mother of change is necessity,' and we have lived this now for an entire year."

The timing for the announcement that the Chorale has won the RVA is fitting, he said, since "we are excited to announce to our singers, and the public, that rehearsals will resume in April.

"We have reached a turning point in numbers of vaccinated members, and we are comfortable returning to singing with those folks," Baugh said. "And we will soon announce a public, outdoor performance on June 26, which we are incredibly excited about. Watch for more information!" Receiving this award validates that support and the recognition that Uptown Players is a valuable part to them and this community."

## Best Local Performer, Best Karaoke Host

*Wayne Smith*

Facebook.com/Wayne-SmithAsCher

## Best Local Arts Organization

*Turtle Creek Chorale*

3630 Harry Hines Blvd., Ste. 306  
214-526-3214

TurtleCreekChorale.com

## Best Local Drag Performer

*Cassie Nova*

Twitter.com/TheCassieNova

## Best Theatrical Presenter

*Uptown Players*

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214-219-2718

UptownPlayers.org

## Best Performance Venue

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Lorie Burch

“This is my THREE-peat!” Lorie Burch exclaimed of her third-straight Readers Voice Award win. “This really means the world to me because the whole reason I started my law practice was for the LGBTQ community, to ensure we had legal protections when it comes to hospital visitation, inheriting property we buy together and being able to take care of children we bring into this world.”

Burch was one of the first law firms to get certified as an LGBT Enterprise by the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. “So,” she added, “I have dedicated my career to the protection of LGBTQ rights. An award like this means I am contributing to a cause that benefits us as a community.”

Burch said she feels her commitment to her clients combined with her responsiveness, ethics, education regarding the LGBTQ community and her volunteerism both within the LGBTQ community and beyond sets her apart as an attorney, demonstrating her authenticity and her dedication to not just her clients but also to the LGBTQ community and to making the world a better place.

“I often joke that if an organization has an L, a G, a B or a T in its title, I’ve either been on the board or been chair of the board! But even more significantly in my mind is that I took that confidence that I gained through the support of the LGBT community and was elected as the national president of the American Business Women’s Association, becoming their first openly gay president since the organization’s inception in 1949. I know for a fact that I have been able to change hearts and minds in the organization simply by being honest and authentic. As national president, I introduced and got passed the organization’s first fully inclusive non-discrimination policy.”

Burch was the Democratic nominee to represent her Collin County district in Congress in 2018, and while she didn’t win, she did get more votes than any other Democrat in the county.

“Visibility makes a huge impact, and it has a ripple effect. All that is to say that this isn’t just about being a lawyer or having a law practice,” Burch said. “My entire life is about being an advocate for those who feel unseen, unheard and unrepresented. I think that is what truly sets me apart.”



Lorie Burch and family

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April Barnes, April Barnes Photography

April Barnes has been taking photos since she was a kid. Following the advice of her father, who worked as a professional photographer in the Plano area from about 1980 to 2000, she spent the first 20 years of her “grown up” life working at a “job with benefits.” Then about three years ago, she decided to follow her childhood dreams, trading in the job with benefits for a career in photography giving her more flexibility and more joy. Shortly after telling her father about her decision to follow in his footsteps, “We found out that he had cancer again. Before his passing, I gratefully got to deep dive with him in photography,” she said.

Barnes specializes in content creation for marketing/websites, portraiture, events and boudoir (as Big D Boudoir). When she isn’t working, she said, she enjoys spending time with her life partner, her four children (ages 9-21), two cats and one dog. Travelling in the Southwest with the flowers, sunshine and nature “feeds my soul,” she said, and she loves getting to photograph nature in the middle of Dallas with McShan Florist and Sandone Christmas trees.

“Photography means so much more to me than a career or profession,” Barnes said. “It’s my passion, therapy and connection to life.”

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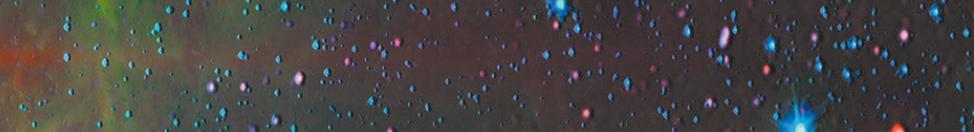
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A year ago this month, North Texas — and most of the rest of the world — closed down in an attempt to stem the spread of the deadly SARS CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Bars, restaurants and schools closed, and offices from all areas of the business world either closed or sent their employees home to work remotely. Responsible people followed local and state mandates to wear a mask and socially distance when they had to be in public. And we all found new ways of accomplishing our daily tasks.

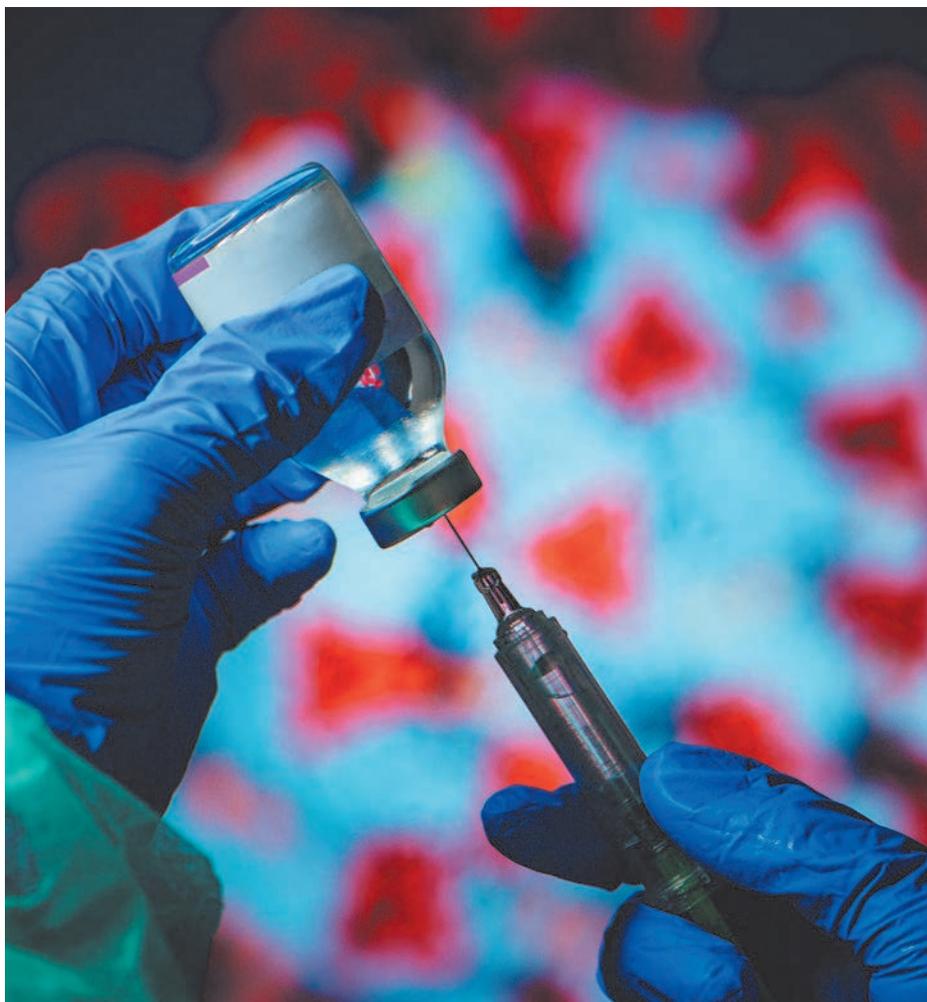
In other words, our whole world changed. A year later, more than 540,000 people have died of COVID-19 in the U.S.; there have been 2.7 million COVID-related deaths worldwide.

But today, as we at Dallas Voice honor our 2021 Readers Voice Awards winners, the world is beginning to open back up again. The rate of new COVID infections and, thankfully, the rate of COVID-related deaths is trending down. Just this month, President Joe Biden told the nation he believes Americans should be able to gather in person once again, rather than virtually, to celebrate by July 4th.

One of the main reasons we are able to even talk about a return to some semblance of what we used to call normal is that COVID vaccines are now available, and President Biden has said that by June, he believes, every American who wants a vaccine will have had the chance to get it.

And since those vaccines would not be available at all without the hard work and dedication of the scientists and medical professionals who developed and tested them, we are presenting these Editor's Choice Special Recognition RVAs to two agencies in our community who played vital roles in developing the vaccines.

To North Texas Infectious Disease Consultants and to Prism Health North Texas thank you for your dedication and your service to the LGBTQ and HIV/AIDS communities of North Texas.



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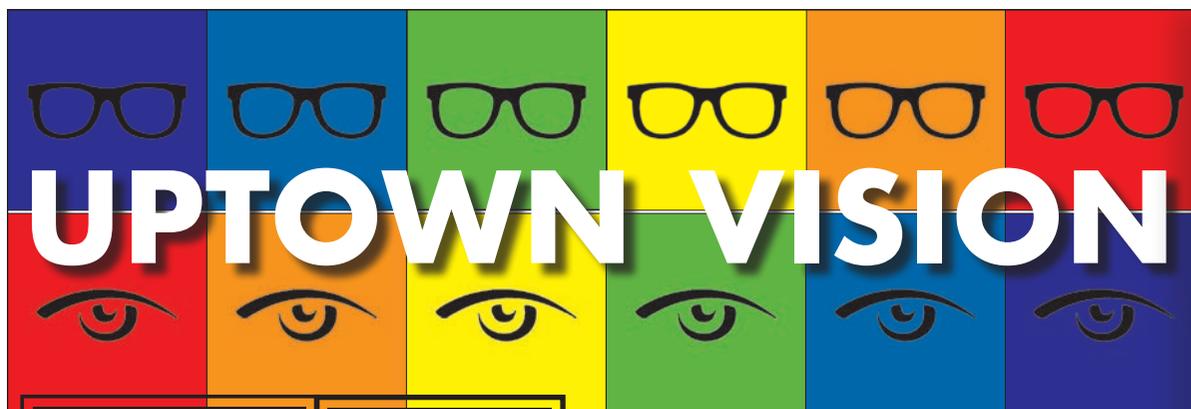
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# EDITOR'S CHOICE: SPECIAL RECOGNITION

## Valerie Jackson

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Starting up your own business is never an easy task. Starting your own business in the midst of a raging pandemic that is causing other businesses to shut down indefinitely — some even closing for good — is even more difficult. So it seems pretty obvious that the odds were against Valerie Jackson when she decided in mid-2020 to open her own electrolysis clinic, Hair & Now Electrolysis.

"I opened the doors in July, 2020," Jackson said. "Initially, I found the electrolysis industry as a client myself. I had sought out permanent hair removal services as part of my transition back in 2012. I had started my business after practicing in a partnership for over six years; I felt it was time to claim my full independence and better serve my clientele based on my own standards of care."

The fact that Jackson is an openly transgender woman might well have created another roadblock on her path to success. But, she said she believes the opposite is probably true.

"I didn't notice any challenges opening a business as a transgender woman," she said. "If anything, it helped me, because so many people wanted to see a woman such as myself accomplish the things I have accomplished."

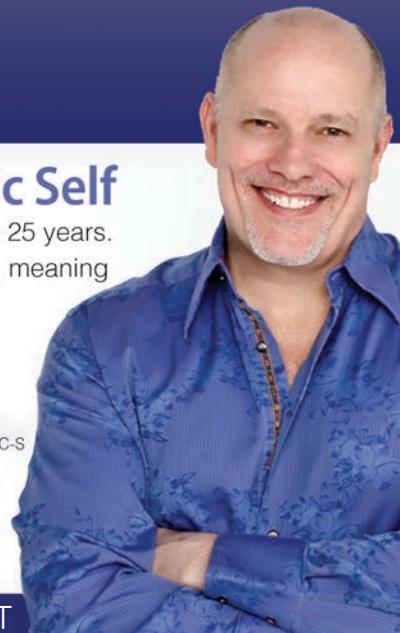
"The biggest barrier was gathering the necessary capital to invest," she continued. "I had some savings, but that was used, partially to make it through the lockdown. I relied on some very loyal clientele to prepay for their services to make up the difference. My grandparents were always a backup plan though. I attribute a large part of my success to everyone's support and belief in me."

But the empathy she has for her clients and her ability to truly relate to them are a big part of her success, Jackson said. "I know firsthand how mentally distressing body hair, especially on the face, can be," she noted. "I've always found joy in helping others. I feel honored to be a part of many transgender people's journeys and their processes in becoming their authentic selves."

"I feel humbled when cisgender women experiencing hormonal/medical conditions vulnerably seek my help," Jackson said. "It's also remarkable to see so many men find a renewed confidence and self esteem through the electrolysis process. I truly enjoy my career and seeing electrolysis change lives. I couldn't imagine doing anything else."

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# Fighting For Our Rights



A conversation with National LGBTQ+ Bar President Wesley Bizzell

**W**e often forget about all the work that is required to gain and maintain the rights we as LGBTQ people have in the U.S. One of the organizations leading the fight is the National LGBT Bar, soon to be the National LGBTQ+ Bar.

Wesley Bizzell is the current presi-

dent of the National LGBTQ+ Bar. Bizzell joined the Bar while he was in law school at Georgetown, after attending his first Lavender Law Conference. He stayed connected after graduating.

In his second year as an associate with Winston & Strawn law firm, he convinced the firm to sponsor Lavender Law and to recruit at its job fair.

Bizzell had served as treasurer for the LGBTQ+ Bar for several years, and, in 2020, became president. In May, when his term ends, he will assume the role of immediate past president for another year. I recently sat down virtually with him to talk about the importance of the LGBTQ+ Bar.

— Anthony Eaton

**Dallas Voice: Why is the Bar important to our community?** What kind of impact has it had? The National LGBT Bar — which will soon become the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association — represents tens of thousands of LGBTQ+ attorneys, judges, law students, activists and other legal professionals. It is a prominent voice in ensuring the legal process respects and protects all LGBTQ+ individuals. It has been a longtime thought leader on issues of concern to our community. It is beloved for our annual Lavender Law Conference and Career Fair, which began in 1988, the largest LGBTQ+ legal conference in the country and the largest LGBTQ+ career fair.

**What was the driving factor of the establishment of the Bar?** The LGBTQ+ Bar was founded at the height of the HIV/

AIDS crisis by a small group of family law practitioners who provided pro bono legal services to those dying of AIDS, helping these young people create wills and get their legal affairs in order before their tragic deaths.

In October 1987, 750,000 people gathered at the U.S. Capitol for the Second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. By then, almost 50,000 of our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters had died of AIDS. The majority of those being gay men in their 20s and 30s. At the March on Washington, a group of lawyers came together and decided to form a national organization for LGBTQ+ attorneys to enable LGBTQ+ lawyers to advocate for societal change. From this moment of crisis, the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association was born.

What was important is that the organization's name had the words "lesbian" and "gay" in the title. While there were local bar organizations in existence, none unequivocally indicated they were organizations for LGBTQ+ lawyers. But we did.

**What kind of work has the Bar been involved in since then?** In the last 30-plus years, the LGBTQ+ Bar has confronted a multitude of crises. Our members have been instrumental in achieving many successes, including creating visible spaces for LGBTQ attorneys within law firms and corporate law departments, enacting a federal hate crimes statute, advocating for the Supreme Court's ruling on marriage equality and abolishing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and the transgender military ban.

Despite these enormous strides, our community — particularly those who are trans and people of color — continues to face crises even today. These critical issues are why the LGBTQ+ Bar must continue to exist. To borrow the lyrics of Tracy Chapman, the LGBTQ+ Bar continues to "hunger for a taste of justice" and "hunger for a world of truth."

**How has the Bar helped to shape and change things for the LGBTQ community?** As a legislative and political law attorney, I'm incredibly proud of the

LGBTQ+ Bar's policy work. We are leading the effort to ban the LGBTQ+ "panic" defense across the U.S. This horrific defense is a legal strategy that asks a jury to find that a victim's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression is to blame for a defendant's violent reaction, such as violent beatings, other assaults and even murder.

In 2013, as a result of our efforts, the American Bar Association unanimously approved a resolution calling for an end to this heinous defense strategy. Since then, 12 states and the District of Columbia have banned such defenses. Since 2019, we have seen 10 jurisdictions ban the defense. Virginia is our first state to ban the defense in 2021, and it is also the first southern state to do so.

I spent a substantial amount of time working closely with the sponsor, Delegate Danica Roem, on this effort and assembling a remarkable coalition of organizations that supported the bill. Roem was the first trans legislator elected to any state legislature, and she was an incredible and passionate advocate. We were blessed to have Matthew Shepard's mother, Judy, testify before both the House and the Senate committees and be an active part

**FIGHTING**, Page 49

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# TPIF opens new grants cycle

More than half a million dollars has been awarded in the community foundation's first three years

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer  
taffet@dallasvoice.com

**T**exas Pride Impact Funds opened its latest grant cycle to organizations providing services to the LGBTQ community in Texas this month.

Since 2018, the fund has distributed 70 grants totaling \$570,000 to about 50 organizations, according to TPIF spokesperson Ron Guillard. The awards are annual, although last year, teaming with Equality Texas, the community foundation raised money to distribute crisis funds to smaller community organizations around the state that were most severely impacted by the pandemic shut down.

Guillard said during the pandemic year, TPIF exceeded its giving plans.

This year, the organization has begun doing community-based strategic planning to shape the next five years. He said the process is similar to what they did beginning in 2013 to create the LGBTQ-focused community foundation for Texas. Building greater diversity is one of the goals.

Applications for the new round of funding are available on the foundation's website. Any organization with 501(c)(3) status that serves the LGBTQ community may apply. While most of the organizations that have received funds are LGBTQ, some are mainstream organizations that have programs targeting the LGBTQ community. For example, Promise House in Dallas, which shelters homeless youth, received a \$5,000 grant for its LGBT house and programs.

Another example is UT Health San Antonio, which received a \$10,000 grant in 2019 to help fund the Pride Community Clinic housed at the Alamo Area Resource Center. The clinic provides

free health care to underserved communities who lack access due to stigma or economic factors, and it educates future healthcare professionals about health issues and needs in the LGBTQ community.

Investing in community-building efforts across Texas is one of the foundation's goals. The upstart Coastal Bend Pride Center is the first LGBTQ community center in the 12-county Coastal Bend region. The \$10,000 grant the center received from TPIF is funding housing programs for LGBTQ youth, adults 55 and older and a transgender alliance, as well as providing computer access, job search assistance, family programming and workshops on a variety of topics including financial security and health and wellness.

TPIF is also committed to investing in organizations led by indigenous and people of color working to meet the needs of varied communities and those organizations working to advance racial and economic justice.

Community building is an important area for TPIF grants focusing especially on youth, seniors and trans people. Smaller organizations especially those in rural areas, are a priority.

The application deadline is May 31. Site visits will take place over the summer, and grants will be awarded in September.

Site visits may be in person or virtual. Guillard said in 2019, a donor from San Antonio was free to drive to Eagle Pass to do a site inspection of Eagle Pass SAFE — Sexuality Advocacy For Everyone. Then a member of the grant committee spoke with the organization's director virtually. The group was awarded \$3,500 to fund a targeted media campaign for PrEPParadas to address the intertwined issues of homophobia and lack of sexual health knowledge among Latina matriarchs.

In 2020, however, site visits were virtual since most organizations' facilities were closed. This year, Guillard said, he expects at least some of the site visits

this summer to be in person. For virtual visits, the committee will meet virtually with the grant writer, the organization's lead official and possibly a client benefiting from the organization's services.

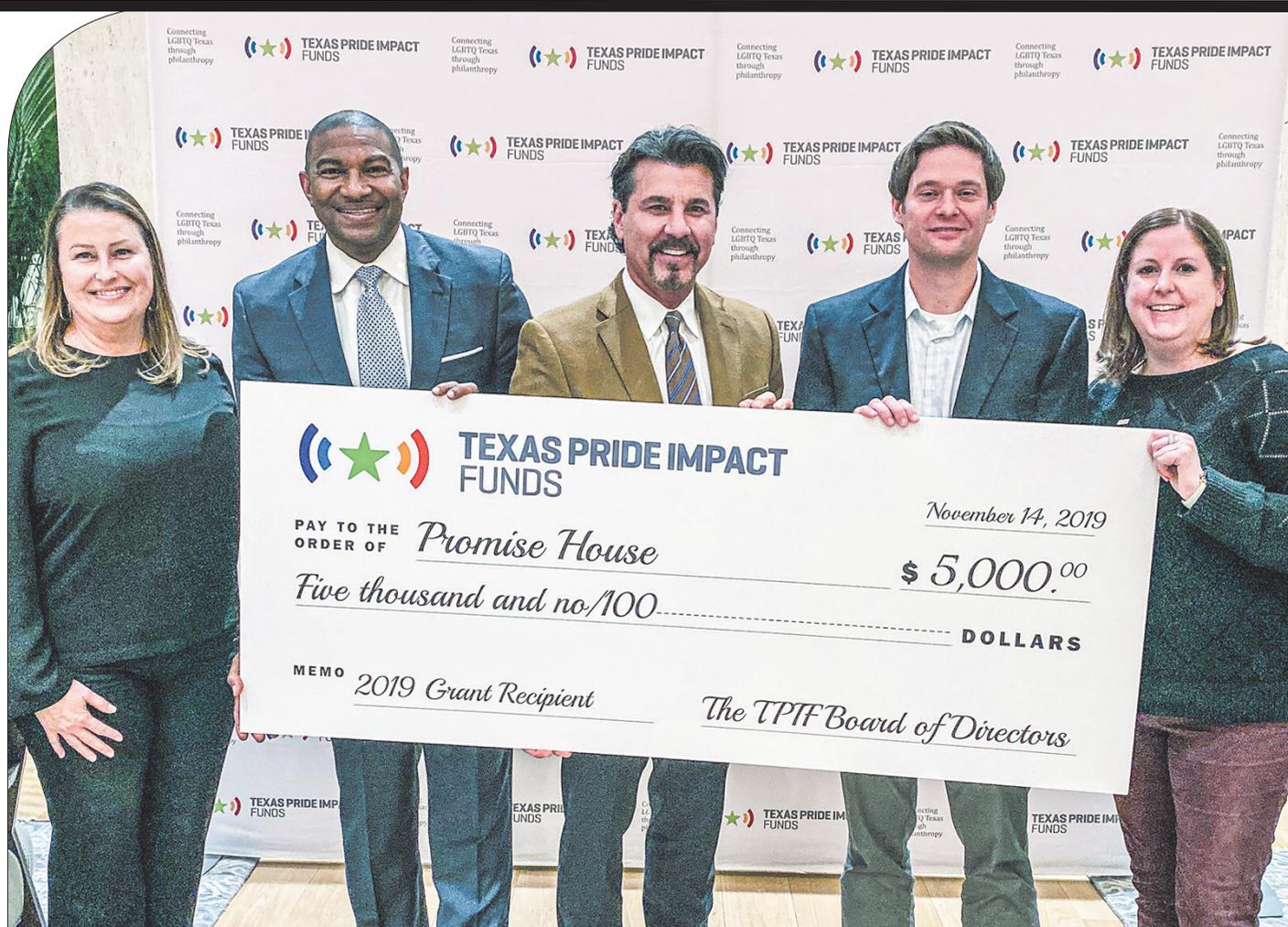
"When we launched, we had a policy where an organization was eligible for two years," Guillard said.

This year, following best practices of LGBTQ community foundations around the country, there are no restrictions based on past awards.

Guillard also said the application doesn't require the applicant to ask for a specific amount of money. The grant committee decides how much to give each organization. However, an applicant may explain what a certain amount of money would fund.

"We're intentionally broad," Guillard explained. "Not many foundations make grants to the LGBTQ community."

Online applications are available at [TX-PIF.org](http://TX-PIF.org). Questions about grant applications may be sent to [grants@txpif.org](mailto:grants@txpif.org).





## FIGHTING, From Page 47

of our coalition fighting to pass this bill. I'm so appreciative of the work of our coalition partners, and we're grateful for the role they played in successfully advocating for this important legislation.

We are working with several other state legislators on bills now, and I know we'll see several other states ban this defense in 2021.

### **The Bar doesn't just focus on LGBTQ legislation and representation; can you talk a little about its work around minority diversity and legal issues?**

Within the legal community, we still have not achieved fulsome diversity and full inclusion. That is true for female attorneys, attorneys of color. It's true for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans and queer attorneys. Thus, addressing diversity and inclusion is necessary. The National LGBTQ+ Bar partners in this work with other affinity bars: the National Bar Association, the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, the National Native American Bar Association, the Hispanic National Bar Association, the National Association of Blind Lawyers, the National Filipino American Lawyers

Association and the South Asian Bar Association of North America.

We know that by working together, we can better advance the cause of diversity and inclusion and be a unified voice to speak out against racial inequity and injustice wherever we see it. For example, the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association has joined NAPABA's Stand Against Hate Campaign, recording a joint video with other national bar associations that denounced the anti-Asian hate, violence and racism related to the coronavirus.

I've also joined the presidents of NBA, SABA, NAPABA and HNBA in a Belonging Project webinar to discuss how the minority bar associations are working to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion as our country battles two pandemics — coronavirus and systemic racism. The affinity bars recognize that we must stand united against bigotry and hate and work together to make the legal profession more diverse and inclusive.

On racial equity issues, the National LGBTQ+ Bar is deeply committed to continuing the focus on racial justice issues in the LGBTQ+ legal community

for the long haul. In 2020, the National LGBTQ+ Bar joined as part of the original signatories to a statement from LGBTQ+ organizations supporting Black lives and calling for racial justice and equity. We are also continuing important existing programs and creating new programs that amplify voices and help address systemic racial oppression and inequality throughout our society, including a Racial Justice Resource Library [LINK: <https://lgbtbar.org/programs/racial-justice-resource-library/>].

### **Despite significant advances in legal protections and rights, the LGBTQ community still faces many challenges related to discrimination in employment, housing, and having or adopting children. Does the Bar have a primary focus right now, and what do you think is the biggest challenge we face?**

We are thrilled that our members have played significant roles in winning historic legal protections for the LGBTQ+ community, including the recent Title VII cases. The National LGBTQ+ Bar Association submitted an amicus brief supporting the employees in these cases.

In June 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, Georgia, ruled that Title VII's prohibition on discrimination on the basis of sex includes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. But our journey to equality is not finished. We are committed to continuing to fight for equality for all.

Like the rest of the country, I think our LGBTQ+ community must address racism and racial inequity not only within our society but within our community itself. The sad fact is that racism still exists within our LGBTQ+ community, and we must call it out when we see it and work to eradicate it.

Our community's unfortunate reality has often only focused on issues of importance to white, cisgender gay men. As a result, we have ignored what must be done to make our society better for those in our community who are trans, non-binary, Black, Indigenous or persons of color. We must do better.

What makes our community beautiful and

**FIGHTING**, Next Page

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## FIGHTING From Previous Page

magnificent is our intersectionality, and we have often failed to understand that. Our LGBTQ+ community is comprised of individuals from every gender, race, and ethnicity. We need to do a better job celebrating this. We need to do a better job of amplifying the voices of diverse LGBTQ+ individuals and honoring those diverse LGBTQ+ individuals who have come before us.

For too long, we have also white-washed our history. We've ignored the contributions of people like Bayard Rustin, Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, José Sarria, Miss Major — and the list goes on and on. Remember, the Stonewall riots were led by trans women of color and drag queens who united against the discrimination they were facing daily. We're standing on their shoulders today, and we should not forget that. While we're getting better and being more inclusive as an LGBTQ+ community, we still have a ways to go.

In 2019, the National LGBTQ+ Bar rolled out Lavender Law 365, the only LGBTQ+ inclusion coaching and consulting program to address [the issues surrounding



diversity within the legal profession and law firms]. This program was explicitly designed to implement best practice standards for LGBTQ+ equity across law firms, law schools, and corporate legal departments. We know that when it comes to gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and LGBTQ+ inclusion and representation, the legal profession is one of the least diverse.

Lavender Law 365 harnesses the LGBTQ+ Bar's expertise to help these organizations foster a more knowledgeable and supportive LGBTQ+ inclusive environment, where they can gain the benefits of having a truly diverse talent pool.

**How can members of the community who are not in the legal profession support the Bar?** We welcome anyone to attend our Lavender Law Conference & Career Fair or to join one of our Lavender Link webcasts. Additionally, for states where we are advocating to ban the LGBTQ "panic" defense, we always love to have constituents call their elected officials to support the issue.

*For more information on the National LGBTQ+ Bar, visit [LGBTBar.org](http://LGBTBar.org).*



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03.26-27

**Avant Chamber Ballet** outdoor performs with Bruce Wood Dance and Dallas Black Dance Theatre in a show including a trio of ballets choreographed by ACB founder Katie Puder; "Hide Me Angel," the last finished work by Bruce Wood, DBDT's "Execution of a Sentiment," choreographed by Darrell Grand Moultrie. 8 p.m. at Annette Strauss Square, 2403 Flora St. \$30 general lawn seating. \$50 table seating. [ATTPAC.org](http://ATTPAC.org).



03.27

**The Gay Softball World Series** is returning to Dallas in 2022, bringing athletes from across the U.S. to DFW for a week of top-notch softball and camaraderie. The Sin City Classic, Las Vegas' annual softball tournament, is hosting the Cornhole Fundraiser here in Dallas to help raise funds for the championship tournament next year. Noon, on the expanded outdoor patio at TMC, 3903 Cedar Springs Road.



03.30

Are you an LGBTQ person over the age of 50? Or maybe you are an LGBTQ person caring for an aging loved one? If so, then check out the Virtual LGBT Community Forum, hosted by Sister Helen Holy (Paul J. Williams) and presented by Coalition for Aging LGBT, *The Senior Source and Elder Financial Safety Center*. 6-8 p.m. Register at <https://biturl.top/Vj6zai>. For information email [Sgore@TheSeniorSource.org](mailto:Sgore@TheSeniorSource.org).



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# Cassie Nova

Vacations, FOMO and coming out

Hello everyone. After a year of living in a pandemic, I can honestly say I need a fucking vacation. There is nothing like staying home for extended periods of time to make you wish you could go somewhere. But what I have realized is that, other than being around my friends, I'm good with not being in or around crowds.

Now don't get me wrong: I would love to go to a concert and see some of my favorite bands or performers. But even then I prefer to be on the fringe of the crowd, not right in the center. Actually, being in one of those suites they have at the American Airlines center would be perfect for me.

I wouldn't exactly say it is anxiety-based; it's just overwhelming having people around me 360. I need my back against a wall, so I don't feel like I need to watch over my shoulder constantly. Maybe in a former life I was a gangster, ripe with paranoia.

Lately, the idea of my perfect vacation has changed ... well, let's say, evolved. A cabin in the woods, miles away from any other people, would be ideal. So if I wanted to walk through the woods naked I could.

For the record: I'm never going to walk through the woods naked; bugs, tree bark, animals — none of that screams, "Let's get naked!" to me.

And I sure as hell won't be skinny-dipping anywhere that isn't a swimming pool. We were at Joe Pool Lake last year, and these fucking little perch wouldn't stop nipping at our nipples. I sure don't need them nipping at my bits. Just the thought of it freaks me out. Plus, in South America somewhere they have little fish that swim up your pee-pee hole! What if they migrate or get brought here by some super villain hellbent on penis destruction? Nope! Not me!

But it would be nice to be alone in the woods with just my husband. Okay — maybe a few friends, too, but no more than, like, 10 or 11 — under the stars, in front of a bonfire, drunk on good wine. Truthfully, we should have done that during the pandemic.

All of this talk about being alone away from everyone and everything has made me realize how badly I suffer from FOMO. (That means "Fear of Missing Out," for those who might not know.) Let me revise my earlier statement: I would love to be away from the maddening crowds but still have access to WIFI. That way I could still keep up on what is going on in the world and stuff. My luck, I'd have a week away and come back to some big news that I missed, like, "CITIES OVERUN BY GIANT SPIDERS!" And I wouldn't know how to kill them because I was off social media. Typical.

I'd love to have my own island — a small one with plenty of fruit and fish for when we run out of snacks and provisions. Sidenote: Possible name for a drag show, "FRUIT AND



FISH."

It would have huts, like on Gilligan's Island, but the bedrooms would be raised and closed off — no sand allowed. Once a week, local tradesmen would stop by to sell or trade their wares: "Oh, thank you kind sir! I did not know I needed a basket made from shells and coconuts, but now I can't imagine my life without it. In trade, I can style a wig for you ... No? Okay. Do you take debit cards?"

You see, I really do need a vacation. I sound crazy.

As most of you know, this little ol' column of mine started as an advice column, and from time-to-time people still send in questions or ask for advice on a subject. The truth is, most of the advice seekers ask such similar questions that I just send them an email and never publish the interaction. You'd be surprised how many questions I get asked about open relationships and about coming out.

Seriously, many of you have the very same problems. In the past two years, I have had at least three letters from people asking advice on what to do when their longtime partner won't tell their parents or family about their relationship. All three were

struggling with their partner not coming out publicly with their relationship.

It surprises me that there are still folks living in the closet, but my answer is always the same for them. They have to come out on their terms, in their time. Outing someone is never the right answer, no matter how frustrating the situation.

On the other hand, being called a "room-mate" when you have been in a long-term relationship seems to shit all over what the two of you have built. Loving someone out and proud means something, and your significant other deserves that.

When it comes to family, I know it can be a hard decision, and — while not everyone likes to hear this — it is okay to close the door on toxic, selfish relationships. Even if that relationship is with a parent. Your relationship with your mom or dad will be a journey. Sometimes it takes years to get to a place of acceptance; sometimes it never happens. You should give them time to come to terms with you being gay. Give them as much time as it took for you to accept yourself.

Y'all, I am still here for advice if you need me. Just send me an email at askcassienova@gmail.com.

Remember to always love more bitch less and be fabulous! XOXO, Cassie Nova

## this week's solution

C	R	O	S	S		P	I	N	A		A	L	D	A	
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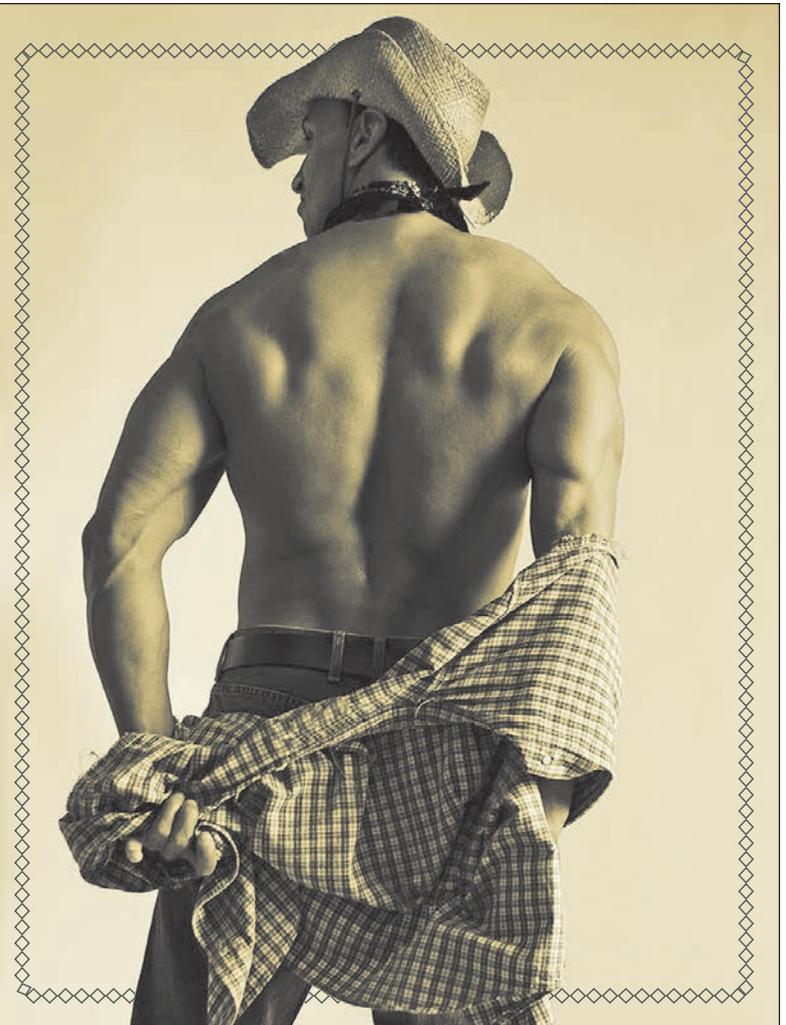
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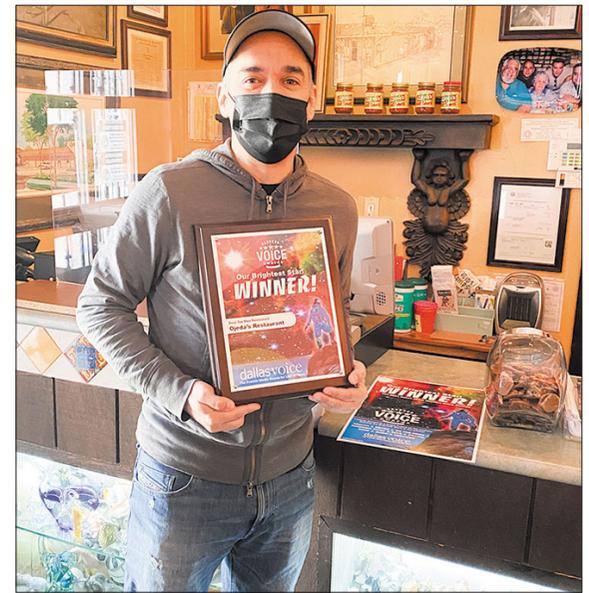




Best Dentist - Dr. Carole Ann Boyd



Best Optometrist - Dr. Bill Henderson



Best Tex-Mex - Ojeda's



Best Emergency Care Facility - Highland Park ER



Best Place to Pamper Yourself - Nailed Nail Bar



Best Gay Apparel - Outlines



Best Yoga Studio - City Yoga



Best Art Gallery - Craighead Green Gallery



Best Cosmetic Practitioner - Dr. Breck Thrash



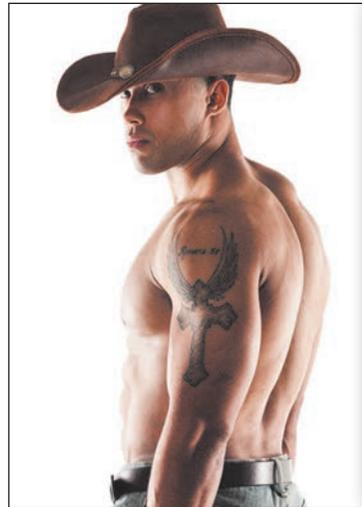
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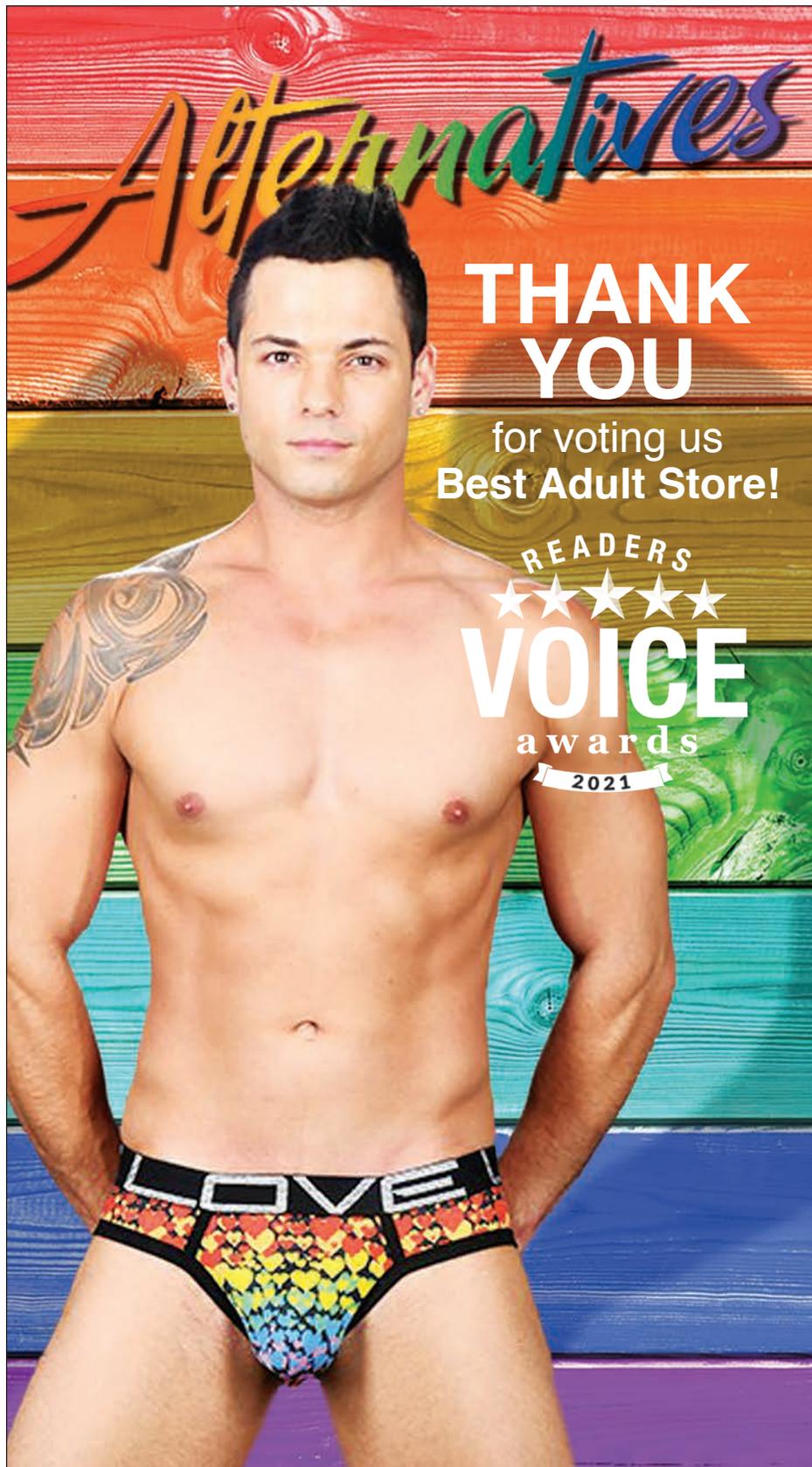
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61						62					63				

Solution on Page 52

### Across

- 1 Symbol at Metropolitan Community Church
- 6 Part of a fruity drink
- 10 Alan of *M\*A\*S\*H*
- 14 Type of sex manual for beginners?
- 15 Judy or Barbra, for example
- 16 Harvey Milk portrayer Penn
- 17 Start of a quip about more people coming out as LGBT
- 20 Doggy style, for example
- 21 Stick it to
- 22 *Hairspray* list
- 23 Food Network chef Cat
- 25 *Jingle Bells* vehicle
- 28 Like a Samurai
- 32 Charged particles
- 33 Singing Mann
- 34 Sibling, in brief
- 35 More of the quip
- 39 Subj. for some aliens
- 40 Like Gomer's Mayberry
- 41 Campbell of *The Company*
- 42 Hot, like Feniger's tamales
- 44 Public outbursts
- 46 Actress Archer

47 Roz portrayer on *Frasier*

- 48 Prefix for Da Vinci's land
- 51 Without a word
- 55 End of the quip
- 58 Part of a checklist
- 59 Sty cry
- 60 Rent
- 61 Top Four matchup
- 62 Parker of *South Park*
- 63 Penetrate

### Down

- 1 Rupert Everett's fellow
- 2 Magazine section
- 3 Hogwarts Mail deliverers
- 4 Socrates influenced this philosophy
- 5 Essayist Susan
- 6 Earhart, for one
- 7 "\_\_\_ do anything better than you"
- 8 Sixty-nine and more (abbr.)
- 9 *Unhappily Ever After* actor
- 10 Art school name
- 11 Shakespearean king
- 12 Kevin Kline title role
- 13 De novo
- 18 *The Whales of August* star Lillian

- 19 Land of the cut
- 23 *Lawrence of Arabia* animal
- 24 Crude cartel
- 25 Stable parents
- 26 Rita Mae Brown's \_\_\_ *Lips*
- 27 \_\_\_ Gay (WWII plane)
- 28 Holy war
- 29 Ruhr industrial center
- 30 One with a holey bottom
- 31 Rob of *Melrose Place*
- 33 Kilmer simile phrase
- 36 Patch style
- 37 *Cats* director Trevor
- 38 Gay population proportion, perhaps
- 43 Delicious dangler
- 44 Hawk, but not chicken hawk
- 45 Bayou cuisine
- 47 Not easily satisfied
- 48 Inflamed end?
- 49 Bag for shopping at Barneys
- 50 "Beg pardon ..."
- 51 Since, to J. M. Barrie
- 52 Cho's *I'm the One* \_\_\_ *I Want*
- 53 Add-on for Congo
- 54 Belgian border river
- 56 *I \_\_\_ Plenty o' Nuttin'*
- 57 To me, to Magnus

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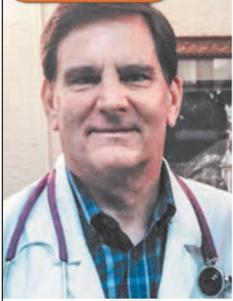
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